



# Renewal Recommendation Report Albany Leadership Charter High School for Girls

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# INTRODUCTION

This report is the primary means by which the SUNY Charter Schools Institute (the “Institute”) transmits to the State University of New York Board of Trustees (the “SUNY Trustees”) its findings and recommendations regarding a school’s Application for Charter Renewal, and more broadly, details the merits of a school’s case for renewal. The Institute has created and issued this report pursuant to the *Policies for the Renewal of Not-For-Profit Charter School Education Corporations and Charter Schools Authorized by the Board of Trustees of the State University of New York* (the “SUNY Renewal Policies”) (revised September 4, 2013 and available at:

<http://www.newyorkcharters.org/wp-content/uploads/SUNY-Renewal-Policies.pdf>).

Additional information about the SUNY renewal process and an overview of the requirements for renewal under the New York Charter Schools Act of 1998 (as amended, the “Act”) are available on the Institute’s website at: <http://www.newyorkcharters.org/operate/existing-schools/renewal/>.

# SCHOOL BACKGROUND AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## ALBANY LEADERSHIP CHARTER HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

### BACKGROUND

Since the school's inception in 2010, Albany Leadership Charter High School for Girls ("ALH") has prided itself on being the first and only public, female only charter high school in the state of New York. ALH currently serves 359 students in grades 9-12. The school aims to maximize the benefits of single gender education for its students and emphasizes character education through service learning activities as well as its school-wide core C.L.E.A.R. values: College and career readiness; Leadership; Empowerment; Accountability; and, Resolve and Resiliency. The school offers a college preparatory curriculum including Scholastic Aptitude Test ("SAT") preparation courses and a college readiness program that enables students to visit college campuses, complete applications and apply for various sources of financial aid. The school's mission states:

The mission of the Albany Leadership Charter High School for Girls is to prepare young women to graduate from high school with the academic and leadership skills necessary to succeed in college and the career of their choosing.

Since its opening, the school has partnered with the Brighter Choice Foundation, Inc. (the "Brighter Choice Foundation"), now also doing business as the Albany Charter School Network ("ACSN"), which provides instructional, academic and operational supports and services to ALH as well as five other SUNY authorized schools and two schools authorized by the New York State Board of Regents (the "Board of Regents"). ALH pays ACSN a fee of 1-2% of per pupil income for its supports and services through a compact agreement similar to the other SUNY authorized schools.

ALH operates in a new private facility at 19 Hackett Boulevard, Albany, within the Albany City School District (the "district").

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

With just two graduation cohorts during its initial charter term, ALH has compiled a limited record of educational achievement in meeting its academic Accountability Plan goals. The school's academic program, however, is of sufficient strength that it is likely to result in ALH being able to meet or come close to meeting those goals with the additional time that renewal would permit. Further, the school has a governing board and organizational structures in place that have the capacity to operate the school in an educationally and fiscally sound fashion. For these reasons, the Institute recommends the SUNY Trustees approve the school's Application for Charter Renewal for a short term of three years.

# RENEWAL RECOMMENDATION

## RECOMMENDATION:      SHORT-TERM RENEWAL

The Institute recommends that the SUNY Trustees approve the Application for Charter Renewal of Albany Leadership Charter High School for Girls and renew its charter for a period of three years with authority to provide instruction to students in 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade in such configuration as set forth in its Application for Charter Renewal, with a projected total enrollment of 365 students.

To earn a Short-Term Renewal, a school must either:

- (a) have compiled a mixed or limited record of educational achievement in meeting its academic Accountability Plan goals, but have in place and in operation at the time of the renewal inspection visit (i) an academic program of sufficient strength and effectiveness, as assessed using the Qualitative Education Benchmarks,<sup>1</sup> which will likely result in the school's being able to meet or come close to meeting those goals with the additional time that renewal would permit, and (ii) a governing board and organizational structures at both the charter school and its education corporation that have demonstrated the capacity to meet the school's academic Accountability Plan goals and to operate the school in an educationally and fiscally sound fashion; or
- (b) have compiled an overall record of meeting its academic Accountability Plan goals but, at the time of the renewal inspection visit, have in place an educational program that, as assessed using the Qualitative Education Benchmarks, is inadequate in multiple and material respects.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Qualitative Education Benchmarks are a subset of the *State University of New York Charter Renewal Benchmarks* (version 5.0, the "SUNY Renewal Benchmarks"), available at: <http://www.newyorkcharters.org/wp-content/uploads/SUNY-Renewal-Benchmarks.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> SUNY Renewal Policies, pages 12-13.

# RENEWAL RECOMMENDATION

## REQUIRED FINDINGS

In addition to making a recommendation based on a determination of whether the school has met the SUNY Trustees' specific renewal criteria, the Institute makes the following findings required by the Act:

- The school, as described in the Application for Charter Renewal meets the requirements of the Act and all other applicable laws, rules and regulations;
- The education corporation can demonstrate the ability to operate the school in an educationally and fiscally sound manner in the next charter term; and,
- Given the programs it will offer, its structure and its purpose, approving the school to operate for another three years is likely to improve student learning and achievement and materially further the purposes of the Act.<sup>3</sup>

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, English language learners ("ELLs"), and students who are eligible applicants for the federal Free and Reduced Price Lunch ("FRPL") program. SUNY<sup>4</sup> and the Board of Regents finalized the methodology for setting targets in October 2012, and the Institute communicated specific targets for each school in July 2013. In accordance with the statute, the Institute, acting on behalf of the SUNY Trustees, considered the school's plans for meeting its enrollment and retention targets prior to recommending the renewal application for approval.

Given the date the school was originally chartered, it does not have statutory targets. However, in accordance with the Act, the Institute, acting on behalf of the SUNY Trustees, considered the school's plans for meeting its future enrollment and retention targets during the next charter term prior to recommending the renewal application for approval. The Institute found the school's plans to meet or exceed the targets satisfactory. Its plans for the education of students with disabilities, ELLs and FRPL students are similarly satisfactory. The Institute also found the school is making good faith efforts to attract and retain such students in accordance with the Act.

## CONSIDERATION OF SCHOOL DISTRICT COMMENTS

In accordance with the Act, the Institute notified the district in which the charter school is located regarding the school's Application for Charter Renewal. The Albany City School District superintendent provided comments in opposition to the renewal of ALH by letter dated January 6, 2015, attached as an Appendix to this report. The Institute reviewed the letter and did not find its argument persuasive. As a result, the Institute did not change its Short-Term Renewal recommendation.

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<sup>3</sup> See New York Education Law § 2852(2).

<sup>4</sup> SUNY Trustees' Charter Schools Committee resolution dated October 2, 2012.

# RENEWAL RECOMMENDATION

## REPORT FORMAT

The Institute makes the foregoing renewal recommendation based on the school's Application for Charter Renewal, evaluation visits conducted and information gathered during the charter term and a renewal evaluation visit conducted near the end of the current charter term. Additionally, the Institute has reviewed the strength and fiscal health of the not for profit education corporation with the authority to operate the school. Most importantly, the Institute analyzes the school's record of academic performance and the extent to which it has met its academic Accountability Plan goals. This renewal recommendation report compiles the evidence below using the SUNY Renewal Benchmarks, which specify in detail what a successful school should be able to demonstrate at the time of the renewal review. The Institute uses the four interconnected renewal questions below for framing benchmark statements to determine if a school has made an adequate case for renewal.

1. Is the school an academic success?
2. Is the school an effective, viable organization?
3. Is the school fiscally sound?
4. If the SUNY Trustees renew the education corporation's authority to operate the school, are its plans for the school reasonable, feasible and achievable?

The report's Appendix provides a School Overview, copies of any school district comments on the Application for Charter Renewal, the SUNY Fiscal Dashboard information for the school, and, if applicable, its education corporation and additional evidence on student achievement contained in the School Performance Summaries.



# RENEWAL BENCHMARK CONCLUSIONS

## IS THE SCHOOL AN ACADEMIC SUCCESS?

ALH is becoming an academic success based on a mixed and limited record of meeting its Accountability Plan goals. At the time of the renewal review, the academic program in place at ALH was of sufficient strength and effectiveness for the Institute to find it likely the school is developing a strong leadership structure, systems, and procedures that, given the additional time that a short term initial renewal allows, is likely to support college and career readiness, and allow the school to meet or come close to meeting its Accountability Plan goals.

**Academic Attainment.** In the two years of the school's four-year Accountability Period<sup>5</sup> in which ALH has had a graduating class and for which complete sets of results are available, the school has compiled a mixed and limited record of meeting its key academic goals. Each year, the school's four year graduation rate exceeded the district's by at least seven percentage points. With a target for this measure of 75 percent of students graduating, ALH graduated 59 percent of students during 2012-13 and 65 percent of students during 2013-14. (Graduation rates for SUNY authorized charter high schools are based on the school's self-reported Graduation Cohort for Accountability as defined in the New York State Education Department's ("NYSED's") SIRS<sup>6</sup> Manual.)

ALH fell short of meeting the benchmarks for most college preparation measures and did not meet its goal during either year that it graduated a high school cohort. The school's performance on the College Board's Preliminary SAT (PSAT) and SAT standardized assessments fell short of meeting the statewide average for young women. During 2012-13, with a benchmark of 75 percent of graduates earning a Regents diploma with advanced designation, 23 percent of ALH's 16 graduates earned the distinction. During 2013-14, eight percent of the school's 43 graduates earned the advanced designation. However, with a 75 percent college matriculation target, 94 percent of graduates during 2012-13 and 70 percent of graduates during 2013-14 matriculated into 2-year or 4-year colleges or universities. It will be important in a future charter term that the school trend upward in graduating students at the level necessary to earn a Regents diploma with advanced designation as the school's mission is to prepare students for college success.

