

The background of the entire page is a solid blue color. Overlaid on this is a grid of lighter blue squares. The grid is not uniform; it is composed of several rectangular blocks of squares of varying sizes. One large block covers the top-left and middle-left portions of the page. Another block is in the bottom-left. A third, smaller block is in the bottom-right. The word 'INSTITUTE' is printed in large, white, bold, sans-serif capital letters, with the 'I' and 'N' partially obscured by the dark grey rectangle. The words 'THE SUNY CHARTER SCHOOLS' are in a smaller, white, sans-serif font above 'INSTITUTE'.

# THE SUNY CHARTER SCHOOLS INSTITUTE

*RENEWAL RECOMMENDATION REPORT  
NEW ROOTS CHARTER SCHOOL*

**Report Date: March 9, 2022**

**Review Date: November 3 – 4, 2021**

SUNY Charter Schools Institute  
H. Carl McCall SUNY Building  
353 Broadway  
Albany, NY 12246

518.445.4250  
[www.newyorkcharters.org](http://www.newyorkcharters.org)



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

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## CHARTER SCHOOL BACKGROUND

# NEW ROOTS CHARTER SCHOOL

116 North Cayuga Street, Ithaca | Grades: 9-12 | Ithaca City School District

The State University of New York Board of Trustees (the “SUNY Trustees”) approved the original charter for New Roots Charter School (“New Roots”) on September 16, 2008. The charter opened in fall 2009, serving 125 students in 9<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> grade.



### MISSION

*New Roots Charter School prepares our diverse student body to meet the challenges of citizenship, work, and life long learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Our interdisciplinary academic program features hands-on, community-based learning that supports students in solving real world problems. New Roots Charter School students earn a Regents diploma and demonstrate readiness for higher education by earning college credit and creating a graduation portfolio that demonstrates that they have met or exceeded New York State learning standards. Our school community creates a model of secondary education that integrates best practices in sustainability education with those proven to support educational equity.*

### CURRENT CHARTER

Serves: 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup>

Chartered Enrollment:  
160

Charter Expiration:  
July 31, 2022

### PROPOSED FUTURE CHARTER

Serves: 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup>

Chartered Enrollment:  
140

Charter Expiration:  
July 31, 2027

### KEY DESIGN ELEMENTS

Education for sustainability as an integrated principle for applied disciplinary studies;



Community-based learning;



Small school design; and,



A college and life readiness curriculum.



## CHARTER SCHOOL BACKGROUND



### NOTEWORTHY

In September 2021, the United States Department of Education (“USDE”) designated New Roots as a Green Ribbon School. The aim of the USDE Green Ribbon Schools is to inspire schools and districts to strive for 21<sup>st</sup> Century excellence by highlighting promising environmental sustainability practices that all schools can employ. The award recognizes schools that reduce environmental impact and costs; improve the health and wellness of schools, students, and staff; and, provide effective environmental and sustainability education. New Roots regularly demonstrates progress in all three of these areas. The recognition aligns with an important part of the charter’s mission.

### SUMMARY OF COVID-19 RESPONSE

In March 2020, New Roots transitioned its program to an online platform. Last year, the school welcomed students back into its facility in a hybrid format, combining online synchronous and asynchronous learning opportunities with onsite, place-based learning activities. Some students did not return to any in person instruction citing medical necessity. New Roots provided those students with a fully virtual learning format. Notably during remote and hybrid learning, the school never experienced quarantine or lost instructional days due to infections as of date of the Institute’s renewal visit, which is a testament to the operations team’s COVID-19 response procedures.

## RENEWAL RECOMMENDATION

### FULL-TERM RENEWAL

**Full-Term Renewal with Conditions.** *The Charter Schools Institute (the “Institute”) recommends that the SUNY Trustees’ Charter Schools Committee approve the Application for Charter Renewal of New Roots Charter School for a period of five years with authority to provide instruction to students in 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grade in such configuration as set forth in its Application for Charter Renewal, with a projected total enrollment of 140 students with the following conditions:*

- Report to the Institute each year as part of its annual reporting, beginning in the 2022-23 school year, the resources developed by one or more unique positions, along with associated data, metrics, and measures the board establishes that result in increased oversight of curriculum development; instructional delivery; teacher coaching; and, professional development to the teaching staff;*
- Engage an external consultant to conduct an annual evaluation of the charter’s program using the Institute’s benchmarks (or an alternative framework approved by the Institute) and report findings by July 31 each year to the New Roots board and the Institute beginning with the 2022-23 school year;*
- Maintain a minimum billable enrollment of no less than 80% of proposed chartered enrollment each school year as follows: charter term year one minimum enrollment of 100 students; year two minimum enrollment of 108 students; years three through five minimum enrollment of 112 students; and,*
- Report to the Institute each year as part of its annual reporting requirement data on alumni post secondary activities and outcomes as outlined in the charter’s Accountability Plan; a description of the resources and staff dedicated to supporting alumni and tracking outcome data; and, a description of responsive adjustments intended to improve outcomes each year.*

*The Institute makes this recommendation based on New Roots Charter School meeting, except as noted above and herein, the criteria for charter renewal set forth in the Policies for the Renewal of Not-for-Profit Charter School Education Corporations and Charter Schools Authorized by the Board of Trustees of the State University of New York (the “SUNY Renewal Policies”).<sup>1</sup>*

1. SUNY Renewal Policies (p. 14) are available on the [Institute’s website](#).

## RENEWAL RECOMMENDATION



To earn a ***Subsequent Full-Term Renewal***, a charter must demonstrate that it has met or come close to meeting its academic Accountability Plan goals.

### REQUIRED FINDINGS

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

- 1: the charter, as described in the Application for Charter Renewal, meets the requirements of the Act and all other applicable laws, rules, and regulations;
- 2: the education corporation can demonstrate the ability to operate the charter in an educationally and fiscally sound manner in the next charter term; and,
- 3: given the programs it will offer, its structure, and its purpose, approving the charter to operate for another five years is likely to improve student learning and achievement and materially further the purposes of the Act.<sup>2</sup>

2. See New York Education Law § 2852(2).

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During its five year charter term, New Roots demonstrated academic success by coming close to meeting its key Accountability Plan goals. Throughout the charter term, New Roots struggled to maintain fiscal health, which contributed to weaknesses in the educational program. The table below demonstrates the key findings for the SUNY Trustees and highlights the successes of the charter.

### FINDINGS & INFORMATION

#### *Is the charter an academic success?*

New Roots is an academic success insofar as it came close to meeting its high school graduation and college preparation goals by the end of the Accountability Period. The charter continues to develop some aspects of its instructional leadership and teacher coaching and development supports. New Roots also continues to develop its capacity to track student outcomes on co-academic, mission aligned measures and college matriculation and success.

#### *Is the charter an effective, viable organization?*

New Roots is close to being an effective and viable organization. The organizational structure supports the charter's basic operational functions. Low enrollment and the resulting fiscal challenges have limited the growth and development of the charter's educational program.

#### *Is the charter fiscally sound?*

Based on the evidence collected through the renewal review, New Roots is fiscally sound following an influx of federal support funding and non-recurring philanthropic contributions. While one time revenue events do not contribute to sustainable financial health, the education corporation presents a reasonable and appropriate fiscal plan for the next charter term even though it is based on lower enrollment. In order to realize that plan, the charter must maintain sustainable student enrollment levels, which is why the Institute recommends an enrollment renewal condition.

#### *If the SUNY Trustees renew the education corporation's authority to operate the charter, are its plans for the charter reasonable, feasible, and achievable?*

The charter's plans for the future are reasonable, feasible, and achievable.

New Roots has defined seven aspirational descriptors of its charter graduates that include: healthy persons; lifelong learners; communicators; community members; citizens; members of ecosystems; and, visionaries. In order to accomplish these goals, the charter relies on developing meaningful relationships and individualized supports for students. However, the charter has not devoted resources to establishing a system to gather the data necessary to determine and report to the board and public if its graduates are in fact fulfilling any, some, or all of the aspirational goals the charter sets. Low prioritization caused by multiple competing responsibilities of staff members filling various positions (in turn caused by low funding) continues to challenge the establishment of cogent data collection and

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

analysis systems. Charter leaders habitually relay circumstantial, ad hoc anecdotes of student success in academics or other life outcomes but have not established comprehensive data analysis and synthesis routines characteristic of high performing schools that focus on continuous, systematic improvement. The charter rightly is proud of its commitment to developing meaningful relationships and individualized supports for its students. The Institute has provided consistent feedback advocating for the establishment of data systems as a necessary tool for the charter to understand and enhance the effectiveness of its individualized supports and overall program.

The quality of instruction across New Roots' classrooms remains varied. In about half of 13 lessons observed during the November 3 – 4, 2021 renewal visit, teachers continue to dominate lesson talk and inadvertently miss opportunities for students to think deeply and critically about lesson content. The Institute has provided consistent feedback about the charter's need to improve these practices throughout the charter term beginning with the charter's prior renewal report from December 2016. Few lessons observed included the structure and questioning necessary to ensure students are consistently presented with opportunities to analyze, synthesize, and connect current learning to prior learning. While the charter is establishing interdisciplinary projects where teachers collaborate across classrooms, teachers will benefit from additional coaching and professional development supports to ensure every lesson is robust and delivered in a planned and Socratic manner as envisioned by the charter's program.

