

THE SUNY CHARTER SCHOOLS INSTITUTE

SCHOOL EVALUATION REPORT
**ALBANY COMMUNITY CHARTER
SCHOOL**

VISIT DATE: MAY 30 - 31, 2019

REPORT DATE: JULY 16, 2019

SUNY Charter Schools Institute

SUNY Plaza

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Albany, NY 12246

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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 in a diagonal line 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. Several paper clips in various colors (orange, light green, pink, blue, black) are 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 May 30-31, 2019 to Albany Community Charter School (“Albany Community”). 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 Community on July 15, 2005. The school opened its doors in the fall of 2006, initially serving students in Kindergarten and 1st grade. Albany Community is in the third year of its third charter term and is chartered to enroll 675 students in Kindergarten – 8th grade. The school is located in the Albany City School District (the “district”) in privately owned facilities at 65 Krank Street, Albany, NY (Kindergarten – 4th grade), and 42 S. Dove Street, Albany, NY (5th – 8th grade).

The mission of Albany Community is:



To provide a high quality educational experience for children in the Albany area by building a shared responsibility and commitment for student success. We believe all children can excel in a nurturing and supportive environment of high expectations, love, and respect, giving them the ability to determine their future success in school and life. Through a relentless focus on academic achievement and character development, we seek to develop in our students the academic and social skills necessary to enable them to discover their unique gifts and talents in order to become responsible public citizens dedicated to the advancement of one's self, one's family, and one's community.

In its third charter term, Albany Community lacks strong systems to support teachers with meeting the needs of all students particularly at-risk students. Despite improvements in structures for curriculum and reviewing assessment data, vacancies in key roles continue to hinder leaders' abilities to provide regular coaching and support to at-risk program providers and some general education teachers. The school's board of trustees (the “board”) recognizes the need to improve its capacity to provide more effective oversight of the program and sustained, effective support to school leaders.

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 English language arts 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/. Please refer to the performance summary section of Appendix A for a breakdown of this data.

In 2017-18, the third year of the school's five year Accountability Period, Albany Community did not meet its ELA goal after not having met the goal in the two prior years. The school met its mathematics, science, and No Child Left Behind ("NCLB") goals in 2017-18.

ELA

In 2017-18, Albany Community did not meet its ELA goal. Notwithstanding an increase of 10 percentage points from the prior year, 32% of students enrolled for at least two years scoring at or above proficiency is far from the school's absolute target of 75%. Although the 3rd and 8th grades posted strong achievement on the state's exams, high performance was not consistent. For example, 51% of the school's 3rd grade students enrolled for at least two years scored at or above proficiency, and only 17% of the school's 7th grade students scored at or above proficiency. Notwithstanding the slightly higher performance of the 3rd and 8th grades in 2017-18, Albany Community posted an overall negative effect size for the third consecutive year. Although the 8th grade ELA growth has been high each year since 2015-16, the school's average growth score for 4th – 8th grade during the same years does not demonstrate that the school is growing the learning of all students such that they will be ready to succeed in high school after finishing 8th grade at Albany Community.

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

MATHEMATICS

Albany Community demonstrated growth in mathematics outcomes and met its mathematics goal in 2017-18. With 40% of students enrolled in at least their second year scoring at or above proficiency, the school performed 23 percentage points higher than the district. This year, Albany Community's comparative mathematics effect size of 0.26 nearly met the target of 0.3 and is the first positive effect size for the school in the current charter term. The school performed slightly higher than expected compared to demographically similar schools across the state. Despite the school's overall growth in performance, the recent positive results are not evident in every grade level that produces data on the state's assessments. Higher performance concentrates in 3rd, 4th, and 8th grade while the mathematics achievement in 5th, 6th, and 7th grade remains low. The school's overall growth score in mathematics exceeded its target of 50; however, all grades did not demonstrate high growth. The school's 4th, 6th, and 7th grades posted growth scores significantly lower than those of the 5th and 8th grades.

SCIENCE

Albany Community met its science goal in 2017-18. With 74% of its 4th and 8th grade students scoring at or above proficiency on the state's science exam, Albany Community narrowly missed its absolute target of 75%. The school posted a large difference between the 4th grade science achievement of 92% of students proficient and only 48% of 8th grade students demonstrating science proficiency. Despite this, the school performed higher than the district's 52% proficiency rate.

NCLB

Albany Community met its NCLB goal as the school was not identified as requiring a local assistance plan or as a focus charter school under the state's accountability system during 2017-18.

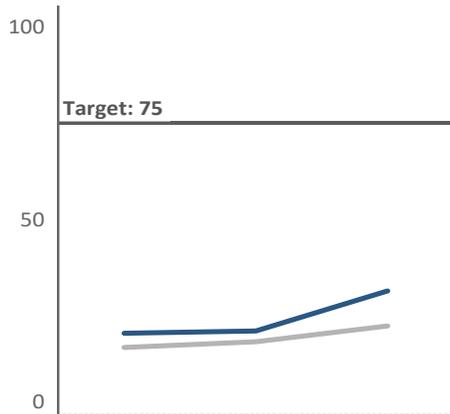
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ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

ALBANY COMMUNITY CHARTER SCHOOL

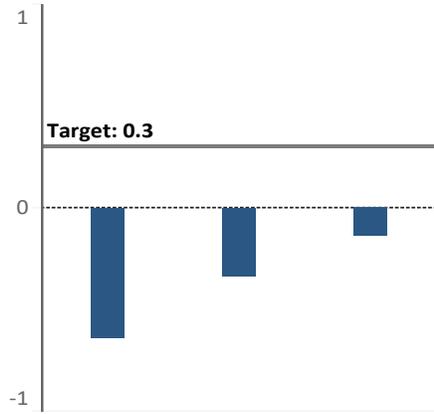
ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN GOAL

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



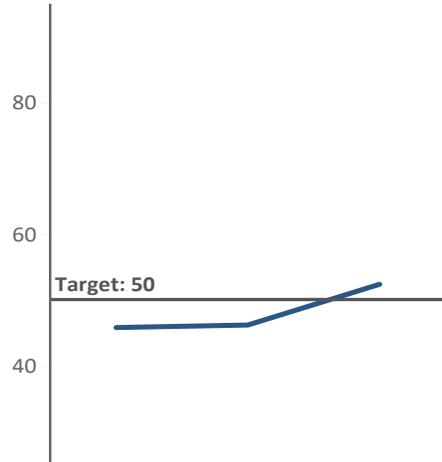
Test Year	Comp Grades	District %	School %
2016	3-8	18	21
2017	3-8	19	22
2018	3-8	23	32

