

THE SUNY CHARTER SCHOOLS INSTITUTE

SCHOOL EVALUATION REPORT
**ALBANY LEADERSHIP CHARTER
HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS**

VISIT DATE: APRIL 30 - MAY 1, 2019

REPORT DATE: JUNE 6, 2019

SUNY Charter Schools Institute

SUNY Plaza

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Charter Schools Institute
The State University of New York

A collection of colorful pencils and paper clips on a dark grey background. The pencils are arranged diagonally from the top left to the bottom right, showing a variety of colors including green, blue, red, pink, orange, yellow, green, orange, blue, purple, and brown. Some pencils are sharpened, while others are not. There are also several paper clips in various colors (orange, green, pink, blue, black) scattered around the pencils.

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INTRODUCTION & SCHOOL BACKGROUND

INTRODUCTION

This School Evaluation Report offers an analysis of evidence collected during the school visit on April 30–May 1, 2019 to Albany Leadership Charter High School for Girls (“Albany Leadership”). While the SUNY Charter Schools Institute (the “Institute”) conducts a comprehensive review of evidence related to all the State University of New York Charter Renewal Benchmarks (the “SUNY Renewal Benchmarks”) near the end of a charter term, most mid-cycle school evaluation visits focus on a subset of these benchmarks. This subset, the Qualitative Education Benchmarks, addresses the academic success of the school and the effectiveness and viability of the school organization. It provides a framework for examining the quality of the educational program, focusing on teaching and learning (e.g., curriculum, instruction, assessment, and services for at-risk students), as well as leadership, organizational capacity, and board oversight. The Institute uses the established criteria on a regular basis to provide schools with a consistent set of expectations leading up to renewal.

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

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

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INTRODUCTION & SCHOOL BACKGROUND

SCHOOL BACKGROUND

The SUNY Trustees approved the original charter for Albany Leadership on January 27, 2009. The school opened its doors in the fall of 2010, initially serving 125 students in 9th and 10th grade. Albany Leadership is in its first year of its third charter term. The school's chartered enrollment for the 2018-19 school year is 350 students in 9th – 12th grade. The school is located in the Albany City School District at 19 Hackett Boulevard, Albany, NY.

Albany Leadership's mission states:



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

Albany Leadership has a record of meeting or coming close to meeting its Accountability Plan goals. The SUNY Trustees granted the school a Full-Term Subsequent Renewal in 2018. During the 2017-18 school year Albany Leadership surpassed its graduation and college preparation goals, with over 90% of its 4th year cohort graduating and 75% of graduates matriculating into college the following year.

Notwithstanding the school's academic achievement, the school has had three different school leaders in the last three years. Immediately before the 2018-19 school year, the previous principal suddenly departed. Due to the sudden departure, the school now lacks established systems for coaching teachers, delivering professional development, and using assessment data to drive instruction and schoolwide decision making. In addition to high levels of leader turnover, the school, since the end of the 2017-18 school year to April 2019, has lost 42% of its teachers requiring the school to hire many new teachers who are new to the profession.

School leaders have made efforts to reorganize the school's organizational structure and provide more support to the school's largely inexperienced teaching staff. One month before the Institute's visit, the school shifted the assistant principal role to a director of curriculum and instruction ("DCI") and hired a dean of students. The shift in the leadership team allows the principal and DCI to focus more on the academic program as opposed to student discipline issues.

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Although the board is supportive of the school leader, the board has not outlined clear performance criteria nor provided a clear plan for leadership professional development and ongoing support for the new principal. As it is early in the school's charter term, Albany Leadership has the opportunity to establish strong systems to ensure sustained effectiveness of the academic program.

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

2017-18 SCHOOL PERFORMANCE REVIEW

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

In 2017-18, the first year of the school's five year Accountability Period, Albany Leadership met the high school graduation and college preparation goals included in its Accountability Plan. The school also came close to meeting the goal for its two key academic goals in ELA and mathematics and met its science and social studies goals. In 2017-18, the school did not meet its No Child Left Behind ("NCLB") goal but subsequently met the Every Student Succeeds Act ("ESSA") goal in 2018-19 when the state accountability system moved the school to good standing.

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION

Albany Leadership met its graduation goal during 2017-18. With 92% of its 2014 Graduation Cohort graduating by the end of 2017-18, the school increased its graduation rate by 14 percentage points from the previous year and exceeded the absolute target by 17 points. The school also exceeded the target for its comparative measure, outperforming the district's graduation rate by 26 percentage points. In contrast, the school did not meet the target of 95% of students in the 5th year Graduation Cohort graduating when only 83% of the 2013 cohort graduated by the end of 2017-18.

POST SECONDARY PREPARATION

Albany Leadership met its college preparation goal in 2017-18, exceeding the target for all four measures included under its goal. That year, 82% of the school's 61 graduates demonstrated college preparation by earning a Regents diploma with advanced designation, passing a college level course, or passing an Advanced Placement exam with a score of 3 or higher.

1. Because the SUNY Trustees make a renewal decision before student achievement results for the final year of a charter term become available, the Accountability Period ends with the school year prior to the final year of the charter term. For a school in a subsequent charter term, the Accountability Period covers the final year of the previous charter term and ends with the school year prior to the final year of the current charter term.

2. Education Law § 2850(2) (f).

3. Education Law § 2854(1)(d).

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Additionally, 75% of graduates from 2017-18 matriculated into a college program the year after graduation meeting the target in the school's Accountability Plan. Further, the school's College, Career, and Civic Readiness Index ("CCCRI") of 168 exceeded the state's Measure of Interim Progress ("MIP") and the CCCRI of the district.

ELA

The school came close to meeting its ELA goal in 2017-18. That year, the percentage of students in the school's Accountability Cohort achieving the standard for graduating with a Regents diploma on the Regents Examination in English Language Arts, currently defined as scoring at least at Performance Level 3, exceeded the absolute target of 80%. Additionally, 87% of the school's Total Cohort scored at least at Performance Level 3, exceeding the district's performance by 17 percentage points. With 53% of the school's Accountability Cohort achieving the college and career readiness standard, currently defined as scoring at Performance Level 4 or above on the Regents Examination in English Language Arts, the school performed below the absolute target of 65%. However, the school's percentage of students achieving the standard exceeded the district Total Cohort by five percentage points. The school's Performance Index ("PI") of 161 was approximately the same as the district's PI of 162.

MATHEMATICS

The school also came close to meeting its mathematics goal in 2017-18. Albany Leadership exceeded the targets for all comparative measures included in its Accountability Plan. That year, 93% of the school's Accountability Cohort met the standard for graduation with a Regents diploma, exceeding the absolute target by 13 percentage points. The school's Total Cohort also exceeded the district's performance by 22 percentage points. In contrast, only 22% of the school's Accountability Cohort achieved the college and career readiness standard, currently defined as scoring at or above Performance Level 4 on a Regents mathematics exam. Although the school fell below the absolute target, the school's performance almost doubled the district performance on the same measure. Additionally, the school's PI in mathematics exceeded the district PI by 21 points.

