2015-16 School Evaluation Report

ROADS CHARTER SCHOOL II

Visit Date: April 6-7, 2016
Report Date: June 28, 2016

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

INTRODUCTION

This School Evaluation Report offers an analysis of evidence collected during the school visit on April 6-7, 2016. While the SUNY Charter Schools Institute (the "Institute") conducts a comprehensive review of evidence related to all the State University of New York Charter Renewal Benchmarks (the "SUNY Renewal Benchmarks") near the end of a charter term, most mid-cycle school evaluation visits focus on a subset of these benchmarks. This subset, the Qualitative Education Benchmarks, addresses the academic success of the school and the effectiveness and viability of the school organization. It provides a framework for examining the quality of the educational program, focusing on teaching and learning (i.e., curriculum, instruction, assessment and services for at-risk students), as well as leadership, organizational capacity and board oversight. The Institute uses the established criteria on a regular basis to provide schools with a consistent set of expectations leading up to renewal.

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

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

SCHOOL BACKGROUND

Opening Information

Date Initial Charter Approved by SUNY Trustees	March 22, 2011
Date of School Opening	August 27, 2012

Location and 2015-16 Enrollment

Address	District	Facility	Chartered Enrollment	Grades
1010 Rev James A. Polite Ave. Bronx, NY 10459	CSD 12	DOE Co-located	250	9-12

Partner Organization

Partner Name	Partner Type	Dates of Service
ROADS Schools, Inc.	Not-for-profit charter management organization	2012-13 to Present

ROADS Charter School I's ("ROADS II's") mission is to:

> "…promote academic success by ensuring that disconnected youth-overage and under-credited students aged 15-17 in New York City-graduate from high school prepared to excel in their academic, professional and personal lives. Our "second-chance" high schools offer customized and rigorous curricula, socio-emotional support and work-based experiences to foster student engagement and accelerate student progress."

The Institute and ROADS II have agreed to implement an Accountability Plan that recognizes ROADS II's target population: students who have been previously adjudicated, are in foster care, or who are homeless. This Accountability Plan aligns with the existing framework for college and career ready high schools while providing the school leeway for the time it takes its students to meet graduation requirements and for the types of meaningful post-secondary activities in which students engage. Thereby, the Institute holds ROADS II accountable to a set of high standards for performance on Regents exams, for high school graduation and for post-secondary engagement while recognizing the unique life challenges of the students enrolled at ROADS charter schools. As with all SUNY authorized charter schools, the Institute uses the SUNY Renewal Benchmarks to frame its analysis of the school's program on the ground using the same benchmarks that guide the qualitative analysis of all SUNY authorized charter schools.

BENCHMARK CONCLUSIONS

QUALITATIVE EDUCATION BENCHMARKS

The SUNY Renewal Benchmarks, grounded in the body of research from the Center for Urban Studies at Harvard University,[1] describe the elements in place at schools that are highly effective at providing students from low-income backgrounds the instruction, content, knowledge and skills necessary to produce strong academic performance. The SUNY Renewal Benchmarks describe the elements an effective school must have in place at the time of renewal.[2]

Use of Assessment Data

This year, ROADS II has implemented assessments to monitor the literacy levels of its students more closely than in previous years. However, the school does not implement its outcome mastery assessment system in a consistent manner across departments to improve instructional effectiveness and student learning. ROADS II struggles to collect sufficient data for a systematic and timely analysis that informs the school's academic program and classroom instruction.

- ROADS II administers the Qualitative Reading Inventory ("QRI") each trimester to assess student reading levels and the SCANTRON assessment twice a year to assess student growth in reading and math. However, the addition of the QRI to the assessment battery does not enable instructional leaders to more closely monitor students' literacy levels and adjust instruction and group students more effectively. Although 136 students were eligible for the assessment, the school administered the QRI to 20 students during trimester 1 and to 10 students during trimester 2. The school has not created systems, supports and structures that successfully incent students to attend. Therefore, it does not conduct appropriate assessment activities within reasonable timeframes. This record of data does not provide instructional leaders and teachers with the necessary information to adjust instruction appropriately to meet the needs of the entire student body.

- Teachers create and regularly administer in-class assessments, including exit tickets, midterms and finals, that align to learning objectives the school expects students to master by the end of each trimester. The school requires students to master at least 70% of their outcomes to achieve a passing grade for a course. In recent years, ROADS II has worked with an external consulting firm to develop strong assessments, rubrics and protocols to fine tune assessments before administering to students.

- ROADS II makes assessment data available to school stakeholders. The school uses the "JumpRope" online portal to house student grades and assessment data. Teachers, leaders,

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[1] An extensive body of research identifying and confirming the correlates of effective schools exists dating back four decades. Selected sources include: www.mes.org/correlates.html; scholar.harvard.edu/files/fryer/files/dobbie_fryer_revision_final.pdf; and, gao.gov/assets/80/77488.pdf.

[2] Additional details regarding the SUNY Renewal Benchmarks, including greater specificity as to what the Institute looks for at each school that may demonstrate attainment of the SUNY Renewal Benchmarks, is available at: www.newyorkcharters.org/suny-renewal-benchmarks/.

and student caretakers regularly access this portal to monitor student progress. Board members also receive regular reports of student assessment results that they use during monthly board meetings to monitor student progress toward completing graduation requirements.

- Teachers use more frequent assessments such as exit tickets to adjust instruction and inform lesson planning in an immediate fashion. The school and individual departments use more formal assessments to adjust outcomes and instructional pacing throughout the year and as a basis for curriculum review before the start of a new school year.