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



Test Year	Test Grades	Effect Size
2016	3-8	-0.64
2017	3-8	-0.33
2018	3-8	-0.14

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



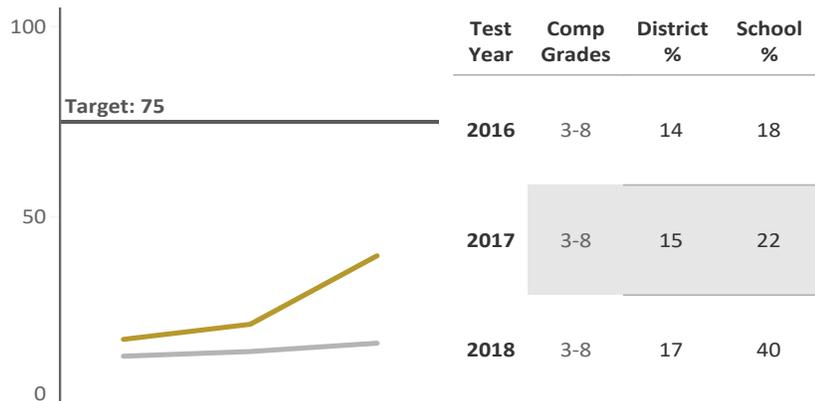
Test Year	School Mean Growth
2016	46.0
2017	46.4
2018	52.5

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

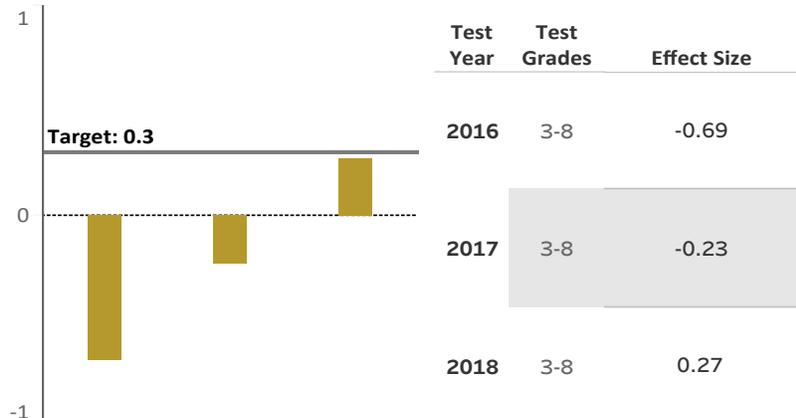
ALBANY COMMUNITY CHARTER SCHOOL

MATHEMATICS ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN GOAL

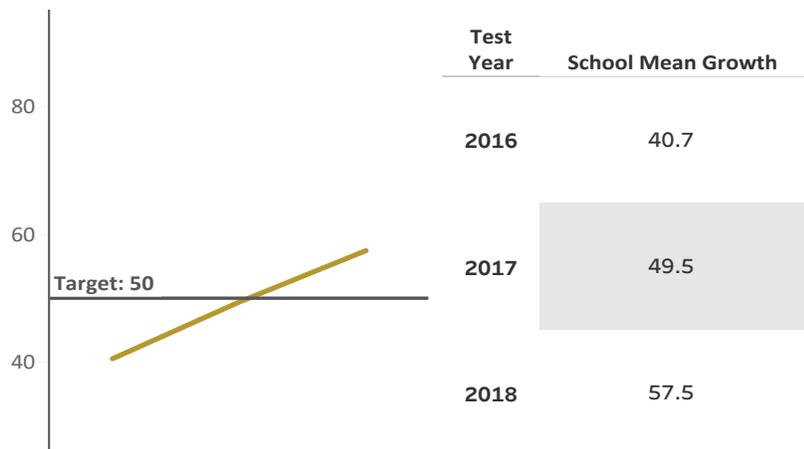
Comparative Measure: District Comparison. Each year, the percentage of students at **the school** in at least their second year performing at or above proficiency in Mathematics will be greater than that of students in the same tested grades in **the district**.



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



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

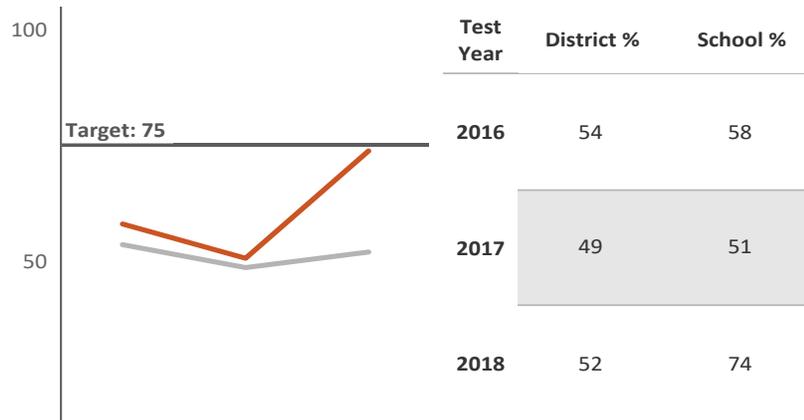


ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

ALBANY COMMUNITY CHARTER SCHOOL

SCIENCE ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN GOAL

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



SPECIAL POPULATIONS PERFORMANCE

	2016	2017	2018
Enrollment Receiving Mandated Academic Services	20	16	9
Tested on State Exam	11	12	5
School Percent Proficient on ELA Exam	9.1	0.0	s
District Percent Proficient	0.0	1.7	2.1
	2016	2017	2018
ELL Enrollment	9	9	12
Tested on NYSESLAT Exam	9	9	12
School Percent 'Commanding' or Making Progress on NYSESLAT	0.0	0.0	8.3

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

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

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

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

BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

QUALITATIVE BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

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

SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 1B

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

In its 13th year of operation, Albany Community has yet to establish a coherent system for leaders to effectively use assessment data despite some improvements in structures for teachers' scoring assessments and reviewing data. Leaders do not regularly rely on comprehensive data sets to make schoolwide decisions that guide teacher coaching.