In response to a deficit of effective supports for teachers in improved lesson planning and instructional delivery, New Roots now benefits from the support of an accomplished outside consultant who is working to establish an ongoing instructional leadership program. At the time of the renewal visit, the plans for such a program would include modeling of effective instructional coaching and working directly with classroom teachers to improve lesson planning, preparation, and execution of instruction. The establishment of clear expectations for instructional planning, both in lesson preparation and the selection and use of instructional materials, is part of that work. More importantly, this work highlights the need for New Roots to establish on-going supports for teachers, and hire appropriately qualified staff members to implement and oversee them to ensure students are doing the intellectual work and producing work products that demonstrate mastery of New York State standards necessary for graduation for the charter to be successful in a future charter term.

Students participating in a focus group during the Institute's renewal visit provided evidence that the school has established a nurturing environment that students report is welcoming, accepting, and supportive in a very personal and individual way. Students cited New Roots' support in preparing essays and higher education application components, and connections to internships and volunteer opportunities in the community. In alignment with the charter's mission of sustainability, students tend a community farm that produces vegetables for use in New Roots' farm to table lunch program.

Based on the Institute's review of the charter's performance as posted over the charter term; a review of the Application for Charter Renewal submitted by the education corporation; a review of academic, organizational, governance, and financial documentation; and, a renewal review of the charter's academic program, the Institute finds that the charter meets the required criteria for renewal with conditions.

The Institute recommends that the SUNY Trustees grant New Roots Charter School a Full-Term Subsequent renewal of five years with conditions.



# DP

DATA PRESENTATION

PAGES: 8-19

AP

ACADEMIC  
PERFORMANCE

CP

COMPLIANCE  
PERFORMANCE

CS

COMMUNITY  
SATISFACTION

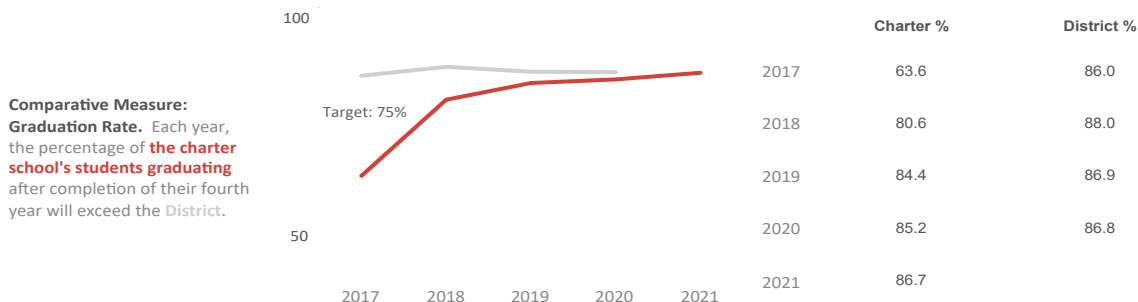
SD

STUDENT  
DEMOGRAPHICS

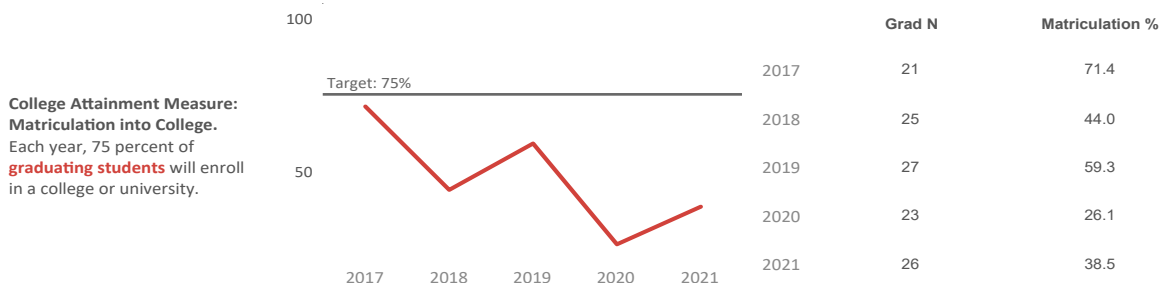
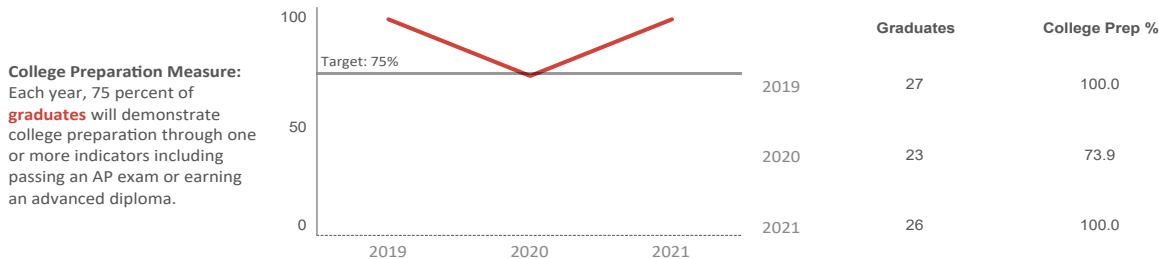
## ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

### NEW ROOTS CHARTER SCHOOL

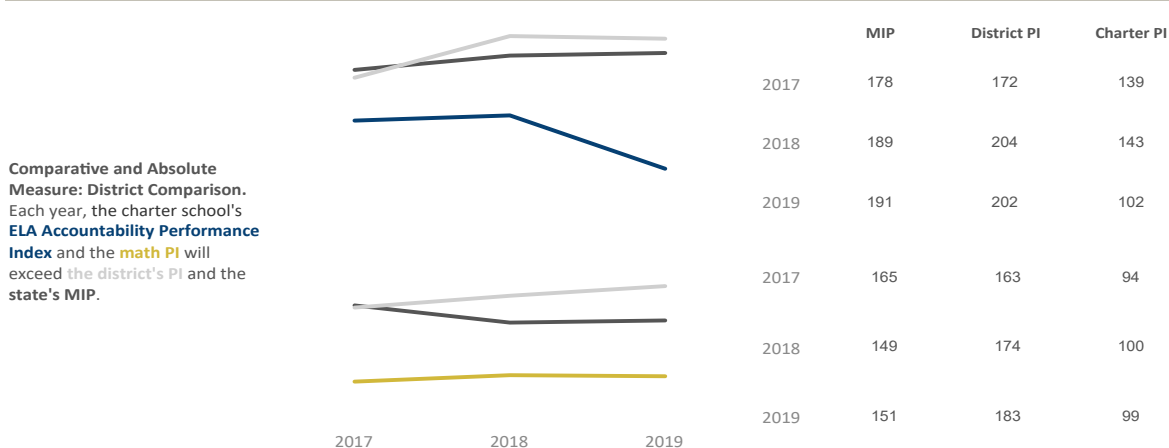
#### HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATE



#### COLLEGE PREPARATION AND ATTAINMENT



#### ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS AND MATHEMATICS



## ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE



### HAS THE CHARTER MET OR COME CLOSE TO MEETING ITS ACADEMIC ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN GOALS?

During its subsequent five year charter term, New Roots came close to meeting its key Accountability Plan goals in high school graduation, college preparation, English language arts (“ELA”), and mathematics. Notably in 2020-21, 100% of the charter’s graduating students demonstrated college preparation by passing a college level course. The charter also met or came close to meeting its science, social studies, and No Child Left Behind (“NCLB”) and Every Student Succeeds Act (“ESSA”) goals over the term.

New Roots came close to meeting its graduation goal over the majority of the term. In 2016-17, the first year of the charter’s current Accountability Period, 64% of New Roots’ 2013 Graduation Cohort graduated after four years, falling under the absolute target of 75% and Ithaca City School District (the “district”) results. The following year, the charter increased its four year graduation rate to 81% and surpassed the absolute target but still performed below the district. In 2018-19 and 2019-20, New Roots continued to post graduation rates above the target of 75% and narrowed the gap between the charter and the district. During 2020-21, 87% of the charter’s 2017 Graduation Cohort graduated after four years, exceeding the absolute target by 12 percentage points and meeting the most recently available results from the local district. Importantly, while the majority of New Roots students’ district of residence is the Ithaca City School District, the charter enrolls students from 17 other districts. Due to this enrollment pattern, New Roots has an opportunity to develop suitable alternative comparison groups. Notably, in 2020-21, 86% of first and second year Cohort members earned enough credits to be promoted to the next grade, which is a key leading indicator of future graduation rates.