- As regular attendance is an issue for many students, leaders are thoughtful about the most reliable way to measure teacher effectiveness using student data. In turn, they evaluate teachers using data from students who attend the teacher's specific course at least 60% of the time. Leaders expect that at least 90% of students attending at this rate should successfully earn credit from that particular class. For classes that culminate with a Regents exam, instructional leaders use student scores to measure teacher effectiveness.

- The school regularly communicates student progress and growth to parents and caretakers through formal report cards at the end of each trimester, as well as through progress reports each month.

Curriculum

The school's curriculum effectively supports teachers in instructional planning although the school lacks clear systems for using student data to develop and adjust curriculum materials as necessary. ROADS II's instructional and credit accumulation design does not accomplish what was envisioned in the school's original charter design.

- ROADS II uses a curriculum framework based around outcomes the school expects students to master at the end of each trimester for each subject. The school tasks department teams with reviewing each pre-existing outcome to ensure alignment with state standards in each course. The school partners with an outside consulting firm to help improve vertical and horizontal alignment across courses, grading integrity and to determine if curriculum outcomes are, among other things, content focused, skill focused or transferable to other areas of life. The outcomes allow teachers to guide pacing appropriately so that they know what to teach and when to teach it.

- To support this framework, department teams create their own pacing guides and supporting documents, with the assistance of school leaders, which adequately serve as tools to bridge outcomes and daily lesson planning. Particularly, department teams examine data from the previous school year to adjust the pacing of instruction for a particular outcome to increase student success.

- Teachers review assessment data, particularly exit tickets and quizzes, to attempt to make informed changes to upcoming lessons. Although teachers report using midterm assessment data to determine how to adjust pacing for the rest of an outcome cycle, data analysis is not timely. The lag between the assessment of the administration and the analysis of the resulting data happens to late during the subsequent trimester to be completely useful to instructional leaders or teachers. Ultimately, student mastery of outcomes determines how a department may develop and adjust trimester plans, outcomes, and materials they use to teach them in the future.

- Teachers have access to an electronic drive that houses resources to plan focused lessons using a lesson plan template consistent across classrooms. However, as the rigor of instruction varies greatly across classrooms, corresponding to the strengths and weaknesses of teachers, some teachers miss opportunities to include questioning and activities that would develop students' higher-order thinking and problem solving skills.

Pedagogy

Adequate instruction is evident throughout the school. Most teachers deliver clear and purposeful lessons but miss opportunities to challenge students with tasks that develop higher order thinking and problem solving skills. As shown in the chart below, during the visit, Institute team members conducted 15 classroom observations following a defined protocol used in all school evaluation visits.

CONTENT AREA		TOTAL OBSERVATIONS
	ELA	1
	Writing	2
	Math	4
	Science	3
	Soc Stu	4
	Specials	1
	Total	15

- Across the school, a majority of teachers deliver lessons with clear objectives that align to the school's curriculum (11 out of 15 classrooms observed). In classrooms where objectives were clear and purposeful, teachers consistently communicated their expectations for student performance by posting the objective and discussing it with students. Also in these classrooms, teachers implemented lessons as planned to ensure student activities supported achievement of the objective and that lessons address objectives in support of the mastery outcomes. In some classrooms, the stated objective

described an activity rather than a learning goal and did not include any way to measure student success.

- A slight majority of teachers effectively check for student understanding (8 out of 15 classrooms observed). Most commonly, teachers engage students in direct teacher to student discourse about the lesson content. In one notable exception, the teacher structured the lesson such that the students engaged so deeply in the material that they drove the conversation in the class enabling the teacher to assess the content thereof, often using non-verbal cues to prompt the students to delve deeper into their analytical thinking and provide further explanation. In most cases, teachers failed to gauge adequately understanding across the classroom instead favoring only those students who choose to participate actively in the conversation.

- A minority of teachers challenge students with questions and activities that develop depth of understanding and higher-order thinking and problem solving skills (5 out of 15 classrooms observed). Most teachers implement lessons using a direct instruction method limiting opportunities for student discourse about the lesson content. Many teachers rely on a guided note taking approach to pedagogy that focuses students on factual information without providing opportunities to explore open ended problems or challenges. Teachers admonish students to provide a factually accurate response without providing opportunities for them to defend or elaborate on their answers.

- Most teachers maintain a focus on academic achievement in their classrooms where students are mostly engaged in learning activities (11 out of 15 classrooms observed). Most teachers have successfully established trust and a strong rapport with their students. Students respond by staying on task and engaged in learning activities.

Instructional Leadership

ROADS II is again developing strong instructional leadership following the departure of the school's founding principal at the end of last year.

- The school's observation and evaluation protocol identifies four domains for measuring the quality of teachers' planning and implementation of lessons and clearly establishes the school's expectations for performance within each domain. Leaders and teachers examine progress toward process goals during weekly meetings wherein the leaders set high expectations for teacher performance. With some support from the network, the school's leaders conduct frequent observations of teachers and provide regular feedback sufficient to support the development of the teaching staff, but this is not translating into a school that attracts students to attend on a regular basis nor does it sufficiently translate into strong outcomes for students. Measures of teacher performance do not link to student performance outcomes.

- Classroom observation and feedback at ROADS II is not sustained for all teachers: the leaders differentiate the frequency and intensity of feedback based on the teachers' past performance on observations with weaker teachers receiving more frequent and more intensive coaching and directives. Most observation notes contain clear recommendations or steps for teacher improvement but this practice is not consistent across all observations. In some cases, observation results are not as clear and contain suggestions for teachers to consider how to improve certain aspects of their practice without clear recommendations on how to do so or a clear timeline.