SCIENCE

Albany Leadership met its science goal in 2017-18. The school exceeded the absolute target of 75% proficiency with 89% of its Accountability Cohort students scoring at least 65 on a Regents science exam. The school met the comparative measure outperforming the district by 19 percentage points.

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

SOCIAL STUDIES

The school also met its social studies goal. The school's 2014 Accountability Cohort posted proficiency rates on the U.S. History and Global History Regents exams that exceeded the target of 75%. The school's Total Cohort outperformed the district's proficiency on both exams.

NCLB

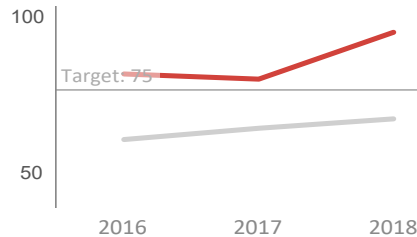
Albany Leadership was identified as a Focus Charter during the 2017-18 school year under the NCLB accountability system based on outcomes from 2015-16. The following year, the state's ESSA accountability system designated the school in good standing during 2018-19.

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

ALBANY LEADERSHIP CHARTER HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATE

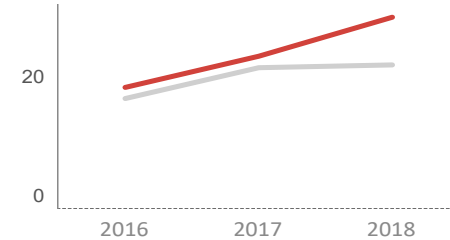
Comparative Measure: Graduation Rate. Each year, the percentage of **the school's students graduating** after completion of their fourth year will exceed the **District**.



	District	School
2016	60.5	80.0
2017	63.8	78.5
2018	66.6	92.4

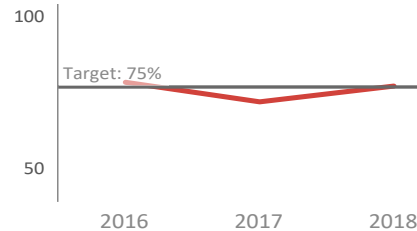
COLLEGE PREPARATION AND ATTAINMENT

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



	District Adv Diploma	School Adv Diploma
2016	17.0	18.8
2017	21.8	23.5
2018	22.2	29.5

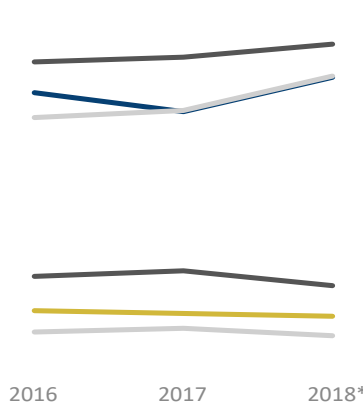
College Attainment Measure: Matriculation into College. Each year, 75 percent of **graduating students** will enroll in a college or university.



	Grad N	Matriculation %
2016	64	76.6
2017	51	70.6
2018	61	75.4

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS AND MATHEMATICS

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



	AMO	District PI	School APL
2016	174	127	148
2017	178	133	132
2018	189	162	161

	AMO	District PI	School APL
2016	159	99	122
2017	165	103	119
2018	149	95	116

*In 2017-18, the state transitioned to a new methodology to calculate the Performance Index and also replaced the AMO with the Measure of Interim Progress.

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BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

QUALITATIVE BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

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

SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 1B

DOES ALBANY LEADERSHIP HAVE AN ASSESSMENT SYSTEM THAT IMPROVES INSTRUCTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS AND STUDENT LEARNING?

Albany Leadership does not utilize its assessment system effectively to allow teachers to analyze assessment data, adjust instruction, and monitor student progress toward mastery. Albany Leadership also lacks established systems to use assessment data to inform professional development and coaching programs.

- The school administers assessments that are not consistently aligned to state standards. Teachers create and administer unit assessments across content areas, and also use a variety of formative assessments in their classrooms. Teachers also create interval assessments to benchmark student progress during the school year. While leaders expect teachers to align interval assessments to the corresponding Regents exams, they do not consistently provide the necessary support and oversight to teachers that ensure these assessments meet the rigorous requirements of the Regents exams. The school also administers standardized assessments including the STAR assessment in ELA and mathematics three times per year and a mock Regents exam in each subject once per year.
- Leaders have not established clear expectations for how teachers should use data to inform instruction. After each interval assessment the school expects the DCI and teachers meet to analyze data and create plans to inform instruction. However, with the vacancy in the DCI role for much of the year, teachers did not regularly engage in the data analysis process with leaders. The process and content for these meetings varies across content areas, and teachers do not possess consistent understandings of the expectations and outcomes for using interval assessments as well as STAR data. As such, the school lacks a system for teachers to utilize data to provide the appropriate academic interventions and for leaders to monitor the effectiveness of interventions.

4. An extensive body of research identifying and confirming the correlates of effective schools exists dating back four decades. Selected sources include:

<https://www.gao.gov/assets/80/77488.pdf>; and http://scholar.harvard.edu/files/fryer/files/dobbie_fryer_revision_final.pdf.

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

BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

- School leaders lack a system to use assessment data to inform teacher coaching and professional development. Although the instructional leadership team meets weekly, leaders do not regularly collaborate to review schoolwide assessment data to set priorities and develop coaching strategies.

SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 1C

DOES ALBANY LEADERSHIP'S CURRICULUM SUPPORT TEACHERS IN THEIR INSTRUCTIONAL PLANNING?

The school's instructional program lacks systematic support that develops teacher competency in curricular planning and implementation. Because the school did not solidify its instructional leadership structure until late in the current school year, leaders do not provide effective oversight of the curricular planning and review process. Albany Leadership has an opportunity early in the charter term to establish systems that result in high quality and rigorous instructional planning.

- Albany Leadership provides teachers with curricular materials aligned to state standards that have the potential to support effective instruction. However, given the school's inconsistencies with leadership and inexperienced teaching staff, leaders do not yet fully support teachers with a solid implementation of the curricular programs to meet student needs. The school closely follows EngageNY for ELA and mathematics. Science and social studies teachers use New Visions open source curricular materials. These curricula include scope and sequence documents and pacing guides. The school also partners with local colleges and universities to provide college credit bearing courses for all students.
- Although Albany Leadership provides teachers with a curricular framework, school leaders do not consistently provide the support needed for the inexperienced teaching staff to adapt curricula and create high quality lesson plans. Though teachers have access to past lesson plans, leaders do not consistently support or monitor teachers' use of previous plans as teachers essentially begin the planning process anew each year. Leaders conduct audits of lesson plans that focus disproportionately on issues of compliance, such as having curricular documents linked to the lesson plan, rather than on the quality of instructional methods. As such, lesson plans lack evidence that teachers have a strong content understanding and ability to plan instructional strategies that engage students in rigorous work and are differentiated to meet all students' needs.

BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 1D

IS HIGH QUALITY INSTRUCTION EVIDENT THROUGHOUT ALBANY LEADERSHIP?

Lessons at Albany Leadership lack rigor and fail to engage students in meaningful content in contrast to last school year. With one third of the teaching staff new to the school and seven teachers departing the school during this school year, instructional leaders prioritize coaching on classroom management and basic lesson planning support. However, lessons demonstrate low expectations for academic achievement and student behavior contributing to students' frequent off task behavior and achievement well below internal targets for interval and Regents assessments. As shown in the chart below, Institute team members conducted 23 classroom observations following a defined protocol used in all evaluations visits.

		GRADE				
		9	10	11	12	Total
CONTENT AREA	ELA	2	1	2		5
	Math	2	1	4		7
	Soc Stu	1	1	1	2	5
	Science	1	1	1	1	4
	Other	1			1	2
	Total	7	4	8	4	23

- Many teachers deliver lessons with clear objectives aligned to the school's curriculum (16 out of 23 lessons observed). Aligned with the school's coaching focus, nearly all lessons have posted objectives aligned to state standards, and lesson tasks generally align to the objective. However, while several classrooms have two teachers in the room, lessons generally fail to utilize both teachers effectively for academic instruction with the exception of the integrate co-teaching classrooms ("ICT") with a special education and general education teacher. Often one teacher leads instruction while the other is responsible for monitoring student behavior. Even with this model the second teacher often fails to consistently address or redirect misbehaviors.
- Teachers do not effectively use techniques to check for student understanding (7 out of 23 lessons observed). When teachers do ask check for understanding questions, they are typically basic recall questions. Teachers accept one word answers from a few volunteers rather than pushing for higher levels of participation from students in order to gauge whole class understanding of the objective. During work time, rather than individually

BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

addressing students' misconceptions, teachers either circulate without purpose or monitor student behavior. Lesson plans demonstrate teachers do not effectively plan opportunities to check for student understanding based on assessment data or student needs.

- Few teachers engage students in higher order thinking (3 out of 23 lessons observed). Concomitant with poor lesson planning, lesson activities are low rigor and teachers provide few opportunities for students to engage in academic discussion or rigorous problem solving. Although the school's lesson plan template includes a section for higher order questions, teachers' planned questions and strategies are ineffective. Lessons do not push students to elaborate, defend their thinking, or synthesize key concepts.
- Less than half of lessons maintain a focus on academic achievement (11 out of 23 lessons observed), a significant decline from the Institute's last visit during the school's charter renewal in 2017. In the lessons that maximize learning time, teachers use timers for pacing and have some academic and behavioral routines in place. However, in most lessons, teachers do not hold students to high expectations for behavior or academic achievement. Teachers lack the tools and skills to address egregious student behaviors such as loudly listening to music, swearing, sleeping, talking, and using cell phones. Class sizes are small in part due to the school's low daily attendance and student tardiness, yet the teachers in the room unsuccessfully redirect students' misbehaviors. As a result students are disengaged and do not fully participate in the lesson.

DOES ALBANY LEADERSHIP HAVE STRONG INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP?

In its 9th year of operation, after experiencing a high level of turnover of teachers and key leadership team members, Albany Leadership does not possess strong instructional leadership. School leaders have not communicated a clear instructional vision and the school lacks a system to integrate its various coaching supports. The school's professional development and coaching is not effectively increasing the inexperienced teaching staff's pedagogical skills.

BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

- Leaders do not communicate a clear instructional vision to staff members. While some staff members express general goals for all students to enter college and for the school to meet its Accountability Plan goals, staff members do not articulate schoolwide expectations for instruction. After the sudden departure of the previous principal at the beginning of the year, the current principal prioritized supporting new teachers and fulfilling the duties of the vacant DCI and dean of students positions. As a result, the school has not established instructional priorities for all staff members with an aligned long term plan for the academic program.
- After facing leadership turnover at the start of the year, Albany Leadership's instructional leadership team continues to build its capacity to support the development of the teaching staff as of May 2019. One month before the Institute's visit, the assistant principal shifted from oversight of academics, instruction, and behavior into the DCI role to oversee solely curriculum and instruction, and the school hired a dean of students. As such, the leadership team, now consisting of the principal, two external coaches from the Albany Charter School Network ("ACSN"), director of student support services, DCI, and instructional supervisor for humanities, continues to shift roles and responsibilities. Despite restructuring and expanding the leadership team, current leaders do not effectively coordinate to monitor the health of the academic program.
- Albany Leadership's coaching systems do not improve teachers' instructional skills at a rate necessary to ensure consistent, high student achievement. The principal, DCI, two ASCN coaches, the director of student support services, and instructional supervisor for humanities provide classroom observations and feedback. However, the observations and feedback have produced minimal results as teachers continue to lack mastery on basic pedagogical skills that coaches have provided feedback on for most of the year. This year's interval assessment data in Regents classes show nearly all classes at least 10 percentage points below target for the Regents exam with most classes more than 30 percentage points below target.
- The school's professional development program does not target the needs of the teaching staff. Although the principal recognizes a need to improve sessions for next year, the school currently does not use classroom observation data to inform or differentiate professional development sessions. Leaders do not properly align the amount of time spent on certain topics with the needs of teachers. Rather than using weekly professional development time to build teachers' pedagogical skills and content knowledge, staff members spend the majority of time identifying and monitoring strategies for the school to meet its Accountability Plan goals, such as implementing Saturday school or communicating more with parents. The effectiveness of these strategies is inconsistent, and staff members lack robust data and meaningful leader feedback to evaluate progress and the quality of action planning.

BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

- Albany Leadership lacks formal systems for teachers and leaders to collaborate on curricular and instructional content planning. Although department and grade teams meet once per month, staff members often use this time for administrative tasks and ad hoc duties rather than focusing on academic content. Instructional staff members do not have regularly structured time for co-planning within and across grade levels, content areas, and between general education and at-risk staff.
- Although instructional leaders conduct teacher evaluations, in its 9th year of operation, the school does not consistently hold teachers accountable for student achievement. School leaders have placed teachers on performance improvement plans based on classroom observations and curriculum audits. However, the lack of collaboration among instructional leaders results in a lack of alignment in identifying teachers' needs and determining necessary supports. As such, the school does not have systems to effectively hold teachers accountable to a set of pedagogical standards and monitor teachers' improvement over time.

SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 1F

DOES ALBANY LEADERSHIP MEET THE EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF AT-RISK STUDENTS?

Albany Leadership has programs in place to meet the needs of English language learners ("ELLs") and students with disabilities. The schools continues to develop its systems to meet the needs of students at risk of academic failure.