New Roots came close to meeting its college preparation goal in the majority of the charter term. From 2018-19 to 2020-21, the charter’s graduates demonstrated college preparation through multiple methods such as achieving the college and career readiness benchmark on the SAT; earning a Regents diploma with advanced designation; passing an Advanced Placement exam; or, passing a college level course offered through partnership with Tompkins Cortland Community College or SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry. Notably, in 2018-19 and 2020-21, 100% of the charter’s graduates demonstrated college preparation through at least one of these methods exceeding the target by 25 percentage points. Over the five year Accountability Period, New Roots graduates matriculated into two and four year college programs at rates that fell below the target of 75% each year. In the most recent year with available data, 39% of 2017 Graduation Cohort graduates matriculated into college, falling 36 percentage points under the target. As a condition of the charter’s renewal, New Roots will develop a program for alumni engagement that includes comprehensive data collection about alumni postsecondary activities and outcomes. New Roots also has an opportunity to establish alternative post secondary goals for students that align to its mission and support the varied post-secondary choices of its students.

## ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

### BENCHMARK SUMMARY

#### ASSESSMENT

New Roots is developing an assessment system to improve instructional effectiveness and student learning. Beginning in the 2020-21 school year, the charter began administering the nationally normed NWEA MAP (“MAP”) assessment three times annually to gather data on students’ reading and mathematics skills. In addition, students take diagnostic assessments in reading, writing, and mathematics as well as curriculum-based, quarterly, and midterm assessments. Teachers in some classes administer project-based assessments wherein students generate a work product such as a presentation to demonstrate content area skill. Seniors also complete a capstone project that results in a final work product based on a research question aligned with the charter’s focus on sustainability. While New Roots recently established systems and structures, such as weekly data meetings, to analyze assessment data to inform instruction, teachers do not yet consistently implement effective practices to adjust instruction based on comprehensive analyses of assessment results. This hinders New Roots’ capacity to provide timely, targeted instruction aligned with student needs as demonstrated by assessment data. Most teachers utilize daily exit tickets to assess student learning during lessons. However, the effectiveness of exit tickets as an assessment tool varies across classrooms. The charter recently began implementing Schoolrunner, an online data management platform families and students can access to track grades and other relevant data. New Roots intends to continue to develop teachers’ proficiency with Schoolrunner to improve the charter’s capacity to analyze and respond to assessment data more effectively.

#### CURRICULUM

New Roots has a curricular framework that supports teachers with instructional planning, but has opportunities to further develop the curriculum to support the implementation of rigorous instruction. Depending on content area, individual teachers utilize curricular guiding documents such as unit plans based on a combination of commercial, open source, and internally developed resources. Notably, the charter provides opportunities for 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students to earn college credit by enrolling in courses at nearby Tompkins Cortland Community College. New Roots provides opportunities for teachers to plan curriculum collaboratively during weekly team meetings. The charter intends to further develop its curricular offerings in the future by applying to provide a career and technical education (“CTE”) program offering courses in agriculture, entrepreneurship, and technology. While teachers develop written daily lesson plans, lesson plans lack clear, measureable objectives as well as detail and specificity. Moreover, lesson plans miss opportunities to anticipate and prepare for student misunderstandings. Teachers submit lesson plans weekly to the principal and superintendent, but do not receive consistent feedback. With the addition of supplementary instructional leadership capacity, New Roots has the opportunity to support teachers in the development of rigorous curriculum more effectively.

## ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

### PEDAGOGY

The quality of instruction at New Roots is inconsistent and varies significantly across classrooms. Most teachers employ effective questioning techniques to check for student understanding and provide effective feedback on student work during class. However, most lessons lack clear objectives aligned to the charter's curriculum that support purposeful, standards-based instruction. Learning objectives are frequently vague or not measurable, which hinders teachers' ability to assess student learning against state standards and adjust instruction accordingly. Teachers' questioning techniques sometimes serve to engage students and occasionally prompt classroom discussions. However, in most lessons, teachers continue to dominate classroom discourse and take on the majority of the cognitive lift in grappling with lesson content. Moreover, a majority of lessons do not challenge students with activities that develop higher order thinking skills. For example, most lessons do not provide sufficient time for students to engage with and respond to one another's ideas, and teachers frequently miss opportunities to prompt students to engage in challenging tasks. Teachers likewise miss opportunities to leverage the charter's small class sizes to facilitate active student participation in classroom activities. Still, a majority of teachers employ effective classroom management techniques that create a consistent focus on lesson activities and mirror the charter's culture of individuality and acceptance.

### INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

In its 13<sup>th</sup> year, New Roots' instructional leadership capacity is insufficient to meet teachers' needs for high quality observations, feedback, professional development, and performance evaluations. This year, in response to these deficits, the board employed an accomplished external consultant to support the charter's development of a comprehensive instructional leadership program. At the time of the renewal visit, the program includes the modeling of effective instructional coaching and working directly with classroom teachers to improve lesson planning, preparation, and execution of instruction. The establishment of clear expectations for instructional planning, both in lesson preparation and the selection, preparation, and use of instructional materials is also part of that work. More importantly, this work highlights the need for New Roots to establish the staff positions and ongoing supports for teachers that will ensure an instructional leadership team that develops specific details around the charter's vision for place-based teaching and learning characterized by cogent projects that align to state learning standards. Meanwhile, teachers continue to lack clear performance expectations; consistent and germane coaching feedback that increases their effectiveness in the classroom; and, clear priorities for teacher development through coaching or a comprehensive professional development program. The charter currently uses peer observations to provide needed feedback to teachers. However, without consistent norming procedures for observations and a clear set of expectations against which to align them, teacher feedback does not provide specific next steps in service of meeting a clearly defined goal that pushes teaching and learning to consistently deep engagement with meaningful, real world content.

## ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

### AT RISK PROGRAM

New Roots has programs in place to support students who struggle academically and compliant settings for students with disabilities and English language learners (“ELLs”). However, the charter continues to struggle to establish routines and procedures that support the systematic analysis of data to monitor student achievement and the effectiveness of these interventions. This year, teachers and leaders use data from the MAP assessment to identify struggling students. Teachers discuss these data, along with student work products, quick assessments, and data on behavioral infractions during weekly faculty team meetings. While this is a promising practice, the charter continues to lack effective analysis protocols and replicable procedures to identify support strategies. Teachers may recommend a student for consideration by the charter’s Rise to Thrive team or for enrollment in the school’s learning lab but teachers do not consistently describe the criteria for inclusion in either of these interventions. The Rise to Thrive team consists of the learning specialist, dean of students, learning lab teacher, the relevant course teacher, and the special education teacher. During weekly meetings, the Rise to Thrive team discusses student data and develops individualized interventions to address academic or behavioral student needs. The learning lab is an additional resource during and after school hours for students who require academic support in a specific subject or subjects. After monitoring for several weeks, students who do not respond to these interventions may be referred to the district committee on special education for evaluation for special education services. Teachers continue to rely on the charter’s small environment and use informal approaches to monitor student progress, for instance, through daily conversations with other staff members. New Roots has yet to establish the systematic use of regular conversations involving multiple staff members with clear routines and criteria to identify students requiring support and developing effective interventions for them.

New Roots uses integrated classroom settings, consultant teacher services, and counseling to support students with disabilities. The charter partners with multiple surrounding districts to provide this variety of services and maintain compliance on all individualized education programs. Students and parents report that these services, along with the charter’s small setting and personal approach to instruction, provide an environment where students with disabilities can successfully engage in lesson content whereas in other schools, student disabilities manifested significant challenges that prevented learning from taking place. In addition, some students with disabilities also attend learning lab periods during or after school for extra support with a special education teacher. The charter supports ELLs through push in and pull out routines. During pull out sessions, a specialist guides students through the use of Houghton Mifflin’s Read180 program for bolstering English literacy skills. This is the first year the charter has enrolled any ELL students during the charter term so outcome data are not yet available.

### ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

New Roots faced enrollment challenges throughout the charter term that hindered the effectiveness of the educational program. Although the charter and its board are developing solutions to some of these limitations, others persist. A new board member provides increased capacity related to instruction and fundraising, two areas integral to the charter’s effective delivery of the education program. The board acknowledges the additional capacity has significantly bolstered its understanding of what it means to evaluate teaching and

## ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

learning and its capacity to do so. Operationally, the charter has successfully migrated to digital platforms, PowerSchool and Schoolrunner, which enable seamless integration of student data. The late adoption of these platforms is illustrative of the charter's prior constrained growth and capacity. Currently, the staff possesses a range of experience and skill levels, and many instructional and non-instructional staff members fulfill responsibilities across multiple positions. However, the Institute observed that not all staff members possess the requisite skill and background to fully execute programmatic and functional areas. The charter's operations manager works to ensure every staff member has sufficient resources, especially in an ongoing pandemic, but continues to face limitations in accessing appropriate training and professional development to enhance the needed skills in light of budgetary restrictions. To significantly increase the charter's capacity to deliver an effective education program, the board must establish clear priorities and goals and directly align performance evaluations at all levels of the organization to them.

### BOARD OVERSIGHT & GOVERNANCE

In its 13<sup>th</sup> year of operation, the board is developing its capacity to effectively govern the day to day operations of the charter. During the renewal visit, the Institute observed New Roots does not clearly and consistently communicate student success measures or expectations for excellence for students and staff across the school community. As indicated by the Institute's letter, dated July 21, 2021, the board has not established and aligned transparent performance targets on academic, fiscal, and operational goals that are consistent across the organization. The board has approved an instructional leadership structure to support teachers and establish protocols for peer observation, feedback, and coaching; however, New Roots lacks clarity and specificity around expected outcomes. The board's investment in developing instructional leadership capacity, by retaining an academic coach and consultant and recruiting additional board members, developed the organization's capacity to achieve accountability goals this year. However, low enrollment hampers the board's ability to further invest in the program.