- Albany Community has improved the alignment of its internally developed assessments to the rigor of state standards, but does not yet fully utilize results to drive instruction. With the adoption of the Achievement First Navigator ("AF Navigator") open source curriculum at the start of this school year, the school's unit assessments, quizzes, and formative assessments now better align to the rigor of state standards. The school also administers the TerraNova assessment twice per year in Kindergarten – 2nd grade for ELA and mathematics. For 2018-19, the school began using iReady assessments for ELA and mathematics for all grades three times per year. The instructional coaches and director of academics review assessments to ensure alignment to the rigor of New York State standards.
- Although Albany Community has a framework for evaluating teachers, it lacks a process for using assessment results to evaluate teacher effectiveness. School leaders generally refer to a performance rubric and reference school goals and priorities to evaluate teacher performance, but clear evidence that leaders have normed on this approach and apply it consistently is elusive. As of the May 2019 visit, the school had not yet completed formal evaluations for the 2018-19 school year despite leaders setting a goal to complete evaluations before then. Teachers are aware of the evaluation criteria but could not articulate how leaders use data to measure their effectiveness.

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

- Albany Community lacks a coordinated system to use assessment results to drive its professional development opportunities to improve teacher practice. Although leaders meet regularly and review data and use it to suggest individual teacher coaching strategies, these meetings do not consistently result in adjustments to the professional development calendar that target areas of improvement based on schoolwide data trends. The school provides some opportunities for teachers to attend external professional development sessions. However, teachers self select sessions to attend, and leaders miss an opportunity to utilize student data to help teachers select sessions such that they improve teachers' pedagogical practices across the school.
- This year, the school has a valid and reliable process to score assessments. Teachers from all content areas meet to score the ELA and mathematics interim assessments using rubrics and exemplars from the AF Navigator materials. Instructional coaches and the director of academics lead professional development to norm the process. Grade teams score assessments in a given content area for the respective grade, then another grade team reviews the scoring to check for accuracy.
- The school makes assessment data readily available to leaders, teachers, and board members. Leaders expect 3rd– 8th grade ELA and mathematics teachers to scan exit tickets into the online system daily and make adjustments for intervention or reteaching. The director of academics emails the leadership team almost daily with an update on exit ticket data, and sends weekly emails to teachers with grade level data. Although the principals provide monthly data reports to the board that summarize proficiency and growth on assessments, it is not clear how the board holds school leaders accountable for developing an effective dashboard to facilitate monitoring of the school's progress over time.

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

In its 13th year of operation, Albany Community does not have systems to ensure teachers across grade levels and content areas consistently plan high quality lessons and implement them with fidelity. Despite revisions to the curriculum to provide effective tools for planning, leaders' lesson plan feedback does not consistently result in high quality lesson plans.

- In contrast to the Institute's evaluation visit in 2018, Albany Community now has a curricular framework aligned to state standards and grade levels. For ELA and mathematics, the school adopted the AF Navigator open source curriculum this year, which provides unit plans, scope and sequence documents, and lesson plans. The

BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

school supplements the AF Navigator curriculum with FUNdations and GO Math!. The instructional leadership team analyzes New York State standards and assessments and makes adjustments to the curricular materials to ensure alignment. Despite introducing a high quality curricular program, leaders do not have consistent systems to ensure that teachers internalize lesson plans and deliver the program with fidelity.

- Based on the AF Navigator curricular program, the school provides teachers with supporting tools as a bridge between the curricular framework and lesson plans. Teachers create pacing guides for their content areas and instructional coaches review the pacing guides and provide feedback. As the AF Navigator curricular program includes resources like lesson plans, leaders expect teachers to use the materials to focus on internalizing lesson content. However, the coaching and professional development does not translate to ensure that teachers internalize lesson content fully, which results in low quality lessons.
- Albany Community leaders do not ensure that teacher lesson plans include strategies for effective differentiation or engaging students in rigorous thinking activities. Although teachers meet basic expectations for lesson planning, leaders do not expect or provide feedback on teachers' planning with regard to differentiating instruction. Though leaders consistently provide feedback, the feedback focuses primarily on ensuring plans are complete and does not challenge teachers to deepen content knowledge or strategies to engage students more deeply in the work. The school lacks a system to track feedback to ensure it aligns to the school's priorities and produces consistently strong instructional planning practices. The school provides little time for teachers to plan across grade levels and content areas, and no formal time for general education teachers to plan collaboratively with intervention, special education, and English language learners ("ELLs") teachers.
- Leaders' support does not result in teachers consistently planning high quality lessons. Teachers upload weekly lesson plans into an electronic system for review and feedback. Lesson plans meet basic expectations such as having a gradual release format. Coaches provide feedback on lesson plans via email or verbally, then informally observe to monitor whether teachers have implemented feedback. However, leaders do not regularly provide feedback on differentiation strategies or engaging students in rigorous thinking. Feedback primarily focuses on ensuring the lesson plan template is complete and rarely challenges teachers to develop strategies to engage more students in the work. The school lacks a system to track the feedback given to all teachers, ensure it is aligned to the school's priorities, and track teachers' progress to demonstrate sustained, consistently strong instructional planning practices.

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BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

- The school has processes for selecting, reviewing, and developing its curriculum, but the quality of leaders’ reflective practices varies in its effectiveness to improve the academic program. The leadership team chose the school’s new curriculum based on AF Navigator’s results at high performing charter schools enrolling similar populations of students. Despite selecting a high quality program, the school lacks effective systems to ensure that teachers implement the program with fidelity and have the proper supports in place to deliver high quality lessons.

IS HIGH QUALITY INSTRUCTION EVIDENT THROUGHOUT ALBANY COMMUNITY?

Teachers convey a strong commitment to children at Albany Community, but need additional supports to ensure instruction appropriately engages students in challenging work. For this year, leaders prioritized training teachers to monitor student understanding during lessons. However, teachers do not yet effectively use information gathered from checks for understanding to adjust instruction in the moment to address student needs. As shown in the chart below, Institute team members conducted 16 observations following a defined protocol used in all evaluation visits. Due to school scheduling, the Institute was unable to observe lessons in all grades and subject areas.

SUNY
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1D

		GRADE									
		K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total
CONTENT AREA	ELA				1	1	1	1			4
	Math				1	2		1	1	2	7
	Soc Stu					1	1			1	3
	Science			1		1					2
	Total			1	2	5	2	2	1	3	16

- Most teachers deliver lessons with clear objectives aligned to the school’s curriculum (12 of 16 lessons observed). Most lessons contain purposeful and measurable objectives that align to state standards. In a few instances, teachers either did not identify a clear objective or planned activities that did not align with the stated objective. Despite the school’s stated priority of developing routines and clear roles for co-teachers to monitor student work, leaders do not consistently hold teachers accountable for ensuring that co-teachers have clear and purposeful roles and responsibilities during each lesson.

BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

- Less than half of teachers observed effectively check for student understanding (7 of 16 lessons observed). The school focused on this area for development during this school year. As a result, teachers more consistently collect student data during lessons. However, teachers are not yet equipped to effectively use the data collected to address student misconceptions and adjust teaching in the moment. In some cases, teachers' questioning strategies are low level and do not glean clear information about student understanding of a concept or lesson objective.
- Few teachers include opportunities in lessons to challenge students with questions or activities that engage students in higher order thinking and problem solving activities (2 of 16 lessons observed). Although lesson plans include high quality questions, teachers do not consistently ask these questions to push student thinking. Teachers primarily ask low level questions that require factual recall. Worksheets vary in rigor and do not consistently push students to apply concepts or construct new information.
- As a result of the strong culture setting routines evident throughout the school, a majority of teachers effectively keep students on task and engaged in their learning (15 of 16 lessons observed). Clear routines and procedures, smooth transitions, and urgency for learning characterize classrooms throughout Albany Community. Teachers maximize learning time in lessons and have clear and consistent expectations for behavior.

DOES ALBANY COMMUNITY HAVE STRONG INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP?

In its 13th year of operation, Albany Community continues to be hindered by vacancies in key instructional areas resulting in inconsistency in schoolwide expectations and student achievement outcomes. The school lacks systems to effectively use assessment and classroom observation data to identify schoolwide trends, inform coaching priorities, and provide targeted feedback to instructional staff. Although the school uses a framework to track its goals and to recognize whether or not it is meeting the established targets, school leaders are not diligent in collecting and using data to accomplish these goals.

- Albany Community's leadership establishes high expectations for student outcomes, but has not communicated a clear vision for what instruction should look like at the school. Although teachers can articulate leaders' expectations for overall proficiency on assessments, teachers communicate different levels of what mastery means on assessments. School leaders use a framework to outline the goals, targets, professional development, coaching support, and measurement tools needed to meet their

BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

Accountability Plan goals. However, leaders acknowledge that they have not fully implemented the framework this year and have made only some progress toward meeting the targets in each of the phases.

- Due to vacancies in key leadership roles, the instructional leadership does not provide sustained and systemic coaching to all teachers. The instructional leadership team consists of the elementary and middle school principals, director of academics, two instructional coaches at the elementary level, and one instructional coach at the middle school level. The board hired an external consultant to develop school leader capacity to provide effective coaching and professional development for teachers. However, the school has vacancies in the elementary and middle school ELA coaching positions, as well as in the director of student support services role. As such, the instructional leaders have taken on additional responsibilities and do not provide the intended weekly coaching to all ELA teachers and academic intervention services (“AIS”) teachers, special education, and ELL teachers.
- The school’s professional development content aligns to the school’s priorities this year, but is not consistently developed based on assessment data. The school has held several sessions this year on monitoring student work, creating lessons in a gradual release format, and rehearsing lessons before delivery in the classroom, all of which are aligned to the school’s priorities. However, school leaders do not have a system to consistently use classroom observation and student assessment data to modify professional development content or topics. Based on the Institute’s classroom observations, lessons do not engage students in critical thinking and teachers have not mastered using data to adjust instruction in the moment.
- Albany Community does not consistently provide opportunities for all teachers to meet to plan and improve curriculum and instruction within and across grade levels. The schedule allows for common planning at each grade level, but special education, intervention, and ELL teachers are unable to join due to scheduling conflicts with providing intervention services. General education teachers do not consistently articulate at-risk students’ progress toward meeting intervention goals.
- School leaders do not consistently hold teachers accountable for high quality instruction and student achievement. The schoolwide evaluation process includes an end of year formal evaluation with a self evaluation component for each teacher. At the time of the Institute’s visit a month prior to the end of the school year, school leaders had not yet completed formal performance evaluations of instructional staff although they had planned to do so by the visit date. While teachers reported that they were aware of the evaluation criteria, they could not clearly articulate how school leaders use data to measure their effectiveness. The lack of regular observation and feedback for intervention and ELL teachers hinders school leaders’ ability to appropriately evaluate these teachers.

BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 1F

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

Albany Community's programs to support at-risk students are not meeting the needs of all students struggling academically. While the school provides mandated services for students with disabilities, the quality of programming for all students with disabilities, students struggling academically, and ELLs is low. Without fully developed systems to identify struggling students, develop effective supplemental instructional strategies, and monitor data for improvement, interventions are not targeted and effective. With the position of student support services director vacant at the time of the visit, the supports to general education teachers and at-risk students lack coordination, which limits their effectiveness.

- Albany Community does not consistently identify all at-risk students. This year, the school administered the Fountas & Pinnell ("F&P") assessment twice and used the data to triangulate the iReady results. When teachers identify students who consistently struggle in their lessons, they can alert AIS teachers. Although the school has a Response to Intervention ("RTI") procedure to identify students who may have a disability, AIS and general education teachers do not consistently describe the RTI cycle or required interventions. As such, the Institute did not find evidence that the school's RTI system effectively identifies every student who may require a special education evaluation.⁶ To identify ELLs, the school administers the home language survey during the registration process and meets with families to determine if a student may qualify to take the New York State Identification Test for English Language Learners ("NYSITELL"). This year a personnel transition caused Albany Community to miss the administration window and so no potential ELLs completed the NYSITELL. The Institute is following up with the school to ensure the implementation of a compliant ELL program.
- The school has no regularly occurring meetings for teachers to analyze, plan, act, and evaluate the effectiveness of a targeted set of strategies for students with disabilities, ELLs, or students struggling academically. While at-risk program providers track and are aware of the progress of students, and classroom teachers know which students are at risk, general education teachers are not consistently aware of students' progress toward meeting Individual Education Program ("IEP") goals or meeting English language acquisition goals. The school's 12 week intervention cycle does not allow AIS teachers to quickly monitor and respond to students' academic needs.
- The lack of coordination among general education and intervention teachers hinders Albany Community's supports for students who struggle academically. The school schedule provides an hour of additional intervention support in ELA and mathematics

6. Please note that the school has legal obligations under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act ("IDEA") as well as its charter agreement to identify all students who may require special education services.

BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

daily. For students formally identified as needing additional support through the RTI program, AIS teachers push into ELA and mathematics classes for 45 minutes twice each week. For students requiring more intense intervention, teachers pull small groups of no more than five students for 30 minutes of additional instruction daily. However, without regular collaboration between intervention and general education teachers to analyze outcome data and student work products to determine effective strategies, the purposefulness and effectiveness of these interventions is unclear.

