

# THE SUNY CHARTER SCHOOLS INSTITUTE

*SCHOOL EVALUATION REPORT*  
**NEW VISIONS AIM CHARTER  
HIGH SCHOOL II**

*VISIT DATE: APRIL 1 - 2, 2019*

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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, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple, and brown, are laid out diagonally from the top left towards the bottom right. Several paper clips in colors like orange, light green, pink, and blue are scattered at the bottom of the frame.

# CONTENTS

**2**

Introduction & School Background

**5**

Academic Performance

**9**

Benchmark Analysis

## Appendices

A: School Overview

B: SUNY Renewal Benchmarks

# INTRODUCTION & SCHOOL BACKGROUND

## INTRODUCTION

This School Evaluation Report offers an analysis of evidence collected during the school visit on April 1-2, 2019 to New Visions AIM Charter High School II (“AIM II”). While the SUNY Charter Schools Institute (the “Institute”) conducts a comprehensive review of evidence related to all the State University of New York Charter Renewal Benchmarks (the “SUNY Renewal Benchmarks”) near the end of a charter term, most mid-cycle school evaluation visits focus on a subset of these benchmarks. This subset, the Qualitative Education Benchmarks, addresses the academic success of the school and the effectiveness and viability of the school organization. It provides a framework for examining the quality of the educational program, focusing on teaching and learning (e.g., curriculum, instruction, assessment, and services for at-risk students), as well as leadership, organizational capacity, and board oversight. The Institute uses the established criteria on a regular basis to provide schools with a consistent set of expectations leading up to renewal.

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

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

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# INTRODUCTION & SCHOOL BACKGROUND

## SCHOOL BACKGROUND

The SUNY Trustees approved the charter restructuring renewal of ROADS Charter School II (“ROADS II”) to AIM II on May 24, 2017. This restructuring allowed the education corporation to serve the same students but required the program to operate under new governance and a new educational program. ROADS II closed its doors at the end of the 2016-17 school year. AIM II began transitioning the program at the end of the 2016-17 school year and officially began operating on August 1, 2017, initially chartered to serve 164 students in 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grade. The school is in the second year of its first charter term and is chartered to serve up to 250 students in 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grade by the end of the current charter term. The school is in co-located space at 1010 Reverend James A. Polite Avenue, Bronx, NY, in New York City School District (“CSD”) 12.

The mission of AIM II is:



*New Visions AIM Charter High Schools provide youth who face the greatest obstacles to successful high school completion with the supports, experiences, and opportunities they need to graduate high school prepared for a successful transition into a post-secondary academic or work preparatory program.*

AIM II is one of 10 charter schools that partner with New Visions for Public Schools, Inc. (“New Visions” or the “network”), a New York not-for-profit corporation that serves as the educational management organization (“EMO”) for AIM II. The New York State Board of Regents (the “Board of Regents”) authorizes six of these charter schools. The SUNY Trustees authorize the remaining four charter schools: New Visions Charter High School for Humanities, New Visions Charter High School for Advanced Math and Science, New Visions AIM Charter High School I (“AIM I”), and AIM II, all of which operate as independent education corporations. New Visions also provides educational programming to a portfolio of 76 New York City Department of Education (“NYCDOE”) schools across the city, 10 of which are transfer schools that serve students who are at least 16 years old and are off track for high school graduation. By contract, the network provides the school with curriculum, assessment, instructional, operational, facilities, and back office assistance. The network is also responsible for managing and evaluating the performance of each school and school leader.

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# INTRODUCTION & SCHOOL BACKGROUND

By design, students who enroll at AIM II must be at least 15 years old, have completed 7<sup>th</sup> grade, and repeated a grade at least once. The school gives lottery preference to students who have been involved with the criminal justice system, the foster care system, and child protective services. After the restructuring renewal, AIM II opened in the ROADS II location to serve the students who chose to remain. The network replaced the board, principal, and the majority of the staff.

In its proposal to renew and restructure the ROADS I and ROADS II educational programs, New Visions cited its record of successful partnerships with NYCDOE transfer schools in raising students' credit accumulation rate and graduation rates above that of students in non-New Visions NYCDOE transfer schools. The network also noted a need to adapt the curriculum resources, leadership coaching, and professional development support it typically employs in transfer schools in order to serve the higher need AIM I and AIM II student populations. This school year, the network formalized a partnership with Good Shepherd Services ("GSS"), a New York City community service organization that provides on-site physical, emotional, and mental health services for students. GSS is contracted to provide school based staff members who collaborate with instructional staff to recruit and enroll students, social emotional supports including crisis intervention, attendance outreach and support, professional development to staff, establish work and post-secondary program partnerships, and improve school culture.

