

# THE SUNY CHARTER SCHOOLS INSTITUTE

*FIRST YEAR SCHOOL EVALUATION REPORT  
CYPRESS HILLS ASCEND CHARTER  
SCHOOL*

*VISIT DATE: MAY 1, 2019*

*REPORT DATE: JUNE 24, 2019*

*SUNY Charter Schools Institute*

*SUNY Plaza*

*353 Broadway*

*Albany, NY 12246*

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



A collection of colorful pencils and paper clips is arranged on a dark grey, textured background. The pencils, in various colors including green, blue, red, pink, orange, yellow, green, orange, blue, purple, and brown, are fanned out diagonally from the top left towards the bottom right. Several paper clips in colors like orange, light green, pink, blue, and 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 May 1, 2019 first year school evaluation visit to Cypress Hills Ascend Charter School ("Cypress Hills Ascend").

## 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"; see attachment). 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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# INTRODUCTION & SCHOOL BACKGROUND

## SCHOOL BACKGROUND

The SUNY Trustees approved the original charter for Cypress Hills Ascend on June 8, 2017. Cypress Hills Ascend opened its doors in the fall of 2018, chartered to serve 166 students in Kindergarten – 1<sup>st</sup> grade during the 2018-2019 school year. The school operates in leased space at 392 Grant Avenue, Brooklyn, New York 11208 within New York City Community School District (“CSD”) 19. At scale, Cypress Hills Ascend will serve 672 students in Kindergarten – 5<sup>th</sup> grade.<sup>1</sup>

Cypress Hills Ascend operates under the management of Ascend Charter Schools (“Ascend” or the “education corporation”), a not-for-profit education corporation that oversees five operating high-performing SUNY-authorized charter schools in New York City and has been given authority to open four additional schools in the next two years. All schools within the education corporation operate under the management of Ascend Learning Inc. (“Ascend Learning” or the “network”), a New York City-based not-for-profit charter management organization. By contract, the network provides the schools with academic, operational, facilities, and back office assistance. Schools utilize the network’s curriculum and assessment materials. The network is also responsible for evaluating the performance of each school and school leader, and reporting organizational outcomes to the education corporation board.

The mission of Cypress Hills Ascend states:



*The mission of Cypress Hills Ascend is to equip every student with the knowledge, confidence, and character to succeed in college and beyond. Our liberal arts curriculum invites students on an intellectual adventure, igniting their natural curiosity. In a warm and supportive community, students build a strong foundation of critical thinking skills, academic habits, and moral integrity, and graduate as independent young adults, prepared to think on their own, thrive on their own, and engage the world as informed, responsible citizens.*

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.

1. An enrollment revision is currently pending that would lower enrollment to 459 students in Kindergarten - 5<sup>th</sup> grade for the final year of the current charter term.

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# INTRODUCTION & SCHOOL BACKGROUND

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Pursuant to the Institute’s inspection of Cypress Hills Ascend at the above address on August 22, 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>2</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>3</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 CYPRESS HILLS ASCEND HAVE AN ASSESSMENT SYSTEM THAT IMPROVES INSTRUCTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS AND STUDENT LEARNING?

Cypress Hills Ascend has a strong assessment system that improves instructional effectiveness and student learning. The school utilizes the same comprehensive set of assessments as other Ascend schools. Leaders use effective systems to analyze formal assessment data and support teachers in adjusting instruction to meet the needs of all students.

- Cypress Hills Ascend administers assessments that align to state standards and the school's curricula. For English language arts ("ELA"), the school administers the STEP assessment four times per year along with internally developed writing assessments and assessment tasks from the Wilson Foundations phonics curriculum. In mathematics, the school administers internally-developed unit tests, weekly quizzes and fluency assessment tasks. The network academics team develops shared assessments such as unit tests in coordination with school leaders, referencing state standards and released state exam questions to ensure that assessments are valid. Teachers also regularly administer curriculum-based or internally-developed formative assessments such as daily exit tickets in order to closely track student mastery.
- Cypress Hills Ascend has a valid and reliable process for scoring and analyzing assessments. Teachers use common rubrics for ELA and mathematics across all schools in the education corporation. The school dedicates time before assessment administration

## SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 1B

2. 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).