- Teachers meet in daily planning periods as content teams to discuss a myriad of topics including making adjustments to pacing, scope and sequence, developing outcomes and the assessment thereof, lesson planning and the quality of related resource materials. Last year, teachers met during weekly half-day sessions to complete the same tasks. The school adjusted its schedule to allow more time for deeper professional learning sessions but teachers report that time for completing their daily tasks is short compared to the school's past practice of setting aside a half day each week.

- The school meets monthly for either a full day or half-day professional learning session. The complexity of content determines the duration of the session. The school also convenes for professional learning for two weeks during the summer. The school's leaders and network staff members select topics based on the results of classroom observations and observations of counselors and culture staff.

- The school continues to use an evaluation rubric that clearly defines the domains and expected level of performance for each teacher. Student academic outcomes do not inform teacher evaluation. Leaders state that the data are unreliable for purposes of teacher evaluation given the school's 47 percent average daily student attendance rate and varying ability levels. The Institute notes that this attendance rate falls far short of the school's Accountability Plan target. Leaders continue to consider ways to gauge teacher success that that they can attribute solely to effective teaching.

At-Risk Students

As the school serves an over-age, under-credited population, it considers all ROADS II students at risk of academic failure. The school meets the educational needs of some at-risk students. However, given the population of students the school promised to successfully support in its original charter design, ROADS II is failing to meet the needs of the very students it promised to serve when it applied for its charter.

- The special education program consists of a special education coordinator, 10 teachers responsible for providing special education services (some are special education certified

and some have met the criteria for classification as highly qualified; not all are classified as solely special education teachers), and two reading specialists. An English as a Second Language ("ESL") teacher serves the school's 27 English language learners ("ELLs"). The size of the at-risk program staff is adequate to support the needs of the school's large at-risk population.

- In order to meet the mandates of the 103 students with Individualized Education Programs ("IEPs"), the school provides integrated co-teaching ("ICT") services to many of its students. ROADS II also offers special education teacher support services ("SETSS") and 15:1 classrooms settings to support student needs. ELLs receive push-in services by the ESL teacher and attend a stand-alone class during the school day depending on their classification.

- Due to the various and significant social-emotional needs across the student population, the non-academic student support staff has grown to include 11 staff members. Aside from the principal, the director of student support and clinical support coordinator oversee three social workers, two attendance outreach coordinators, a dean of culture, a dean of students, two culture coordinators and a college and career counselor. Students also have access to an external counseling center located in the schools co-located building. The amount of social-emotional staff the school employs is appropriate to meet the needs of students with mandated counseling requirements and students across the school with the highest need. However, because of the vast needs of the entire student population, some staff members identify the need for additional supports throughout the school community.

- Despite providing appropriate settings to the majority of students with IEPs mandating academic supports, five percent of students have one academic course where they are not receiving appropriate, mandated services at the time of the visit. While network leaders report this is due to staff constraints (one staff member did not pass the exam to be classified as highly qualified and the school has had to adjust the placement of other special education teachers in order to be in compliance), they are aware of the seriousness of the issue and are working to ensure students receive mandated services in all classes.

- This year, the network added a special education compliance coordinator role to ensure all eligible students receive mandated services. While the Institute finds this important for the students this year, the Institute also notes that in prior years the school has not sufficiently addressed the needs of all at-risk students.

- At-risk program staff and general education teachers coordinate formally and informally within departments on a weekly basis to plan instruction and discuss student progress toward meeting academic goals. During and outside of these meetings, staff members monitor the progress of at-risk students by reviewing data including SCANTRON assessments, final exams, Regents exams and attendance records, which is sufficient in

determining student growth. The special education coordinator also meets with department teams biweekly and holds separate meetings for co-teachers every other week. These meetings adequately provide staff with professional development opportunities, opportunities to review best practices and appropriate amounts of time to discuss the academic progress of students.

Organizational Capacity

ROADS II continues to experience teacher and staff turnover, which hampers the effective delivery of the school's academic, disciplinary, and social-emotional support programs. The school organization does not evidence the promising design presented in its original charter application.

- The school's principal oversees all three arms of the school's administrative structure: its academic program, its social emotional supports, and its operations. Three directors more closely monitor and implement the school's policies and procedures within each administrative arm. The structure in place allows the school to implement and carry out academic and social emotional supports that differ from the original design of the school. The Institute has not been able to determine the effectiveness of the school's social emotional support program because the school began to collect these data systematically during the fourth year of the charter term. The network supports the school's operations, talent recruitment, and professional learning program and provides coaching to seven teachers. The organizational structure is clear with distinct roles and lines of accountability.

- The school clearly documents and shares its progressive discipline policy with the entire school community including teachers, students and caregivers although some teachers struggle to consistently implement the policies and procedures with fidelity. Non-negotiable student behaviors like sleeping and cursing go unaddressed in some classrooms. In others, teachers do not tolerate even low-level misbehaviors. The school's administration collects deep data about discipline infraction and other student behavior. The dean of culture analyzes those data and uses the result to develop programs, incentives and consequences designed to mitigate problem behaviors despite evidence that teachers miscode some data elements. Regardless of this thoughtful approach, the school's low attendance rate and high number of suspensions point to the lack of effectiveness of these structures in their implementation.

- This year, 13 of 23 teachers, or about 57 percent, chose not to return to ROADS II. Notwithstanding support from the network, the school struggles to recruit and retain highly qualified special education and content specialty teachers. Teachers new to the school this year report that the interview committee makes clear the special mission of the school and candidates have an opportunity to meet current students during demonstration lessons that are part of the interview process.

- At the time of the evaluation visit, ROADS II enrolled 215 students though its chartered enrollment is higher at 250 students. Far fewer than 215 students attend school on a daily basis. The school's average daily attendance rate at the time of the visit was just 47 percent, which falls far short of ROADS II's Accountability Plan target of 75 percent of students attending 75 percent of the time.