- The school has clear procedures for identifying students with disabilities, ELLs, and students struggling academically. The school uses a home language questionnaire to identify families who speak languages other than English and administers the New York State Identification Test for English Language Learners ("NYSITELL") to eligible students. Albany Leadership uses STAR ELA and mathematics assessment data to identify students in need of academic intervention. The director of student support services assigns teachers to provide tier 2 and 3 supports to students based on the STAR data. If students do not make progress after intensified support, the school may refer the student to the district Committee on Special Education ("CSE") to be evaluated for an Individualized Education Program ("IEP").

BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

- Early in the charter term the school has an opportunity to improve the quality and coordination of the academic interventions provided to students struggling academically. The school changed the structure of the academic intervention program for the 2018-19 school year. At-risk providers now spend more time pushing into classrooms to support tier 2 and 3 students and less time pulling small groups outside the classroom. As a result, teachers provide less tier 2 and 3 supports, and the school has identified that students identified as struggling academically through the school's Response to Intervention ("RTI") program are making less growth on the STAR assessments than in the previous year. At the time of the visit, school leadership acknowledged the opportunity to readjust the RTI service model to ensure all students struggling academically receive frequent and effective interventions.
- Albany Leadership's at-risk programming meets the needs of ELLs and students with disabilities. ELL teachers provide standalone classes for ELLs differentiated based on students' language acquisition needs and push into core content classes based on student need. ELL teachers create formal achievement goals and use mock Regents data during the year to monitor progress toward grade level content mastery, and review the NYSESLAT data to adjust students' skill based support for achieving language proficiency. For students with disabilities, the school provides ICT in core classes and special education teachers provide small group pull out instruction based on students' IEPs. Special education teachers use classroom work samples to monitor students' progress toward IEP goals every quarter.
- The school does not provide structured time for at-risk providers and general education teachers to collaborate to plan instruction. Some general education teachers set up consistent times to meet with at-risk program providers for planning and coordination. However, meetings are not consistent across the entire teaching staff, and leaders provide little oversight to ensure coordination happens on a regular basis.

BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 2C

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

In its 9th year of operation, Albany Leadership continues to develop its capacity to deliver a high quality educational program. The school struggles to retain high quality leaders and teachers. The school maintains its relationship with ACSN for teacher coaching and support but reset its organizational structure and has not consistently maintained its capacity to implement a rigorous instructional vision.

- Albany Leadership adjusted several policies and operational systems necessary for realizing the school's mission in its 9th year of operation, but these systems have not yet been effective. The school offers a high school course sequence that includes various college level courses across all core subjects; however, instruction in these courses suffers from the school's inconsistent practices to coach and support teachers. Although Albany Leadership maintains a relationship with ACSN for teacher coaching and development, the school's instructional leadership team has not fully developed its practices for teacher coaching and professional development. This year, the school added staff members to an attendance office in order to increase student attendance rates. However, at the time of the visit, the average daily attendance rate was similar to the previous year's rate. Some teachers report that they do not have a clear sense of expectations for their performance this year and are unclear about their professional evaluation criteria.
- After the second consecutive year of a change in organizational structure due to leadership turnover, teachers and staff members are unclear about the lines of accountability at the school. With the hiring of a new DCI, reinstatement of a dean of students to the school's organizational structure, and creation of an instructional supervisor for humanities role, staff members are unclear about who to go to for specific curriculum, instruction, and coaching questions.
- Albany Leadership has experienced an increase in suspensions this year in comparison to last year. In response, the school recently developed a continuum of care model to provide consistent schoolwide expectations to all staff members about how to effectively address students' social and emotional needs and maximize students focus on learning activities. The continuum model requires teachers to work with culture leaders to reduce the frequency with which students experience suspension from school and lose instructional time. Because the model is new, the effectiveness of the continuum of care model is yet to be determined.

BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

- Albany Leadership struggles to retain high quality staff members. Following the 2017-18 school year, the school lost or did not rehire 15 of 36 teachers. Before the start of the 2018-19 school year, the school's previous principal resigned. At the end of August, the board filled the principal position and ensured that the year started with teachers in every available position. With several new staff members, the school is focusing its teacher coaching efforts on developing its newest teachers. Other teachers report receiving little to no support throughout this year. Although leaders recognize the loss of some teacher during this school year, the school does not have cogent plans to incentivize strong teachers and staff members to maintain their positions with the school.
- The school has the necessary resources and maintains a healthy financial status. Following a recent change in the business manager position, the school invested in consulting support for the new business manager, which has allowed the school to effectively monitor and maintain its finances. This year, the school consistently maintains enrollment slightly higher than its chartered enrollment of 350 students.
- The school takes steps to monitor its enrollment of ELLs, students with disabilities, and economically disadvantaged students and makes purposeful and thoughtful efforts to recruit students that identify in these categories. With proportions of ELLs and students with disabilities enrollment that match those of the district, Albany Leadership graduates ELLs, students with disabilities, and economically disadvantaged students at rates similar to general education students in the school.
- Although Albany Leadership struggles to support all teachers and retain highly effective staff members, the board and the school leadership articulated no clear plan to review the school's academic and operational programs to ensure effectiveness and efficiency for next year.

BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 2D

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

Albany Leadership's board attempts to ensure the school meets its Accountability Plan goals. After the unexpected resignation of the former leader at the start of the 2018-19 school year, the board hired a new leader in August 2018. The board worked with urgency to ensure the school had a leader in place for the start of the year, but did not effectively communicate clear performance expectations or a system of support to set leaders up for successful onboarding during the 2018-19 school year.

- The school's board possesses the skills necessary to provide effective oversight to the academic, financial, and operational health of the school. Board members possess expertise in a variety of fields such as higher education, educational leadership, finance, policy, and community relations. The board operates two committees, finance and accountability, that meet monthly.
- The board receives regular updates to monitor the academic, operational, and fiscal components of the school's program. With the recent leader transition, the board is working with the school's new leader to ensure the monthly reporting documents continue to include the information necessary for the board to provide rigorous oversight to the school's program.
- Albany Leadership does not successfully retain school leaders, as the board has overseen three principal transitions within the past three years. The board worked with urgency to ensure the selection and hiring processes of each leader transition did not diminish the school's capacity to function effectively. During the most recent leader transition, the board selected the school's former DCI to assume the principal position. The board has deferred to the new leader to carry out the instructional vision and implement priorities based on the former leader's intended plans. Aside from monthly board updates the board does not proactively monitor the progress of the school leader transition or the program on the ground. More so, the board did not work with urgency to develop an onboarding plan for the new leader and, instead, relies on the leader to initiate such supports. At the time of the visit, the board did not have a plan to evaluate the leader at the end of the school year.