ALH has met its English language arts ("ELA") Regents passing goal during the charter term. During 2012-13, 84 percent of the school's Accountability Cohort<sup>7</sup> scored at or above proficiency on the Regents English assessment exceeding the district's proficiency rate by 18 percentage points. ALH's 86 percent proficiency rate on the Regents English exam during 2013-14 exceeds its benchmark of 75 percent and, based on past performance, will likely exceed the district's proficiency rate.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> 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. For a school in an initial charter term, the Accountability Period covers the first four years the school provides instruction to students.

<sup>6</sup> NYSED's Student Information Repository System. The SIRS manual is available at:

<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/irs/sirs/home.html>.

<sup>7</sup> The Institute bases its Regents exam proficiency rates on NYSED's Accountability Cohort as defined in NYSED's SIRS manual.

<sup>8</sup> District level data for Regents assessments administered during 2013-14 are not yet available.



## RENEWAL BENCHMARK CONCLUSIONS

ALH also met its mathematics goal during the charter term. During 2012-13, the school outperformed the district by 27 percentage points when 90 percent of its Accountability Cohort scored at or above proficiency on a Regents mathematics exam. During 2013-14, with 97 percent of the school's Accountability Cohort scoring at or above proficiency, ALH is likely to exceed the district's Regents mathematics proficiency rate.

With only two years of complete data, ALH has compiled a mixed and limited record of academic success. The school met some key Accountability Plan goals, made progress toward meeting other goals. As such, in analyzing the two years for which complete data are available ALH is establishing a limited record of academic success. Combined with the Institute's analysis of the academic program and leadership in place at the school at the time of renewal, the Institute finds that the additional time that a short-term, three year renewal provides, is likely to meet its Accountability Plan goals.

# RENEWAL BENCHMARK CONCLUSIONS

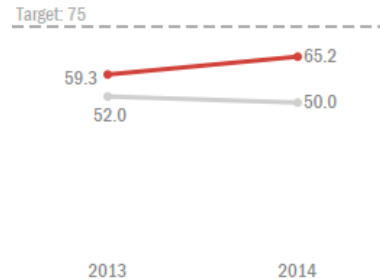
## ALBANY LEADERSHIP CHARTER HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

### DESCRIPTION

### 4-YEAR GRADUATION RATE

#### Comparative Measure: Graduation Rate.

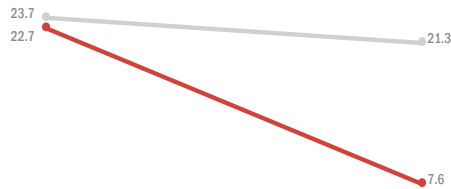
Each year, the percent of **students graduating** after the completion of their fourth year will exceed that of the **local school district**.



### ADVANCED REGENTS DIPLOMA ATTAINMENT

#### College Preparation Measure: Advanced Regents Diploma.

Each year, the percent of **students graduating** with an Advanced Regents diploma will exceed that of the **local school district**.



### COLLEGE MATRICULATION

#### College Attainment Measure: Matriculation into College.

Each year, **75 percent** of **graduating students** will enroll in a college or university.

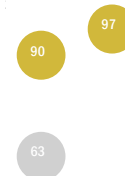
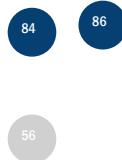


### ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

### MATHEMATICS

#### Comparative Measure: District Comparison.

Each year, the percent of students passing the **Regents English** or a **Regents math** exam will exceed that of students in the **local school district**.



## RENEWAL BENCHMARK CONCLUSIONS

**Instructional Leadership.** ALH has refined its instructional leadership throughout the charter term. This year, the school has redefined the scope of responsibility for each instructional leader and is effectively implementing a sustained and consistent coaching system that supports all teachers in meeting students' needs. The school now holds its teachers to high expectations for teacher performance, but does not yet use school-wide performance data to inform professional development topics.

- In the 5<sup>th</sup> year of operations, the school's leadership is establishing an environment of high expectations for teacher performance. Instructional leaders and teachers can succinctly articulate achievement expectations for their students and personal development goals for individual teachers. The school has established general goals for improved pedagogical practice; however, the evaluation team's renewal visit observations indicated no evidence of teachers meeting stated goals. Instructional leaders have yet to establish consistent observation data collection processes. One instructional leader has explicitly stated individual goals for teachers in an observation tracker while others maintain sporadic notes.
- ALH's instructional leadership supports the development of the largely novice teaching staff: the school has 20 new teachers, 17 of whom have never taught in a classroom before this year. The school's principal, assistant principal and dean of academics divide observation and evaluation responsibilities by content area. The leaders report that their caseloads are not overwhelming and teachers report that they feel supported in the development of their teaching practice. This year, the principal has recast the locus of responsibility for each role and has effectively implemented a system for developing teachers' pedagogical skills.
- Instructional leaders provide coaching and supervision and are in the process of building and strengthening the system so that instructional goals, professional development and teacher evaluation are coherent and aligned with the school's mission of preparing young women for success in college. The three instructional leaders observe each teacher under their respective purview once per week. In contrast to previous years, coaches use a rubric to provide targeted feedback within a day following each observation. Despite identifying school wide goals for pedagogical improvement, during the renewal the visit team found limited evidence that teachers effectively implement these practices consistently and with fidelity.
- The school provides opportunities for teachers to plan curriculum and instruction within and across grade levels at weekly department meetings and during daily common preparation periods when subject area teachers can meet to plan lessons and curriculum units. This year, the ELA and social studies departments purposefully plan instruction across their content areas to establish consistent themes across those curricular areas. Teachers report having sufficient time to collaborate with colleagues and plan instruction.
- ALH provides two weeks of professional development during August that center on establishing school culture, behavioral expectations and curriculum development. Teachers who are new to the school report that these sessions are useful but veteran teachers report having received the material in the past and that the sessions are not differentiated based on professional need. School leaders use observation data and the

## RENEWAL BENCHMARK CONCLUSIONS

results of a teacher survey, but not school wide assessment results, to identify topics for professional development during the school year. Professional development topics during the school year continue to focus on classroom management strategies. ACSN, the school's network, has provided professional development sessions that focus on differentiation of instruction and establishing professional learning communities. Although instructional leaders use observations to ensure the implementation of strategies learned during professional development sessions, they do not close the evaluation loop by analyzing student work products or assessment data to determine the effectiveness of the strategies as implemented.

- Instructional leaders hold teachers accountable for high quality instruction and student achievement through two formal evaluations per year. Teachers are aware of leaders' expectations for pedagogical practice and student performance: the school communicates student performance expectations through classroom signage, and teachers are aware of the expectations quantitatively, and key levers qualitatively. School leaders take action when teachers do not meet performance expectations. Last year, leaders did not rehire three teachers due to low performance; one teacher is on an improvement plan this year.

**Curriculum and Assessment.** With the support of school leaders and ACSN staff, teachers develop curriculum documents that support instructional planning in all core subjects. ALH has an assessment system that monitors the delivery of instructional content and student learning.

- Each content area has a basic curriculum framework outlining standards for student performance and expectations for skills attainment. Teachers and instructional leaders, with ACSN support, use Regents exams data and New York State provided curriculum documents to adjust the school's scope and sequence documents prior to the start of each school year.
- ALH has now developed a systematic approach to reviewing and revising curriculum. Teachers modify Individual lesson plans and pacing with support from instructional leaders during weekly meetings; leader observations and assessment results inform these modifications. The assistant principal provides oversight to the English and social studies departments, the dean of academics provides oversight to the mathematics and science departments, and the principal provides oversight to all other teachers. Additionally, teachers meet by content area once per week to inform planning and address areas of content wide concern.
- ALH has addressed transitions to more rigorous courses by relying on New York State developed content materials and sample assessment questions, which teachers, modify to create curriculum with oversight from school leaders.
- Teachers develop lesson plans using a standardized lesson plan format. Teachers upload lesson plans to the school's electronic curriculum management system by the weekend before lesson implementation. The designated school leader evaluates the lesson plans and provides feedback to teachers with follow-up during weekly observations.
- ALH administers quarterly interval assessments in all core courses as the primary means for monitoring its academic program. In contrast to previous years, the school

## RENEWAL BENCHMARK CONCLUSIONS

has implemented a systematic approach to interval assessment development. Teachers select and modify when necessary assessment questions from pre-existing question banks. Subject level content leaders review the assessments to ensure that validity of the questions and to ensure alignment with the school's curriculum. Additionally, the dean of academics reviews the assessments as a final check of validity and reliability. Although ALH leaders cannot certify the validity and reliability of these assessments, the systematic development process ensures a more robust assessment development and review process than in previous years.

- The school's dean of academics collects all interval data and creates individual teacher data plans that he provides to teachers within a week of test administration. Teachers review the data and meet with subject area leaders to plan modifications to curriculum and instruction. The data plan includes specific follow-up action activities; however, at the time of the visit, reviewers found no evidence of systematic implementation of the action plans.
- The school also administers diagnostic assessments in ELA and mathematics to identify students requiring intervention supports and teacher created unit assessments to evaluate student understanding of content addressed in class. Despite the availability of relevant data, ALH does not systematically use assessment results to drive professional development activities.
- ALH communicates assessment results to families through regular progress reports, report cards and calls home. In contrast, the school does not regularly report student assessment data to board members.

**Pedagogy.** As has been the case over the course of the charter term, classroom instruction is generally purposeful but lacks the level of rigor and urgency necessary to generate high student achievement. As shown in the chart below, during the renewal visit, Institute team members conducted 30 classroom observations following a defined protocol used in all school renewal visits.