- ROADS II continues to revise and innovate existing programs to address the unique needs of its students. The Bridge program, for instance, is a blended learning program that provides roughly 30 students with extra flexibility around where and when they can complete their coursework and accumulate credits. In some cases, students are able to leverage the program to complete coursework not currently scheduled at ROADS II to accelerate their progress towards graduation. In comparison to the rest of the school's enrollment, attendance rates of students enrolled in the Bridge program are lower but the average rate of credit attainment is higher, indicating early success in the program.

Board Oversight

With only one founding trustee still active, the ROADS II board has not developed the original vision articulated in its charter application into a strong school organization. The current board possesses deep experience related to all aspects of the programming at the school, but its oversight has not resulted in a high quality and effective educational program.

- Leadership turnover at both the board and network level has been significant. Only one founding trustee remains on the board; seven are no longer active. Current trustees apply a wealth of relevant skills to their governance of ROADS II but have been unable to steer the school on a clear path from the promises in the original charter design to the realities of a robust school program. With three different chief executive officers and other staff transitions during the charter term, the network has also not provided stability and has not put in place sufficient structures and daily routines that would enable the school to meet its academic and social emotional learning goals.

- Board members possess impressive experience in law, finance, K-12 education, and supporting young people who have experienced life trauma. Despite this knowledge and experience, the board is still adjusting its monitoring of the fiscal, social-emotional, and academic program at ROADS II. Recently, the board engaged a consulting firm to support the school's financial management. The board also asked for revisions to its dashboard to include deeper information about the school's academic progress and leading indicators of success. The changes have resulted in greater fiscal stability and improved information for decision-making.

- The board identifies stabilizing the school's academic and operational leadership and more closely monitoring student progress as its priorities for this year. The board has taken

strategic steps to address these during 2015-16, tasking the network and school leaders to implement additional measures of student literacy levels to more closely monitor academic progress and student attendance. As more students move toward graduation, the board prioritizes monitoring and ensuring students' engagement in meaningful post-secondary activities.

Appendix A
School Overview

APPENDIX A: SCHOOL OVERVIEW

Mission Statement

Our mission is to promote academic success by ensuring that disconnected youth-overage and under-credited students aged 15-17 in New York City-graduate from high school prepared to excel in their academic, professional and personal lives. Our "second-chance" high schools offer customized and rigorous curricula, socio-emotional support and work-based experiences to foster student engagement and accelerate student progress.

Board of Trustees[3]

Board Member Name	Position	Board Member Name	Position
Jeffrey Li	Chair	Martin Kurzweil	Vice Chair
Ashley Dills	Treasurer	Jane Wilson	Secretary
Carrie Braddock	Trustee	Gwendolyn Baker	Trustee
Jane Mitchell	Trustee	Stacy Gibbons	Trustee
Mark Gallogly	Trustee		

School Characteristics

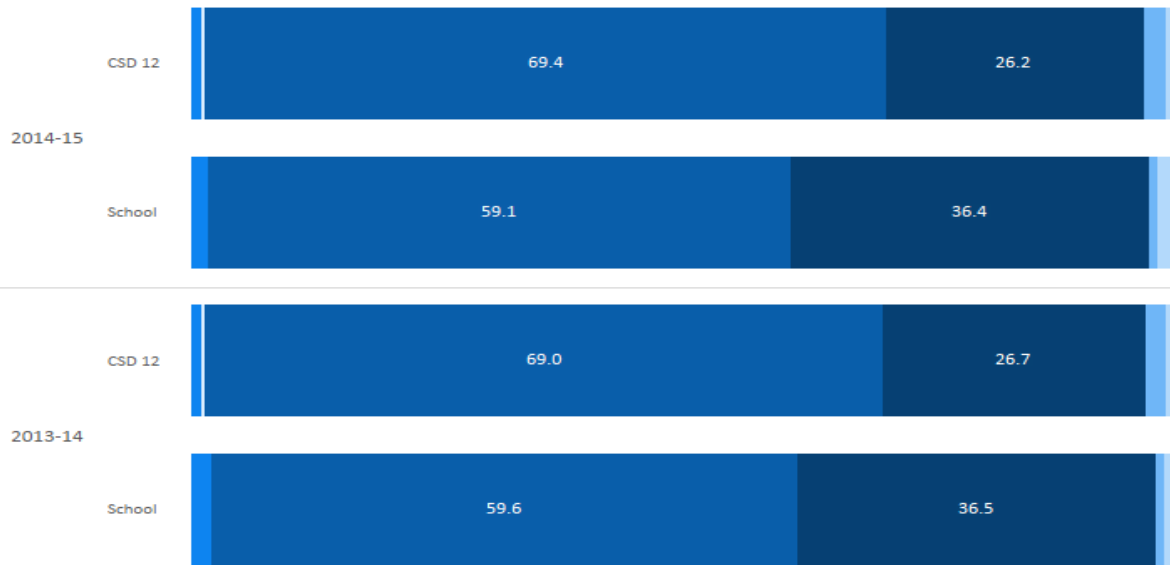| School Year	Chartered Enrollment	Actual Enrollment[4]	Proposed Grades	Actual Grades
2012-13	150	143	9	9
2013-14	200	279	9-10	9-10
2014-15	200	232	9-11	9-11
2015-16	250	215	9-12	9-12

Key Design Elements

- Competency-based assessment and progression to college and career readiness;
- Emphasis on Literacy and Numeracy;
- Customization and integration of technology;
- Job readiness skills;
- Socio-emotional supports;
- Extended time; and,
- Human capital strategy.