Albany
Leadership

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APPENDIX A: School Overview

BOARD OF TRUSTEES¹

CHAIR

Elizabeth Robertson

VICE CHAIR & SECRETARY

Margaret M. Moree

TRUSTEES

Etwin Bowman

Sharon Cates-Williams

James Celestine

Eldon Harris

SCHOOL LEADERS

PRINCIPAL

Carina Cook, Principal (August 2018 to Present)

William Rivers, Principal (September 2017 to August 2018)

Christina Roberts, Principal (January 2014 to September 2017)

Nadeen Herring, Interim Principal (June 2013 to December 2013)

Melissa Jarvis Cedeno, Principal (2010-11 to May 2013)

SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS

SCHOOL YEAR	CHARTERED ENROLLMENT	ACTUAL ENROLLMENT ²	ACTUAL AS A PERCENTAGE OF CHARTERED ENROLLMENT	PROPOSED GRADES	ACTUAL GRADES
2010-11	125	147	118%	9-10	9-10
2011-12	225	209	93%	9-11	9-11
2012-13	325	333	102%	9-12	9-12
2013-14	375	328	87%	9-12	9-12
2014-15	375	341	91%	9-12	9-12
2015-16	355	348	98%	9-12	9-12
2016-17	360	350	97%	9-12	9-12
2017-18	365	355	97%	9-12	9-12
2018-19	350	351	100%	9-12	9-12

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

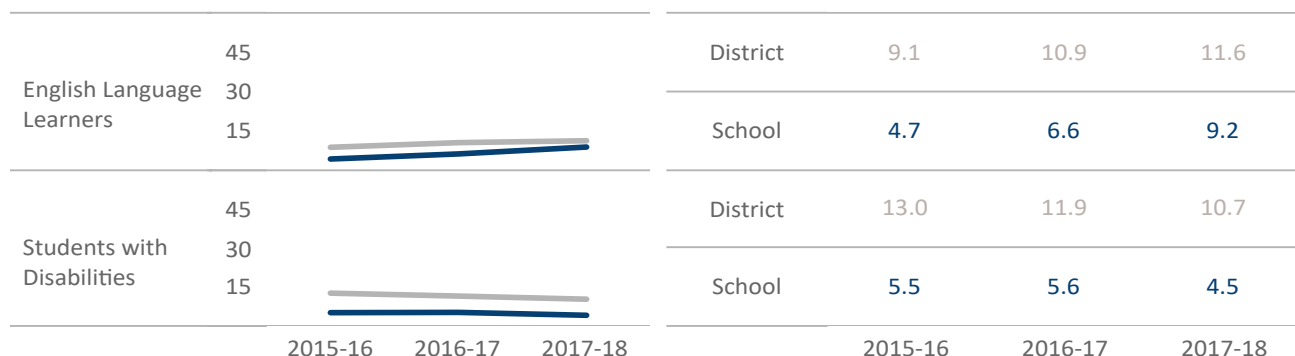
2. Source: Institute's Official Enrollment Binder. (Figures may differ slightly from New York State Report Cards, depending on date of data collection.)

APPENDIX A: School Overview

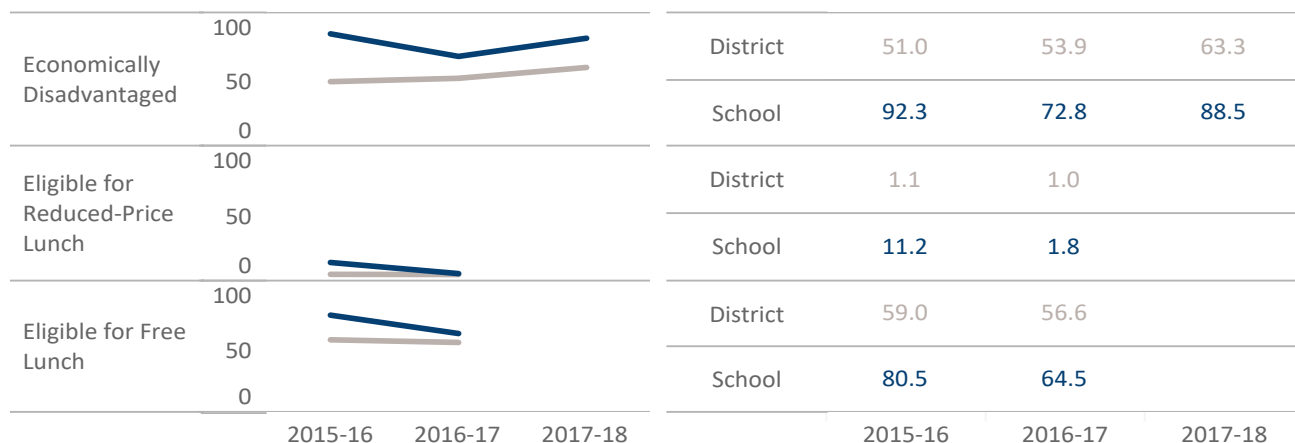
Albany Leadership Charter High School for Girls

Albany CSD

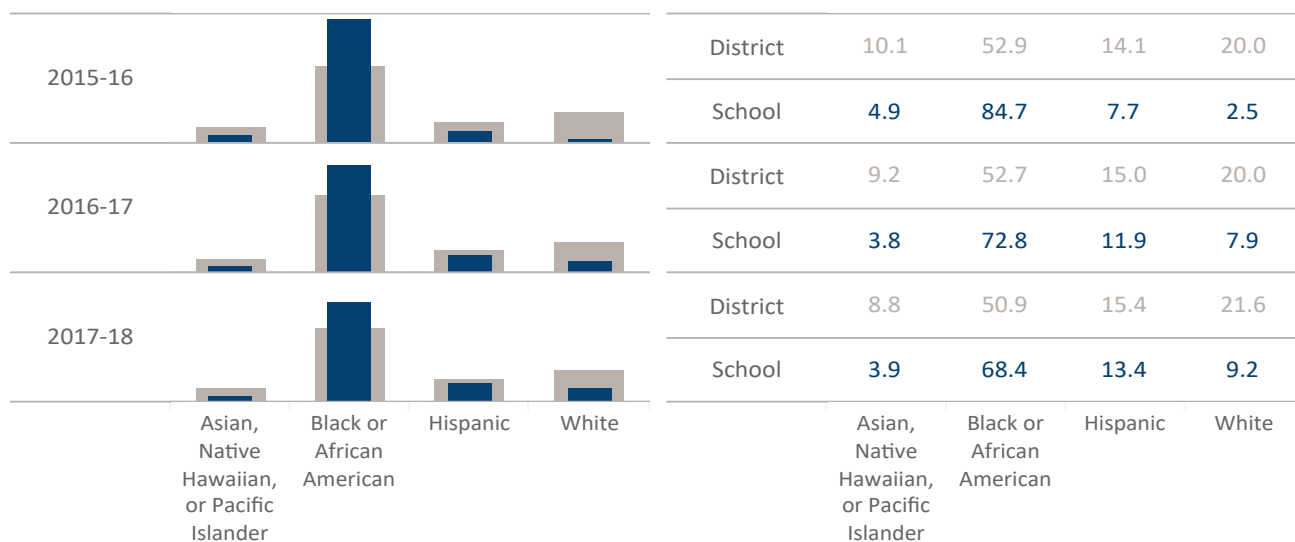
Student Demographics: Special Populations



