

# THE SUNY CHARTER SCHOOLS INSTITUTE

*FIRST YEAR SCHOOL EVALUATION REPORT  
OUR WORLD NEIGHBORHOOD  
CHARTER SCHOOL 2*

*VISIT DATE: APRIL 12, 2019*

*REPORT DATE: MAY 22, 2019*

*SUNY Charter Schools Institute*

*SUNY Plaza*

*353 Broadway*

*Albany, NY 12246*

*518.445.4250*

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



**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 fan-like pattern, showing a variety of colors including green, blue, red, pink, orange, yellow, green, orange, blue, purple, and brown. Some pencils have erasers attached. Several paper clips in various colors (orange, green, pink, blue, black) are scattered at the bottom of the frame.

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# INTRODUCTION & SCHOOL BACKGROUND

## INTRODUCTION

This report outlines the SUNY Charter Schools Institute's (the "Institute's") observations and findings from its April 12, 2019 first year school evaluation visit to Our World Neighborhood Charter School 2 ("OWN 2").

## REPORT FORMAT

As with all SUNY-authorized charter schools, on a periodic basis throughout the term of the school's charter the Institute conducts a number of formal site visits. The Institute reports in writing to the school on data gathered during these visits. Cumulatively, the information in reports such as this and those issued in later years forms the foundation of qualitative data on the school's effectiveness. At the conclusion of the school's charter term, the Institute provides the State University of New York Board of Trustees (the "SUNY Trustees") an analysis of the school's performance over the term of its charter that includes this qualitative information. The Institute makes a renewal recommendation for the school based on two components: the school's attainment of its Accountability Plan goals, and evidence of the quality of the school's educational program collected during school evaluation visits.

At renewal, the Institute evaluates the academic, organizational, legal, and fiscal aspects of the school's program using the State University of New York Charter Renewal Benchmarks (the "SUNY Renewal Benchmarks"). For formal first year school evaluation visits conducted prior to renewal, the Institute focuses on specific qualitative benchmarks that provide a fixed standard for determining the quality of the academic program as the school progresses toward renewal.

Although the information provided in this report is not prescriptive, the Institute would expect school leadership to review thoroughly the issues highlighted below and, to the extent helpful, use them to assist in guiding the school's academic program or other aspects of the school. In this regard, please be aware that although the Institute takes very seriously the conclusions provided, staff members are cognizant of the fact that a one-day site visit may not yield information on all facets of a school's program.

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SUNY Plaza  
353 Broadway  
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# INTRODUCTION & SCHOOL BACKGROUND

## SCHOOL BACKGROUND

The SUNY Trustees approved the original charter for Our World Neighborhood Charter Schools (“OWN” or the “education corporation”) to operate OWN 2 on June 13, 2016. OWN 2 is a replication of Our World Neighborhood Charter School (“OWN 1”).

OWN 2 opened its doors in the fall of 2018, serving 116 students in Kindergarten – 2<sup>nd</sup> grade during the 2018-19 school year. The school initially planned to serve students in Kindergarten - 1<sup>st</sup> grade during its first year, but worked with the Institute to revise its charter to serve students in Kindergarten - 2<sup>nd</sup> grade in its first year. OWN requested this revision because it did not receive a sufficient number of student applications to meet full enrollment with only Kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> grade.

The school operates in leased space at 135-25 79<sup>th</sup> Street, Howard Beach, New York 11414 within New York City Community School District (“CSD”) 27. At scale, OWN 2 will serve 453 students in Kindergarten – 5<sup>th</sup> grade.

The mission of OWN 2 is:



*OWN 2 will educate our students to become independent thinkers and lifelong learners. We are committed to an educational philosophy based on inquiry, active and experiential learning, and social justice. Through a literacy-based, integrated, and standards-driven curriculum that encourages community and honors diversity, OWN 2 students will receive the broad education they will need to meet the academic and social challenges of successfully entering and completing a strong high school program, and indeed, to thrive in today’s world.*

As noted below, for first year visits, the Institute focuses on academic program benchmarks, with a particular focus on the emergence of systems and structures that will support a high quality program. In the case of first year visits to replication schools, the Institute looks for evidence that the new school is adapting and implementing highly effective systems and structures from the original school or schools.