- Albany Community provides the required services to students with disabilities due to the low enrollment of students with disabilities, but the Institute did not find consistent evidence that the school appropriately identifies all students. Albany Community provides AIS interventions for up to 12 weeks before re-evaluating to adjust the programming. However, due to inconsistent monitoring and follow up, a student who may require special education services may languish in an ineffective intervention for more than half of the school year before the school begins the referral process. Upon the hire of a new student support services director, the school should take active steps and the board should monitor the implementation of an effective intake of new students with disabilities and the identification of future students with disabilities in accordance with the IDEA and charter agreement.
- Although Albany Community employs an ELL teacher who provides some support to ELLs, the school lacks a high quality, coordinated program. The ELL teacher pushes into classrooms to provide ELLs with content support during lessons. While the ELL teacher knows who to support and when, the service structure does not allow the ELL teacher to provide high quality English language acquisition supports or time to coordinate with general education teachers about ELL progress toward meeting content and English language acquisition goals.
- The school would benefit from providing additional, focused professional development for teachers to meet at-risk student needs. Teachers report attending external professional development sessions that are not targeted to the supports needed by students at Albany Community. The school's in-house professional development sessions are not specifically related to supporting ELLs or students with disabilities, and the absence of a director of student support services has resulted in teachers not receiving regular coaching.

BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 20

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

Staff turnover and vacancies continue to hinder Albany Community's ability to deliver a high quality educational program. Although a new leadership structure and curricular framework allow leaders to spend more time on instruction this year, the school's structures around student interventions and teacher support are not effective.

- Albany Community continues to struggle to retain quality staff. This year the school had two staff members in the role of director of student support services who started and then resigned within a few months of hire. A similar situation occurred with the ELA instructional coach roles at both the elementary and middle school levels. At the time of the Institute's visit, five teachers left during the school year and almost two-thirds of teachers were in their first or second year of teaching at the school. Although this year the school improved its support for new teachers through one-on-one professional development and coaching, school leaders have not established a system to retain staff long-term.
- Persistent staff vacancies hinder the ability of the school's administrative team to support the academic program effectively. This year, Albany Community's organizational structure eliminated the executive director position and moved to a dual principal model with the former executive director overseeing Kindergarten – 5th grade and a former assistant principal and founding teacher overseeing 6th – 8th grade. The leadership team also includes a Kindergarten – 8th grade director of academics and a director of student support services. Due to additional vacancies in the elementary and middle schools' ELA instructional coach roles, leaders take on additional duties and are not able to provide the full coaching and instructional supports to intervention teachers and some general education teachers.
- Albany Community does not effectively monitor the school's enrollment and retention targets for students with disabilities and ELLs. Although the school meets its chartered enrollment, the school retained less than 80% of its students for the start of the 2018-19 school year. At the time of the Institute's visit, no evidence was available to suggest that the school's leadership actively monitors the school's progress in meeting the statutorily required efforts in enrolling students with disabilities and ELLs. See Appendix A for the school's progress toward enrollment and retention targets for the 2017-18 school year.

BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

- Albany Community has a clear discipline system at the elementary level, but lacks a system at the middle school level, which leads to a lack of coherent systems and alignment across all grades. At the elementary level, teachers know what behaviors to handle in the classroom and which behaviors require support from school leaders. At the middle school level, leaders do not clearly articulate the same expectations to teachers. Without clear expectations, the middle school level does not have clear criteria for applying behavior interventions or systems to track any intervention for behavior. At the time of the Institute’s visit, the school could not verify data for the number of in-school and out-of-school suspensions to date, and staff members did not have data to identify the trends for such suspensions. The Institute will follow up with the school to ensure compliance with accurately tracking and reporting suspension data.
- Albany Community leaders monitor and evaluate the program and allocate sufficient resources toward academic priorities. The school purchased the iReady program to improve intervention programming and adopted the AF Navigator open source curriculum to provide high quality materials to teachers. The board also allocated funds to hire external consultants to support school leaders’ development throughout this school year.

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

In its 13th year of operation, the Albany Community board recognizes a need to improve its systems and structures to build capacity to govern the school. The board has plans in place to further the school’s development, and has begun work with external consultants to recruit more members, help develop its skills, and support school leaders.

- The board is building its skills to provide more effective oversight of the academic program. The board acknowledges it lacks experience in law and education and is seeking new members in these areas. The board anticipates recruiting two new members in the near future and is working with a consultant to seek out more candidates. At the time of the Institute’s visit, the board could not articulate the reasons for the high staff turnover at the school and did not have a plan to address it, although they are aware of the issue.
- The board establishes goals for the school but they are not consistently specific and measurable. At the beginning of the year, the board worked with school leaders to identify goals for this school year on assessment scores, student enrollment, staff retention, and leader development. Given the board’s acknowledgment of its lack of expertise in certain areas, the board recognizes it does not yet request appropriate data from school leaders nor have a full understanding of the information to enable

BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

them to provide effective oversight. In the absence of clear benchmarks and targets for each goal and a lack of skill in understanding the data, the board is not able to evaluate whether the school is making sufficient progress during the school year. Although board members come to the school for meetings and engage in an annual tour of the school, board members have not been at the school during instructional time to build a strong understanding of the academic program.

- The board retains school leaders but does not consistently provide them with support and development. The elementary school principal is Albany Community's founding principal; and, the middle school principal, new to the role this year, is a founding teacher. Although the board has tasked the principals to identify opportunities for leadership development, the board's support does not consistently meet leaders' needs in a timely manner. The board took decisive steps in hiring a school improvement consultant at the beginning of the school year, but had to change course when the consultant did not meet leaders' needs. As a result, the board hired a different external consultant in January 2019 who provides instructional leadership development to school leaders and staff members.
- The board evaluates its performance and that of school leaders. Recognizing they do not have the capacity to effectively execute board responsibilities, board members completed a self evaluation with the support of an external consultant and plan to continue this process in the future. At the end of last school year, the board completed a written evaluation of the executive director and finalized it with the release of state assessment scores. The board has structures in place for a similar evaluation process for both principals this school year. However, given the board's difficulty in requesting pertinent information, the board is unable to hold leaders accountable throughout the school year.