Student Demographics: Free/Reduced Lunch



Student Demographics: Race/Ethnicity

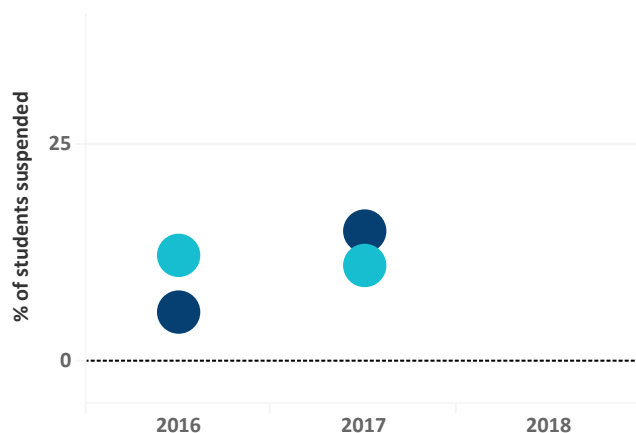


Data reported in these charts reflect BEDS day enrollment counts as reported by the New York State Education Department

APPENDIX A: School Overview

Albany Leadership Charter High School for Girls

Albany CSD



School ISS Rate

School OSS Rate

2016

12.1

5.5

2017

10.9

15.0

2018

N/A

N/A

District data suitable for comparison are not available. The percentage rate shown here is calculated using the method employed by the New York City Department of Education ("NYCDOE"): the total the number of students receiving an in school or out of school suspension at any time during the school year is divided by the total enrollment, then multiplied by 100. The school is unable to report suspension data for 2017-18.

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



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

2016 2017 2018

3

1

0

Albany Leadership Charter High School for Girls's Enrollment and Retention Status: 2017-18

			District Target	School
Enrollment	economically disadvantaged	<div><div></div></div>	68.6	88.8
	English language learners	<div><div></div></div>	9.0	11.2
	students with disabilities	<div><div></div></div>	14.8	4.5
Retention	economically disadvantaged	<div><div></div></div>	88.1	77.7
	English language learners	<div><div></div></div>	91.6	79.2
	students with disabilities	<div><div></div></div>	84.0	68.8

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

APPENDIX A: School Overview

SCHOOL VISIT HISTORY

SCHOOL YEAR	VISIT TYPE	DATE
2010-11	First Year	February 17, 2011
2011-12	Evaluation	November 9-10, 2011
2013-14	Evaluation	January 8-9, 2014
2014-15	Initial Renewal	November 5-6, 2014
2016-17	Evaluation	May 9, 2017
2017-18	Subsequent Renewal	October 25-26, 2017
2018-19	Evaluation	April 30 - May 1, 2019

CONDUCT OF THE VISIT

DATE(S) OF VISIT	EVALUATION TEAM MEMBERS	TITLE
April 30 - May 1, 2019	Hannah Hansen	School Evaluation Analyst
	Denise Gaffor	School Evaluation Analyst
	Kerri Rizzolo	Senior Analyst
	Jeff Wasbes	Executive Deputy Director for Accountability
	Cheyenne Batista São Roque	External Consultant

CHARTER CYCLE CONTEXT

CHARTER TERM	ACCOUNTABILITY PERIOD ³	ANTICIPATED RENEWAL VISIT
First Year of Subsequent Five Year Charter Term	Second Year of Five Year Accountability Period	Fall 2021

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

APPENDIX A: School Overview

KEY DESIGN ELEMENTS:

ELEMENT	EVIDENT?
Single gender education;	+
Extended school day and school year;	+
College preparatory curriculum; and,	+
Character education through service learning and advisory.	+

APPENDIX B: SCHOOL PERFORMANCE SUMMARY

Albany Leadership Charter High School for Girls

High School Graduation

2015-16				2016-17				2017-18			
			MET				MET				MET
Leading	1. Each year, 75 percent of students in the second year high school Total Graduation Cohort will score at or above proficiency on at least three different Regents exams required for graduation.	2014 Cohort N	% Passing ≥ 3 Regents		2015 Cohort N	% Passing ≥ 3 Regents		2016 Cohort N	% Passing ≥ 3 Regents		
		84	71.4	NO	114	55.3	NO	87	50.6	NO	
Absolute	2. Each year, 75 percent of students in the Total Graduation Cohort will graduate after the completion of their fourth year.	2012 Cohort N	%		2013 Cohort N	%		2014 Cohort N	%		
		80	80.0	YES	65	78.5	YES	66	92.4	YES	
Comparative	3. Each year, 95 percent of students will graduate after the completion of their fifth year.	2011 Cohort N	% Graduating		2012 Cohort N	% Graduating		2013 Cohort N	% Graduating		
		59	76.3	NO	80	81.3	NO	65	83.1	NO	
	4. Each year, the percent of students graduating after the completion of their fourth year will exceed that of the local school district.	Comparison School District: Albany			Comparison School District: Albany			Comparison School District: Albany			
		School	District		School	District		School	District		
		80.0	60.5	YES	78.5	63.8	YES	92.4	66.6	YES	

College Preparation

2015-16				2016-17				2017-18			
			MET				MET				MET
Absolute	1. Each year, 75 percent of graduating students will demonstrate their preparation for college by at least one or some combination of indicators of college readiness. ¹							Graduate N	%		
								61	82.0	YES	
	2. Each year, 75 percent of graduating students will matriculate in a college or university in the year after graduation.	2012 Cohort N	%		2013 Cohort N	%		Graduate N	%		
		64	76.6	YES	51	70.6	NO	61	75.4	YES	
Comparative	3. Each year, the College, Career, and Civic Readiness Index ("CCCRI") for the school's Total Cohort will exceed the state's MIP set forth in the state's ESSA accountability system.							CCCRI	MIP		
								168	128	YES	
	4. Each year, the school's CCCRI for the Total Cohort will exceed that of the district's Total Cohort.	Comparison School District: Albany									
		School	District								
		168	90							YES	

1. The indicators include, but are not limited to: passing an Advanced Placement exam with a score of 3 or higher, earning a score of 4 or higher on an International Baccalaureate exam, passing a College Level Examination Program exam, passing a college level course, achieving the college and career readiness benchmark on the SAT, earning a Regents diploma with advanced designation.