Although New Visions is committed to serving the school's students, it has only partially implemented the changes it outlined in its restructuring renewal application. AIM II lacks defined post-secondary pathways with strong systems to track and support alumni. While the school provides instructional programming based on students' credit attainment, instruction at AIM II continues to be inadequate to meet the specialized needs of the student population. The GSS partnership is not fully integrated with the instructional program and in its restructuring renewal application, the network identified using student attendance rates to measure the effectiveness of its social emotional supports. This year AIM II's goal for average daily attendance is 65%. At the time of the Institute's evaluation visit, AIM II's actual average daily attendance rate was 52%, a level similar to ROADS II's rate in its last year of operation.

Because AIM II is the result of a restructuring renewal, at the end of the charter term, the SUNY Trustees will treat AIM II, for purposes of renewal outcomes, as a school coming to renewal for the first time. However, because AIM II is the result of a restructuring of a previously existing school, the Institute does expect that the school will have fully developed systems and processes supporting the educational program from the beginning of the charter term, aligned to those described in the school's proposal.

# ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

## 2017-18 SCHOOL PERFORMANCE REVIEW

At the beginning of the Accountability Period,<sup>1</sup> the school developed and adopted an Accountability Plan that set academic goals in the key subjects of ELA and mathematics, high school graduation, and post-secondary outcomes. For each goal in the Accountability Plan, specific outcome measures define the level of performance necessary to meet that goal. Throughout the charter term, the Institute examines results for the required Accountability Plan measures on an annual basis and provides an Accountability Dossier to each school detailing the school's progress toward meeting its Accountability Plan goals.

The Act requires charters be held “accountable for meeting measurable student achievement results”.<sup>2</sup> During its first year of operation, the Institute worked closely with the staff at New Visions to develop an Accountability Plan based on goals and measures that provide a challenging but mission aligned set of high school outcomes. Specifically, the Plan includes goal areas for post-secondary engagement in a meaningful next step, including college, technical/occupational studies, or meaningful employment within one year of completing the AIM II program. More information about the required Accountability Plan measures can be found on the Institute's website at [www.newyorkcharters.org/accountability/](http://www.newyorkcharters.org/accountability/).

AIM II's Accountability Plan measures goal attainment using the absolute and comparative performance of the school's sixth year cohort. Because the school is only in its second year of operation, students in the sixth year cohort will have spent time in other educational settings prior to enrolling in the school. However, the school also included multiple growth measures and leading indicators of future achievement in its Accountability Plan. The Institute emphasizes those measures in its analysis of the school's performance when available.

1. Because the SUNY Trustees make a renewal decision before student achievement results for the final year of a charter term become available, the Accountability Period ends with the school year prior to the final year of the charter term. In the case of initial renewal, the Accountability Period covers the first four years of the charter term.

2. Education Law § 2850(2)  
(f).

During 2017-18, AIM II failed to meet its key Accountability Plan goals in high school graduation and post-secondary preparation. Notably, the school produced low performance against leading indicators of future graduation results. AIM II also failed to meet its subject area goals in ELA, science, social studies, and under the Every Student Succeeds Act (“ESSA”). The school did not collect enough data to evaluate the attainment of its mathematics goal. While it is not in its Accountability Plan, AIM II monitors student attendance as an integral factor mediating the school's academic performance. From 2017-18 to 2018-19, the school improved its average daily attendance rate by seven percentage points, but it remained low at 52% as of April 2019. Fifty-seven percent of students enrolled during 2017-18 were chronically absent.

# ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

## HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION

In 2017-18, the first year of the school's initial four year Accountability Period, AIM II did not meet its high school graduation goal. The school posted low achievement on three key leading indicators of graduation for future cohorts. With only 19% of the school's fourth year Graduation Cohort passing at least two of the five exams required for graduation, AIM II fell 46 percentage points below the absolute target in 2017-18. That year, only 36% of the 50 students in their first year enrolled in AIM II earned at least ten credits, falling 29 percentage points below the target. Additionally, only 29% of the 136 students who had been enrolled at the school for more than one year earned at least eight credits in 2017-18, falling 36 points below the target. The school's low performance on these measures does not establish a record of achievement that indicates the school will likely increase the proportion of its students graduating after six years.