Albany
Community

Ax

APPENDICES

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RENEWAL
BENCHMARKS

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APPENDIX A: School Overview

BOARD OF TRUSTEES¹

CHAIR

Michael J. Strianese

VICE CHAIR

Shai Butler

TREASURER

Ron Mexico

SECRETARY

Bramble Buran

TRUSTEES

Juanita Nabors

Lasone Garland-Bryan

SCHOOL LEADERS

ELEMENTARY

S. Neal Currie, Elementary School Principal (2018-19 to Present)

S. Neal Currie, Executive Director (2011-12 to 2017-2018)

S. Neal Currie, Principal (2006-07 to 2010-11)

MIDDLE SCHOOL

Shermaine Moore-Boakye, Middle School Principal (2018-19 to Present)

SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS

SCHOOL YEAR	CHARTERED ENROLLMENT	ACTUAL ENROLLMENT ²	ACTUAL AS A PERCENTAGE OF CHARTERED ENROLLMENT	PROPOSED GRADES	ACTUAL GRADES
2006-07	104	104	100%	K-1	K-1
2007-08	182	167	92%	K-2	K-2
2008-09	266	231	87%	K-3	K-3
2009-10	286	298	104%	K-4	K-4
2010-11	346	340	98%	K-4	K-5
2011-12	414	404	98%	K-4	K-6
2012-13	474	469	99%	K-4	K-7
2013-14	543	549	101%	K-4	K-8
2014-15	612	558	91%	K-4	K-8
2015-16	621	650	105%	K-4	K-8
2016-17	675	584	87%	K-8	K-8
2017-18	675	680	95%	K-8	K-8
2018-19	675	641	95%	K-8	K-8

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

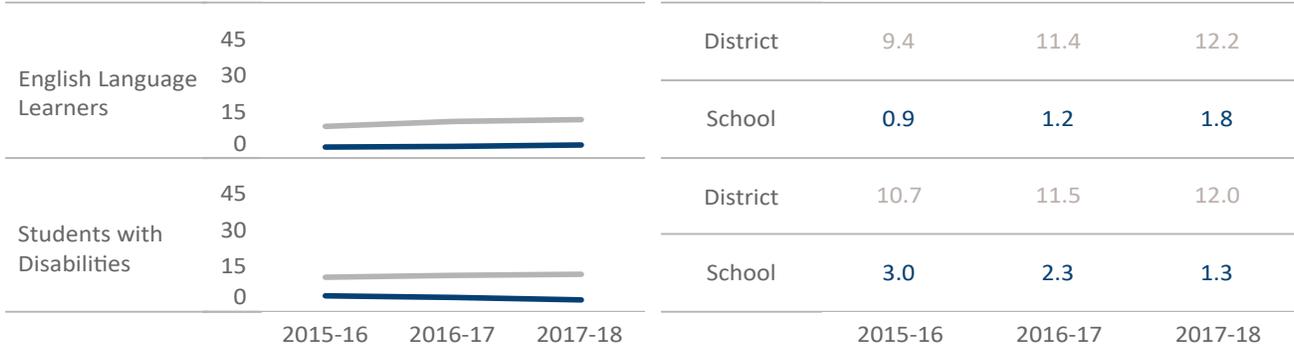
2. Source: Institute's Official Enrollment Binder. (Figures may differ slightly from New York State Report Cards, depending on date of data collection.)

APPENDIX A: School Overview

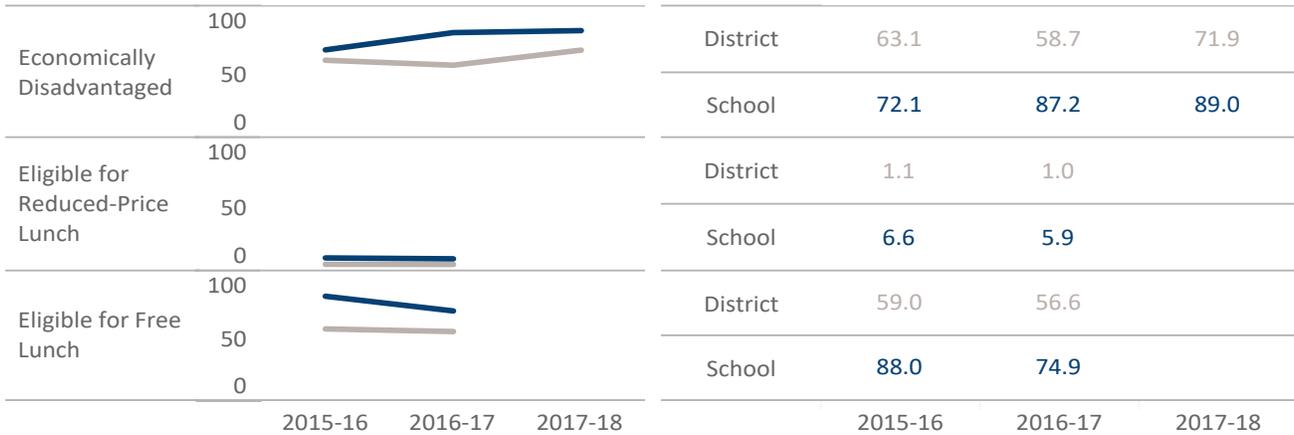
Albany Community Charter School

Albany CSD

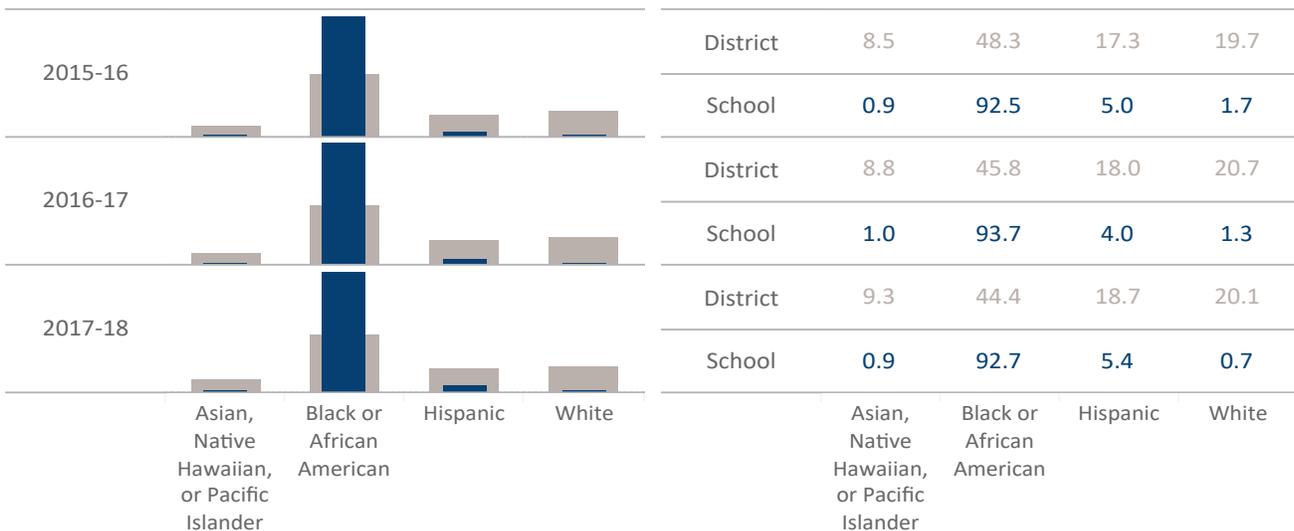
Student Demographics: Special Populations