### CLASSROOM OBSERVATION METHODOLOGY: NUMBER OF OBSERVATIONS

		GRADE				
		9	10	11	12	Total
CONTENT AREA	ELA	4	3	1	3	11
	Math	3	2	2	1	8
	Writing					
	Science	2			2	4
	Soc Stu	1	2	1		4
	Specials	1		1	1	3
	Total	11	7	5	7	30

## RENEWAL BENCHMARK CONCLUSIONS

- Most teachers deliver purposeful lessons with clear objectives aligned to the school's curriculum (24 out of 30 classrooms observed). Many teachers continue to create multi-media presentations and use Do Now activities to provide spiraled review and relate the day's lessons to previously taught concepts. In some cases, slow pacing and missed opportunities for student engagement prevent teachers from implementing lesson plans with fidelity, thereby weakening their effectiveness.
- Half of the school's teachers regularly and effectively check for student understanding (15 out of 30 classrooms observed). In many classes, checks for understanding are cursory and only require students to agree, disagree or recall basic information. Most teachers rely heavily on student volunteers to answer questions. With limited whole class checks for understanding or cold calling, teachers allow some students to passively opt out of participating in instructional activities. While some teachers deliver instruction exclusively from the front of the room, most teachers circulate to monitor students' completion of written work, to attend to student questions and to redirect off-task behavior, but do not immediately adjust instruction based on perceived levels of student understanding. Few teachers evaluate student learning at the end of lessons despite plans for exit tickets, generally because lesson components run longer than planned and teachers run out of time.
- A small minority of teachers challenge students with questions and activities that develop depth of understanding and higher order thinking and problem solving skills (6 out of 30 classrooms observed). Most teachers provide basic foundational instruction; assigned student work is generally rote and procedural with very few opportunities for students to engage in higher-order thinking. While the level of student engagement across classes is significantly higher than in previous years, there is limited evidence of the school's stated instructional priorities of requiring students to do the cognitive lifting and increase meaningful student discourse. Many teachers do not require students to demonstrate deeper understanding of material by defending or elaborating on their responses. Because of the teacher-directed structure of most lessons, students do not use new knowledge and skills or apply presented concepts to real life situations. In one notable exception, an English teacher facilitated rich peer-to-peer discussion, engaging all students through a multi-media presentation about what it means to behave "like a girl."
- Most teachers establish and maintain classroom environments with consistent focus on academic achievement (19 out of 30 classrooms observed). Teachers are consistently prepared with materials that are readily available, but most do not communicate a sense of urgency for learning. Most teachers communicate their own set of behavioral expectations, which are inconsistent across classrooms. Teachers fail to anticipate or proactively prevent misbehavior such as calling out, chatting and sleeping in class; efforts to redirect behavior are ineffective.

**At-Risk Students.** Although ALH has a clearly defined, tiered intervention process, it continues to provide an inadequate amount and variety of supports to meet the needs of all students.

## RENEWAL BENCHMARK CONCLUSIONS

- In its 5<sup>th</sup> year of operation, ALH has developed and implemented clear procedures for identifying at-risk students including students with disabilities, ELLs and those struggling academically. The school uses TerraNova (a nationally normed standardized test) scores, core class grades, interim assessment results and teacher referrals to place students in tiered intervention groups. The school gives the home language survey to all new entrants during the registration process and the ELL coordinator administers the New York State Identification Test for English Language Learners (NYSITELL) as necessary to identify students in need of language acquisition support. The special education coordinator makes referrals for special education evaluations for students who do not demonstrate sufficient progress towards grade level proficiency after several cycles of intervention.
- While the school invested additional resources in its at-risk programs and added push in and pull out small group interventions this year, staffing and scheduling constraints continue to limit the amount of support available to meet the needs of struggling students. Based on past performance, the school has identified math as its primary area of concern and deploys its supports accordingly. Currently, 49 struggling students receive intensive math remediation for half a period (26 minutes) during the school day one to four times per week in a small group setting, and 25 students can receive additional tutoring for ELA or other content areas afterschool from classroom teachers or students from local colleges. Special education teachers, who also teach several general education classes, provide a combination of push in and pull out supports for students with disabilities. The ELL coordinator provides alternative, credit-bearing ELA classes for the school's 11 ELLs, as well as push in and pull out small group support.
- The school currently monitors the progress and success of at-risk students through a variety of school-wide assessments. The response to intervention coordinator also sets personal goals for each student receiving tiered intervention supports and tracks their progress towards meeting them over five-week cycles. Interviewed teachers are generally well informed about which students in their classes have disabilities, what their needs are and how to address them. Additionally, some teachers report receiving co-teaching supports in the classroom when at-risk staff push in to work with small groups of students. Classroom teachers are aware of the content of their students' Individualized Education Programs ("IEPs"), record students' progress towards their IEP goals on weekly tracking sheets and provide this information to the special education team.
- Leaders provide general education teachers with limited professional development or training on using strategies to support struggling students and students with disabilities within the general education program. The intervention coordinator gives presentations about special education, differentiation and the steps of the intervention process to the whole staff during summer pre-service professional development, and is available as a resource throughout the year.
- ALH does not provide regular, scheduled opportunities for coordination between classroom teachers and at-risk program staff. While teachers report frequent informal contact to discuss students' progress, this depends on teachers' availability during the day and personal initiative.



## RENEWAL BENCHMARK CONCLUSIONS

GRADES 9-12		2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Enrollment (N) Receiving Mandated Academic Services		N/A	2	5
RESULTS	School Percent Graduating in 4 years	N/A	s <sup>9</sup>	s
	District Percent Graduating in 4 years		31.8	25

GRADES 9-12		2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
ELL Enrollment (N)		N/A	0	3
RESULTS	School Percent Graduating in 4 years	N/A	N/A	s
	District Percent Graduating in 4 years		11.8	26

<sup>9</sup> In order to comply with Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act regulations on reporting education outcome data, the Institute does not report assessment results for groups containing five or fewer students.

# RENEWAL BENCHMARK CONCLUSIONS

## IS THE SCHOOL AN EFFECTIVE, VIABLE ORGANIZATION?

At the end of its initial charter term, ALH is establishing itself as an effective and viable organization with systems and structures in place that are likely to enable the school to meet its Accountability Plan goals in a future charter term. The education corporation board has grown increasingly more proactive in carrying out its oversight responsibilities and focusing on student achievement. During the current charter term, the board has generally abided by its by-laws and been in general and substantial compliance with the terms of its charter, code of ethics, applicable state and federal law, rules and regulations.

## ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

**Board Oversight.** ALH's board continues to work to achieve the school's mission and Accountability Plan goals. The board convenes finance, governance, and accountability committees to monitor regularly the day-to-day operations of the school. The board also effectively evaluates its own performance and the performance of the ALH principal.

- This year, the board continues to stabilize its membership with its eight current members but still seeks an additional member with secondary school experience. The board convenes three committees: finance, governance, and accountability. The finance committee monitors the school's fiscal activities and financial health; the governance committee ensures adequate membership and governance structures; and the accountability committee monitors the school's progress toward meeting its Accountability Plan goals. Each committee meets monthly and provides information to the full board at its monthly meetings. The school's principal and operations director attend the committee meetings and full board meetings providing information when required. In contrast to previous years, the committees and the full board provide adequate oversight of the school's day-to-day activities.
- The finance committee, with input from the principal and the director of operations, provides information to the full board about the school's fiscal activities, cash flow, accounts receivable, and enrollment.
- The accountability committee reports to the full board about student participation and achievement on the Regents exams required for high school graduation, student performance on the school's interval assessments, student participation in and achievement on PSAT and SAT exams, and course credit accumulation. Using these data points, the accountability committee forecasts the probable graduation rate of the current 4<sup>th</sup> year cohort. The board used this information to identify areas for improvement in the school's performance and has charged the school's principal with implementing interventions to achieve the desired results. The board communicated to the school community 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.

## RENEWAL BENCHMARK CONCLUSIONS

- The board regularly participates in development activities. Four times each year, the board convenes to undergo professional development. This year, ACSN provided professional development workshops to the board and the board was generally satisfied with the results. The board also uses a comprehensive rubric to evaluate its own performance. The board reflects on the findings of its self-evaluation and takes action to correct perceived deficiencies. For instance, the board determined through its own evaluation that it lacked sufficient fiscal expertise and then recruited new members to support those operations.
- The board evaluates the performance of the school's leader each year. At the time of the renewal visit, after close to one calendar year at the school, the school's new leader had begun the evaluation process by submitting a self-evaluation for the board's review.

**Organizational Capacity.** ALH now has an organizational structure that supports the delivery of the educational program. The school has established an administrative structure with staff, operational systems, policies and procedures that allow the school to carry out the academic program.

- Unlike in previous years, the school has distinct lines of accountability with clearly defined staff roles and responsibilities. ALH has historically struggled to define the school administrators' responsibilities, with dramatic organizational restructuring taking place between, and sometimes during school years. In its 5<sup>th</sup> year, the school's leadership has deliberately assessed the balance of responsibilities between school leaders and reassigned responsibilities to ensure that all school leaders can effectively carry out their work. The school's organizational structure articulates clear responsibilities with management divided between the school's leaders; teachers are aware of whom to go to for what.
- The school does not have a clear discipline system. However, school leaders monitor school-wide disciplinary concerns and act to address them. For example, early in the 5<sup>th</sup> year, the school identified the problem of many students being late to class. School leaders immediately put in place a zero tolerance policy that teachers report the school enforces with fidelity and has yielded a significant decrease in students late to class. Each individual teacher establishes his or her own strategies to manage student behavior and thresholds for consequences. At the time of the visit, Institute staff observed teachers addressing similar student infractions in different ways. In some classrooms students who were disruptive or disrespectful to teachers and classmates did not experience consequences, while a teacher in another classroom immediately addressed the behavior.
- An ongoing challenge to the school is staff turnover. Throughout the life of the charter, the school has had mostly novice teachers and has experienced high levels of teacher attrition. At the time of the renewal visit, 20 out of 35 staff were new to the school and 17 of the new staff were in their first year of teaching. However, unlike in previous years when teachers suggested that staff attrition was largely due to lack of sufficient leadership support, teachers report feeling supported.
- ALH has historically struggled to maintain full student enrollment. The school's chartered enrollment is 375 students and by late September, and at the time of the renewal visit, it

## RENEWAL BENCHMARK CONCLUSIONS

had 359 students. Despite this slight under-enrollment, the school is within its allowable 20 percent enrollment range as defined by its charter agreement, and has not had to reduce staff or academic services. This year, the school is proactive in implementing strategies to reduce attrition by increasing parental contact to address academic or behavioral concerns, and implementing cultural programs such as a student government, to increase student pride and buy-in toward the school.