The school's first sixth year Graduation Cohort consisted of students who enrolled in the 2012 Graduation Cohort and first enrolled in high school anywhere during the 2012-13 school year. With 14% of the school's 102 Graduation Cohort members graduating after six years, AIM II fell 53 percentage points below the target of 67%. AIM II's sixth year graduation outcomes are not meaningfully different than ROADS II's graduation rates in the final year of its charter term.

## POST SECONDARY PREPARATION

AIM II also did not meet its post-secondary preparation goal in the first year of its Accountability Period, failing to demonstrate that students were prepared to pursue a meaningful post-secondary option aligned to the school's mission. As of April 2019, more than half of the school's graduates from 2017-18 were not placed in a meaningful post-secondary option. Twenty-nine percent of its 14 graduates enrolled in a two or four year college, entered military service, entered a technical/occupational institute, or gained employment in the fall following graduation. This rate of engagement in meaningful post-secondary outcomes fell 51 percentage points below the school's absolute target of 80%. Additionally, the school's College, Career, and Civic Readiness Index ("CCCRI") was 14, falling far below the state's measure of interim progress ("MIP") of 128.

AIM II assesses its students' career readiness by administering the SkillsUSA Workforce Ready Employability Assessment. Only two of the school's 17 students included in the sixth year Accountability Cohort passed the exam, falling far below the target of 75%. The school also included a measure in its Accountability Plan measuring the percentage of students completing a career readiness portfolio. However, the school did not execute these plans in 2017-18.

# ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

## ELA

During 2017-18, AIM II posted low results on the growth measures included under its ELA Accountability Plan goal. The school administered the Performance Series Reading diagnostic assessment and collected data from the fall to spring for only 32 students. With only 53% of those students increasing their Lexile levels from fall to spring, the school fell seven percentage points below the target. Among the 16 students in the school's reading intervention program who had fall and spring scores, only 19% met or exceeded their expected Lexile growth, falling 31 percentage points below the target. While AIM II did exceed the target for its sixth year Accountability Cohort students passing the Regents exam, only 17 students out of 102 included in the graduation cohort remained in the sixth year Accountability Cohort by their sixth year. With 82% of those remaining in the Accountability Cohort passing with at least a Performance Level 3 or exceeding the safety net option for eligible students by the end of their sixth year, the school exceeded the target by 32 points.

## MATHEMATICS

In 2017-18, the school did not collect sufficient data to evaluate the attainment of its growth measures included under its Accountability Plan goal in mathematics. The school included measures in its Accountability Plan for measuring student growth in mathematics using the STAR Math exam. However, the school did not yet administer this exam in 2017-18. The school did exceed the target for its sixth year Accountability Cohort students passing a mathematics Regents exam with 82% of its 17 students remaining in the Accountability Cohort passing with at least a Performance Level 3 or exceeding the safety net option for eligible students by the end of their sixth year.

## SCIENCE

During 2017-18, the school posted mixed results on the two measures included under its science goal. The school slightly exceeded the absolute target of 50% passing a Regents science exam when 53% of the 17 students remaining in the 6<sup>th</sup> year Accountability Cohort did so before the end of their sixth year. In contrast, only 9% of the school's 102 students included in the 2012 Graduation Cohort passed a science exam with a 65 or above.

### **SOCIAL STUDIES**

AIM II also demonstrated mixed results in social studies during 2017-18. With 82% of the school's 17 students remaining in the 6<sup>th</sup> year Accountability Cohort passing a social studies exam by the end of their sixth year, the school exceeded the absolute target by 32 percentage points. However, only 14% of the school's 102 students included in the sixth year Graduation Cohort passed a social studies exam with a 65 or above.

### **NCLB/ESSA**

The school failed to meet its NCLB goal in 2017-18, having been identified as a focus charter under the state's accountability system based on achievement outcomes from 2015-16. Subsequently, the school was identified as needing comprehensive support and improvement in 2018-19 under the state's ESSA accountability system.

# 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>3</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>4</sup>

## SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 1B

### DOES AIM II HAVE AN ASSESSMENT SYSTEM THAT IMPROVES INSTRUCTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS AND STUDENT LEARNING?

AIM II lacks systems to effectively use data to improve instructional effectiveness and student learning. Although the school is using the network data portal to gather data and monitor students' academic progress, New Visions does not provide the necessary support that enables the school to plan and execute integrated instructional and social emotional supports for AIM II students.