Despite the board's collective professional experience, which spans more than a century in higher education, finance, legal, and environmental sustainability sectors, SUNY placed the education corporation on probation in December 2019 for low enrollment, fiscal mismanagement, and admitting students outside the permissible grade range. As of July 2021, the education corporation met the specific obligations in its probationary remedial action plan but remains on probation and has fiscal reporting obligations until the end of the charter term. The board acknowledged that its fiscal and operational challenges created a sense of urgency for establishing quantifiable goals and objectives. Fiscal consultants helped the board finance committee develop fiscal monitoring systems and forecasting methods. During the renewal visit, the board acknowledged its prior inattention to fiscal obligations and expressed assurance to rebuild trust among charter stakeholders. Codified internal controls and systems and the development of data dashboards to monitor academic, fiscal, and operational performance at the board and school levels indicate the board is implementing, maintaining, and abiding by the appropriate policies, systems, and processes. Fulfillment of the outstanding teacher pension payments, albeit through two, non-recurring philanthropic donations, and recent approval of the teachers union contract by the board indicate the board is on the path to appropriate systems and policies to ensure effective governance and oversight of the school.

## COMPLIANCE REPORTING



### HAS THE CHARTER SUBSTANTIALLY COMPLIED WITH APPLICABLE LAWS, RULES AND REGULATIONS, AND PROVISIONS OF ITS CHARTER?

*With the exceptions noted below, the charter generally and substantially complies with applicable laws, rules, regulation, and provisions of its charter.*

#### NEW ROOTS CHARTER SCHOOL

##### **Violations**

As noted in the Board and Governance Oversight section of this report, SUNY placed the education corporation on probation in December 2019 for the remainder of the charter term. In January 2019, the Institute informed the education corporation of its corrective plan status for conduct included in the probation.

##### **Complaints**

In April 2018, the district filed a complaint alleging the charter was admitting students who did not meet the criteria required by the charter agreement. The Institute's investigation and sustaining of parts of the complaint contributed to the charter's probationary status in December 2019.

##### **FOIL**

The New Roots website does not contain the required Freedom of Information Law ("FOIL") information including the notice and list of information. The charter's FOIL policy contains minor omissions and the family handbook does not contain the FOIL notice. The Institute will work with the charter to achieve FOIL compliance for the next charter term, if granted.

##### **Annual Reports**

The New Roots website does not include a posting of the most recent annual report or the most recent audit, which is part thereof. The Institute will review the requirements with the charter so it understands its obligations for the next reporting cycle.

##### **Bylaws**

The education corporation's bylaws need revision to reflect current New York law related to board committees and their powers. The Institute will work with the board chair and secretary to align the bylaws with the New York Not-For-Profit Corporation Law.

##### **Policies**

The charter's admissions policy requires amendment to properly reflect the minimum ages of students and the 8<sup>th</sup> grade completion/other requirements approved by prior amendment of the charter agreement. The student discipline policy also needs minor revision to be in full compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. The Institute will work with the charter to achieve compliance during the next charter term, if granted.

## COMMUNITY SATISFACTION

To report on parent satisfaction with the charter's program, the Institute used satisfaction survey data, information gathered from a focus group of parents representing a cross section of students, and data regarding persistence in enrollment.

### PARENT SATISFACTION: SURVEY RESULTS

RESPONSE RATE	OVERALL SATISFACTION	SAFE ENVIRONMENT	EDUCATIONAL GOALS	STRONG FAMILY & COMMUNITY TIES
21%	90%	80%	90%	74%

#### Parent Survey Data

The Institute compiled data from the charter's 2019-20 family satisfaction survey and a set of parent testimonials New Roots collected in 2020-21. In 2019-20, 21% of families who received the survey responded and 7 families provided testimonials in 2020-21. Parents are satisfied with the charter's program. Most families agree or strongly agree the charter provides information about educational goals and student progress toward meeting them. Families also agree or strongly agree that the charter provides a safe environment and forms strong partnerships with families. The Institute received 13 letters from families voicing their support for the school's renewal.

#### Parent Focus Group

The Institute asks all charters facing renewal to convene a representative set of parents for a focus group discussion. A representative set includes parents of students in attendance at the charter for multiple years, parents of students new to the charter, parents of students receiving general education services, parents of students with special needs, and parents of ELLs. Ten parents joined the Institute for the discussion. Parents expressed their support for the school's renewal and were particularly effusive of the school's support for their students' social and emotional needs.

#### Public Comments

In accordance with the Act, the Institute notified the district in which the charter school is located regarding the Application for Charter Renewal. The full text of any written comments received from the district appears below, which also includes a summary of any public comments.

The Ithaca City School District held its required hearing on New Roots' renewal application on October 14, 2021. Several people submitted letters, two in opposition to the application and one in support. Outside of the hearing, 12 letters in support from current and former parents cited the charter's small, calm, and creative environment for reaching their students. Parents spoke of the charter's community projects, environmentalism, and real world focus as attributes that some families travel over an hour to obtain. The parents spoke of how the charter is the only other option for

## COMMUNITY SATISFACTION

students who would not thrive in a traditional district setting. The parents also cited the charter's supportive environment both academically and emotionally, which allowed their students to finally thrive in a school setting. Ten former parents, contractors, and community members spoke in opposition to the renewal application under its current leadership and board. These commenters cited several incidents of alleged harassment and intimidation by leadership toward students and adults. Several alleged the board has not acted appropriately or within its conflict of interest policy and pointed out the charter is still on probationary status. The Institute followed up on these allegations during its mid-charter evaluation and monitoring visits and found them to be unfounded. One situation ended up in litigation, which the Institute continues to monitor. The commenters also cited the arrests of two staff members for off-campus conduct who New Roots subsequently dismissed. Two parents alleged the parent teacher organization had difficulty operating independently of school leadership. Finally, one commenter alleged the charter's discipline practices were discriminatory in nature. Suspension information for the charter is provided in the Student Demographics section, below.

The Director of Sustainability for the City of Ithaca provided a letter of support for the renewal citing the charter's Green Ribbon School Award and its example and resource as an equitable and sustainable entity mirroring Ithaca's commitment to economic development balancing climate justice and job creation. Ithaca's Roots of Success program wherein the city collaborates with regional high schools and community colleges, including New Roots, trains future community leaders and skilled employees with an emphasis on a green economy. The letter indicates the partnership is a model in the community.

**Persistence in Enrollment** An additional indicator of parent satisfaction is persistence in enrollment. In 2020-21, 88% of New Roots students returned from the previous year. Student persistence data from previous years of the charter term is available in student demographics section of the report.

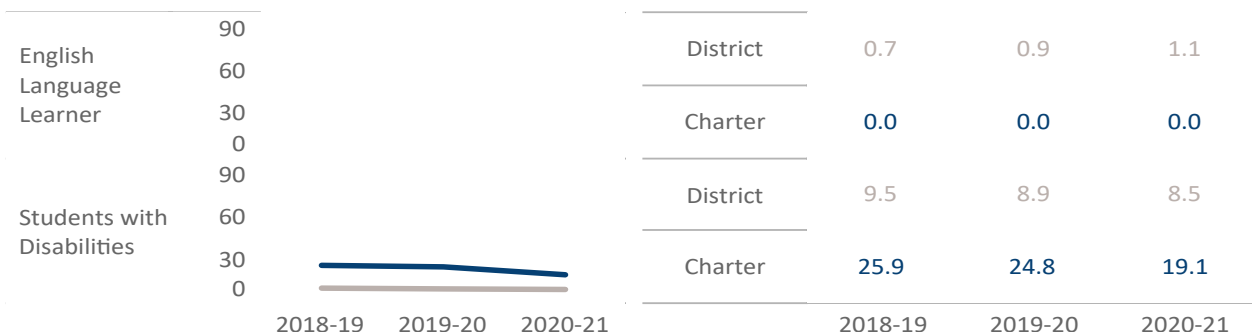
*The Institute derived the statistical information on persistence in enrollment from its database. No comparative data from the district or the NYSED is available to the Institute to provide either district or statewide context.*

## STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

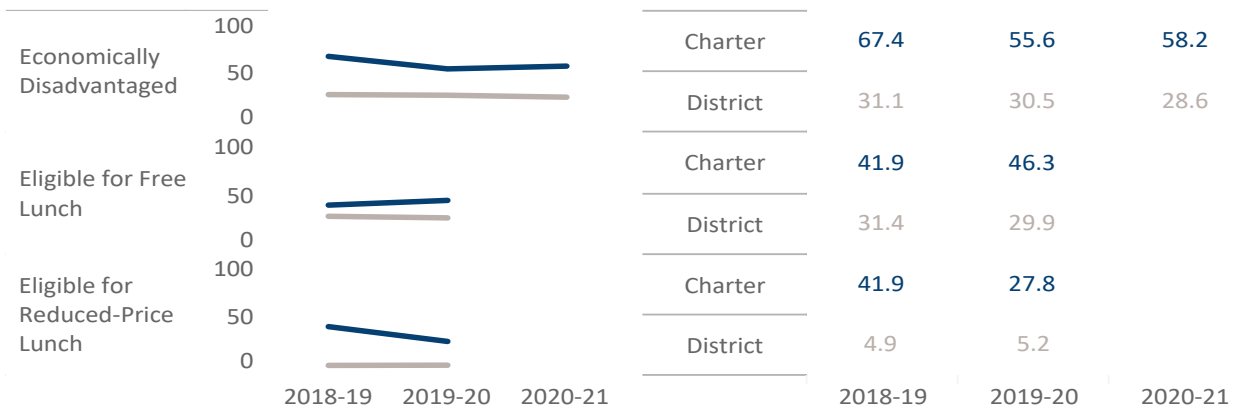
### New Roots Charter School

### Ithaca City School District

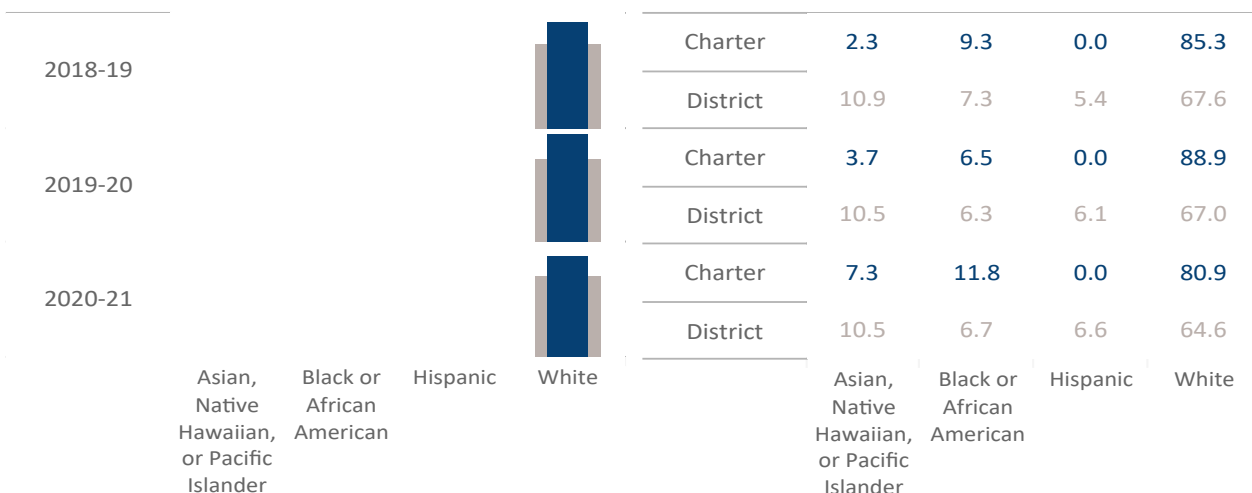
#### Student Demographics: Special Populations



#### Student Demographics: Free/Reduced Lunch



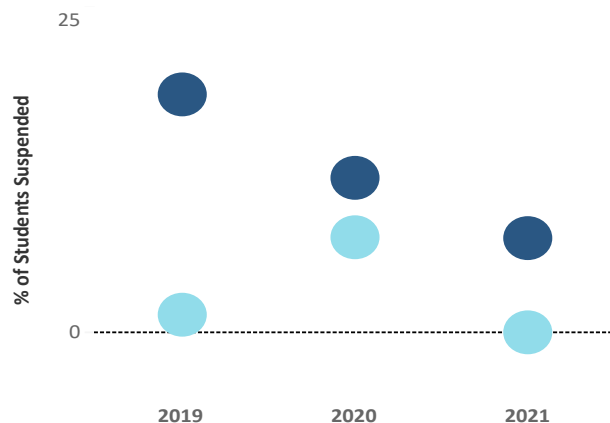
#### Student Demographics: Race/Ethnicity



\* Data reported in these charts reflect BEDS day enrollment counts as reported by the NYSED except for the charter's 2020-21 ELL enrollment and 2018-19 through 2020-21 SWD enrollment which reflect data reported by the education corporation and validated by the Institute.

## STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

### New Roots Charter School



### Ithaca City School District

	ISS Rate	OSS Rate
2019	1.4	18.4
2020	7.3	11.9
2021	0.0	7.3

Data suitable for comparison are not available. The percentage rate shown here is calculated using the method employed by 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 charter each year

		2019	2020	2021
2018-19	80.4			
2019-20	70.0	0	0	0
2020-21	87.9			

### New Roots Charter School's Enrollment and Retention Status: 2020-21

		Target	Charter School
enrollment	economically disadvantaged	27.1	40.9
	English language learners	2.2	0.0
	students with disabilities	11.5	19.1
retention	economically disadvantaged	90.0	94.1
	English language learners	83.5	NA
	students with disabilities	86.4	77.3

\* Data reported in these charts reflect information reported by the education corporation and validated by the Institute.

## STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

### ENROLLMENT AND RETENTION TARGETS

As required by Education Law § 2851(4)(e), a charter must include in its renewal application information regarding the efforts it will put in place to meet or exceed SUNY's enrollment and retention targets for students with disabilities, ELLs, and students who are eligible applicants for the federal Free and Reduced Price Lunch ("FRPL") program. The Institute examines each charter's progress toward meeting or coming close to meeting its targets over the charter term as well as the efforts it has and will put in place to meet or continue to meet those targets.

New Roots attracts students with disabilities and economically disadvantaged students in proportions that exceed those of the district. While the charter retains a greater concentration of economically disadvantaged students than the district, it retained a slightly lower proportion of students with disabilities. The school enrolled no ELLs for the majority of the charter term, though it enrolls one former ELL this year. The charter endeavors to enroll and retain students with disabilities, ELLs, and economically disadvantaged students by:

- employing a director for community outreach who oversees recruitment and retention efforts and the efficacy of those efforts;
- developing and placing print ads in local media outlets, placing event programs at popular local attractions, and hanging large banners on public buildings publicizing the school's program and offerings;
- hosting virtual open houses to attract students and families from Ithaca and the surrounding communities who may not be able to or don't feel comfortable visiting a school during the pandemic;
- hosting informational tables at well attended community events;
- updating and developing the charter website, Instagram, and Facebook pages with technology specifically designed to support marketing efforts to prospective families;
- recruiting and supporting staff, interns, and volunteers from diverse backgrounds to create a more welcoming environment for students;
- sending outreach materials to regional school leaders and guidance counselors via mail and email;
- hosting school administrators from regional schools to visit and tour New Roots; and,
- organizing a schoolwide word of mouth campaign including staff, students, and families.

## FISCAL ANALYSIS

### IS THE EDUCATION CORPORATION FISCALLY SOUND?

*New Roots is fiscally sound based on the Institute's review of the fiscal evidence collected at the time of the renewal review. The SUNY Fiscal Dashboard presents color-coded tables and charts indicating that the education corporation has demonstrated fiscal soundness over the majority of the charter term.<sup>3</sup>*



On December 18, 2019, the SUNY Trustees voted to place New Roots on probationary status following a period of low enrollment, fiscal mismanagement, and failing to pay outstanding debt owed to the New York State Teachers' Retirement System ("NYSTRS"). Additionally, external auditors issued a going concern opinion for fiscal years 2019 and 2020. Subsequent to the charter being placed on probation and issued a going concern opinion, the external auditor found the New Roots board and leadership completed full payment of the outstanding balance due to NYSTRS and completed other necessary corrective actions. The June 30, 2021 audited financial statements resulted in an unqualified opinion. The Institute continues to monitor the financial condition and enrollment closely especially as the NYSTRS payment was made possible by two, large donations rather than by income from ongoing operations.



### DOES THE CHARTER OPERATE PURSUANT TO A FISCAL PLAN WITH REALISTIC BUDGETS THAT IT MONITORS AND ADJUSTS WHEN APPROPRIATE?

***New Roots 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:***

INDICATORS	EVIDENT?
The education corporation has clear budgetary objectives and budget preparation procedures.	+
Board members, charter management, and staff members contribute to the budget process, as appropriate.	+
The education corporation frequently compares its long-range fiscal plan for the charter to actual progress and adjusts it to meet changing conditions.	P
The education corporation routinely analyzes budget variances for the charter; the board addresses material variances and makes necessary revisions.	P

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

"+" : This indicator is generally present.

"-" : This indicator is generally not present.

"P" : The education corporation is progressing toward this indicator being present.

"N/A" : This indicator is not applicable.

## FISCAL ANALYSIS

Actual expenses are equal to, or less than, actual revenue with no material exceptions.



Structurally, the charter faces low enrollment making it difficult to generate revenue to pay the operating costs, which generally increase over time. Additional philanthropic funding has provided temporary stop gaps to cover operating costs. Earlier in the charter term, New Roots had not properly managed an accumulation of non-payments from sending school districts. The board requires strategic long term planning to improve the trajectory of the program.