### FAITHFULNESS TO CHARTER & PARENT SATISFACTION

As part of their initial applications and their Applications for Charter Renewal, schools identify the Key Design Elements that reflect their missions and distinguish the schools. The table below reflects the intended Key Design Elements and indicates for each if the school is implementing the element as included in the school's charter.

Key Design Elements	Evident?
Single sex education;	+
College preparatory curriculum;	+
Safe and disciplined environment;	+
Small school size; and,	+
Dedicated teachers.	+

**Parent Satisfaction.** As evidence of parent satisfaction with the school, ALH submitted survey data with its Application for Charter Renewal based on a response rate of 43 percent. The survey response rate is sufficiently low enough that it may not be representative of the broader school community's perceptions.

2013-14
Response Rate: 60%
Overall satisfaction: 86%
College Preparedness: 80%
School Culture: 80%

## RENEWAL BENCHMARK CONCLUSIONS

**Persistence in Enrollment.** The Institute derived the following information from its database. No comparative data from NYSED is available to the Institute to provide district wide comparison. As such, the data presented is for information purposes but does not allow for comparative analysis.

	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Percent of Eligible Students Returning From Previous Year	N/A	60.5	66.6

### COMPLIANCE

**Governance.** In material respects, the ALH board has implemented and abided by adequate and appropriate systems, processes, policies and procedures to ensure the effective governance and oversight of the school. The board demonstrates a thorough understanding of its role in holding the school leadership accountable for both academic results and fiscal soundness.

- The board has generally avoided creating conflicts of interest, and when it has not done so, the board has used disclosure and recusal to mitigate such conflicts, such as Brighter Choice Foundation affiliated trustees serving on the board.
- The board has a functioning finance committee that has allowed the school to be housed in private space without extensive fundraising, and has recently added a treasurer with extensive financial expertise.
- The board maintains good continuity with three members serving since the school's inception. Originally, the principal of the Green Tech High Charter School, authorized by SUNY, served on the board to provide single-sex high school education expertise, but this practice, which is not in the by-laws, was not continued.
- The board properly amended its by-laws early in the charter term to eliminate a co-chair structure.
- The board has already begun to focus on its enrollment and retention targets for the next charter term.
- At some board meetings the board opens with a public comment period where staff and parents can provide input to the board.

**Legal Requirements.** The education corporation substantially complies with applicable laws, rules and regulations and the provisions of its charter.

- **Complaints.** The school has generated two informal complaints during the charter term; no formal complaints required review by the Institute. One complaint involved a student record dispute that was handled informally. The other was an employee retaliation complaint that the school board resolved.

## RENEWAL BENCHMARK CONCLUSIONS

- **Violations.** The Institute did not issue any violations letters to the school during its charter term, nor did the Institute or the Charter Schools Committee place the school on corrective action or probation.

The Institute noted exceptions to the school's compliance in the following areas.

- **Alternative Instruction.** While the school provides alternative instruction to students who are suspended out of school, some students who are suspended in school do not receive live instruction, only assignments. This issue was discussed with the dean in charge of discipline and the practice will be amended.
- **Code of Ethics.** The education corporation's code of ethics needs to be updated to comply with provisions of the New York General Municipal Law. The Institute will also ensure this is updated prior to the start of a new charter term.
- **Facilities Issues.** The Institute noted some minor building issues like janitors' rooms and electrical breaker boxes not being locked, which could pose a hazard to students.

# RENEWAL BENCHMARK CONCLUSIONS

## IS THE EDUCATION CORPORATION FISCALLY SOUND?

Based on evidence collected in the renewal review, ALH is fiscally sound. The education corporation has successfully managed cash flow and has adequate financial resources to ensure stable operations in the future. The education corporation engages in effective budgeting practices and fiscal monitoring of revenues and expenses, making appropriate adjustments when necessary. The SUNY Fiscal Dashboard, a multi-year financial data and analysis for SUNY authorized charter schools, appears below in the Appendix.

The education corporation is operating under a January 31, 2013 compact agreement with ACSN. Services include academic, legal and financial assistance, technical support and advocacy, professional development to both school staff and board of trustees to improve governance knowledge and expertise. The compact contains a service fee that increases from 1% of per pupil revenues in 2012-13 to 1.5% in 2013-14 to 2% in 2014-15. The agreement expires June 30, 2015. ACSN anticipates its fee to increase to 3% - 5% - 7% over a future charter term, but the board has not fully reviewed or agreed to such a contract and had not yet identified a source for the increased fees.

**Budgeting and Long-Range Planning.** Throughout the charter term, ALH has maintained fiscal soundness with effective budgeting practices and routine monitoring of revenues and expenses. Net assets have remained strong over the charter term and as of June 30, 2014 total approximately \$810k.

- The principal and the business manager develop annual budgets and present them to the board for consideration and final approval.
- ALH's business manager prepares for the school board monthly financial reports that include a current balance sheet, a profit and loss statement, a budget-versus-actual-expenditure report, and personnel expenditure projections.
- The ALH board approves the annual operating budget and considers any significant adjustment to the budget on an as needed basis.
- The renewal application contained a projected budget for the next charter term that included conservative enrollment projections and staffing levels making the budget reasonable and feasible.

**Internal Controls.** The education corporation has established and maintains appropriate fiscal policies, procedures and controls. Written policies address key issues including financial reporting, revenues, procurement, expenditures, consultants and contracts, property and equipment, payroll, banking, capital assets, and record retention.

- ALH has accurately recorded and appropriately documented transactions in accordance with established policies. These policies are comprehensive and updated as needed.



## RENEWAL BENCHMARK CONCLUSIONS

- ALH's most recent completed audit reports of internal controls related to financial reporting and compliance with laws, regulations and grants, disclosed no material weaknesses, or instances of non-compliance. Although, the independent auditor did note that ALH does not employ an individual with the necessary qualifications to prepare a complete set of financial statements and related footnotes in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles ("GAAP"). Governance and management have been advised of this previously and have concluded that the cost to rectify this in-house would exceed the benefit. The independent auditor also found that cash collected for prom tickets throughout the year was not provided to the business office for deposit until the last ticket was sold in June 2014. The auditor recommended that cash received be provided to the business office no more than seven days after the physical receipt date. Management agreed with this recommendation and has implemented procedures including general instructions for cash counting, verification forms and security bags for cash collection. In addition, the auditor found that there is no disaster recovery plan in place that includes off-site backup of data files. Management agreed and is in the process of final implementation of a secure virtual private network (VPN) for server data.

**Financial Reporting.** ALH has complied with financial reporting requirements by providing the SUNY Trustees and NYSED with required financial reports that are on time, complete and follow GAAP.

- ALH presents its annual financial statements in accordance with GAAP and the independent audits of those statements have received unqualified opinions.
- ALH has filed key reports timely and accurately including audit reports, budgets, cash-flow statements, un-audited reports of income, expenses and enrollment reports.

**Financial Condition.** ALH maintains adequate financial resources needed to ensure stable operations.

- ALH has posted fiscally strong composite-score ratings on the SUNY Fiscal Dashboard indicating fiscal stability over the charter contract term.<sup>10</sup>
- ALH leases facility space from the Brighter Choice Foundation through June 30, 2018. The education corporation successfully renegotiated the lease payments as of July 1, 2013, resulting in reduced rental payments of over 8%. The board acknowledged that it would have to plan for facilities after that date but was not only considering financing the facility with bonds.
- ALH achieved savings of approximately \$100,000 by switching to CDTA student bus passes for Schenectady students.

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<sup>10</sup> The composite score assists in measuring the financial health of an education corporation using a blended score that measures the school's performances on key financial indicators. The blended score offsets financial strengths against areas where there may be financial weaknesses.

## RENEWAL BENCHMARK CONCLUSIONS

- The renewal application states that there are no anticipated changes in the facility for the next charter term.
- ALH has no long term debt.
- ALH maintains adequate cash flow over the charter term with cash reserves that are available to cover current bills and those coming due shortly. ALH had 43.5 days of cash on hand. Recommended cash reserves would be at least one month reserve therefore the Fiscal Dashboard shows a medium risk in this category.
- The New York State Comptroller issued a report dated January 2014 on the education corporation's compact agreement with the ACSN. The report points out that the compact does not clearly define the activities that ACSN will engage in or how delivery of services will be measured, and, therefore, the board can't be certain of the services it should be receiving and paying for under the compact. The report further stated that the service fees structure of 1% - 2% does not appear to be reasonable as the services being provided do not have any bearing on the number of students at the school or the tuition rate, and the increasing fee places additional financial burdens on the education corporation. The board responded to the audit with a detailed letter outlining its understanding that the fee is considered membership dues in a trade association, much like a chamber of commerce or school-related trade organization where an array of services are available to members. The board believes that it has conducted proper due diligence in carrying out its fiduciary responsibility related to service contracts and plans to continue to do so. The board response states that it was not a party to setting the methodology by which the membership fee for participation in the compact was established, but the board states it did evaluate and deliberate over many months the value of joining the compact as a dues paying member.
- The anticipated future fee structure of the compact calls for an increase in the rate to 3% - 7%, which will increase expenses for the education corporation that are not currently budgeted in the out years.
- Contributions and fundraising activities have played a diminishing role in the financial health of the school.
- ALH has established the required \$75,000 Dissolution Reserve Fund under the SUNY authorized charter agreements for the purpose of covering legal and administrative costs associated with the closure/dissolution of a school. The reserve fund is reported separately in the financial statements.