- The school regularly administers a variety of assessments aligned to the school's curricula and state standards. These assessments include the Performance Series in ELA and STAR Math in mathematics, both of which the school administers twice per year. Additionally, the school administers On Demand Writing for all 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade ELA courses two times per year, mock Regents exams in all Regents course once per year, and in-class assessments adapted from the New Visions curricula.
- Despite the ability to access data, AIM II does not effectively use academic data to meet student needs. Despite the robust data portal, the school lacks support from the network to systematically review data and use the analysis to improve student learning. Although leaders expect teachers to use data to adjust instruction, the school does not hold teachers accountable for doing so. More so, the New Visions teacher professional development and coaching support prioritizes classroom routines and using a universal design for learning lesson template, but lacks the support that allows teachers to develop the instructional skills necessary to use data to inform their instruction. For example, in classroom observations and in reviewing curricular planning documents, the Institute observed teachers not systematically using data collected during instruction to inform the beginning and end of class assessments.

3. 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).

4. 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

- Although New Visions intended to have a robust use of co-academic data to support the educational program, AIM II lacks a systematic approach to do so. The GSS coaches, social workers, and school counselors collect social emotional information on each student through student intake surveys, interviews, counseling, and daily check-ins. Although academic and non-academic staff members have frequent informal touch points, teachers, coaches, and counselors do not have a systematic process to use social emotional data to inform all students' academic program in a comprehensive manner. Contrary to what it outlined in its restructuring renewal application, New Visions does not support the school in using data to strategically expose students to post secondary pathways and track post-secondary outcomes.

## DOES AIM II'S CURRICULUM SUPPORT TEACHERS IN THEIR INSTRUCTIONAL PLANNING?

The New Visions curricula do not effectively support teachers in their instructional planning. The network provides a curriculum framework that includes universal design for learning to address skill deficits. However, the network has not put in place adequate supports to ensure teachers have appropriate oversight and guidance to modify the curricula in light of the school's low attendance and students' social emotional needs.

- Despite myriad curricular resources, the New Visions network does not work with sufficient urgency to support teachers in adapting the curriculum to meet students' needs. AIM II accesses the New Visions open source curricula for all core subjects, which aligns to state standards. Teachers attend content-specific network professional development sessions and two network instructional specialists provide support with implementing reading intervention curriculum and lesson planning. However, 47% of AIM II's student body has an Individualized Education Program ("IEP"), the majority of students are behind grade level in reading, and the school's low attendance hinders all students from regular access to the content. The network has not provided support to AIM II that results in teachers and leaders adjusting content, course structure, and interventions to meet these specific needs.

# BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

- Lessons typically fall short of delivering the quality of instruction required for all students to master state standards although the school has structures in place to support teachers in lesson planning. Despite the network's common planning template centered on universal design for learning the academic director's weekly feedback on lesson plans, lessons lack content differentiation, individualized questioning for students, and rigorous activities. Three special education teacher vacancies also hinder teachers' ability to plan effective lessons. Since the start of the year, these vacancies have required some general education teachers to work independently in classrooms that should typically be co-taught and co-planned.

## IS HIGH QUALITY INSTRUCTION EVIDENT THROUGHOUT AIM II?

AIM II lacks high quality instruction. Instructional material is not rigorous or engaging enough to push students with below grade level skills to even come close to meeting grade level expectations. As shown in the table below, during the evaluation visit, Institute team members conducted 24 classroom observations following a defined protocol used in all school visits. The school groups students by credit accumulation level and cohort rather than by grade level. As such, the classrooms are labeled in the table below as "ungraded".

		GRADE	
		Ungraded	
CONTENT AREA	ELA	8	
	Math	6	
	Soc Stu	4	
	Science	5	
	Other	1	
	Total	24	

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# BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

- Most teachers deliver lessons with clear objectives aligned to the school's curricula (16 of 24 lessons observed). Due to leaders' expectations for all classrooms, teachers consistently post objectives on the board and lesson activities generally align with the stated objectives. Some co-teachers have clear roles in helping students reach lesson objectives. However, in some lessons, objectives are vague or lesson activities do not align to the objective. For example, in one social studies lesson, the activity was engaging but did not end in students answering the essential question and the expected outcome of the objective was unclear.
- Less than half of teachers regularly use strategies to check for student understanding (9 of 24 lessons observed). Teachers ask leading questions and allow students to opt out of answering questions. For those questions that do gauge understanding, teachers lack strategies to engage multiple students and accept one word answers that do not provide a strong understanding of the objective. For example, in one mathematics lesson the teacher asked, "How do we describe the graph?", then accepted several one word answers from one single student, rather than asking multiple students to explain the concept fully.
- Few lessons at AIM II challenge students with questions and activities that develop depth of understanding and higher order thinking and problem solving skills (4 of 24 lessons observed). Instruction is consistently teacher directed, and teachers miss opportunities to engage students in analysis and discussion of challenging materials. Lesson activities continue to lack the rigor needed for students to meet grade level expectations. For example, in an ELA class teachers asked higher order thinking questions about a rigorous text. However, teachers summarize key ideas without waiting for students to attempt to answer.
- Just over half of teachers maximize learning time to create a consistent focus on academic achievement (14 of 24 lessons observed). Teachers do not consistently hold all students accountable for engaging with the material and allow students to opt out of learning. Teachers across most classrooms do not consistently address student misbehavior. For example, students routinely ignore teacher redirection, use cell phones during instructional time, and are late to class. Despite partnering with GSS to address students' social and emotional learning needs, and conducting classroom management training, the school's support to help teachers implement effective strategies for targeting attendance and behavior issues has been ineffective. As a result, classroom attendance remains low and low level behaviors continue to disrupt purposeful instruction.

# BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

## SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 1E

### DOES AIM II HAVE STRONG INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP?

The New Visions coaching and professional development is not tailored to ensure AIM II staff can deliver instruction that meets students' unique needs. As a result, AIM II is continuing to develop its instructional leadership. Despite defined areas of instructional focus for the current school year, increased network assistance and systems from last school year, and efforts to leverage the school's strongest teachers, the system of coaching and supervision has not produced strong instructional practices that are integrated with social emotional supports.

- While there are clear expectations for the graduation and daily attendance rates, both rates remain low and the school does not have clear expectations for alternative graduation pathways, contrary to what New Visions outlined in its restructuring renewal report. School leaders and the network have not set clear benchmark goals to monitor progress toward overall goals. The principal holds daily morning meetings to review priorities and give updates to all staff, in addition to sending weekly staff emails. However, teachers do not consistently articulate leaders' expectations. AIM II has also not communicated benchmark goals that define necessary progress toward credit accumulation for graduation and the school's Regents exam goals.
- The instructional leadership structure and New Visions' support and coaching does not urgently improve teachers' instructional effectiveness to meet the needs of AIM II students. The principal and academic director are the school's primary instructional leaders. The academic director, principal, and three lead teachers provide observation and feedback. AIM II's partnership with Ramapo for Children, an organization that provides professional development to schools and programs for students, also provides classroom management coaching to select teachers. The network provides two instructional coaches who visit the school at least once per week to provide literacy curriculum support and lesson planning support. However, the numerous instructional supports are inadequate, given that instruction at AIM II is weak and lessons are low rigor. Coaching and observation feedback does not result in concrete action steps that leaders track using data to show the effectiveness of coaching supports.
- The network's support for school leaders does not urgently improve and develop AIM II's leadership. Although the network provides two coaches who support the principal with understanding the Danielson Framework for Teaching and implementing programmatic systems, New Visions does not develop the capacity of school leaders to support teachers with pedagogy. The Institute's classroom observations found little to no improvement in the school's instruction since the Institute's last visit in April 2018. Additionally, while

# BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

the GSS partnership is intended to allow school leaders to focus more on instruction, the school does not fully leverage the partnership to support teachers' ability to use social emotional data to improve instructional skills. During classroom observations the Institute observed low level misbehaviors, students often off task, and students suddenly leaving and entering the classroom without teachers reengaging them in the lesson.

- Instructional and network leaders implement a professional development plan that interrelates with classroom practice but does not sufficiently focus on the unique needs of the school's student population. Sessions include social and emotional support, understanding the Danielson rubric, and classroom management and routines. However, the school lacks a tracking system to show how professional development leads to improved teacher practice and meet students' needs.
- Instructional leaders do not effectively hold teachers accountable for quality instruction and student achievement. Instructional leaders conduct two formal evaluations and two informal observations over the course of the year using the Danielson rubric. While leaders' evaluation feedback identifies teachers' strengths and weaknesses, based on the Institute's classroom observations and the school's academic performance, the midyear evaluations do not consistently demonstrate alignment between pedagogy and teacher and student performance. In the evaluations the school submitted to the Institute, school leaders rated 75% of teachers as effective or highly effective, yet the Institute's observations identified low quality instruction and the school's January Regents passing rate was only 23%.

## DOES AIM II MEET THE EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF AT-RISK STUDENTS?

By design, AIM II's entire school program serves students who are over-age and undercredited and so the entire population is at risk for academic failure. AIM II does not have the systems or procedures in place to meet the educational needs of students struggling academically, students with disabilities, and English language learners ("ELLs"), as evidenced by the school's low attendance and graduation rates, and quality of intervention programs. The GSS partnership is intended to help manage aspects of the school's social emotional learning program and improve attendance, but schoolwide attendance does not meet the target and the instructional and social emotional program lack coherence. The school's special education program is understaffed, and the ELL program is not in compliance.

# BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

- The school uses clear procedures to gather information about the risks to academic achievement each student faces. AIM II primarily utilizes the NYCDOE student information systems to gain information about students with disabilities and ELLs. As the school primarily accepts over age and undercredited students, the intake process includes diagnostic assessments to identify students' reading levels and mathematics abilities. Using this data, the school identifies students for intervention in ELA and mathematics. If students do not make progress in interventions, or teachers observe the possibility of a disability, then the school will refer the student for evaluation with the district Committee on Special Education. The school administers the Home Language Identification Survey to families new to the school and, if necessary, the New York State Identification Test for English Language Learners ("NYSITELL").
- AIM II does not fully utilize its available data and supports to meet students' social emotional needs. In addition to academic services, the school attempts to provide social emotional services for students through the GSS partnership. Upon students' admission, GSS staff members administer an intake survey to gauge levels of trauma and other risk factors. The school then assigns a GSS coach, a social worker, or a counselor as primary contacts for each student. Though tasked with working to reach 65% daily attendance, GSS, in partnership with the school, has not made enough improvement to meet the goal. Students' inconsistent attendance results in an inability to provide consistent services and interventions. The school does not systematically track data on attendance interventions to analyze how effectively they improve attendance rates and overall engagement of students. GSS has not developed the systems and collaboration within the school to demonstrate a measurable impact on the social and emotional learning of students.
- Although New Visions' restructuring renewal application states the school will use small group instruction and computer programs to meet at-risk students' needs, AIM II's intervention programs do not meet the academic needs of all students enrolled at the school. For students struggling academically, the school identified about 32 students to receive Read180 or Transitions to Algebra to improve basic reading and mathematics skills. Otherwise, the school attempts to infuse similar basic reading skills into other English courses, but the school lacks structured small group instruction within core content courses and regular computer-based instruction is limited to these 32 students. At the time of the Institute's visit, the school had two vacancies in the special education department, employing only two special education certified teachers including the special education manager. The special education manager provides direct services in addition to overseeing program compliance, and the school also provides ICT and counseling. However, due to special education teacher vacancies and ongoing attendance issues, the school is unable to bill the NYCDOE for special education funding in specific content areas. The school attempted to contract with providers for related services, but contractors stopped providing services to the school due to high levels of student absenteeism.

# BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

- AIM II does not meet ELLs' needs. The school has a part time teacher with an internship English to Speakers of Other Languages ("ESOL") certificate. The ELL teacher provides push-in services but the school's ELL program is ad hoc, lacks consistent and reliable coordination with general education and ICT teachers, and is not research based. The program is currently out of compliance and the Institute will work with the school and network to ensure the program is in compliance for the remainder of the charter term.
- AIM II does not consistently monitor the progress and success of at-risk students and AIM II teachers are not consistently aware of students' progress toward meeting IEP goals, achieving English language proficiency, and goals for students struggling academically. The school, with support from the network, has developed a clear data housing structure to view student achievement results by subgroups of students. However, due to a lack of capacity within the at-risk program, the school only reviews data for students who are close to graduation to ensure they are on track, and students with IEPs who are due for annual reviews. The school provides teachers with summaries of students' IEPs but does not have expectations for teachers to track progress toward IEP goals. The ELL provider and general education teachers are unaware of ELLs' English language proficiency levels. The school does not consistently have a clear understanding of ELLs' progress as students do not attend school consistently enough to complete all parts of the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test ("NYSESLAT"), with some students missing NYSESLAT scores for upwards of three years.
- AIM II's professional development offerings have not resulted in improved program results for students with disabilities and ELLs. The school provides training sessions that involve strategies for differentiation, social emotional learning, and other general strategies to support students with disabilities and ELLs. Based on a review of lesson plans, interviews with teachers, and classroom observations, the Institute did not see evidence that the school actually implements strategies from these training offerings to improve student outcomes.
- AIM II does not provide formalized opportunities for coordination between classroom teachers and at-risk program teachers. Some at-risk program teachers report meeting with content area teachers, but these meetings are inconsistent. Due to the vacancies of special education teachers, the special education manager and special education teacher do not have scheduled time to coordinate with teachers consistently.

# BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

## SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 20

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

The New Visions network has not fully differentiated its supports for AIM II in a manner that realizes the schools' unique needs compared to the NYCDOE public transfer schools it oversees. The AIM II school leaders, in coordination with the New Visions network, are continuing to develop structures that support the delivery of the academic and social and emotional programs. With the network's new partnership with GSS, AIM II has a greater capacity to meet students' social emotional needs. However, staff vacancies and low student attendance continue to hinder the effectiveness of the educational program.

- AIM II has established an administrative structure that has the potential to carry out its academic program but does not do so with fidelity. The principal and the academic director are the instructional leaders at the school while the director of operations oversees operations and finance. The associate director of culture and climate, the associate director of clinical support, and youth development director oversee the social and emotional supports for students. The network provides administrative, assessment, and curricular support for school staff. Despite small improvements in credit accumulation and Regents passing rates and the myriad structures in place, the school continues to lack systems for ensuring leaders collaborate to sufficiently improve attendance and that all students have consistent access to the school's educational program. At the time of the Institute's visit, this year's average daily attendance of 54% is still very low, does not meet the school's internal goal of 65%, and is not meaningfully different than ROADS II's average attendance during the final year before closure.
- The school has structures in place that has led to inconsistent improvements in schoolwide discipline. To monitor behavior schoolwide, the dean reviews the school culture tracker daily. All staff members use the tracker to log student behaviors. The network sends weekly updates to the principal with suspension and attendance data for the school. As such, leaders regularly review schoolwide discipline data and the school's environment is more orderly. However, while through the GSS partnership AIM II has the increased staffing for each student to have two adults assigned for social emotional support, the partnership is not consistently integrated with instruction across classrooms. The Institute notes in classroom observations that teachers inconsistently hold students accountable for low level misbehaviors.

# BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

- The school does not retain quality teachers. At the time of the Institute’s visit the school had three special education teacher vacancies. AIM II also experiences high teacher turnover. Only 50% of teachers from last year returned for the start of the 2018-19 school year, and four staff members have left during this year. The network acknowledges a need to change teacher recruitment and retention practices and is only now beginning to differentiate its recruitment strategies for AIM II teachers from its other charter school teachers.
- AIM II does not sufficiently retain students. At the time of the Institute’s visit, only 58% of students who were eligible to return from last school year were currently active in attendance at the school. While the network and school leaders express that they expect the GSS partnership will improve student attendance and retention, given that this is the first year of the partnership, there is not yet evidence to support this. The network lacks urgency in using other methods to improve student attendance and retention.

## SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 2D

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

Despite being in the second year of its charter term, the board and the New Visions network are still developing an understanding of the needs of AIM II students. While the network and board have worked to put new programs and systems in place, the board lacks urgency in assessing the new systems and making changes to support the school in meeting its Accountability Plan goals and the needs of AIM II students.

- While board members possess a variety of skills and experiences that are important in appropriately governing the school, the board does not sufficiently leverage those skills and experiences. Board members possess expertise in finance, education, higher education, clinical services, and law. The board seeks to add a community member. The board has considered developing committees to support its functioning, but opted not to do so and has not yet determined another solution to provide effective oversight that maximizes its areas of expertise and capacity.
- The board lacks urgency in establishing its long range goals and plans for monitoring the overall program. The board monitors graduation rates, daily attendance rates, students’ credit accumulation, and Regents passing rates. To support students’ social emotional needs, the board approved the school’s partnership with GSS. However, at nine months into the school year, the board has not yet established evaluation criteria for

# BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

the partnership. Given the unique nature of AIM II's restructuring renewal from a failing school, and the New Visions network's experience in serving transfer schools, the school should have clear goals for the social emotional program. In the absence of these goals, the board has limited ability to monitor the partnership effectively and hold GSS staff accountable for its impact on the academic program.

- The board lacks an effective process to evaluate the school leader and the New Visions network. The board relies on the network to complete yearly evaluations of the principal. The board meets regularly with representatives from the New Visions network and uses this time to request additional support when needed, such as a differentiated data dashboard because the traditional dashboard did not include information that was pertinent for AIM II students. However, given the school's low performance against its internal goals, the board has yet to act with urgency to require additional New Visions network resources to bring about significant academic improvements in the near future.
- The board evaluates its own performance and recognizes a need to improve. The board's self-assessment template is compliance and input-focused rather than driven by outcomes. While the board understands a need to increase the school's performance, it does not yet have systems in place to provide itself meaningful feedback and support for oversight.