### DOES THE CHARTER MAINTAIN APPROPRIATE INTERNAL CONTROLS AND PROCEDURES?

*The education corporation maintains appropriate internal controls and procedures. The following elements are generally present:*

INDICATORS	EVIDENT?
The education corporation has a history of sound fiscal policies, procedures and practices, and maintains appropriate internal controls.	-
The most recent audit report was free of any significant deficiencies or material weaknesses in internal controls.	P
The education corporation's Financial Policies and Procedures manual is reviewed and updated on a regular basis.	AUGUST 2021
During the current charter term, an external auditor found significant deficiencies and material weaknesses in the charter's internal controls. The weaknesses and deficiencies included insufficient supporting documentation regarding journal entries, stale outstanding checks, and overstated accounts receivable balances. Additionally, during the charter term an auditor commented on the ability of the charter to continue as a going concern. Large receivable balances that remained uncollected and deemed doubtful to collect and the outstanding debt due to the NYSTRS at the time of the fiscal year 2019-20 audit contributed to this opinion. The most recent audit for 2020-21 no longer contains comments about the ability of the charter to remain a going concern; however, the auditor continued to identify weaknesses concerning receivable balances and stale, dated outstanding checks. In addition, New Roots did not properly pursue with NYSED all of the state charter school basic tuition and special education funding it claimed it was owed to the education corporation. While New Roots reached out to the Institute for assistance and improved its billing relationships with districts, some of those funds will most likely never be recovered in some cases based on lack of accessible information.	

## FISCAL ANALYSIS

### DOES THE CHARTER COMPLY WITH FINANCIAL REPORTING REQUIREMENTS?

*New Roots complies with financial reporting requirements by providing the SUNY Trustees and NYSED with required financial reports that are on time, complete, and follow generally accepted accounting principles. The following reports were generally filed in a timely, accurate and complete manner:*

INDICATORS	EVIDENT?
Annual financial statement audit reports, including federal Single Audit report, if applicable.	+
Annual budgets.	+
Un-audited quarterly reports of income, expenses, and enrollment.	+
Bi-monthly enrollment reports to the sending districts and, if applicable, to NYSED including proper documentation regarding the level of special education services provided to students.	+
Grant expenditure reports.	+

### DOES THE CHARTER MAINTAIN ADEQUATE FINANCIAL RESOURCES TO ENSURE STABLE OPERATIONS?

*New Roots did not maintain adequate financial resources to ensure stable operations during all of the charter term. Critical financial needs of the charter were dependent on variable income (grants, donations and fundraising). The following elements are generally present:*

INDICATORS	EVIDENT?
The education corporation maintains sufficient cash on hand to pay current bills and those that are due shortly.	P
The education corporation maintains adequate liquid reserves to fund expenses in the event of income loss (generally 30 days).	+

## FISCAL ANALYSIS

The education corporation prepares and monitors cash flow projections. **+**

If the education corporation includes philanthropy in its budget, it monitors progress toward its development goals on a periodic basis. **+**

If necessary, the education corporation pursues district state aid intercepts with NYSED to ensure adequate per pupil funding. **P**

The education corporation accumulates unrestricted net assets that are equal to or exceed two percent of the charter's operating budget for the upcoming year. **+**

The education corporation is in compliance with all loan covenants. **N/A**

During the first three years of the current charter term, New Roots maintained between 0.7 and 1.6 months of cash on hand to pay liabilities due shortly at each fiscal year end, less than the Institute's recommended benchmark of three months. The most recent audit for fiscal year 2020-21 reported 3.9 months of cash on hand at year end. Large philanthropic contributions partly aided the improvement made during each of the two most recent fiscal years. New Roots will need to continue to monitor its cash position during the current fiscal year and going forward to ensure stability without the reliance on philanthropic support to cover operating costs.

During the current charter term, New Roots carried a large receivable on its balance sheet from past due tuition payments from local school districts. However, the auditor has determined these balances are from past years and may never be collected from districts or through the state aid intercept process. In response to this, New Roots and its board ensured current tuition billing contains sufficient supporting documentation so the local districts did not challenge the amounts billed. This has led to the charter receiving current tuition payments on a more timely basis and in full. These practices will need to continue to support the charter's improved fiscal health.

New Roots reported both operating surpluses and deficits in the last five years. The charter reported an operating surplus of \$540,000 in the most recent fiscal year which offsets deficits from prior years in the charter term. For 2020-21, the fiscal dashboard reports the charter is fiscally strong with \$989,215 in net assets and 3.9 months of cash on hand to pay liabilities due shortly. New Roots has funded and maintained the required \$75,000 in an escrow account in case of dissolution.

## FISCAL ANALYSIS

### NEW ROOTS CHARTER SCHOOL

#### CHARTER INFORMATION

##### BALANCE SHEET

###### Assets

###### Current Assets

Cash and Cash Equivalents - **GRAPH 1**  
Grants and Contracts Receivable  
Accounts Receivable  
Prepaid Expenses  
Contributions and Other Receivables

###### Total Current Assets - **GRAPH 1**

Property, Building and Equipment, net  
Other Assets

###### Total Assets - **GRAPH 1**

###### Liabilities and Net Assets

###### Current Liabilities

Accounts Payable and Accrued Expenses  
Accrued Payroll and Benefits  
Deferred Revenue  
Current Maturities of Long-Term Debt  
Short Term Debt - Bonds, Notes Payable  
Other

###### Total Current Liabilities - **GRAPH 1**

Deferred Rent/Lease Liability  
All other L-T debt and notes payable, net current maturities

###### Total Liabilities - **GRAPH 1**

###### Net Assets

Without Donor Restrictions  
With Donor Restrictions

###### Total Net Assets

###### Total Liabilities and Net Assets

##### ACTIVITIES

###### Operating Revenue

Resident Student Enrollment  
Students with Disabilities

###### Grants and Contracts

State and local  
Federal - Title and IDEA  
Federal - Other  
Other  
NYC DoE Rental Assistance  
Food Service/Child Nutrition Program

###### Total Operating Revenue

###### Expenses

Regular Education  
SPED  
Other

###### Total Program Services

Management and General  
Fundraising

###### Total Expenses - **GRAPHS 2, 3 & 4**

###### Surplus / (Deficit) From School Operations

###### Support and Other Revenue

Contributions  
Fundraising  
Miscellaneous Income  
Net assets released from restriction

###### Total Support and Other Revenue

###### Total Unrestricted Revenue

###### Total Temporally Restricted Revenue

###### Total Revenue - **GRAPHS 2 & 3**

###### Change in Net Assets

###### Net Assets - Beginning of Year - **GRAPH 2**

Prior Year Adjustment(s)

###### Net Assets - End of Year - **GRAPH 2**

Opened 2009-10

2016 17	2017 18	2018 19	2019 20	2020 21
167,268	182,202	143,164	260,439	579,178
-	-	2,312	37,533	104,681
291,413	284,367	297,031	83,523	70,621
3,854	3,327	3,326	1,374	30,887
57,241	1,017	-	-	-
519,776	470,913	445,833	382,869	785,367
496,919	467,757	418,111	360,671	310,995
24,420	23,457	48,457	98,457	99,831
1,041,115	962,127	912,401	841,997	1,196,193

7,653	124,944	13,601	14,363	20,177
190,850	217,973	148,492	378,814	186,801
-	17,357	-	-	-
-	-	-	-	-
-	-	-	-	-
160,576	-	288,608	-	-
359,079	360,274	450,701	393,177	206,978
-	-	-	-	-
-	-	-	-	-
359,079	360,274	450,701	393,177	206,978

667,855	587,672	422,519	439,738	980,133
14,181	14,181	39,181	9,082	9,082
682,036	601,853	461,700	448,820	989,215
1,041,115	962,127	912,401	841,997	1,196,193

1,644,864	1,880,090	1,844,980	1,550,649	1,464,051
170,492	213,994	194,579	124,109	102,708

-	-	37,502	930	15,692
109,250	127,069	117,083	115,349	45,222
-	50,458	-	35,064	36,877
-	-	48,022	-	360,453
-	-	-	-	-
45,542	945	401	1,079	22,074
1,970,148	2,272,556	2,242,567	1,827,180	2,047,077

1,250,348	1,397,748	1,448,826	1,230,464	1,128,431
159,654	180,245	189,673	153,770	139,949
137,993	156,300	161,387	135,939	115,033
1,547,995	1,734,293	1,799,886	1,520,173	1,383,413
434,174	505,450	509,400	435,770	411,803
-	-	-	-	-
1,982,169	2,239,743	2,309,286	1,955,943	1,795,216
(12,021)	32,813	(66,719)	(128,763)	251,861

11,376	6,561	5,042	225,449	204,413
3,984	3,066	2,282	7,825	-
9,280	6,107	3,236	22,317	15,991
-	-	-	-	-
24,640	15,734	10,560	255,591	220,404

1,993,989	2,288,290	2,253,127	2,087,870	2,267,481
799	-	-	(5,099)	-
1,994,788	2,288,290	2,253,127	2,082,771	2,267,481

12,619	48,547	(56,159)	126,828	472,265
669,417	682,036	601,853	461,700	448,820
-	(128,730)	(83,994)	(139,708)	68,130
682,036	601,853	461,700	448,820	989,215