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[3] Source: The Institute's board records at the time of the visit.
[4] Source: Institute's Official Enrollment Binder. (Figures may differ slightly from New York State Report Cards, depending on date of data collection.)
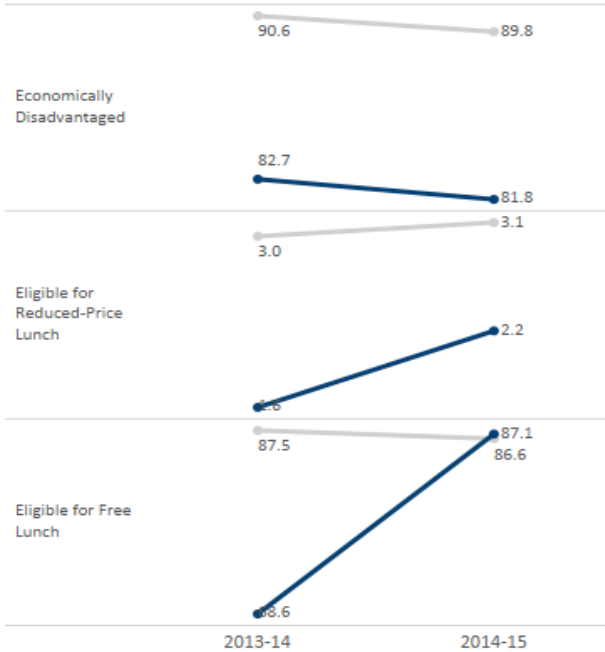
SUNY Charter Schools Institute | 41 State Street, Suite 700 | Albany, New York

Student Demographics: Race/Ethnicity

2014-15

CSD 12	69.4	26.2
School	59.1	36.4

2013-14

CSD 12	69.0	26.7
School	59.6	36.5

Race/Ethnicity Color Legend

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

Student Demographics: Free/Reduced Lunch

Economically Disadvantaged
- 90.6 → 89.8
- 82.7 → 81.8

Eligible for Reduced-Price Lunch
- 3.0 → 3.1
- (2.6) → 2.2

Eligible for Free Lunch
- 87.5 → 87.1
- (?8.6) → 86.6

Student Demographics: Special Populations

English Language Learners
- 18.7 → 19.2
- 12.2 → 9.8

Students with Disabilities
- 38.4 → 41.3
- 21.6 → 22.4

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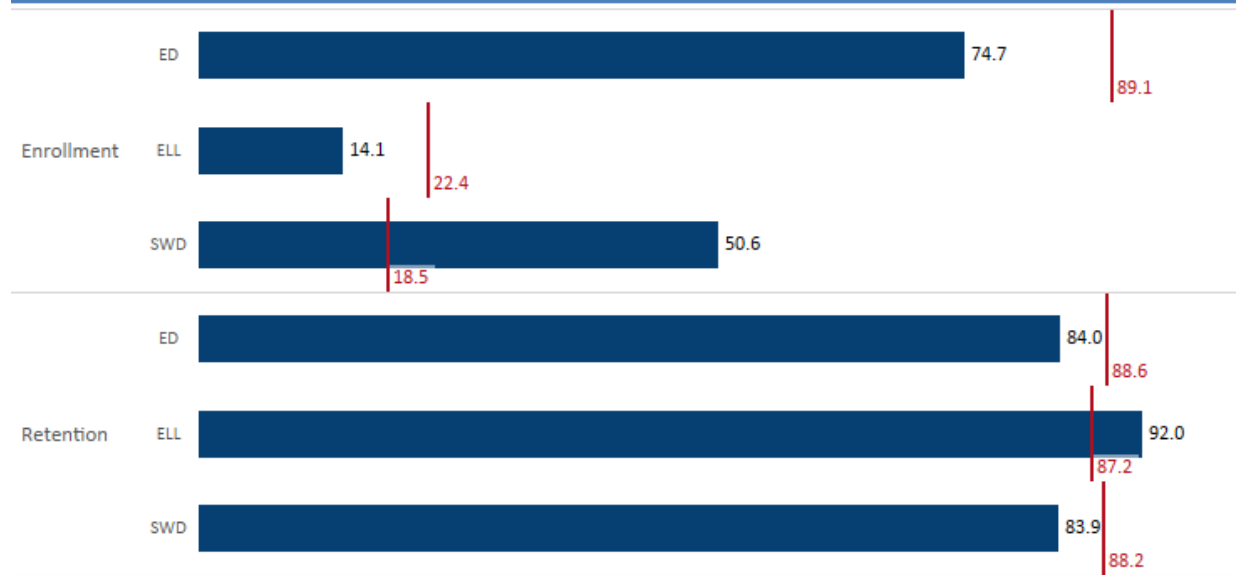
The charts show trends in enrollment in the **school** and the district for each subgroup over the charter term.

Enrollment and Retention Targets

Enrollment

ED — 74.7 | target 89.1

ELL — 14.1 | target 22.4

SWD — 50.6 | target 18.5

Retention

ED — 84.0 | target 88.6

ELL — 92.0 | target 87.2

SWD — 83.9 | target 88.2

The chart illustrates the school's **current enrollment and retention percentages** against the **enrollment and retention targets**. As required by Education Law § 2851(4)(e), a school must include in its renewal application information regarding the efforts it has, and will, put in place to meet or exceed SUNY's enrollment and retention targets for students with disabilities, ELL, and FRPL students. This analysis is based on the most recently available data provided by the school.