3. 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

to review expectations and rubrics, then teachers practice scoring together and ask leaders clarifying questions to ensure grading practices are consistent across schools and classrooms. If leaders notice any inconsistencies in grading, they address and fix the errors, explaining their reasoning to teachers in order to ensure scores are reliable. This process results in consistent scoring practices between classrooms within Cypress Hills Ascend and other schools in the education corporation.

- Teachers at Cypress Hills Ascend use student data to drive lesson planning. For instance, teachers analyze weekly Thursday mathematics quiz results and immediately plan and deliver a lesson on Friday addressing the most common misconceptions from the quiz. Teachers also formally review student data every six to eight weeks after STEP assessment administration to reformat guided reading and other small instructional groups to best support struggling students. School leaders recognize an opportunity to review daily formative assessment results in a more systematic way in order to enact true continuous progress monitoring and tailored student supports. Network leaders also compare results between school sites and use the results to inform their school support strategy. For instance, each Monday, the network's mathematics instructional leader sends a message to school directors and deans of instruction highlighting best practices and common misconceptions from the prior week's mathematics quiz.
- Cypress Hills Ascend keeps families apprised of student progress via two progress reports and two formal report cards each year. Teachers and families meet in person to share report cards to further discuss students' progress. The school also sends home specific reports after Foundations phonics assessments that provide families with additional information about their students' performance and skills to work on. The school also holds monthly family programs focused on specific academic components during which instructional leaders explain the curriculum and strategies to support students at home.

## DOES CYPRESS HILLS ASCEND'S CURRICULUM SUPPORT TEACHERS IN THEIR INSTRUCTIONAL PLANNING?

The school's curriculum supports teachers in planning and delivering effective instruction. Cypress Hills Ascend implements curricula that have proven successful at other Ascend schools and with similar student populations; Ascend schools currently in operation consistently meet or exceed most accountability plan measures. Cypress Hills Ascend leaders have systems in place to support teachers in planning lessons that increase student achievement.



# BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

- Cypress Hills Ascend's curricular framework replicates the highly effective curriculum in use at other schools in the education corporation, which provides teachers with clearly structured lesson materials that align to state standards. In ELA, the school implements a balanced literacy approach consisting of the Wilson Foundations phonics curriculum along with internally-developed curricula for guided reading, read aloud, and reading and writing workshop, the latter of which are based on the research-based Teacher's College Reader's and Writer's Project ("TCRWP"). For mathematics, the school implements a combination of internally-developed mathematics workshop and number stories lessons in order to support students' conceptual understanding and problem solving ability. The school implements a network-developed science curriculum which uses hands-on laboratory activities to develop students' knowledge of science and practical understanding of the scientific method. Cypress Hills Ascend provides teachers with many additional resources such as leveled reading books to support guided reading. Network instructional leaders oversee the selection of all curricula to ensure alignment to the school's educational program and state standards. Notably, the network has updated and redesigned the curricula since the introduction of the Common Core in order to ensure that lessons match the rigor of state exams.
- The network provides schools with robust curricular materials including a scope and sequence, unit plans, and lesson plan templates for each subject that tells teachers what to teach and when to teach it. Leaders set the expectation that teachers should follow the lessons as the pacing guides dictate, but support teachers in adding to or modifying lessons as needed to meet the needs of their specific students. The network provides teachers with several weeks of training in the summer on the purpose and implementation of each curricular component.
- The school has regular systems and structures to support teachers in planning high quality lessons. Teachers divide planning responsibilities by subject among the grade team members; for instance, one teacher is in charge of planning reading workshop, while another is in charge of planning math. Teachers draft lessons based on the curricular framework the network provides and then submit those lessons to the dean of instruction who provides written and verbal feedback on the lesson plans. The dean's feedback helps teachers refine and finalize lesson plans, which they then share with the rest of the grade team. This process helps ensure that lessons are consistent, purposeful, and of high quality.
- The network uses student achievement data and feedback from school leaders and teachers to adjust and refine curriculum in order to best meet the needs of students. The school director, dean of instruction, and managing director conduct frequent observations and trainings with leaders from other Ascend schools in order to share

# BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

best practices, identify and address common misconceptions, and ensure consistent implementation. For instance, earlier this school year, leaders of lower elementary grades expressed a desire to include more readaloud lessons in the schedule; as a result, the network introduced schedule changes to incorporate more time for readaloud.