The SUNY Fiscal Dashboard, provided in the Appendix, presents color-coded tables and charts indicating that ALH has demonstrated fiscal soundness over the course of its charter term.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> The U.S. Department of Education has established fiscal criteria for certain ratios or information with high – medium – low categories, represented in the table as green – gray – red. The categories generally correspond to levels of fiscal risk, but must be viewed in the context of each Education Corporation and the general type or category of school.

## RENEWAL BENCHMARK CONCLUSIONS

### IF THE SUNY TRUSTEES RENEW THE EDUCATION CORPORATION'S AUTHORITY TO OPERATE THE SCHOOL, ARE ITS PLANS FOR THE SCHOOL REASONABLE, FEASIBLE AND ACHIEVABLE?

ALH has compiled a limited record of educational achievement in meeting its academic Accountability Plan goals, but the academic program in place at the time of the renewal review is of sufficient strength that the school will likely meet or come close to meeting its academic Accountability Plan goals with the additional time a Short-Term Renewal would permit. The school is an effective and viable organization, and the education corporation is fiscally sound. Therefore, ALH's plans for its future are reasonable, feasible and achievable.

[Plans for the School's Structure.](#) The education corporation has provided all of the key structural elements for a charter renewal and those elements are reasonable, feasible and achievable.

### MISSION FOR THE NEXT CHARTER TERM

The mission of the Albany Leadership Charter High School for Girls is to prepare young women to graduate from high school with the academic and leadership skills necessary to succeed in college and the career of their choosing.

[Plans for the Educational Program.](#) ALH plans to modify its daily schedule in the next charter term such that students have the opportunity to accrue seven credits per year rather than six, as is currently the case.

	Current Charter Term	End of Next Charter Term
Enrollment	375	365
Grade Span	9-12	9-12
Teaching Staff	35	35
Days of Instruction	191	191

[Plans for Board Oversight and Governance.](#) Board members express interest in continuing to serve ALH in the next charter term.

## RENEWAL BENCHMARK CONCLUSIONS

**Fiscal & Facility Plans.** ALH plans to remain in its current facility and does not anticipate making any significant renovations in the next charter term.

The school's Application for Charter Renewal contains all necessary elements as required by the Act. The proposed school calendar allots an appropriate amount of instructional time to meet or exceed instructional time requirements, and taken together with other academic and key design elements, should be sufficient to allow the school to meet its proposed Accountability Plan goals. The school has amended or will amend other key aspects of the renewal application -- including bylaws and code of ethics -- to comply with various provisions of the New York Education Law, Not-for-Profit Corporation Law, Public Officers Law and the General Municipal Law, as appropriate.

## APPENDIX: SCHOOL OVERVIEW

### Mission Statement

The mission of the Albany Leadership Charter High School for Girls is to prepare young women to graduate from high school with the academic and leadership skills necessary to succeed in college and the career of their choosing.

### Board of Trustees

Board Member Name <sup>12</sup>	Position
James Vallee	Chair
Elizabeth Robertson	Vice Chair
Margaret Moree	Secretary
Alex Ma	Trustee
Rebekah Brisbane	Trustee
Bryan Lester	Trustee
Daniel MacGregor	Trustee

### School Characteristics

School Year	Proposed Enrollment	Actual Enrollment <sup>13</sup>	Proposed Grades	Actual Grades
2010-11	125	147	9-10	9-10
2011-12	225	220	9-11	9-11
2012-13	325	333	9-12	9-12
2013-14	375	328	9-12	9-12
2014-15	375	359	9-12	9-12

<sup>12</sup> Source: The Institute's Board records at the time of the Renewal review.

<sup>13</sup> Source: The Institute's Official Enrollment Binder. (Figures may differ slightly from New York State Report Cards, depending on date of data collection.)

## APPENDIX: SCHOOL OVERVIEW

### Student Demographics

	2011-12		2012-13		2013-14 <sup>14</sup>
	% of School Enrollment <sup>15</sup>	% of Albany CSD Enrollment	% of School Enrollment	% of Albany CSD Enrollment	% of School Enrollment
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>					
American Indian or Alaska Native	0	0	0	0	0
Black or African American	90	55	91	53	76
Hispanic	5	14	3	15	14
Asian, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	3	7	4	8	5
White	2	21	2	21	3
Multiracial	0	2	0	3	2
<b>Special Populations</b>					
Students with Disabilities	3	15	5	15	5
English Language Learners	6	7	3	8	4
<b>Free/Reduced Lunch</b>					
Eligible for Free Lunch	64	60	68	60	-- <sup>16</sup>
Eligible for Reduced-Price Lunch	9	7	5	7	--
Economically Disadvantaged	91	68	77	76	58

### School Leaders

School Year(s)	Name(s) and Title(s)
2010-11 to May 2013	Melissa Jarvis-Cedeno, Principal
June 2013 to December 2013	Nadeen Herring, Interim Principal

<sup>14</sup> The Institute derived the 2013-14 Students with Disabilities, ELL and Economically Disadvantaged statistics from the school's October 2013 student enrollment report to NYSED (2013-14 BEDS Report). District data are not yet available. Because NYSED releases data up to a full year after the conclusion of any one school year, the data presented in this table may differ from current information reported by the school and included in this report.

<sup>15</sup> The Institute derived the 2011-12 and 2012-13 student demographic data from the school and district New York State Report Cards.

<sup>16</sup> School free and reduced-price lunch data is not available for the 2013-14 school year.

## APPENDIX: SCHOOL OVERVIEW

December 2013 to Present

Christina Roberts, Principal

### School Visit History

School Year	Visit Type	Evaluator (Institute/External)	Date
<b>2010-11</b>	First Year Visit	Institute	February 17, 2011
<b>2011-12</b>	Evaluation Visit	Institute	November 9-10, 2011
<b>2013-14</b>	Evaluation Visit	Institute	January 8-9, 2014
<b>2014-15</b>	Initial Renewal Visit	Institute	November 5-6, 2014

### Conduct of the Renewal Visit

Date(s) of Visit	Evaluation Team Members	Title
<b>November 5-6, 2014</b>	Jeff Wasbes	Executive Deputy Director for Accountability
	Sean Fitzsimons	Director of New Applications
	Heather Wendling	Senior Analyst



# APPENDIX: FISCAL DASHBOARD



## Albany Leadership Charter High School for Girls

SCHOOL INFORMATION					
<b>FINANCIAL POSITION</b>		Opened 2010-11			
<b>Assets</b>					
<b>Current Assets</b>		2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Cash and Cash Equivalents - GRAPH 1		-	45,782	102,938	458,750
Grants and Contracts Receivable		-	464,773	185,140	205,638
Accounts Receivable		-	18,351	16,216	27,356
Prepaid Expenses		-	13,989	8,964	5,254
Contributions and Other Receivables		-	-	-	-
<b>Total Current Assets - GRAPH 1</b>		-	542,895	314,258	696,998
Property, Building and Equipment, net		-	477,367	454,547	410,139
Other Assets		-	-	-	75,000
<b>Total Assets - GRAPH 1</b>		-	1,020,262	768,805	1,107,137
<b>Liabilities and Net Assets</b>					
<b>Current Liabilities</b>					
Accounts Payable and Accrued Expenses		-	428,429	154,603	26,352
Accrued Payroll and Benefits		-	145,720	264,058	478,300
Deferred Revenue		-	28,035	-	-
Current Maturities of Long-Term Debt		-	-	-	-
Short Term Debt - Bonds, Notes Payable		-	-	-	-
Other		-	-	-	-
<b>Total Current Liabilities - GRAPH 1</b>		-	602,184	418,661	504,652
L-T Debt and Notes Payable, net current maturities		-	-	-	-
<b>Total Liabilities - GRAPH 1</b>		-	602,184	418,661	504,652
<b>Net Assets</b>					
Unrestricted		-	418,078	350,144	602,485
Temporarily restricted		-	-	-	-
<b>Total Net Assets</b>		-	418,078	350,144	602,485
<b>Total Liabilities and Net Assets</b>		-	1,020,262	768,805	1,107,137
<b>ACTIVITIES</b>					
<b>Operating Revenue</b>					
Resident Student Enrollment		-	2,060,368	3,179,666	4,606,634
Students with Disabilities		-	51,853	42,125	106,788
<b>Grants and Contracts</b>					
State and local		-	235,000	-	37,588
Federal - Title and IDEA		-	83,000	-	187,637
Federal - Other		-	293,965	90,923	-
Other		-	-	132,180	-
Food Service/Child Nutrition Program		-	68,802	-	109,132
<b>Total Operating Revenue</b>		-	2,792,989	3,444,894	5,047,779
<b>Expenses</b>					
Regular Education		-	1,424,046	2,542,070	3,272,330
SPED		-	116,097	71,548	121,914
Regular Education & SPED (combined)		-	-	-	-
Other		-	135,189	303,589	286,217
<b>Total Program Services</b>		-	1,675,332	2,917,207	3,680,461
Management and General		-	1,438,823	992,299	1,028,226
Fundraising		-	-	-	-
<b>Total Expenses - GRAPHS 2, 3 &amp; 4</b>		-	3,114,155	3,909,506	4,708,687
<b>Surplus / (Deficit) From School Operations</b>		-	(321,166)	(464,612)	339,092
<b>Support and Other Revenue</b>					
Contributions		-	594,120	359,690	-
Fundraising		-	-	-	4,882
Miscellaneous Income		-	145,124	36,988	31,564
Net assets released from restriction		-	-	-	-
<b>Total Support and Other Revenue</b>		-	739,244	396,678	31,564
<b>Total Unrestricted Revenue</b>		-	3,532,233	3,841,572	5,079,343
<b>Total Temporarily Restricted Revenue</b>		-	-	-	-
<b>Total Revenue - GRAPHS 2 &amp; 3</b>		-	3,532,233	3,841,572	5,079,343
<b>Change in Net Assets</b>		-	418,078	(67,934)	370,656
<b>Net Assets - Beginning of Year - GRAPH 2</b>		-	-	418,078	350,144
Prior Year Adjustment(s)		-	-	-	(118,315)
<b>Net Assets - End of Year - GRAPH 2</b>		-	418,078	350,144	602,485