Persistence in Enrollment

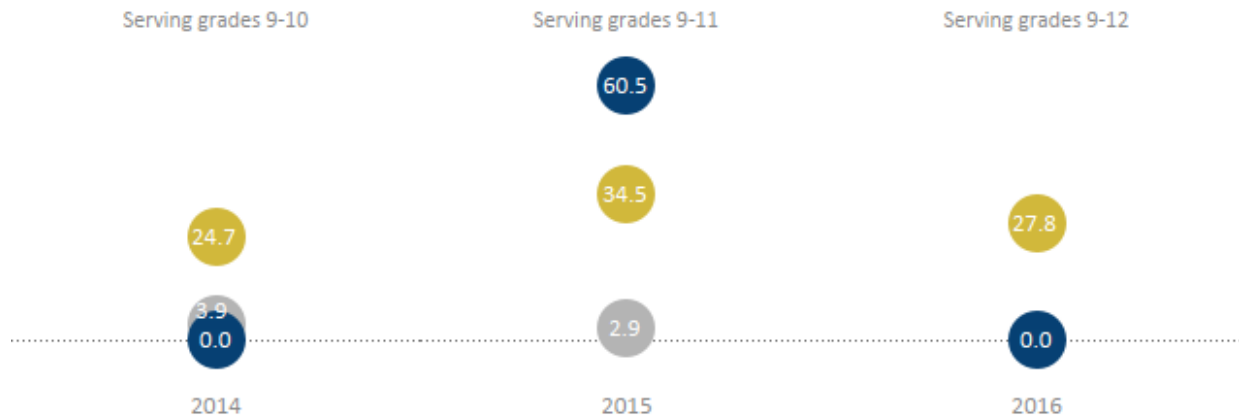2015-16 — 82.2

2014-15 — 70.8

2013-14 — 60.8

Persistence in enrollment illustrates the percentage of students not scheduled to age out of the school who re-enroll from the previous year. The Institute derived the statistical information on enrollment persistence from its database. No comparative data from NYCDOE or NYSED is available to the Institute to provide either district wide or by CSD context. As such, the information presented is for information purposes but does not allow for comparative analysis.

School Discipline

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

Serving grades 9-10	Serving grades 9-11	Serving grades 9-12
	60.5	
	34.5	27.8
24.7		
3.9 / 0.0	2.9	0.0
2014	2015	2016

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

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

2014	2015	2016
1	3	5

School Leaders

School Year(s)	Name(s) and Title(s)
2012-13 to 2014-15	Seth Litt, Principal
2015-16	Chester Asher, Principal

School Visit History

School Year	Visit Type	Date
2012-13	First Year	April 22, 2013
2014-15	Evaluation	June 11, 2015

2015-16	Pre-Renewal	April 6-7, 2016

Conduct of the Visit

Date(s) of Visit	Evaluation Team Member	Title
April 6-7, 2016	Aaron Campbell	Senior Analyst
	Jeff Wasbes	Executive Deputy Director of Accountability

Charter Cycle Context

Charter Term	4th Year of Five-Year Charter Term
Accountability Period[5]	4th Year of Four-Year Accountability Period
Anticipated Renewal Visit	Fall 2016

Charter Cycle Context

Charter Term	Accountability Period	Anticipated Renewal Visit
4th Year of Five-Year Charter Term	4th Year of Four-Year Accountability Period[6]	Fall 2016

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[5] 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.

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

Appendix B

SUNY Renewal Benchmarks

State University of New York Charter Renewal Benchmarks

Version 5.0, May 2012

Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

State University of New York Charter Renewal Benchmarks

	Renewal Question 1 Is the School an Academic Success?
Evidence Category	**SUNY Renewal Benchmarks**
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 1A **Academic Accountability Plan Goals**	**Over the Accountability Period, the school has met or come close to meeting its academic Accountability Plan goals.** The Institute determines the extent to which the school has met the Accountability Plan goals in the following areas: • English language arts; • mathematics; • science; • social studies (high school only); • NCLB; • high school graduation and college preparation (if applicable); and • optional academic goals included by the school.
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 1B **Use of Assessment Data**	**The school has an assessment system that improves instructional effectiveness and student learning.** The following elements are generally present: • the school regularly administers valid and reliable assessments aligned to the school's curriculum and state performance standards; • the school has a valid and reliable process for scoring and analyzing assessments; • the school makes assessment data accessible to teachers, school leaders and board members; • teachers use assessment results to meet students' needs by adjusting classroom instruction, grouping students and/or identifying students for special intervention; • school leaders use assessment results to evaluate teacher effectiveness and to develop professional development and coaching strategies; and • the school regularly communicates to parents/guardians about their students' progress and growth.

	Renewal Question 1 **Is the School an Academic Success?**
Evidence Category	**SUNY Renewal Benchmarks**
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 1C **Curriculum**	**The school's curriculum supports teachers in their instructional planning.** The following elements are generally present: • the school has a curriculum framework with student performance expectations that provides a fixed, underlying structure, aligned to state standards and across grades; • in addition to the framework, the school has supporting tools (i.e., curriculum maps or scope and sequence documents) that provide a bridge between the curriculum framework and lesson plans; • teachers know what to teach and when to teach it based on these documents; • the school has a process for selecting, developing and reviewing its curriculum documents and its resources for delivering the curriculum; and • teachers plan purposeful and focused lessons.
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 1D **Pedagogy**	**High quality instruction is evident throughout the school.** The following elements are generally present. • teachers deliver purposeful lessons with clear objectives aligned to the school's curriculum; • teachers regularly and effectively use techniques to check for student understanding; • teachers include opportunities in their lessons to challenge students with questions and activities that develop depth of understanding and higher-order thinking and problem solving skills; • teachers maximize learning time (e.g., appropriate pacing, on-task student behavior, clear lesson focus and clear directions to students); transitions are efficient; and • teachers have effective classroom management techniques and routines that create a consistent focus on academic achievement.
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 1E **Instructional Leadership**	**The school has strong instructional leadership.** The following elements are generally present: • the school's leadership establishes an environment of high expectations for teacher performance (in content knowledge and

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

	Renewal Question 1 Is the School an Academic Success?
Evidence Category	**SUNY Renewal Benchmarks**
	• the school provides adequate training and professional development to identify at-risk students and to help teachers meet students' needs; and • the school provides opportunities for coordination between classroom teachers and at-risk program staff including the school nurse, if applicable.