APPENDIX B: SCHOOL PERFORMANCE SUMMARY

Albany Leadership Charter High School for Girls

English Language Arts

English Language Arts		2015-16			2016-17			2017-18		
		MET			MET			MET		
Absolute	1. Each year, 65 percent of students in the fourth year Accountability Cohort will meet or exceed Common Core expectations (currently scoring at or above Performance Level 4 on the Regents Exam in English Language Arts (Common Core).	2012 Cohort N	%		2013 Cohort N	%		2014 Cohort N	%	
		69	56.5	NO	57	40.4	NO	59	52.5	NO
Growth	2. Each year, 50 percent of students in the fourth year Accountability Cohort who did not score proficient on the 8 th grade ELA exam will meet or exceed Common Core expectations (currently scoring at or above Performance Level 4 on the exam).	Low Performing Entrants N	%		Low Performing Entrants N	%		Low Performing Entrants N	%	
		NR	NR	NO	NR	NR	NO	NR	NR	NO
Comparative	3. The percentage of students in the Total Cohort scoring at or above Level 4 on the Regents English exam will exceed the district.	Comparison District: Albany			Comparison District: Albany			Comparison District: Albany		
		School	District		School	District		School	District	
		56.5	23.0	YES	40.4	45.5	NO	52.5	47.6	YES
	4. The school’s performance index (“PI”) in ELA of students in the fourth year of their Accountability Cohort will exceed that of the district.	148	127	YES	132	133	NO	161	162	NO

Mathematics

Mathematics		2015-16			2016-17			2017-18		
		MET			MET			MET		
Absolute	1. Each year, 65 percent of students in the fourth year Accountability Cohort will meet or exceed Common Core expectations (currently scoring at or above Performance Level 4 on a Regents Common Core mathematics exam).	2012 Cohort N	%		2013 Cohort N	%		2014 Cohort N	%	
		69	27.5	NO	57	28.1	NO	59	22.0	NO
Growth	2. Each year, 50 percent of students in the fourth year Accountability Cohort who did not score proficient on the 8 th grade math exam will meet or exceed Common Core expectations (currently scoring at or above Performance Level 4 on the exam).	Low Performing Entrants N	%		Low Performing Entrants N	%		Low Performing Entrants N	%	
		NR	NR	NO	NR	NR	NO	NR	NR	NO
Comparative	3. The percentage of students in the Total Cohort scoring at or above Level 4 on a Regents mathematics exam will exceed the district.	Comparison District: Albany			Comparison District: Albany			Comparison District: Albany		
		School	District		School	District		School	District	
		27.5	7.7	YES	28.1	12.8	YES	22.0	11.1	YES
	4. The school’s PI in mathematics of students in the fourth year of their Accountability Cohort will exceed that of the district.	122	99	YES	119	103	YES	116	95	YES

APPENDIX C: SUNY Renewal Benchmarks

VERSION 5.0, MAY 2012

Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Renewal Benchmarks adapt and elaborate on these correlates.

APPENDIX C: SUNY Renewal Benchmarks

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

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

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

APPENDIX C: SUNY Renewal Benchmarks

RENEWAL QUESTION 1

IS THE SCHOOL AN ACADEMIC SUCCESS?

SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 1A

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

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

- English language arts;
- mathematics;
- science;
- social studies (high school only);
- NCLB;
- high school graduation and college preparation (if applicable); and
- optional academic goals included by the school.

SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 1B

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

The following elements are generally present:

- the school regularly administers valid and reliable assessments aligned to the school's curriculum and state performance standards;
- the school has a valid and reliable process for scoring and analyzing assessments;
- the school makes assessment data accessible to teachers, school leaders and board members;
- teachers use assessment results to meet students' needs by adjusting classroom instruction, grouping students and/or identifying students for special intervention;
- school leaders use assessment results to evaluate teacher effectiveness and to develop professional development and coaching strategies; and
- the school regularly communicates to parents/guardians about their students' progress and growth.

APPENDIX C: SUNY Renewal Benchmarks

SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 1C

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

The following elements are generally present:

- the school has a curriculum framework with student performance expectations that provides a fixed, underlying structure, aligned to state standards and across grades;
- in addition to the framework, the school has supporting tools (i.e., curriculum maps or scope and sequence documents) that provide a bridge between the curriculum framework and lesson plans;
- teachers know what to teach and when to teach it based on these documents;
- the school has a process for selecting, developing and reviewing its curriculum documents and its resources for delivering the curriculum; and
- teachers plan purposeful and focused lessons.

SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 1D

HIGH QUALITY INSTRUCTION IS EVIDENT THROUGHOUT THE SCHOOL.

The following elements are generally present:

- teachers deliver purposeful lessons with clear objectives aligned to the school's curriculum;
- teachers regularly and effectively use techniques to check for student understanding;
- teachers include opportunities in their lessons to challenge students with questions and activities that develop depth of understanding and higher-order thinking and problem solving skills;
- teachers maximize learning time (e.g., appropriate pacing, on-task student behavior, clear lesson focus and clear directions to students); transitions are efficient; and
- teachers have effective classroom management techniques and routines that create a consistent focus on academic achievement.

SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 1E

THE SCHOOL HAS STRONG INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP.

The following elements are generally present:

- the school's leadership establishes an environment of high expectations for teacher performance (in content knowledge and pedagogical skills) and in which teachers believe that all students can succeed;
- the instructional leadership is adequate to support the development of the teaching staff;
- instructional leaders provide sustained, systemic and effective coaching and supervision that improves teachers' instructional effectiveness;

APPENDIX C: SUNY Renewal Benchmarks

SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 1F

- instructional leaders provide opportunities and guidance for teachers to plan curriculum and instruction within and across grade levels;
- instructional leaders implement a comprehensive professional development program that develops the competencies and skills of all teachers;
- professional development activities are interrelated with classroom practice;
- instructional leaders regularly conduct teacher evaluations with clear criteria that accurately identify teachers' strengths and weaknesses; and
- instructional leaders hold teachers accountable for quality instruction and student achievement.

THE SCHOOL MEETS THE EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF AT-RISK STUDENTS

The following elements are generally present:

- the school uses clear procedures for identifying at-risk students including students with disabilities, English language learners and those struggling academically;
- the school has adequate intervention programs to meet the needs of at-risk students;
- general education teachers, as well as specialists, utilize effective strategies to support students within the general education program;
- the school adequately monitors the progress and success of at-risk students;
- teachers are aware of their students' progress toward meeting IEP goals, achieving English proficiency or school-based goals for struggling students;
- the school provides adequate training and professional development to identify at-risk students and to help teachers meet students' needs; and
- the school provides opportunities for coordination between classroom teachers and at-risk program staff including the school nurse, if applicable.

APPENDIX C: SUNY Renewal Benchmarks

RENEWAL QUESTION 2

IS THE SCHOOL AN EFFECTIVE, VIABLE ORGANIZATION?

SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 2A

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

The following elements are generally present:

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

SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 2B

PARENTS/GUARDIANS AND STUDENTS ARE SATISFIED WITH THE SCHOOL.

The following elements are generally present:

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

SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 2C

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

The following elements are generally present:

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

APPENDIX C: SUNY Renewal Benchmarks

SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 2D

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

The following elements are generally present:

- board members possess adequate skills and have put in place structures and procedures with which to govern the school and oversee management of day-to-day operations in order to ensure the school's future as an academically successful, financially healthy and legally compliant organization;
- the board requests and receives sufficient information to provide rigorous oversight of the school's program and finances;
- it establishes clear priorities, objectives and long-range goals, (including Accountability Plan, fiscal, facilities and fundraising), and has in place benchmarks for tracking progress as well as a process for their regular review and revision;
- the board successfully recruits, hires and retains key personnel, and provides them with sufficient resources to function effectively;
- the board regularly evaluates its own performance and that of the school leaders and the management company (if applicable), holding them accountable for student achievement; and
- the board effectively communicates with the school community including school leadership, staff, parents/guardians and students.

SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 2E

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

The following elements are generally present:

- the board effectively communicates with its partner or management organizations as well as key contractors such as back-office service providers and ensures that it receives value in exchange for contracts and relationships it enters into and effectively monitors such relationships;
- the board takes effective action when there are organizational, leadership, management, facilities or fiscal deficiencies; or where the management or partner organization fails to meet expectations; to correct those deficiencies and puts in place benchmarks for determining if the partner organization corrects them in a timely fashion;
- the board regularly reviews and updates board and school policies as needed and has in place an orientation process for new members;
- the board effectively recruits and selects new members in order to maintain adequate skill sets and expertise for effective governance and structural continuity;

APPENDIX C: SUNY Renewal Benchmarks

- the board implements a comprehensive and strict conflict of interest policy (and/or code of ethics)—consistent with that set forth in the charter and with the General Municipal Law—and consistently abides by them throughout the term of the charter;
- the board generally avoids conflicts of interest; where not possible, the board manages those conflicts in a clear and transparent manner;
- the board implements a process for dealing with complaints consistent with that set forth in the charter, makes the complaint policy clear to all stakeholders, and follows the policy including acting on complaints in a timely fashion;
- the board abides by its by-laws including, but not limited to, provisions regarding trustee election and the removal and filling of vacancies; and
- the board holds all meetings in accordance with the Open Meetings Law and records minutes for all meetings including executive sessions and, as appropriate, committee meetings.

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

The following elements are generally present:

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

SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 2F

APPENDIX C: SUNY Renewal Benchmarks

RENEWAL QUESTION 3

IS THE SCHOOL FISCALLY SOUND?

SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 3A

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

The following elements are generally present:

- the school has clear budgetary objectives and budget preparation procedures;
- board members, school management and staff contribute to the budget process, as appropriate;
- the school frequently compares its long-range fiscal plan to actual progress and adjusts it to meet changing conditions;
- the school routinely analyzes budget variances; the board addresses material variances and makes necessary revisions; and
- actual expenses are equal to, or less than, actual revenue with no material exceptions.

SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 3B

THE SCHOOL MAINTAINS APPROPRIATE INTERNAL CONTROLS AND PROCEDURES.

The following elements are generally present:

- the school follows a set of comprehensive written fiscal policies and procedures;
- the school accurately records and appropriately documents transactions in accordance with management's direction, laws, regulations, grants and contracts;
- the school safeguards its assets;
- the school identifies/analyzes risks and takes mitigating actions;
- the school has controls in place to ensure that management decisions are properly carried out and monitors and assesses controls to ensure their adequacy;
- the school's trustees and employees adhere to a code of ethics;
- the school ensures duties are appropriately segregated, or institutes compensating controls;
- the school ensures that employees performing financial functions are appropriately qualified and adequately trained;
- the school has systems in place to provide the appropriate information needed by staff and the board to make sound financial decisions and to fulfill compliance requirements;
- a staff member of the school reviews grant agreements and restrictive gifts and monitors compliance with all stated conditions;
- the school prepares payroll according to appropriate state and federal regulations and school policy;

APPENDIX C: SUNY Renewal Benchmarks

SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 3C

- the school ensures that employees, trustees and volunteers who handle cash and investments are bonded to help assure the safeguarding of assets; and
- the school takes corrective action in a timely manner to address any internal control or compliance deficiencies identified by its external auditor, the Institute, and/or the State Education Department or the Comptroller, if needed.

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

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

- annual financial statement audit reports including federal Single Audit report, if applicable;
- annual budgets and cash flow statements;
- un-audited quarterly reports of income, expenses, and enrollment;
- bi-monthly enrollment reports to the district and, if applicable, to the State Education Department including proper documentation regarding the level of special education services provided to students; and
- grant expenditure reports.

SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 3D

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

The following elements are generally present:

- the school maintains sufficient cash on hand to pay current bills and those that are due shortly;
- the school maintains adequate liquid reserves to fund expenses in the event of income loss (generally three months);
- the school prepares and monitors cash flow projections;
- If the school includes philanthropy in its budget, it monitors progress toward its development goals on a periodic basis;
- If necessary, the school pursues district state aid intercepts with the state education department to ensure adequate per pupil funding; and
- the school accumulates unrestricted net assets that are equal to or exceed two percent of the school's operating budget for the upcoming year.

APPENDIX C: SUNY Renewal Benchmarks

RENEWAL QUESTION 4

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

SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 4A

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

Based on elements present in the Application for Charter Renewal:

- the school is likely to fulfill its mission in the next charter period;
- the school has an enrollment plan that can support the school program;
- the school calendar and daily schedules clearly provide sufficient instructional time to meet all legal requirements, allow the school to meet its proposed Accountability Plan goals and abide by its proposed budget;
- key design elements are consistent with the mission statement and are feasible given the school's budget and staffing;
- a curriculum framework for added grades aligns with the state's performance standards; and
- plans in the other required Exhibits indicate that the school's structure is likely to support the educational program.

SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 4B

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

Based on elements present in the Application for Charter Renewal:

- for those grades served during the last charter period, the school has plans for sustaining and (where possible) improving upon the student outcomes it has compiled during the last charter period including any adjustments or additions to the school's educational program;
- for a school that is seeking to add grades, the school is likely to meet its Accountability Plan goals and the SUNY Renewal Benchmarks at the new grade levels; and
- where the school will provide secondary school instruction, it has presented a set of requirements for graduation that students are likely to meet and that are consistent with the graduation standards set by the Board of Regents.

APPENDIX C: SUNY Renewal Benchmarks

SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 4C

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

Based on elements present in the Application for Charter Renewal:

- school trustees are likely to possess a range of experience, skills, and abilities sufficient to oversee the academic, organizational and fiscal performance of the school;
- plans by the school board to orient new trustees to their roles and responsibilities, and, if appropriate, to participate in ongoing board training are likely to sustain the board's ability to carry out its responsibilities;
- if the school plans to change an association with a partner or management organization in the term of a future charter, it has provided a clear rationale for the disassociation and an outline indicating how it will manage the functions previously associated with that partnering organization; and
- if the school is either moving from self-management to a management structure or vice-versa, or is changing its charter management organization/educational service provider, its plans indicate that it will be managed in an effective, sound and viable manner including appropriate oversight of the academic and fiscal performance of the school or the management organization.

SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 4D

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

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

- the school's budgets adequately support staffing, enrollment and facility projections;
- fiscal plans are based on the sound use of financial resources to support academic program needs;
- fiscal plans are clear, accurate, complete and based on reasonable assumptions;
- information on enrollment demand provides clear evidence for the reasonableness of projected enrollment; and
- facility plans are likely to meet educational program needs.