# APPENDIX: FISCAL DASHBOARD



## Albany Leadership Charter High School for Girls

### SCHOOL INFORMATION - (Continued)

#### Functional Expense Breakdown

	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Personnel Service	-	669,033	685,778	693,669	841,294
Administrative Staff Personnel	-	625,174	1,106,790	1,606,043	1,779,173
Instructional Personnel	-	23,821	57,423	146,175	93,393
Non-Instructional Personnel	-	-	-	-	-
Personnel Services (Combined)	-	1,318,028	1,849,991	2,445,887	2,713,860
Total Salaries and Staff	-	317,206	367,994	396,014	516,472
Fringe Benefits & Payroll Taxes	-	6,249	2,731	5,999	13,705
Retirement	-	-	-	-	-
Management Company Fees	-	651,400	712,600	660,000	666,600
Building and Land Rent / Lease	-	9,665	13,802	39,456	62,863
Staff Development	-	152,717	112,968	180,296	187,418
Professional Fees, Consultant & Purchased Services	-	26,638	10,826	10,158	28,187
Marketing / Recruitment	-	206,987	287,594	298,534	281,195
Student Support, Materials & Services	-	52,930	97,665	109,903	90,890
Depreciation	-	372,335	453,335	562,440	532,100
Other	-	3,114,155	3,909,506	4,708,687	5,093,290
<b>Total Expenses</b>	-	3,114,155	3,909,506	4,708,687	5,093,290

### SCHOOL ANALYSIS

#### ENROLLMENT

	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Chartered Enroll	-	125	225	325	375
Revised Enroll	-	-	-	-	-
Actual Enroll - GRAPH 4	-	147	209	333	328
Chartered Grades	P-Year	9-10	9-11	9-12	9-12
Revised Grades	-	-	-	-	-

#### Primary School District: Albany

Per Pupil Funding (Weighted Avg of All Districts)	-	14,072	14,072	14,072	13,811
Increase over prior year	0.0%	20.2%	0.0%	0.0%	-1.9%

#### PER STUDENT BREAKDOWN

	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	Average - 5 Yrs. OR Charter Term
<b>Revenue</b>						
Operating	-	19,000	16,483	15,153	15,999	16,659
Other Revenue and Support	-	5,029	1,898	95	162	1,796
<b>TOTAL - GRAPH 3</b>	-	24,029	18,381	15,248	16,161	18,454
<b>Expenses</b>						
Program Services	-	11,397	13,958	11,048	11,888	12,073
Management and General, Fundraising	-	9,788	4,748	3,087	3,641	5,316
<b>TOTAL - GRAPH 3</b>	-	21,185	18,706	14,135	15,528	17,388
% of Program Services	0.0%	53.8%	74.6%	78.2%	76.6%	70.8%
% of Management and Other	0.0%	46.2%	25.4%	21.8%	23.4%	29.2%
% of Revenue Exceeding Expenses - GRAPH 5	0.0%	13.4%	-1.7%	7.9%	4.1%	6.1%

#### Student to Faculty Ratio

	-	9.2	8.4	10.3	8.9
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#### Faculty to Admin Ratio

	-	2.0	2.8	3.4	3.4
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#### Financial Responsibility Composite Scores - GRAPH 6

Score	0.0	1.5	1.1	2.0	2.1	1.9
Fiscally Strong 1.5 - 3.0 / Fiscally Adequate 1.0 - 1.4 / Fiscally Needs Monitoring < 1.0	N/A	Fiscally Strong	Fiscally Adequate	Fiscally Strong	Fiscally Strong	Fiscally Strong

#### Working Capital - GRAPH 7

Net Working Capital	0	(59,289)	(104,403)	192,346	362,412	97,767
As % of Unrestricted Revenue	0.0%	-1.7%	-2.7%	3.8%	6.8%	1.6%
Working Capital (Current) Ratio Score	0.0	0.9	0.8	1.4	1.7	1.2
Risk (Low ≥ 3.0 / Medium 1.4 - 2.9 / High < 1.4)	N/A	HIGH	HIGH	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	HIGH
Rating (Excellent ≥ 3.0 / Good 1.4 - 2.9 / Poor < 1.4)	N/A	Poor	Poor	Good	Good	Poor

#### Quick (Acid Test) Ratio

Score	0.0	0.9	0.7	1.4	1.7	1.2
Risk (Low ≥ 2.5 / Medium 1.0 - 2.4 / High < 1.0)	N/A	HIGH	HIGH	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	MEDIUM
Rating (Excellent ≥ 2.5 / Good 1.0 - 2.4 / Poor < 1.0)	N/A	Poor	Poor	Good	Good	Good

#### Debt to Asset Ratio - GRAPH 7

Score	0.0	0.6	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.5
Risk (Low < 0.50 / Medium 0.51 - .95 / High > 1.0)	N/A	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	LOW	MEDIUM
Rating (Excellent < 0.50 / Good 0.51 - .95 / Poor > 1.0)	N/A	Good	Good	Good	Excellent	Good

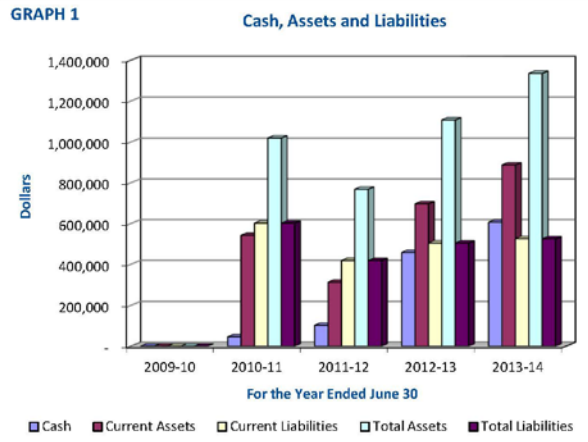
#### Months of Cash - GRAPH 8

Score	0.0	0.2	0.3	1.2	1.4	0.8
Risk (Low > 3 mo. / Medium 1 - 3 mo. / High < 1 mo.)	N/A	HIGH	HIGH	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	HIGH
Rating (Excellent > 3 mo. / Good 1 - 3 mo. / Poor < 1 mo.)	N/A	Poor	Poor	Good	Good	Poor

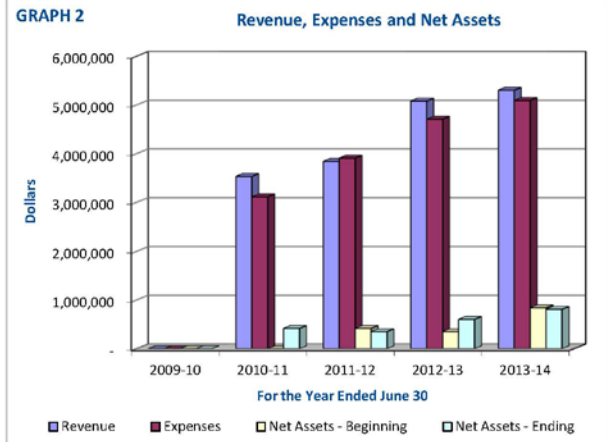
# APPENDIX: FISCAL DASHBOARD



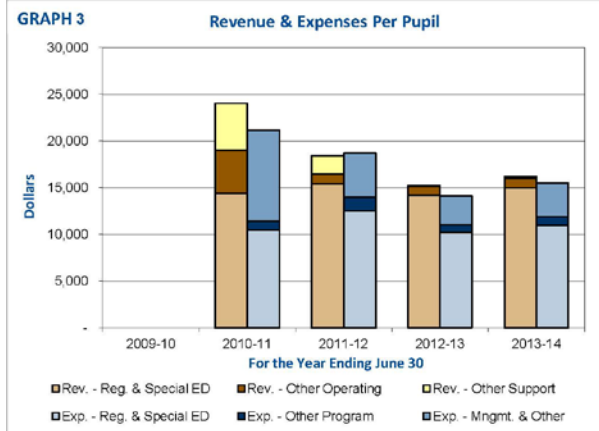
## Albany Leadership Charter High School for Girls



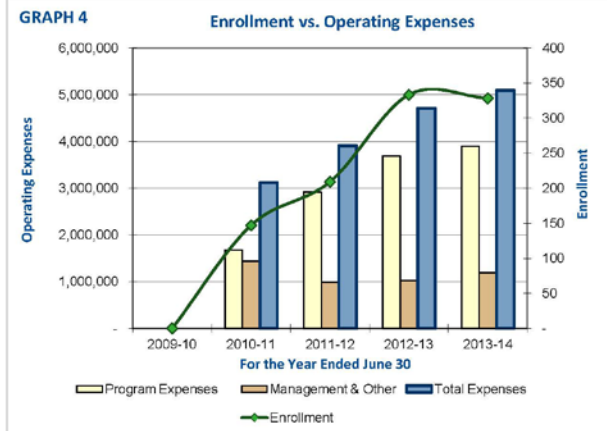
This chart illustrates the relationship between assets and liabilities and to what extent cash reserves makes up current assets. Ideally for each subset, subsets 2 thru 4, (i.e. current assets vs. current liabilities), the column on the left is taller than the immediate column on the right; and, generally speaking, the bigger that gap, the better.