	Renewal Question 2 Is the School an Effective, Viable Organization?
Evidence Category	**SUNY Renewal Benchmarks**
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 2A **Mission & Key Design Elements**	**The school is faithful to its mission and has implemented the key design elements included in its charter.** The following elements are generally present: • the school faithfully follows its mission; and • the school has implemented its key design elements.
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 2B **Parents & Students**	**Parents/guardians and students are satisfied with the school.** The following elements are generally present: • the school regularly communicates each child's academic performance results to families; • families are satisfied with the school; and • parents keep their children enrolled year-to-year.
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 2C **Organizational Capacity**	**The school organization effectively supports the delivery of the educational program.** The following elements are generally present: • the school has established an administrative structure with staff, operational systems, policies and procedures that allow the school to carry out its academic program; • the organizational structure establishes distinct lines of accountability with clearly defined roles and responsibilities; • the school has a clear student discipline system in place at the administrative level that is consistently applied; • the school retains quality staff; • the school has allocated sufficient resources to support the achievement of goals; • the school maintains adequate student enrollment; • the school has procedures in place to monitor its progress toward meeting enrollment and retention targets for special education students, ELLs and students who qualify for free and reduced price lunch, and adjusts its recruitment efforts accordingly; and • the school regularly monitors and evaluates the school's programs and makes changes if necessary.

	Renewal Question 2 Is the School an Effective, Viable Organization?
Evidence Category	**SUNY Renewal Benchmarks**
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 2D **Board Oversight**	**The school board works effectively to achieve the school's Accountability Plan goals.** The following elements are generally present: • board members possess adequate skills and have put in place structures and procedures with which to govern the school and oversee management of day-to-day operations in order to ensure the school's future as an academically successful, financially healthy and legally compliant organization; • the board requests and receives sufficient information to provide rigorous oversight of the school's program and finances; • it establishes clear priorities, objectives and long-range goals, (including Accountability Plan, fiscal, facilities and fundraising), and has in place benchmarks for tracking progress as well as a process for their regular review and revision; • the board successfully recruits, hires and retains key personnel, and provides them with sufficient resources to function effectively; • the board regularly evaluates its own performance and that of the school leaders and the management company (if applicable), holding them accountable for student achievement; and • the board effectively communicates with the school community including school leadership, staff, parents/guardians and students.
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 2E **Governance**	**The board implements, maintains and abides by appropriate policies, systems and processes.** The following elements are generally present: • the board effectively communicates with its partner or management organizations as well as key contractors such as back-office service providers and ensures that it receives value in exchange for contracts and relationships it enters into and effectively monitors such relationships; • the board takes effective action when there are organizational, leadership, management, facilities or fiscal deficiencies; or where the management or partner organization fails to meet

Renewal Question 2 Is the School an Effective, Viable Organization?	
Evidence Category	**SUNY Renewal Benchmarks**
	expectations; to correct those deficiencies and puts in place benchmarks for determining if the partner organization corrects them in a timely fashion; • the board regularly reviews and updates board and school policies as needed and has in place an orientation process for new members; • the board effectively recruits and selects new members in order to maintain adequate skill sets and expertise for effective governance and structural continuity; • the board implements a comprehensive and strict conflict of interest policy (and/or code of ethics)—consistent with that set forth in the charter and with the General Municipal Law—and consistently abides by them throughout the term of the charter; • the board generally avoids conflicts of interest; where not possible, the board manages those conflicts in a clear and transparent manner; • the board implements a process for dealing with complaints consistent with that set forth in the charter, makes the complaint policy clear to all stakeholders, and follows the policy including acting on complaints in a timely fashion; • the board abides by its by-laws including, but not limited to, provisions regarding trustee election and the removal and filling of vacancies; and • the board holds all meetings in accordance with the Open Meetings Law and records minutes for all meetings including executive sessions and, as appropriate, committee meetings.
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 2F **Legal Requirements**	**The school substantially complies with applicable laws, rules and regulations and the provisions of its charter.** The following elements are generally present: • the school compiles a record of substantial compliance with the terms of its charter and applicable state and federal laws, rules and regulations including, but not limited to, submitting items to the Institute in a timely manner, and meeting teacher certification (including NCLB highly qualified status) and background check requirements, FOIL and Open Meetings Law;

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

	Renewal Question 3 Is the School Fiscally Sound?
Evidence Category	**SUNY Renewal Benchmarks**
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 3A **Budgeting and Long Range Planning**	**The school operates pursuant to a long-range financial plan in which it creates realistic budgets that it monitors and adjusts when appropriate.** The following elements are generally present: • the school has clear budgetary objectives and budget preparation procedures; • board members, school management and staff contribute to the budget process, as appropriate; • the school frequently compares its long-range fiscal plan to actual progress and adjusts it to meet changing conditions; • the school routinely analyzes budget variances; the board addresses material variances and makes necessary revisions; and • actual expenses are equal to, or less than, actual revenue with no material exceptions.
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 3B **Internal Controls**	**The school maintains appropriate internal controls and procedures.** The following elements are generally present: • the school follows a set of comprehensive written fiscal policies and procedures; • the school accurately records and appropriately documents transactions in accordance with management's direction, laws, regulations, grants and contracts; • the school safeguards its assets; • the school identifies/analyzes risks and takes mitigating actions; • the school has controls in place to ensure that management decisions are properly carried out and monitors and assesses controls to ensure their adequacy; • the school's trustees and employees adhere to a code of ethics; • the school ensures duties are appropriately segregated, or institutes compensating controls; • the school ensures that employees performing financial functions are appropriately qualified and adequately trained; • the school has systems in place to provide the appropriate information needed by staff and the board to make sound financial decisions and to fulfill compliance requirements;