# FISCAL ANALYSIS

## NEW ROOTS CHARTER SCHOOL

### CHARTER INFORMATION - (Continued)

#### Functional Expense Breakdown

Personnel Service
Administrative Staff Personnel
Instructional Personnel
Non-Instructional Personnel
Personnel Services (Combined)
<b>Total Salaries and Staff</b>
Fringe Benefits & Payroll Taxes
Retirement
Management Company Fees
Building and Land Rent / Lease / Facility Financing
Staff Development
Professional Fees, Consultant & Purchased Services
Marketing / Recruitment
Student Supplies, Materials & Services
Depreciation
Other

#### Total Expenses

2016 17	2017 18	2018 19	2019 20	2020 21
293,643	356,237	367,482	288,169	258,253
803,591	974,888	1,005,661	788,610	706,741
1,318	1,600	1,650	1,293	1,159
-	-	-	-	-
<b>1,098,552</b>	<b>1,332,725</b>	<b>1,374,793</b>	<b>1,078,072</b>	<b>966,153</b>
274,467	261,328	289,997	207,400	168,036
-	-	-	-	-
-	-	-	-	-
280,116	296,470	306,685	329,488	322,454
4,631	15,545	7,790	6,059	3,207
98,564	98,666	93,911	112,358	124,016
9,949	19,993	15,585	30,935	25,582
17,596	11,870	16,988	16,345	8,969
59,118	59,280	56,159	56,045	49,526
139,176	143,866	147,378	119,241	127,273
<b>1,982,169</b>	<b>2,239,743</b>	<b>2,309,286</b>	<b>1,955,943</b>	<b>1,795,216</b>

### CHARTER ANALYSIS

#### ENROLLMENT

Original Chartered Enrollment
Final Chartered Enrollment (includes any revisions)
Actual Enrollment - <b>GRAPH 4</b>
Chartered Grades
Final Chartered Grades (includes any revisions)

2016 17	2017 18	2018 19	2019 20	2020 21
200	160	160	160	160
160	160	160	160	160
139	149	139	113	109
9-12	9-12	9-12	9-12	9-12
-	-	-	-	-

#### #REF!

Per Pupil Funding (Weighted Avg of All Districts)  
Increase over prior year

-	12,080	12,835	13,215	13,656
0.0%	100.0%	5.9%	2.9%	3.2%

#### PER STUDENT BREAKDOWN

##### Revenue

Operating
Other Revenue and Support
<b>TOTAL - GRAPH 3</b>

14,129	15,204	16,140	16,234	18,772
177	105	76	2,271	2,021
<b>14,306</b>	<b>15,309</b>	<b>16,216</b>	<b>18,505</b>	<b>20,793</b>

##### Expenses

Program Services
Management and General, Fundraising
<b>TOTAL - GRAPH 3</b>
% of Program Services
% of Management and Other

11,102	11,603	12,954	13,507	12,686
3,114	3,382	3,666	3,872	3,776
<b>14,215</b>	<b>14,985</b>	<b>16,620</b>	<b>17,378</b>	<b>16,462</b>
78.1%	77.4%	77.9%	77.7%	77.1%
21.9%	22.6%	22.1%	22.3%	22.9%
0.6%	2.2%	-2.4%	6.5%	26.3%
14.2%	13.0%	13.7%	18.0%	15.8%

% of Revenue Exceeding Expenses - **GRAPH 5**

% of Revenue Expended on Facilities

#### Student to Faculty Ratio

9.5	8.8	8.4	8.0	7.8
-----	-----	-----	-----	-----

#### Faculty to Admin Ratio

2.2	2.3	1.6	2.0	3.5
-----	-----	-----	-----	-----

#### Financial Responsibility Composite Scores - GRAPH 6

Score
Fiscally Strong 1.5 - 3.0 / Fiscally Adequate 1.0 - 1.4 /
Fiscally Needs Monitoring < 1.0

1.8	1.9	1.4	2.0	3.0
Fiscally Strong	Fiscally Strong	Fiscally Adequate	Fiscally Strong	Fiscally Strong

#### Working Capital - GRAPH 7

Net Working Capital
As % of Unrestricted Revenue
Working Capital (Current) Ratio Score
Risk (Low ≥ 3.0 / Medium 1.4 - 2.9 / High < 1.4)
Rating (Excellent ≥ 3.0 / Good 1.4 - 2.9 / Poor < 1.4)

160,697	110,639	(4,868)	(10,308)	578,389
8.1%	4.8%	-0.2%	-0.5%	25.5%
1.4	1.3	1.0	1.0	3.8
MEDIUM	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH	LOW
Good	Poor	Poor	Poor	Excellent

#### Quick (Acid Test) Ratio

Score
Risk (Low ≥ 2.5 / Medium 1.0 - 2.4 / High < 1.0)
Rating (Excellent ≥ 2.5 / Good 1.0 - 2.4 / Poor < 1.0)

1.4	1.3	1.0	1.0	3.6
MEDIUM	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	LOW
Good	Good	Good	Good	Excellent

#### Debt to Asset Ratio - GRAPH 7

Score
Risk (Low < 0.50 / Medium 0.51 - .95 / High > 1.0)
Rating (Excellent < 0.50 / Good 0.51 - .95 / Poor > 1.0)

0.3	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.2
LOW	LOW	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	LOW
Excellent	Excellent	Good	Good	Excellent

#### Months of Cash - GRAPH 8

Score
Risk (Low > 3 mo. / Medium 1 - 3 mo. / High < 1 mo.)
Rating (Excellent > 3 mo. / Good 1 - 3 mo. / Poor < 1 mo.)

1.0	1.0	0.7	1.6	3.9
MEDIUM	MEDIUM	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW
Good	Good	Poor	Good	Excellent

## FUTURE PLANS

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

*Together with the conditions recommended by the Institute, New Roots presents plans for the future that are reasonable, feasible, and achievable. In order to be eligible to apply for its next subsequent renewal, New Roots must meet the conditions of renewal set forth in the Institute's recommendation.*

#### NEW ROOTS CHARTER SCHOOL

**Plans for the Charter's Structure.** The education corporation has provided all of the key structural elements for a charter renewal and those elements are reasonable, feasible, and achievable.

**Plans for the Educational Program.** New Roots will continue its focus on academic attainment with the addition of an instructional leader and annual external reviews of the program in order to meet the conditions of its renewal. The charter will also continue its focus on education for sustainability in a subsequent charter term, if granted.

**Plans for Board Oversight & Governance.** New Roots' current board members express a desire to continue serving the board in a subsequent charter term, if granted. The charter anticipates making no changes to the composition of the board.

**Fiscal & Facility Plans.** Based on evidence collected through the renewal review, including a review of the five year financial plan, New Roots presents a plan that requires close monitoring because of the structural issues arising from low enrollment and high operating costs stemming from facility and collective bargaining agreement rates. Reliance on ad hoc external philanthropy to prop up the education corporation is not sustainable. The Institute will continue to closely monitor the financial condition and the charter's enrollment, which must stay above the conditions' limits in order for New Roots' fiscal plans to be feasible.

New Roots plans to remain in its current privately leased facility during the next charter term. The facility provides ample space and the necessary amenities to operate the school program.

	CURRENT	END OF NEXT CHARTER TERM
<b>Enrollment</b>	160	140
<b>Grade Span</b>	9-12	9-12
<b>Teaching Staff</b>	13	12
<b>Days of Instruction</b>	185	185

New Roots

# Ax

## APPENDICES

### PAGES AX 1-6

<sup>A</sup>  
**CO**  
CHARTER  
OVERVIEW

PAGE Ax 1

<sup>B</sup>  
**RI**  
REPORT  
INFORMATION

PAGE Ax 3

## NEW ROOTS CHARTER SCHOOL BOARD OF TRUSTEES

CHAIR	TRUSTEES
Dr. Jason Hamilton	Meghan Fitzgerald
VICE CHAIR	Dr. Peter Bardaglio
Cate Thompson	Tanya Saunders
TREASURER	Paul Wheeler
Kati Torello	
SECRETARY	
Joesph Wilson	

## CHARTER SCHOOL LEADERS

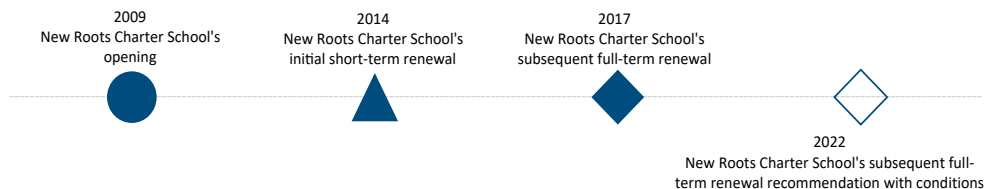
PRINCIPAL
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*Tina Nilsen-Hodges, Principal and Superintendent (October 2008-Present)*

## CHARTER CHARACTERISTICS

SCHOOL YEAR	CHARTERED ENROLLMENT	ACTUAL ENROLLMENT	ACTUAL AS A PERCENTAGE OF CHARTERED ENROLLMENT	GRADES SERVED
2017-18	160	149	93%	9-12
2018-19	160	139	87%	9-12
2019-20	160	113	71%	9-12
2020-21	160	109	68%	9-12
2021-22	160	125	78%	9-12