This chart illustrates total revenue and expenses each year and the relationship those subsets have on the increase/decrease of net assets on a year-to-year basis. Ideally subset 1, revenue, will be taller than subset 2, expenses, and as a result subset 3, net assets - beginning, will increase each year building a more fiscally viable school.



This chart illustrates the breakdown of revenue and expenses on a per pupil basis. Caution should be exercised in making school-by-school comparisons since schools serving different missions or student populations are likely to have substantially different educational cost bases. Comparisons with similar schools with similar dynamics are most valid.



This chart illustrates to what extent the school's operating expenses have followed its student enrollment pattern. A baseline assumption that this data tests is that operating expenses increase with each additional student served. This chart also compares and contrasts growth trends of both, giving insight into what a reasonable expectation might be in terms of economies of scale.

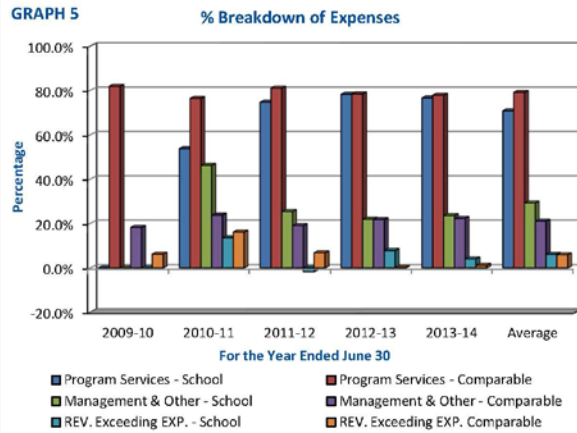
# APPENDIX: FISCAL DASHBOARD



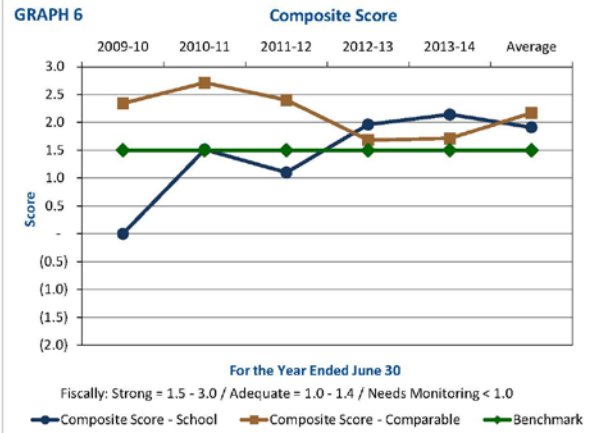
## Albany Leadership Charter High School for Girls

Comparable School, Region or Network: Capital District & Hudson Valley Schools

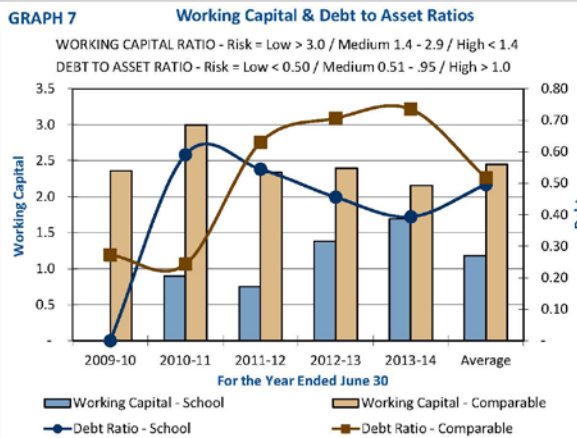
\* Average = Average - 5 Yrs. OR Charter Term



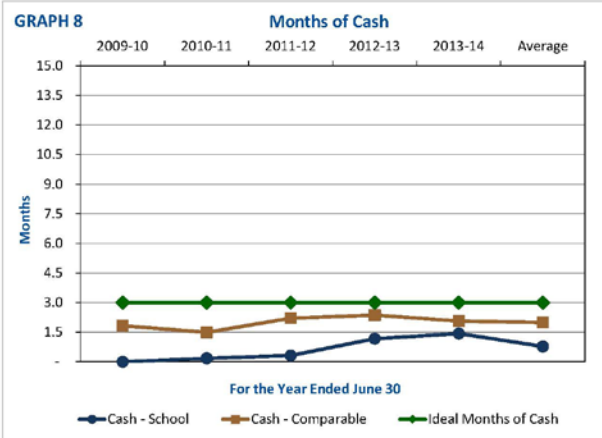
This chart illustrates the percentage expense breakdown between program services and management & others as well as the percentage of revenues exceeding expenses. Ideally the percentage expense for program services will far exceed that of the management & other expense. The percentage of revenues exceeding expenses should not be negative. Similar caution, as mentioned on GRAPH 3, should be used in comparing schools.



This chart illustrates a school's composite score based on the methodology developed by the United States Department of Education (USDOE) to determine whether private not-for-profit colleges and universities are financially strong enough to participate in federal loan programs. These scores can be valid for observing the fiscal trends of a particular school and used as a tool to compare the results of different schools.



This chart illustrates Working Capital and Debt to Asset Ratios. The Working Capital ratio indicates if a school has enough short-term assets to cover its immediate liabilities/short term debt. The Debt to Asset ratio indicates what proportion of debt a school has relative to its assets. The measure gives an idea to the leverage of the school along with the potential risks the school faces in terms of its debt-load.



This chart illustrates how many months of cash the school has in reserves. This metric is to measure solvency – the school's ability to pay debts and claims as they come due. This gives some idea of how long a school could continue its ongoing operating costs without tapping into some other, non-cash form of financing in the event that revenues were to cease flowing to the school.

# APPENDIX: PERFORMANCE SUMMARIES

## SCHOOL PERFORMANCE SUMMARY Albany Leadership Charter High School for Girls



	2011-12				MET	2012-13				MET	2013-14				MET
<b>English Language Arts</b>															
<b>ABSOLUTE MEASURES</b>	2008 Cohort N %					2009 Cohort N %					2010 Cohort N %				
1. Each year, 75 percent of students will score at least 65 on the Regents English exam.	N %					19 84.2				YES	57 86.0				YES
2. Each year, 75 percent of students who scored at Level 1 or 2 on their NYS 8 <sup>th</sup> grade ELA exam will score at least 65 on the Regents English exam.	Low Performing Entrants N %					Low Performing Entrants N %					Low Performing Entrants N %				
	N %					1 --				NA	11 81.8				YES
3. Each year, the Performance Index (PI) on the Regents English exam will meet the Annual Measurable Objective (AMO) set forth in the state's NCLB accountability system.	PI AMO					APL AMO					APL AMO				
						134 163				NO	129 166				NO
<b>COMPARATIVE MEASURE</b>	Comparison: Albany CSD School District					Comparison: Albany CSD School District					Comparison: Albany CSD School District				
4. Each year, the percent of students passing the Regents English exam with a score of 65 or above will exceed that of students from the local school district.	57					84.2 56.0				YES	86.0 N/A				(YES)
<b>GROWTH MEASURES</b>	2010 Cohort N Base Target Result					2011 Cohort N Base Target Result					2012 Cohort N Base Target Result				
5. Each year, the group of students in their 2nd year of high school who have taken a norm-referenced literacy test for two years will reduce by one-half the difference between their previous year's average NCE and an NCE of 50.	74 47 48.5 48				NO	51 53 53.1 46				NO					
<b>Mathematics</b>															
<b>ABSOLUTE MEASURES</b>	2008 Cohort N %					2009 Cohort N %					2010 Cohort N %				
1. Each year, 75 percent of students will score at least 65 on a NYS Regents mathematics exam.	N %					19 89.5%				YES	57 96.5%				YES
2. Each year, 75 percent of students who scored at Level 1 or 2 on their NYS 8 <sup>th</sup> grade ELA exam will score at least 65 on the Regents English exam.	Low Performing Entrants N %					Low Performing Entrants N %					Low Performing Entrants N %				
	N %					0 --				NA	14 85.7				YES
3. Each year, the Performance Index (PI) on the Regents math exam will meet the Annual Measurable Objective (AMO) set forth in the state's NCLB accountability system.	PI AMO					APL AMO					APL AMO				
						115 142				NO	102 146				NO
<b>COMPARATIVE MEASURE</b>	Comparison: Albany CSD School District					Comparison: Albany CSD School District					Comparison: Albany CSD School District				
4. Each year, the percent of students passing the Regents math exam with a score of 65 or above will exceed that of students from the local school district.	61					89.5 63				YES	96.5 N/A				(YES)
<b>Growth Measure</b>	2010 Cohort N Base Target Result					2011 Cohort N Base Target Result					2012 Cohort N Base Target Result				
5. Each year, the group of students in their 2nd year of high school who have taken a norm-referenced mathematics test for two years will reduce by one-half the difference between their previous year's average NCE and an NCE of 50.	74 42.7 46.4 42.1				NO	49 43.7 46.9 43				NO					

Data Sources: New York State and City data, workbooks submitted by schools and databases compiled by the Institute.