	Renewal Question 3 Is the School Fiscally Sound?
Evidence Category	**SUNY Renewal Benchmarks**
	• a staff member of the school reviews grant agreements and restrictive gifts and monitors compliance with all stated conditions; • the school prepares payroll according to appropriate state and federal regulations and school policy; • the school ensures that employees, trustees and volunteers who handle cash and investments are bonded to help assure the safeguarding of assets; and • the school takes corrective action in a timely manner to address any internal control or compliance deficiencies identified by its external auditor, the Institute, and/or the State Education Department or the Comptroller, if needed.
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 3C **Financial Reporting**	**The school has complied with financial reporting requirements by providing the SUNY Trustees and the State Education Department with required financial reports that are on time, complete and follow generally accepted accounting principles.** The following reports have generally been filed in a timely, accurate and complete manner: • annual financial statement audit reports including federal Single Audit report, if applicable; • annual budgets and cash flow statements; • un-audited quarterly reports of income, expenses, and enrollment; • bi-monthly enrollment reports to the district and, if applicable, to the State Education Department including proper documentation regarding the level of special education services provided to students; and • grant expenditure reports.
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 3D **Financial Condition**	**The school maintains adequate financial resources to ensure stable operations. Critical financial needs of the school are not dependent on variable income (grants, donations and fundraising).** The following elements are generally present: • the school maintains sufficient cash on hand to pay current bills and those that are due shortly;

	Renewal Question 3 **Is the School Fiscally Sound?**
Evidence Category	**SUNY Renewal Benchmarks**
	- the school maintains adequate liquid reserves to fund expenses in the event of income loss (generally three months); - the school prepares and monitors cash flow projections; - If the school includes philanthropy in its budget, it monitors progress toward its development goals on a periodic basis; - If necessary, the school pursues district state aid intercepts with the state education department to ensure adequate per pupil funding; and - the school accumulates unrestricted net assets that are equal to or exceed two percent of the school's operating budget for the upcoming year.

	Renewal Question 4 **If the School's Charter is Renewed, What are its Plans for the Term of the Next Charter Period, and are they Reasonable, Feasible and Achievable?**
Evidence Category	**SUNY Renewal Benchmarks**
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 4A **Plans for the School's Structure**	**Key structural elements of the school, as defined in the exhibits of the Application for Charter Renewal, are reasonable, feasible and achievable.** Based on elements present in the Application for Charter Renewal: • the school is likely to fulfill its mission in the next charter period; • the school has an enrollment plan that can support the school program; • the school calendar and daily schedules clearly provide sufficient instructional time to meet all legal requirements, allow the school to meet its proposed Accountability Plan goals and abide by its proposed budget; • key design elements are consistent with the mission statement and are feasible given the school's budget and staffing; • a curriculum framework for added grades aligns with the state's performance standards; and • plans in the other required Exhibits indicate that the school's structure is likely to support the educational program.
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 4B **Plans for the Educational Program**	**The school's plans for implementing the educational program allow it to meet its Accountability Plan goals.** Based on elements present in the Application for Charter Renewal: • for those grades served during the last charter period, the school has plans for sustaining and (where possible) improving upon the student outcomes it has compiled during the last charter period including any adjustments or additions to the school's educational program; • for a school that is seeking to add grades, the school is likely to meet its Accountability Plan goals and the SUNY Renewal Benchmarks at the new grade levels; and • where the school will provide secondary school instruction, it has presented a set of requirements for graduation that students are likely to meet and that are consistent with the graduation standards set by the Board of Regents.

	Renewal Question 4 **If the School's Charter is Renewed, What are its Plans for the Term of the Next Charter Period, and are they Reasonable, Feasible and Achievable?**
Evidence Category	**SUNY Renewal Benchmarks**
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 4C **Plans for Board Oversight and Governance**	**The school provides a reasonable, feasible and achievable plan for board oversight and governance.** Based on elements present in the Application for Charter Renewal: • school trustees are likely to possess a range of experience, skills, and abilities sufficient to oversee the academic, organizational and fiscal performance of the school; • plans by the school board to orient new trustees to their roles and responsibilities, and, if appropriate, to participate in ongoing board training are likely to sustain the board's ability to carry out its responsibilities; • if the school plans to change an association with a partner or management organization in the term of a future charter, it has provided a clear rationale for the disassociation and an outline indicating how it will manage the functions previously associated with that partnering organization; and • if the school is either moving from self-management to a management structure or vice-versa, or is changing its charter management organization/educational service provider, its plans indicate that it will be managed in an effective, sound and viable manner including appropriate oversight of the academic and fiscal performance of the school or the management organization.

SUNY Renewal Benchmark 4D **Fiscal & Facility Plans**	**The school provides a reasonable, feasible and achievable fiscal plan including plans for an adequate facility.** Based on the elements present in the Application for Charter Renewal: • the school's budgets adequately support staffing, enrollment and facility projections; • fiscal plans are based on the sound use of financial resources to support academic program needs; • fiscal plans are clear, accurate, complete and based on reasonable assumptions; • information on enrollment demand provides clear evidence for the reasonableness of projected enrollment; and • facility plans are likely to meet educational program needs.