Student Demographics: Free/Reduced Lunch



Student Demographics: Race/Ethnicity

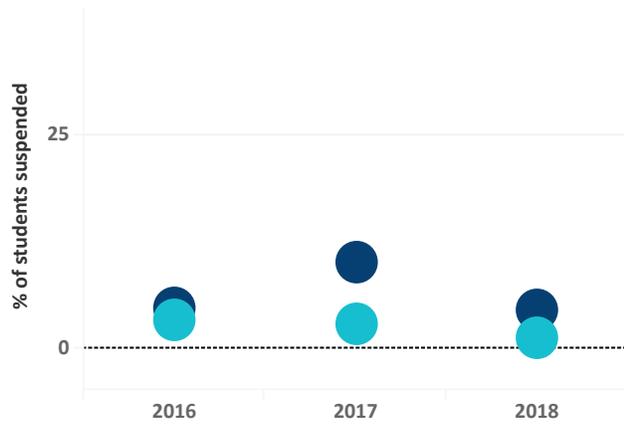


Data reported in these charts reflect BEDS day enrollment counts as reported by the New York State Education Department

APPENDIX A: School Overview

Albany Community Charter School

Albany CSD



	School ISS Rate	School OSS Rate
2016	3.3	4.7
2017	2.8	10.0
2018	1.0	4.4

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 number of students receiving an in school or out of school suspension at any time during the school year is divided by the total enrollment, then multiplied by 100.

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



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

	2016	2017	2018
Expulsions	1	2	1

Albany Community Charter School's Enrollment and Retention Status: 2017-18

		District Target	School
Enrollment	economically disadvantaged	74.7	87.5
	English language learners	7.3	1.6
	students with disabilities	12.6	1.3
Retention	economically disadvantaged	93.3	82.3
	English language learners	94.7	87.5
	students with disabilities	91.3	73.3

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
2006-07	First Year Visit	February 26, 2007
2007-08	Evaluation Visit	February 5, 2008
2008-09	Evaluation Visit	March 30-31, 2009
2009-10	Evaluation Visit	February 9, 2010
2010-11	Initial Renewal Visit	October 13-14, 2010
2015-16	Subsequent Renewal Visit	September 21-22, 2015
2017-18	Evaluation Visit	March 28-29, 2018
2018-19	Evaluation Visit	May 30-31, 2019

CONDUCT OF THE VISIT

DATE(S) OF VISIT	EVALUATION TEAM MEMBERS	TITLE
May 30-31, 2019	Denise Gaffor	School Evaluation Analyst
	Kerri Rizzolo	Senior Analyst
	Jeff Wasbes	Executive Deputy Director for Accountability
	Cheyenne Batista	External Consultant

CHARTER CYCLE CONTEXT

CHARTER TERM	ACCOUNTABILITY PERIOD ³	ANTICIPATED RENEWAL VISIT
Third Year of Five Year Subsequent Charter Term	Fourth Year of Five-Year Accountability Period	Fall 2020

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?
ESL and special education services;	-
Research-based mathematics and reading program;	+
Frequent assessment to monitor progress;	+
High expectations for every child;	-
Extended school day/longer school year;	+
Parent involvement;	+
Character education;	-
Weekly awards assembly;	+
School uniforms; and,	+
Small, safe, and structured environment.	+

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE SUMMARY: ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

Albany Community Charter School

		2015-16 Grades Served K-8				2016-17 Grades Served K-8				2017-18 Grades Served K-8							
		Grades	All % (N)	2+ Years % (N)	MET	Grades	All % (N)	2+ Years % (N)	MET	Grades	All % (N)	2+ Years % (N)	MET				
Absolute Measure	1. Each year 75 percent of students who are enrolled in at least their second year will perform at or above proficiency on the New York State exam.	3	23.9 (71)	25.0 (60)		3	25.7 (74)	29.0 (62)		3	46.6 (73)	50.8 (63)					
		4	24.3 (74)	23.8 (63)		4	16.2 (68)	19.6 (56)		4	27.0 (74)	24.2 (62)					
		5	26.0 (73)	27.0 (63)		5	9.2 (76)	10.5 (57)		5	19.2 (73)	20.0 (55)					
		6	14.7 (68)	17.3 (52)		6	18.7 (75)	16.7 (60)		6	31.9 (72)	33.3 (57)					
		7	10.3 (68)	12.2 (49)		7	20.3 (59)	22.7 (44)		7	18.1 (72)	16.9 (59)					
		8	20.0 (70)	18.9 (53)		8	36.0 (75)	31.1 (61)		8	50.0 (50)	51.2 (41)					
		All	20.0 (424)	21.2 (340)	NO	All	21.1 (427)	21.8 (340)	NO	All	31.2 (414)	32.0 (337)	NO				
Absolute Measure	2. Each year the school's aggregate Performance Index on the State exam will meet the Measure of Interim Progress set forth in the State's ESSA accountability system.	Grades	PLI	AMO		Grades	PLI	AMO		Grades	PI	MIP					
		3-8	84	104	NO	3-8	86	111	NO	3-8	108	101	YES				
Comparative Measure	3. Each year the percent of students enrolled in at least their second year and performing at or above proficiency will be greater than that of students in the same grades in the local district.	Comparison: Albany City School District				Comparison: Albany City School District				Comparison: Albany City School District							
		Grades	School	District		Grades	School	District		Grades	School	District					
		3-8	21.2	17.5	YES	3-8	21.8	19.0	YES	3-8	32.0	23.0	YES				
Comparative Measure	4. Each year the school will exceed its predicted performance on the state exam by an effect size of 0.3 or above based on a regression analysis controlling for economically disadvantaged students statewide.	Grade	% ED	Actual	Predicted	ES	Grade	% ED	Actual	Predicted	ES	Grade	% ED	Actual	Predicted	ES	
		3	73.7	23.9	35.4	-0.68	3	89.5	25.7	29.3	-0.20	3	86.5	46.6	39.6	0.37	
		4	74.7	24.3	33.1	-0.53	4	80.3	16.2	31.0	-0.81	4	91.1	27.0	35.2	-0.45	
		5	75.7	26.0	25.7	0.02	5	91.0	9.2	21.0	-0.83	5	82.1	19.2	27.4	-0.51	
		6	71.8	14.7	27.3	-0.75	6	90.2	18.7	17.9	0.06	6	89.7	31.9	34.8	-0.16	
		7	74.6	10.3	26.3	-0.97	7	84.1	20.3	29.0	-0.47	7	89.7	18.1	26.7	-0.51	
		8	63.4	20.0	37.3	-0.98	8	87.3	36.0	32.7	0.18	8	86.9	50.0	37.2	0.67	
		All	72.4	20.0	30.9	-0.64	NO	All	87.3	21.1	26.6	-0.33	NO	All	87.7	31.2	33.3
Growth Measure	5. Each year, the school's unadjusted mean growth percentile will meet or exceed the target of 50.	Grades	School	State		Grades	School	State		Grades	School	State					
		4	33.2			4	36.3			4	46.3						
		5	53.8			5	42.7			5	50.7						
		6	35.4			6	41.5			6	49.1						
		7	47.0			7	43.1			7	57.4						
		8	61.2			8	66.6			8	62.8						
		All	46.0	50.0	NO	All	46.4	50.0	NO	All	52.5	50.0	YES				