## TIMELINE OF CHARTER SCHOOL RENEWAL



## CHARTER SCHOOL VISIT HISTORY

SCHOOL YEAR	VISIT TYPE	DATE
<b>2009-10</b>	First Year Visit	March 25, 2010
<b>2010-11</b>	Evaluation Visit	May 17-19, 2011
<b>2013-14</b>	Initial Renewal Visit	October 8-9, 2013
<b>2014-15</b>	Evaluation Visit	May 12-13, 2015
<b>2015-16</b>	Evaluation Visit	April 20, 2016
<b>2016-17</b>	Subsequent Renewal Visit	September 21-22, 2016
<b>2020-21</b>	Evaluation Visit	April 21-22, 2021
<b>2021-22</b>	Subsequent Renewal Review	November 3-4, 2021

## CONDUCT OF THE RENEWAL REVIEW

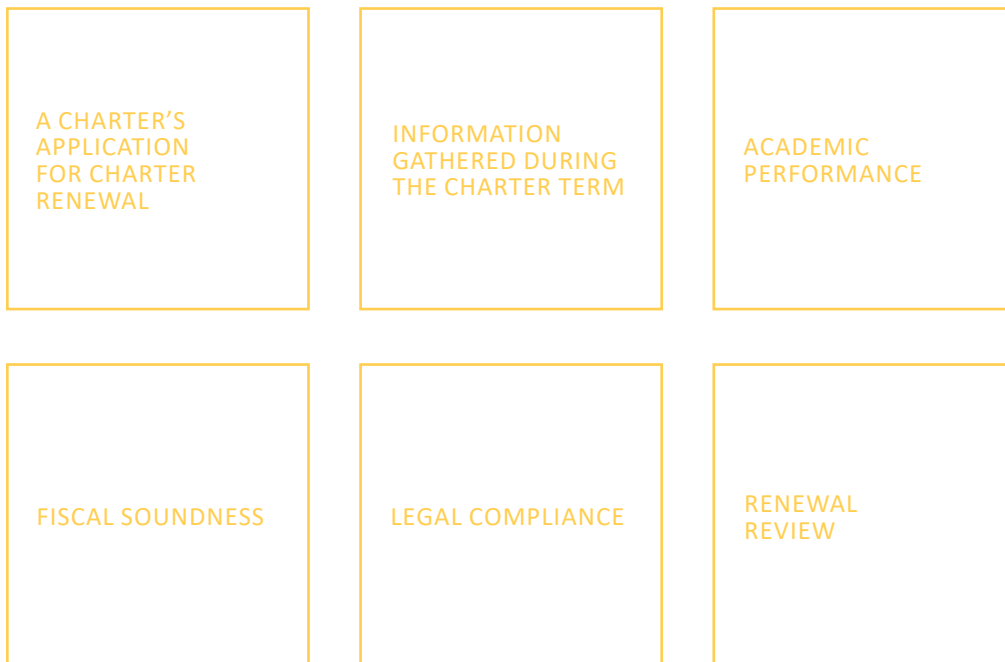
DATE(S) OF REVIEW	EVALUATION TEAM MEMBERS	TITLE
<b>November 3-4, 2021</b>	Jeff Wasbes	Executive Deputy Director for Accountability
	Maureen Foley	Director for New Charters
	Shenita Johnson	External Consultant

The sections below contain general information about the SUNY Trustees' and Institute's approach to renewal.

#### REPORT FORMAT

This report is the primary means by which the SUNY Charter Schools Institute (the "Institute") transmits to the State University of New York Board of Trustees (the "SUNY Trustees") its findings and recommendations regarding a charter school's Application for Charter Renewal, and more broadly, details the merits of a charter's case for renewal. The Institute has created and issued this report pursuant to the ***Policies for the Renewal of Not-For-Profit Charter School Education Corporations and Charter Schools Authorized by the Board of Trustees of the State University of New York*** (the "SUNY Renewal Policies").<sup>1</sup>

#### THE INSTITUTE MAKES ALL RENEWAL RECOMMENDATIONS BASED ON



***Most importantly, the Institute analyzes the charter's record of academic performance and the extent to which it has met its academic Accountability Plan goals.***

1. Revised September 4, 2013 and available on the [Institute's website](#).

## REPORT FORMAT

This renewal recommendation report compiles evidence using the *State University of New York Charter Renewal Benchmarks* (the “SUNY Renewal Benchmarks”),<sup>2</sup> which specify in detail what a successful charter school should be able to demonstrate at the time of the renewal review. The Institute uses the four interconnected renewal questions below for framing benchmark statements to determine if a charter has made an adequate case for renewal.

## RENEWAL QUESTIONS



**IS THE CHARTER AN ACADEMIC SUCCESS?**

**IS THE CHARTER AN EFFECTIVE, VIABLE ORGANIZATION?**

**IS THE CHARTER FISCALLY SOUND?**

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

This report contains appendices that provide additional statistical and organizationally related information including a statistical charter overview, copies of any school district comments on the Application for Charter Renewal, and the SUNY Fiscal Dashboard information for the charter. If applicable, the appendices also include additional information about the education corporation, its charters and student achievement of those charters.



Additional information about the SUNY renewal process and an overview of the requirements for renewal under the New York Charter Schools Act of 1998 (as amended, the “Act”) are available on the [Institute's website](#).

2. Version 5.0, May 2012, are available on the [Institute's website](#).



## IS THE CHARTER AN ACADEMIC SUCCESS? THE INFORMATION BELOW HIGHLIGHTS THE INSTITUTE'S AND SUNY TRUSTEES' APPROACH TO ACCOUNTABILITY PLANS FOR EACH SUNY AUTHORIZED CHARTER.

At the beginning of the Accountability Period,<sup>3</sup> the charter developed and adopted an Accountability Plan that set academic goals for performance in the key subjects of ELA and mathematics, as well as science and the federal Every Student Succeeds Act ("ESSA"). High school Accountability Plans also include goals for High School Graduation, College Preparation, and Social Studies. For each goal in the Accountability Plan, specific outcome measures define the level of performance necessary to meet that goal. The Institute examines results for all required Accountability Plan measures to determine goal attainment. The Act requires charters be held "accountable for meeting measurable student achievement results"<sup>4</sup> and states the educational programs at a charter school must "meet or exceed the student performance standards adopted by the board of regents"<sup>5</sup> for other public schools. SUNY's required accountability measures rest on performance as measured by statewide assessments. Historically, SUNY's required measures include measures that present schools':

ABSOLUTE  
PERFORMANCE, I.E.,  
WHAT PERCENTAGE  
OF STUDENTS  
SCORE AT A CERTAIN  
PROFICIENCY ON  
STATE EXAMS?

COMPARATIVE PERFOR-  
MANCE, I.E., HOW DID THE  
CHARTER DO AS COMPARED  
TO SCHOOLS IN THE  
DISTRICT AND SCHOOLS  
THAT SERVE SIMILAR  
POPULATIONS OF ECO-  
NOMICALLY DISADVAN-  
TAGED STUDENTS?

GROWTH  
PERFORMANCE,  
I.E., HOW MUCH  
DID THE CHARTER  
GROW STUDENT  
PERFORMANCE AS  
COMPARED TO THE  
GROWTH OF SIMILARLY  
SITUATED STUDENTS?

Absolute, comparative, and growth achievement provide a basis for triangulating charter performance within each academic goal area. Furthermore, every SUNY authorized charter school may propose additional, mission aligned goals and measures of success when crafting its Accountability Plan. The final Accountability Plan adopted by the education corporation's board and approved by the Institute is included in the charter and frames the analysis of the charter's student achievement results.

The Institute consistently emphasizes comparative and growth performance over absolute measures in its analysis of goal attainment. Nevertheless, the Institute analyzes every measure included in a charter's Accountability Plan to determine its level of academic success, including the extent to which each charter has established and maintained a record of high performance and demonstrated progress toward meeting its academic Accountability Plan goals throughout the charter term. Whether or not a charter includes additional measures in its Accountability Plan, the Institute considers all available evidence of charter performance at the time of renewal.

3. 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 charter 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. In this renewal report, the Institute uses "charter term" and "Accountability Period" interchangeably.

4. Education Law § 2850(2)(f).

5. Education Law § 2854(1)(d).

State assessment data in ELA, mathematics, and science in 3<sup>rd</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> grade form the basis of data required to analyze the required accountability measures for elementary and middle schools. These data were not available in 2019-20 following the state’s cancellation of all state exams during the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Although schools participated in state assessments in ELA and mathematics in 2020-21, the participation rates that year were inconsistent. The resulting data are not sufficiently reliable or credible for cogent analyses of charter academic performance. In response, the Institute provided all SUNY authorized charter schools a framework for the analysis of norm-referenced and internally developed exam data. To every extent possible, the Institute attempted to maintain a consistent framework of examining absolute, comparative, and growth performance. During 2019-20 and 2020-21, charters reported data on a variety of norm-referenced and internally developed assessments to demonstrate student academic success. This renewal report contemplates charter performance during the pandemic through the lenses of absolute and growth performance on norm-referenced and internally developed ELA, mathematics, and science assessments along with high school completion and college readiness data.



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