## IS HIGH QUALITY INSTRUCTION EVIDENT THROUGHOUT CYPRESS HILLS ASCEND?

Lessons at Cypress Hills Ascend are high quality and include clear objectives with ample opportunities for teachers to check for understanding and adjust their instruction accordingly. As shown in the table below, during the evaluation visit, Institute team members conducted 10 classroom observations following a defined protocol used in all school visits.

|                 |       | G R A D E |   |       |
|-----------------|-------|-----------|---|-------|
|                 |       | K         | 1 | Total |
| CONTENT<br>AREA | ELA   | 4         | 2 | 6     |
|                 | Math  | 2         | 2 | 4     |
|                 | Total | 6         | 4 | 10    |

- Teachers at Cypress Hills Ascend deliver purposeful lessons with clear objectives aligned to the school's curriculum (8 out of 10 lessons observed). Teachers state learning objectives and consistently refer to them throughout lessons to reinforce the intended takeaway or target skill. Teachers plan and execute clear activities that align with the learning objective. For instance, in a math lesson on recognizing and solving problems involving three dimensional shapes, students worked through several problems in which they had to discern and explain which one of a group of objects does not belong based on the characteristics of shapes. Classrooms generally have two teachers present and most lessons include active roles for both adults such as one teacher leading instruction while the other pulls a small group for intervention support.
- Teachers at Cypress Hills Ascend use effective techniques to check for student understanding and adjust instruction accordingly (9 out of 10 lessons observed). Teachers frequently use structures such as cold calls, choral response, and turn and talks to gauge student understanding, look for misconceptions, and then adjust their instruction to either highlight particularly strong student examples or address common misconceptions.

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For instance, during an ELA lesson, a teacher listened to students discussing strategies they would use to decode tricky words in their books, and then had several students share out those strategies in order to highlight target responses.

- About half of teachers at Cypress Hills Ascend provide opportunities for students to respond to higher order questions and to participate in rigorous discussion and debate (6 out of 10 lessons observed). In lessons where this is strong, teachers design lessons and questions to put the thinking work on students, using open-ended questions and embedding frequent opportunities for students to discuss and debate their ideas with each other. For instance, in a mathematics lesson, a teacher intentionally introduced a wrong idea, then guided students to evaluate and expose the misconception using open ended questions. In classrooms where evidence of higher order thinking is not present, teachers mostly ask fact-recall or procedural questions rather than questions that develop depth of understanding.
- Teachers maximize learning time and establish classroom environments focused on academic achievement (9 out of 10 lessons observed). Teachers plan engaging lessons that are discussion-based and use a variety of strategies such as clapping, timers, and songs to minimize transition time and maintain effective pacing. Classrooms have clear systems for materials management which students have internalized, which allows small group rotations and other classroom procedures to function seamlessly with little lost instructional time.

## DOES CYPRESS HILLS ASCEND HAVE STRONG INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP?

Cypress Hills Ascend has strong instructional leadership. The school's instructional leadership team provides teachers with regular professional development in the form of whole-group trainings and regular classroom observations and feedback. The network also provides effective ongoing professional development to teachers.