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# INTRODUCTION & SCHOOL BACKGROUND

Pursuant to the Institute's inspection of OWN 2 at the above address on August 21, 2018, (and documentation provided to or inspected by the Institute at that visit and prior/post thereto), the Institute determined that the education corporation had completed substantially all of the Prior Actions required of it as defined in the Charter Agreement between the education corporation and the SUNY Trustees (the "Charter Agreement") for the operation of the school. Therefore, per Section 3.1 of the Charter Agreement, the Institute permitted the education corporation to provide instruction at the school to students in accordance with the plan provided in the Charter Agreement.

# BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

## QUALITATIVE BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

The SUNY Renewal Benchmarks, grounded in the body of research from the Center for Urban Studies at Harvard University,<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup>

For first year visits, the Institute focuses on academic program benchmarks to establish a baseline measure of the quality of the school's systems and procedures which heavily affect the progress that a school is able to demonstrate in meeting its Accountability Plan goals during the charter term. The Institute expects a school to have moved from the beginning of implementation and the promise of future growth to full and effective implementation of a quality program by the time the school comes to renewal.

## DOES OWN 2 HAVE AN ASSESSMENT SYSTEM THAT IMPROVES INSTRUCTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS AND STUDENT LEARNING?

OWN 2 is developing an assessment system to drive instructional practices. The school utilizes the same assessments as OWN 1, which allows leaders to compare results between schools. However, the school does not yet utilize the effective scoring practices from OWN 1 to ensure that data are valid and reliable across all grades and classrooms.

- OWN 2 administers valid and reliable assessments that align to state standards and school curricula. For English language arts ("ELA"), the school administers the Teachers College Reader's and Writer's Workshop ("TCRWP") running records, an on demand writing piece, and iReady, a research-based online blended learning program. For mathematics, the school administers quarterly assessments created by the original school, curriculum-based unit assessments, and iReady. The ELA and mathematics coaches from OWN 1 review the assessments to ensure alignment with the rigor of state standards.
- OWN 2 is establishing practices to norm teachers on scoring and analyzing assessments to ensure the system is valid and reliable. Teachers score assessments using common rubrics from OWN 1, but leaders have not conducted norming sessions to ensure teachers score assessments consistently and reliably.

1. 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](http://scholar.harvard.edu/files/fryer/files/dobbie_fryer_revision_final.pdf).

2. Additional details regarding the SUNY Renewal Benchmarks are available at: [www.newyorkcharters.org/suny-renewal-benchmarks/](http://www.newyorkcharters.org/suny-renewal-benchmarks/).

# BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

- Teachers and leaders consistently access student achievement data through the school's online data repository. Teachers use this data to determine instructional strategies and drive lesson planning. For ELA, teachers review student reading data from TCRWP running records to group students for guided reading and to select rigorous texts based on student reading levels. In mathematics, teachers determine groupings for instructional periods based on skill mastery.

## DOES OWN 2'S CURRICULUM SUPPORT TEACHERS IN THEIR INSTRUCTIONAL PLANNING?

OWN 2 relies on OWN 1's effective curricular framework to provide teachers with support for instructional planning. Leaders primarily focused this year on acclimating teachers to the curricular programs and recognize a need to build more formal systems for collaboration between OWN 1 and OWN 2 for curriculum development and consistency of implementation.

- OWN 2 implements the curriculum used at OWN 1. In ELA, the school implements reading and writing workshop as well as guided reading from TCRWP, a well-regarded research-based curriculum. Teachers use Houghton-Mifflin's Go Math! for mathematics instruction, which provides integrated lessons and digital resources to support learning. In science, OWN 2 implements FOSS Next Generation, a commercially-available curriculum that emphasizes hands-on learning. For social studies, teachers develop lessons internally and supplement those plans with materials from Social Studies Weekly, a Common Core-aligned commercial curriculum. The school recently purchased Foundations to support with phonics instruction, though at the time of the visit teachers had not yet implemented the program. The school provides teachers with many additional resources such as leveled reading books to support guided reading.
- OWN 2 primarily utilizes the scope and sequence documents and pacing guides from the purchased curricular programs. With these materials, teachers know what to teach and when to teach it. OWN 2 teachers revise objectives for lessons based on advice from the OWN 1 ELA and mathematics coaches. However, leaders do not consistently monitor lesson planning to ensure that teachers tailor purchased curricular resources to the specific needs of OWN 2 students. OWN 2 and education corporation leaders recognize the need to improve upon collaboration structures between OWN 1 and OWN 2 so that teachers implement curricula while also revising curricular resources to meet the specific needs of OWN 2 students.