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE SUMMARY: MATHEMATICS

Albany Community Charter School

		2015-16 Grades Served K-8				2016-17 Grades Served K-8				2017-18 Grades Served K-8							
		Grades	All % (N)	2+ Years % (N)	MET	Grades	All % (N)	2+ Years % (N)	MET	Grades	All % (N)	2+ Years % (N)	MET				
Absolute Measure	1. Each year 75 percent of students who are enrolled in at least their second year will perform at or above proficiency on the New York State exam.	3	22.5 (71)	23.3 (60)		3	46.6 (73)	50.0 (62)		3	68.1 (72)	74.2 (62)					
		4	16.2 (74)	17.5 (63)		4	14.7 (68)	16.1 (56)		4	40.5 (74)	41.9 (62)					
		5	34.7 (72)	35.5 (62)		5	14.9 (74)	19.6 (56)		5	28.8 (73)	34.5 (55)					
		6	14.9 (67)	13.5 (52)		6	20.0 (75)	16.7 (60)		6	22.9 (70)	23.6 (55)					
		7	4.4 (68)	6.1 (49)		7	6.8 (59)	9.1 (44)		7	26.0 (73)	27.1 (59)					
		8	5.7 (70)	7.5 (53)		8	15.1 (73)	15.3 (59)		8	30.8 (52)	33.3 (42)					
		All	16.6 (422)	18.0 (339)		NO	All	20.1 (422)	22.0 (337)		NO	All	36.5 (414)	40.0 (335)		NO	
Absolute Measure	2. Each year the school's aggregate Performance Index on the State exam will meet the Measure of Interim Progress set forth in the State's ESSA accountability system.	Grades	PLI	AMO		Grades	PLI	AMO		Grades	PI	MIP					
		3-8	73	101		NO	3-8	77	109		NO	3-8	107	103		YES	
Comparative Measure	3. Each year the percent of students enrolled in at least their second year and performing at or above proficiency will be greater than that of students in the same grades in the local district.	Comparison: Albany City School District				Comparison: Albany City School District				Comparison: Albany City School District							
		Grades	School	District		Grades	School	District		Grades	School	District					
		3-8	18.0	13.6		YES	3-8	22.0	14.8		YES	3-8	40.0	17.0		YES	
Comparative Measure	4. Each year the school will exceed its predicted performance on the state exam by an effect size of 0.3 or above based on a regression analysis controlling for economically disadvantaged students statewide.	Grade	% ED	Actual	Predicted	ES	Grade	% ED	Actual	Predicted	ES	Grade	% ED	Actual	Predicted	ES	
		3	73.7	22.5	37.8	-0.73	3	89.5	46.6	34.5	0.58	3	86.5	68.1	42.4	1.18	
		4	74.7	16.2	36.5	-1.08	4	80.3	14.7	31.4	-0.85	4	91.1	40.5	33.5	0.35	
		5	75.7	34.7	30.6	0.25	5	91.0	14.9	25.4	-0.58	5	82.1	28.8	32.2	-0.19	
		6	71.8	14.9	31.5	-0.83	6	90.2	20.0	20.9	-0.05	6	89.7	22.9	27.7	-0.20	
		7	74.6	4.4	24.1	-1.04	7	84.1	6.8	21.5	-0.73	7	89.7	26.0	24.2	0.09	
		8	63.4	5.7	19.6	-0.69	8	87.3	15.1	13.1	0.11	8	86.9	30.8	21.5	0.44	
		All	72.3	16.6	30.1	-0.69	NO	All	87.3	20.1	24.5	-0.23	NO	All	87.7	36.5	30.7
Growth Measure	5. Each year, the school's unadjusted mean growth percentile will meet or exceed the target of 50.	Grades	School	State		Grades	School	State		Grades	School	State					
		4	24.3			4	39.8			4	42.8						
		5	59.0			5	54.7			5	69.4						
		6	25.3			6	39.0			6	52.4						
		7	39.7			7	49.0			7	52.4						
		8	56.4			8	64.1			8	76.1						
All	40.7		50.0		NO	All	49.5		50.0		NO	All	57.5		50.0		YES

VERSION 5.0, MAY 2012

Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Renewal Benchmarks adapt and elaborate on these correlates.

APPENDIX C: SUNY Renewal Benchmarks

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

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

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

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.

SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 1C

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

The following elements are generally present:

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

SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 1D

HIGH QUALITY INSTRUCTION IS EVIDENT THROUGHOUT THE SCHOOL.

The following elements are generally present:

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

SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 1E

THE SCHOOL HAS STRONG INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP.

The following elements are generally present:

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

APPENDIX C: SUNY Renewal Benchmarks

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

THE SCHOOL MEETS THE EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF AT-RISK STUDENTS

SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 1F

The following elements are generally present:

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

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.

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

RENEWAL QUESTION 3

IS THE SCHOOL FISCALLY SOUND?

SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 3A

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

The following elements are generally present:

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

SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 3B

THE SCHOOL MAINTAINS APPROPRIATE INTERNAL CONTROLS AND PROCEDURES.

The following elements are generally present:

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

APPENDIX C: SUNY Renewal Benchmarks

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

SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 3C

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

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

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

SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 3D

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

The following elements are generally present:

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

APPENDIX C: SUNY Renewal Benchmarks

RENEWAL QUESTION 4

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

SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 4A

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

Based on elements present in the Application for Charter Renewal:

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

SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 4B

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

Based on elements present in the Application for Charter Renewal:

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

APPENDIX C: SUNY Renewal Benchmarks

SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 4C

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

Based on elements present in the Application for Charter Renewal:

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

SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 4D

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

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

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