- Cypress Hills Ascend's instructional leadership supports the development of the teaching staff. The instructional leadership team includes the school director, dean of instruction, and dean of student services. In addition, network managing directors for schools provide coaching and support to school leaders. The school director and dean of instruction coach all Kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> grade teachers and conduct regular classroom observations. Instructional leaders conduct a formal school walkthrough once per week during which they observe lessons and debrief with one another about instructional trends, recent growth, and areas for improvement. The network managing director of schools is on site at least twice per week and conducts a weekly walkthrough with the



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school's instructional leaders, during which the managing director provides actionable feedback and supports school leaders in strategizing around instructional goals. The dean of student services coaches at-risk teachers and provides them with instructional support. The school will add a dean of students to the leadership team for the upcoming school year, matching the leadership team growth pattern of other Ascend schools, in order to increase its capacity to provide teachers with behavioral and classroom management support.

- Instructional leaders at Cypress Hills Ascend provide sustained and systematic coaching and supervision to teachers and have promoted a culture of learning and scholarship. The school's small size during its first year of operation enables the school director and dean of instruction to observe most teachers on a daily basis and provide teachers with regular feedback in a variety of formats including email, verbal, and in writing. Teachers also receive real-time coaching during observations, as the dean of instruction occasionally takes over teaching during a lesson and allows teachers to observe. Instructional leaders also have weekly or semi-weekly one on one meetings with teachers depending on teachers' skill levels and needs. In addition to regular observations and coaching, instructional leaders at Cypress Hills Ascend conduct teachbacks, during which leaders model a lesson or portion of a lesson for teachers, who then teach the lesson back to the leaders and receive feedback on their instruction.
- Cypress Hills Ascend has regular professional development activities that assist teachers in meeting student academic needs. Teachers participate in two weeks of summer pre-service training, during which they learn about the network's academic program. The school also worked closely with Bushwick Ascend Charter School ("Bushwick Ascend"), one of the stronger schools within the education corporation that has been in operation for several years, where Cypress Hills Ascend teachers were able to observe Bushwick Ascend teachers. The school provides in-house professional development for teachers two days per week, and teachers participate in network-wide professional development once per month during the first half of the school year. In addition, some teachers from Cypress Hills Ascend have participated in professional development from external providers, such as consultants from Foundations and STEP, two of the school's curricular programs. Instructional leaders determine teachers' professional needs based on regular classroom observations and school walkthroughs.
- Cypress Hills Ascend has conducted teacher evaluations based on clear criteria. Each teacher receives a formal mid-year evaluation based on an internally developed rubric from the network that includes five domains: lesson planning, classroom learning environment, instruction, data-driven assessment, and professional responsibilities. At the beginning of the school year, teachers participate in training on the teacher evaluation tool, and instructional leaders ensure teachers understand the evaluation

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criteria during one on one check in meetings. Teachers set goals at the beginning of the school year based on the rubric, and instructional leaders target their observation feedback to address teachers' progress toward these goals. At the formal mid-year evaluation, teachers receive a rating in each rubric domain based on a cumulative review of classroom observations conducted up to that point and set instructional goals for the remainder of the school year.

## SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 1F

### DOES CYPRESS HILLS ASCEND MEET THE EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF AT-RISK-STUDENTS?

Cypress Hills Ascend has multiple structures and programs to meet the needs of at-risk students including integrated co-teaching ("ICT") classrooms, Special Education Teacher Support Services ("SETSS"), and push-in and pull-out support for English language learners ("ELLs"). The school identifies an opportunity to track the progress of students struggling academically who receive Response to Intervention ("RTI") tiered supports and refer them for special education evaluation in a more systematic way.

- Cypress Hills Ascend deploys sufficient resources to provide academic interventions that address the needs of at-risk students. The school's dean of student services, with the support of the school director and dean of instruction, oversees the implementation of services for at-risk students including students struggling academically, students with disabilities, and ELLs. The dean of student services provides SETSS to students whose individualized education plans ("IEPs") mandate them as well as students who benefit academically from such services. In addition, the school has one ICT classroom in each grade in which general and special education teachers provide instruction jointly. Cypress Hills Ascend employs an English as a new language ("ENL") teacher, who both pushes into classrooms and pulls students out to support the school's 24 ELLs. The ENL teacher also manages a guided reading group comprised of ELLs and pushes in while students receive phonics instruction via Foundations. Bushwick Ascend has supported the school in developing supports for ELLs, and teachers engaged in whole school professional development around ELLs in December. The school has a counselor on site one day per week who provides services to students as needed. In addition, students whose IEPs mandate related services receive speech and language, occupational, and physical therapy from external providers.
- Cypress Hills Ascend is developing screening procedures for identifying at-risk students and providing them with the appropriate interventions. The school implements an RTI process to provide tiered interventions to students struggling academically. Every six to eight weeks teachers use STEP assessment and observational data to assign students

# BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

to guided reading groups, which the dean of student services reviews and approves. The school utilizes Leveled Literacy Intervention (“LLI”), a daily, intensive small group reading program, with students requiring tier 2 literacy support. Teachers also identify students in need of additional mathematics support and assign them to small group pullout instruction, which takes place during the daily mathematics block. School leaders recognize that the formal process for referring students for special education evaluation is an area of growth for the upcoming year. Individual teachers are responsible for tracking the growth of students assigned to RTI interventions based on the data obtained from LLI and STEP assessments, but the school lacks a coordinated system to oversee this process and ensure students not making adequate process are referred to the district Committee on Special Education (“CSE”) for formal evaluation. Additionally, the school intends to increase its capacity to provide behavior interventions by adding a dean of students to the leadership team for the upcoming school year. In order for the school to identify ELLs, families complete the home language survey upon enrolling at the school, and the ENL teacher and dean of student services administer the New York State Identification Test for ELLs (“NYSITELL”) to students whose survey results indicate they speak a language other than English at home.

- Cypress Hills Ascend is developing structures to provide sufficient support for ongoing coordination between general and at-risk teachers. Due to the school’s small size in its first year of operation, most coordination between teachers occurs organically on an ad hoc basis. However, at the time of the Institute’s visit, the dean of student services had begun to implement weekly meetings with co-teachers in ICT classrooms and was exploring methods to start weekly special education meetings. The ENL teacher participates in implementation meetings with general and special education teachers in order to coordinate student support and suggest accommodations for ELLs.

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

The Cypress Hills Ascend school organization supports the delivery of the educational program and implements systems that are consistent with other Ascend schools. The school has appropriate staff and operational systems to implement an effective academic program and meet student enrollment and retention targets.



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- Cypress Hills Ascend has an administrative structure with staff, operational systems, and procedures that allow it to carry out the academic program. The school's organizational chart indicates clear lines of reporting, and teachers and staff members know who to turn to if they require support. The operations team includes a director of operations who supervises an operations associate, food server, custodian, and security guard. The operations team oversees the school's organizational processes including human resources, facility maintenance, compliance, budgeting, systems management, and family and community communication. The director of operations receives a weekly dashboard from the network and has a weekly meeting with the network director of operations, who provides oversight and feedback regarding the school's operational systems. Likewise, the network budget team supports the school by meeting monthly with the school's director of operations to provide budgeting and forecasting information. The school implements reliable information management systems including Illuminate for academic data tracking and Knowledge Base, an internal problem solving matrix.
- Cypress Hills Ascend has established a safe and orderly environment and has created systems and protocols necessary to ensure a well-functioning school system. Teachers develop school culture and manage student behavior through the implementation of Responsive Classroom, a social emotional learning ("SEL") program that encourages the cultivation of safe, inclusive classroom environments. School leaders have clear plans to increase the school's student support capacity as it grows with the addition of a dean of students to the leadership team for the upcoming school year. Additionally, the school building is clean and organized, and there is sufficient space for teachers and other school staff to carry out the activities required to meet students' needs.
- Cypress Hills Ascend allocates sufficient resources in support of achieving its goals. Teachers have access to curricular materials that support high quality instruction and know the process for procuring additional materials. School leaders identify a desire to conduct additional outreach to the local Bengali community, which they indicate is underrepresented in the student population.
- Cypress Hills Ascend is authorized to serve 166 students during the 2018-19 school year; the school's enrollment at the time of the Institute's visit was 126 students, which includes fourteen students with IEPs and 24 ELLs. The school has applied for an enrollment revision to lower the number of students it will serve over the course of the charter term; upon approval, the school's actual and chartered enrollments will more closely align. Specific strategies the school is using to maintain enrollment and retention include:
  - o employing various traditional paid advertising methods, including bus and subway advertisements, billboards, print advertisements in local publications, direct mail pieces, and flyers;



# BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

- o translating recruitment materials into Spanish and French languages to increase accessibility for non-English speaking families;
- o maintaining an engaging website;
- o attending neighborhood events and conducting tabling sessions at feeder schools;
- o reaching out to doctors' offices, churches, grocery stores, restaurants, early intervention service providers and agencies, public housing units, and diverse community organizations including those that serve children with disabilities and ELLs; and,
- o maintaining an active presence on social media websites.

## SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 2D

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

The education corporation board has structures and skills to oversee the school effectively, including committees and systems in place to provide rigorous oversight of a growing organization.

- The board uses effective structures and procedures to govern the organization, as evidenced by its effective oversight of existing Ascend schools. Board members possess a variety of backgrounds in professions such as education, finance, and law. Notably, the board has a number of long-term experienced members. The nominating committee of the board is actively exploring new candidates to bring in new perspectives, ensure board succession planning is in place when needed, and round out the board by bringing in members with skills in areas such as strategic financial growth and higher education advising. The board has a well developed structure with committees which meet regularly; the committees are as follows: executive, education, finance and real estate, hiring (for school directors), and nominating (for board recruitment). The Ascend board should continue its focus in ensuring quality oversight of the merged education corporation's financial standing, as well as the financial health of the Ascend management organization's board, as the network continues to grow."
- The board meets regularly and receives sufficient information from school leaders on academic, organizational, fiscal, and operational data to provide rigorous oversight. The board reviews data in a manner that aligns with organizational priorities; for instance, during the spring, the board receives more in-depth reports on staff and student recruitment. The board reviews both overall data for the entire education corporation, as well as disaggregated data to show academic, operational, enrollment, and other data by each school site.



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- The board regularly evaluates the performance of school leaders and key management company personnel, but does not currently have a system in place to evaluate its own performance. One of the board's current efforts is to develop a system for evaluating the services the network provides to the school; the board has engaged consultants with experience in this area and aims to pilot this tool in coming school years.



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# SCHOOL OVERVIEW

## CYPRESS HILLS ASCEND CHARTER SCHOOL BOARD OF TRUSTEES<sup>4</sup>

### CHAIR

Stephanie Mauterstock

### VICE CHAIR

Kathleen Quirk

### TREASURER

Shelly Cleary

### SECRETARY

Amanda Craft

### TRUSTEES

Kwaku Andoh

Christine Schlendorf

Nadine Sylvester

Oral Walcott

## SCHOOL LEADERS

*Lisette Roman, School Director (2018-Present)*

## SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS

| SCHOOL YEAR | CHARTERED ENROLLMENT | ACTUAL ENROLLMENT <sup>5</sup> | ACTUAL AS A PERCENTAGE OF CHARTERED ENROLLMENT | PROPOSED GRADES | ACTUAL GRADES |
|-------------|----------------------|--------------------------------|--|-----------------|---------------|
| 2018-19     | 166                  | 126                            | 76%  | K-1             | K-1           |

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

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

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# SCHOOL OVERVIEW

## CONDUCT OF THE VISIT

| DATE(S) OF VISIT | EVALUATION TEAM MEMBERS | TITLE                     |
|------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| May 1, 2019      | Keegan Prue             | Program Analyst           |
|                  | Maureen Foley           | Director for New Charters |

## KEY DESIGN ELEMENTS:

| ELEMENT  | EVIDENT? |
|--|----------|
| Ascend's Common Core Curriculum;   | +        |
| Ascend Culture based on the Responsive Classroom model and restorative justice practices; and, | +        |
| Teacher Planning and Professional Development.   | +        |