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# BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

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1D**

## IS HIGH QUALITY INSTRUCTION EVIDENT THROUGHOUT OWN 2?

Overall, instruction at OWN 2 is high quality, and leaders recognize clear areas for improvement for instructional practices. Teachers deliver purposeful lessons with clear learning objectives. With the use of responsive classroom and the school's social-emotional Pillar program, teachers create environments that are focused on academic achievement. As shown in the table below, Institute team members conducted 10 classroom observations following a defined protocol used in all school visits.

CONTENT AREA	GRADE				
	K	1	2	Total	
	ELA	1	2	2	5
	Math	2	1	1	4
	Soc Stu		1		1
	Total	3	4	3	10

- Lessons at OWN 2 include clear objectives aligned to the school's curriculum (8 out of 10 lessons observed). Teachers post learning objectives and consistently refer to them throughout lessons, particularly in reading and writing lessons. Lesson activities align clearly with the objectives. The school utilizes a lead and assistant teacher model, but the effectiveness and engagement of both adults during lessons is inconsistent across classrooms. For instance, in classrooms where both adults engage effectively, one teacher leads the lesson while the other adult coaches a small group of students to scaffold the learning objective. In classrooms where this is less effective, one teacher generally leads the lesson while the second teacher observes, missing an opportunity to provide additional instructional support.
- Most lessons include opportunities to check for student understanding (6 out of 10 lessons observed), and leaders recognize a need to improve teachers' abilities to pivot instruction based on student misconceptions. In many classrooms, teachers use clear data collection systems to conference with students and observe specific mastery of skills by taking notes on clipboards. In a few classrooms, teachers do not have consistent systems in place, or miss opportunities to adjust instruction when students experience misconceptions.

# BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

- Half of the lessons provide opportunities for students to answer higher order thinking questions (5 out of 10 lessons observed). In lessons where this is strong, teachers ask open ended questions and give opportunities for students to work with one another to discuss and solve problems. For example, in one lesson, the teachers asked students to give reasons for why they chose a specific writing topic and then discuss with partners how they would approach their writing for the day. In classrooms without opportunities for higher order thinking, teachers ask basic recall questions or do not provide opportunities for students to discuss, debate, or answer questions.
- Most lessons maximize learning time and establish classroom environments focused on academic achievement (7 out of 10 lessons observed). Most teachers plan engaging lessons and use a variety of strategies such as attention-getting signals and songs to accompany classroom routines to keep students focused and interested in activities and learning. In a few classrooms, teachers lack urgency, are not fully prepared for each lesson, and do not immediately redirect behavior so that students remain engaged with learning.

## SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 1E

### DOES OWN 2 HAVE STRONG INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP?

OWN 2 is developing strong instructional leadership and is establishing systems to support the development of all staff. Leaders provide teachers with multiple opportunities for professional development from both internal and external sources; however, leaders do not yet replicate the consistent cycle of teacher observations, coaching, goal setting, and feedback that OWN 1 implements.

- OWN 2's leadership has placed a clear emphasis on building a strong school culture in Year 1, but have not communicated clear academic goals to teachers and students. OWN 2's principal is the primary instructional leader while the special education coordinator also supports teachers, focusing on students who are at risk. Instructional coaches from OWN 1 also visit OWN 2 several times per month to provide support in the form of observations and teacher coaching.
- Instructional leaders are developing a consistent cycle to provide coaching and supervision to teachers. While leaders are frequently in classrooms, the school does not have a consistent system to provide teachers with regular, prioritized feedback based on those observations and to track whether teachers are implementing the feedback they receive. Instructional leaders recognize the need to implement more consistent and sustained coaching structures and identify this as a priority growth area for the school's second year.

# BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

- OWN 2 has regular professional development activities that assist teachers in meeting student academic needs; however, leaders miss opportunities to tie professional development to a clear set of schoolwide or individual teacher goals. Teachers attend several weeks of combined training with OWN 1 staff in the summer prior to the start of the school year. OWN 2 teachers also have several opportunities to visit OWN 1 throughout the school year to observe classrooms and share best practices. School staff meet weekly throughout the school year for ongoing professional development; instructional leaders select topics for these sessions based on trends in recent classroom observations. The school occasionally brings in external instructional consultants, such as from TCRWP, who lead sessions for teachers on implementation and lesson planning. While these activities provide a robust suite of professional development for teachers, instructional leaders do not consistently state expectations for what they will hold teachers accountable for implementing based on these professional development activities.
- At the time of the Institute's visit instructional leaders at OWN 2 had begun to conduct teacher evaluations based on OWN 1's adapted version of the Danielson Framework for Teaching rubric. The principal leads the formal evaluation process; OWN 1 instructional coaches and the special education coordinator also provide input based on their teacher observations. Leaders conduct three informal observations and two formal observations throughout the year. After formal observations, the principal meets with the teacher to debrief and identify where the teacher has made progress and what goals the teacher should work on going forward.

## DOES OWN 2 MEET THE EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF AT-RISK-STUDENTS?

OWN 2 addresses the educational needs of students struggling academically, students with disabilities, and English language learners ("ELLs"). The school deploys sufficient resources to support students and successfully leverages systems and resources from OWN 1. School leaders recognize the opportunity to disaggregate student data more purposefully in order to monitor progress of at risk students.

- OWN 2 has clearly defined screening procedures for identifying at-risk students and providing them with the appropriate interventions. Teachers and school leaders regularly review assessment data and student work to track student progress. If staff identify students who are not making sufficient progress, they fill out a referral form to convene a student intervention team ("SIT") meeting. The SIT consists of the principal, special



# BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

education coordinator, and teachers. Collectively, this group reviews assessment data and student work to determine appropriate intervention strategies to support the student, which teachers are then responsible to implement. The special education coordinator communicates with parents throughout this process, and reconvenes the SIT every six weeks to gauge student progress. If after several rounds the student is still struggling, the SIT and parent meet to determine whether it is appropriate to refer the student to the district Committee on Special Education (“CSE”) for evaluation. Based on its screening measures, OWN 2 has referred five students to the CSE during the 2018-19 school year.

- OWN 2 deploys sufficient resources including staff, classes and settings, and materials to provide academic interventions that address the range of students’ needs. The special education coordinator oversees the academic program for at-risk students and ensures that the school implements interventions and settings in accordance with students’ needs and, where applicable, their individualized education plans (“IEPs”). OWN 2 provides special education teacher support services (“SETSS”) and integrated co-teaching (“ICT”) classrooms with one general education and one full-time special education teacher as required by students’ IEPs. One of the school’s lead teachers provides small group instruction to its six ELLs using the Avenues Series language curriculum.. OWN 1’s certified ELL teacher visits OWN 2 regularly to provide coaching and lesson implementation support to teachers.
- The school provides sufficient time and support for ongoing coordination between general education and at-risk teachers. Teachers regularly discuss student progress during weekly grade level meetings, and ICT teaching pairs leverage this time to plan for differentiation and small group work within lessons.
- OWN 2 is developing systems to consistently and systematically monitor progress for at-risk students. Teachers develop and implement their own internal systems to track student progress on IEP goals and English language acquisition using anecdotal records, formative assessments, and student work samples. However, school leaders do not set clear expectations for what progress monitoring teachers must conduct, nor does the school have systems in place to share best practices around progress monitoring for at-risk students. Likewise, school leaders do not consistently disaggregate performance of at-risk students when reviewing school wide assessment data.

# BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

## SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 2C

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

The education corporation is developing systems to effectively support two schools. While OWN 2's leadership structure is clear and its facility supports the academic program, the school and education corporation recognize a need to ensure that enrollment and student recruitment systems are sufficiently proactive to support full enrollment.