# APPENDIX: PERFORMANCE SUMMARIES

## SCHOOL PERFORMANCE SUMMARY Albany Leadership Charter High School for Girls



	2011-12			MET	2012-13			MET	2013-14			MET			
High School Graduation															
ABSOLUTE MEASURES	Cohort	N	% promoted		Cohort	N	% promoted		Cohort	N	% promoted				
1. Each year, 75 percent of students in each Graduation Cohort will pass their core academic subjects by the end of August and be promoted to the next grade.	2008				2009	22	77.3	YES	2010	65	42	NO			
	2009	22	81.8	YES	2010	76	72.4	NO	2011	71	72	NO			
	2010	79	75.9	YES	2011	76	73.7	YES	2012	84	87	YES			
	2011	76	73.7	NO	2012	105	69.5	YES	2013	95	83	YES			
	All	177	75.7	YES	All	279	72.0	NO	All	315	73.1	NO			
2. Each year, 75 percent of students will score at least 65 on at least three different Regents exams required for graduation by the completion of their second year in the cohort.	2010 Cohort N			% passing ≥ 3 Regents		2011 Cohort N			% passing ≥ 3 Regents		2012 Cohort N			% passing ≥ 3 Regents	
	97			34	NO	67			33	NO	104			24	NO
3. Each year, 75 percent of students will graduate after the completion of their fourth year.	2008 Cohort N			%		2009 Cohort N			%		2010 Cohort N			%	
						27			59.3%	NO	66			65.2%	NO
4. Each year, 95 percent of students will graduate after the completion of their fifth year.	2007 Cohort N			% Graduating		2008 Cohort N			% Graduating		2009 Cohort N			% Graduating	
											21			76	NO
COMPARATIVE MEASURE	Comparison: Albany CSD				Comparison: Albany CSD				Comparison: Albany CSD						
5. Each year, the percent of students graduating after the completion of their fourth year will exceed that of the local school district.	School		District		School		District		School		District				
			49		59.3		52	YES	65.2		50	YES			
College Preparation															
COMPARATIVE MEASURES		N	School	State		N	School	State		N	School	State			
1. Each year, the average performance of students in the 10th grade will exceed the state average on the PSAT tests in Critical Reading and	Reading	N	PSAT	PSAT		Reading	49	37.4	42.5	NO	Reading	68	34.2	45.5	NO
	Math	N	PSAT	PSAT		Math	49	36.9	44	NO	Math	68	35.4	47	NO
2. Each year, the average performance of students in the 12th grade will exceed the state average on the SAT or ACT tests in reading and mathematics.	Reading	N	SAT	SAT		Reading	16	447.5	496	NO	Reading	43	414	483	NO
	Math	N	SAT	SAT		Math	16	430	514	NO	Math	43	394	489	NO
SCHOOL DESIGNED MEASURES	School %		District %		N		%		N		%				
3. College Preparation															
75 percent of students enrolled for 2 or more years will graduate with an Advanced Regents Diploma.					16		22.7%	NO	65		7.6%	NO			
4. College Attainment and Achievement	N		%		N		%		N		%				
Each year, 80 percent of graduates will attend a post-secondary institution within a year of graduation.					16		93.8	YES	22		69.8	NO			

Data Sources: New York State and City data, workbooks submitted by schools and databases compiled by the Institute.

## APPENDIX: SCHOOL DISTRICT COMMENTS



MARGUERITE VANDEN WYNGAARD, PH.D., SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

January 6, 2015

Mr. Ralph A. Rossi II  
Vice President and General Counsel  
Charter Schools Institute  
The State University of New York  
41 State Street, Suite 700  
Albany, NY 12207

Dear Mr. Rossi:

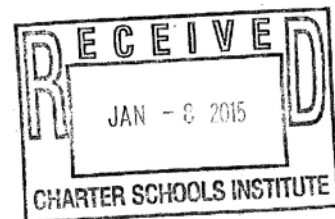
I am writing in regard to the SUNY Board of Trustees' Charter Schools Committee's pending consideration of the renewal application for the Albany Leadership Charter High School for Girls. The City School District of Albany respectfully asks that the trustees deny this request in the best interests of all students, families and taxpayers in the City of Albany. As justification we cite the following:

- The school's substandard academic performance, emphasized by the school's own admission that it does not merit consideration for a full-term renewal.
- The significant financial burden charter schools have created in Albany – on public education and the community at large – with many unanswered questions about how the charter schools have spent more than a quarter-billion in taxpayer dollars. This situation is highlighted by New York State Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli's continued findings of imprudent management of public funds at several Albany charter schools, including Albany Leadership.

Albany Leadership, as with other Albany charter schools, routinely fails to retain the significant majority of students who enroll in its programs, and also fails to provide equal opportunities to students with disabilities. Its overall academic performance has lagged that of Albany High School, a Priority School on the State Education Department's Accountability Status Report.

We believe that it is critical to the future of public education in Albany for the Board of Trustees to acknowledge that the oversaturation of charter schools in Albany is adversely affecting all students, families and taxpayers. We ask that you deny Albany Leadership's short-term renewal request and require the school to close when its current charter expires following the 2014-15 academic year.

1 ACADEMY PARK • ALBANY, NEW YORK 12207  
PHONE: (518) 475-6010 • FAX: (518) 475-6014  
EMAIL: MVANDEN@ALBANY.K12.NY.US



## **I. Substandard academic performance**

Albany Leadership has struggled since its inception and continues to do so. Fewer than one in four (24 of 106, or 22.6 percent) of the Albany students that Albany Leadership reported as freshmen in November 2010 were still enrolled there when the Class of 2014 graduated.

Moreover, the State Education Department reports a graduation rate of 51 percent for Albany Leadership's Class of 2014, underperforming both the total cohort at Albany High School (52 percent) and the graduation rate for girls at Albany High (54 percent).

Charter schools were implemented to provide students and families with choice options that significantly surpassed that of comparable public schools in terms of academic achievement for students. This has not been the reality for most charter schools in Albany, and certainly not the case for this struggling school. Albany Leadership is providing a substandard option for families, which serves only to destabilize the academic environment for students and families when stability and consistency are crucial.

Based solely on this poor academic record, there is no solid basis on which to reward Albany Leadership with three more years to operate.

## **II. Unequal opportunities**

In theory, charter schools provide valuable choice options for students and families. However, in practice Albany Leadership has a consistent record of failing to enroll or retain certain students, especially those students who may need additional help to succeed academically. Albany Leadership serves students with disabilities in disproportionately low numbers in spite of its regulatory charge to "increase learning opportunities for all students, with special emphasis on expanded learning opportunities for students who are at-risk of academic failure."

Albany Leadership, like the rest of Albany's charter schools, does not practice a philosophy of providing equal access to all students. Rewarding this discriminatory behavior would be harmful to Albany's children and families.

During the 2013-14 school year, 48 Albany Leadership students returned to Albany High. That is equal to 18.5 percent of the schools' average bimonthly enrollment of Albany students, as reported by Albany Leadership to the district. From July 1-Dec. 31 of the current school year, 31 Albany Leadership students have returned to district schools.

Albany Leadership also capitalizes on its statutory right to open its doors only to the students it chooses, not to all students who choose it. For example, Albany Leadership has just 16 students with disabilities from Albany enrolled in the current school year. That's 5.3 percent of its Albany student population.

In total this year, our city's nine charter schools enroll 88 Albany students with disabilities, or less than 4 percent of the total population of Albany students enrolled in those schools. By



comparison, about 12 percent of the students enrolled in our district's 15 public schools (1,091) are students with disabilities. Our district also serves another 202 Albany students in out-of-district placements.

Perpetuated annually at Albany Leadership since it opened, this pattern of failing to retain students and excluding students with disabilities is harmful to the needs of all students, who are most successful in stable, consistent learning environments. Albany Leadership has failed to provide this type of environment for all of its students and should not be rewarded with even the short-term renewal it has requested.

Our Board of Education and our district are fully prepared to provide robust academic, social-emotional and extracurricular programming for all current Albany Leadership students in 2015-16.

### **III. A significant financial burden with little public accountability to local taxpayers**

The financial pressures that charter schools have put on our school district and our community have been significant. Charter schools in Albany educate approximately 20 percent of the students but consume the equivalent of 45 percent of the district's total state aid.

By the end of the current school year, our district will have sent nearly \$300 million – more than a quarter of a billion public dollars – in payments and state-mandated services to Albany's charter schools since 1999 while receiving approximately \$33 million in charter transition aid – a net loss of approximately \$260 million over that time.

Furthermore, Albany's charter schools – as well as the foundations and umbrella groups that support them – continue to be largely unaccountable to the local taxpayers for the management of the public funds they receive through our district. As Comptroller DiNapoli's January 2014 audit findings regarding Albany Leadership pointed out – as well as his similar findings at several other Albany charter schools – there are serious questions about where public tax dollars go after our school district sends them on to charter schools. The conviction in 2013 of a Brighter Choice employee accused of embezzling more than \$200,000 in public funds also highlights the grave concerns about how charter schools manage and allocate public funds.

In light of these critical and unanswered questions about how Albany Leadership and other charter schools in Albany spend tax dollars, we ask that the Board of Trustees honor its commitment to close failing charter schools and deny Albany Leadership's renewal request. Without this safeguard of public finances and the public trust, the city's long-term financial health and stability will continue to erode.

\*\*\*\*\*

At the end of the 1998-99 school year, Albany had 17 publicly funded schools serving about 10,500 Albany students. Today, there are 25 publicly funded schools serving about the same

## APPENDIX: SCHOOL DISTRICT COMMENTS

– 4 –

January 6, 2015

student population. The inefficiencies and redundancies inherent in this model are threatening the future of an educational system charged with raising student achievement in an urban community with high poverty and large percentages of high-needs students and families.

Albany's unique charter-school situation is threatening the goal it was intended to achieve: improving the quality of educational opportunities for all of the city's students. Albany Leadership has failed to demonstrate any benefit and failed to provide equal opportunities to all of Albany's students. Allowing it to perpetuate this damaging cycle by renewing its charter for three more years would be harmful to children, families and the entire Albany community.

There is much work to be done on behalf of all students in Albany for public and charter schools alike. Granting this renewal request would continue to undermine those efforts for everyone.

Once again, we respectfully ask that the Charter Schools Committee and the Board of Trustees reject the Albany Leadership request to renew its charter for three more years.

Sincerely,



Marguerite Vanden Wyngaard, Ph.D.  
Superintendent of Schools