- OWN 2's leadership team includes the principal, special education coordinator, and operations manager. The principal is the overall instructional leader, while the special education coordinator and operations manager provide leadership in their respective areas. There are clear lines of reporting and the leadership team meets regularly with each other and with their direct reports.
- OWN leverages some organizational resources across schools. Instructional coaches from OWN 1 provide additional coaching and teacher support part time at OWN 2, and the OWN chief executive officer ("CEO") directly supervises and coaches the OWN 2 principal. Administrative staff from OWN 1 provide some additional support in operational areas such as student recruitment.
- The school environment at OWN 2 is safe, respectful, and focused on academic achievement; however, average daily student attendance of 89% is slightly low. At the time of the visit the school had no occurrences of in-school or out-of-school suspensions during this school year.
- The school facility has sufficient space to carry out the academic program as of the time of the Institute's visit. OWN 2 operates in a newly renovated facility which provides ample space for the school to grow through its full projected enrollment and grade span.
- OWN 2 has allocated sufficient resources to implement the academic program. Teachers have access to curricular materials that support high-quality instruction and understand the system to request additional materials if needed. The school makes outside professional development available through the New York City Charter School Center and other groups, although teachers consistently expressed that they would like opportunities to access more frequent and targeted supplemental professional development.
- Although OWN 2 is authorized to serve 156 students during the 2018-19 school year, its enrollment at the time of the Institute's visit was 102 students. The school requested and was granted an enrollment revision to serve students in Kindergarten - 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade prior to the start of the 2018-19 school year because it received too few applications to

# BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

fill the initially proposed Kindergarten - 1<sup>st</sup> grade seats. School leaders additionally report that some students whose families accepted their enrollment offer did not ultimately matriculate. School leaders recognize that this is a problem and are implementing strategies to meet the school's chartered enrollment in 2019-20. Specific strategies the school is using to increase enrollment and retention include:

- translating enrollment materials into languages spoken in the school's target neighborhoods;
- providing bilingual enrollment and registration support as needed;
- visiting a variety of pre-school, daycare, and after-school care facilities within the community to meet prospective families;
- maintaining robust communication with families after they are accepted in the lottery; and,
- providing translation where needed for parent-teacher meetings.

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

Our World Neighborhood Charter Schools' board has structures to oversee the school effectively. In growing from one to two schools, the education corporation board is scaling systems for oversight that have worked effectively in governing OWN 1.

- The board has the skills, structures, and procedures with which to govern the school, as evidenced by its effective oversight of OWN 1. Board members possess a variety of backgrounds in professions such as education, finance, and law, which enable them to support the successful functioning of the school.
- The board meets regularly and receives sufficient information from school leaders on academic, organizational, fiscal, and operational data to provide rigorous oversight. For example, the board recently reviewed enrollment data from the school lottery to gauge the success of student recruitment efforts. The board reviews academic and fiscal dashboards that include disaggregated data for both OWN 1 and OWN 2, allowing effective governance of both schools.
- As of the date of the Institute's visit, the education corporation submits its board minutes to the Institute on time. The Institute's review of board minutes, agendas, and responses during interviews, indicate that the board allocates its time wisely, reviewing the health of the school while ensuring that future plans such as facilities, enrollment, and fundraising are on track to support the school's ability to execute its mission.



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# SCHOOL OVERVIEW

## OUR WORLD NEIGHBORHOOD CHARTER SCHOOL BOARD OF TRUSTEES

### CHAIR

Dr. Jeanette Betancourt

### VICE CHAIR

Melissa Chin

### TREASURER

Charles Guadagnolo

### SECRETARY

Maura Fitzgerald

### TRUSTEES

Olubunmi Emiglili

Richard Bogle

Dr. Manu Bhagavan

## SCHOOL LEADERS

*Rodney Wilkins, Principal (2018-Present)*

## SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS

SCHOOL YEAR	CHARTERED ENROLLMENT	ACTUAL ENROLLMENT	ACTUAL AS A PERCENTAGE OF CHARTERED ENROLLMENT	PROPOSED GRADES	ACTUAL GRADES
2018-19	156	99	63%	K-1	K-2

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# SCHOOL OVERVIEW

## CONDUCT OF THE VISIT

DATE(S) OF VISIT	EVALUATION TEAM MEMBERS	TITLE
April 12, 2019	Keegan Prue	Program Analyst
	Andrew Kile	Director of School Evaluation

## KEY DESIGN ELEMENTS:

ELEMENT	EVIDENT?
Emphasis on literacy across the curriculum	+
Use of the gradual release of responsibility instructional model	-
Use of assessments to inform instruction and develop and adjust individual learning plans for students	+
Implementation of a robust intervention program	+
An emphasis on a liberal arts education	+
Investment in instructional staff	+
Pillars of a positive community	+
A longer school day and year, (add'l KDE): Socio-economic diversity	+