AIM II

# Ax

APPENDICES

PAGES Ax 1-18

**SO<sup>A</sup>**  
SCHOOL  
OVERVIEW

PAGE Ax 2

**RB<sup>B</sup>**  
RENEWAL  
BENCHMARKS

PAGE Ax 7

# APPENDIX A: School Overview

## BOARD OF TRUSTEES<sup>1</sup>

### CHAIR

Melanie Harris

### TREASURER

Marina Schreiber

### SECRETARY

Musa Ali Shama

### TRUSTEES

Elizabeth Chu

Sharon Hayes

Garrett A. Lynch

Kelly Roman

Rebecca Anne Zofnass

## SCHOOL LEADERS

### PRINCIPAL

*Tameka Jackson, Principal (2017-18 to Present)*

## SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS

SCHOOL YEAR	CHARTERED ENROLLMENT	ACTUAL ENROLLMENT <sup>2</sup>	PROPOSED GRADES	ACTUAL GRADES
2017-18	164	186	9 - 12	9 - 12
2018-19	201	214	9 - 12	9 - 12

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

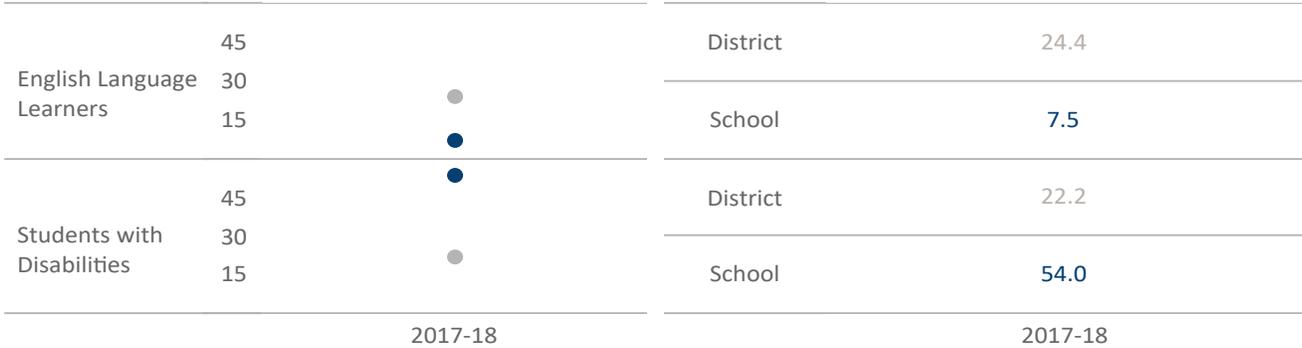
2. Source: Institute's Official Enrollment Binder. (Figures may differ slightly from New York State Report Cards, depending on date of data collection.)

# APPENDIX A: School Overview

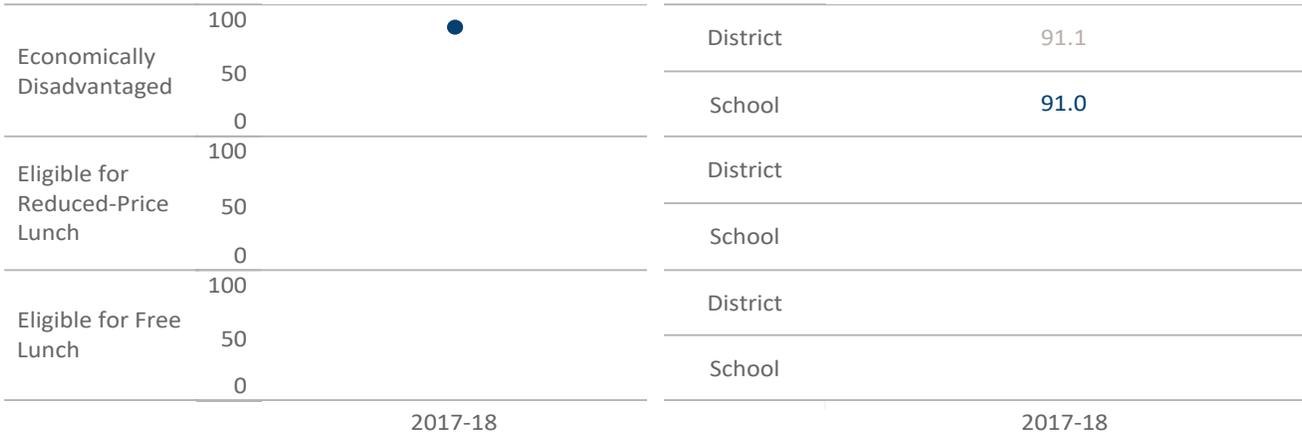
New Visions AIM Charter High School II

CSD 12

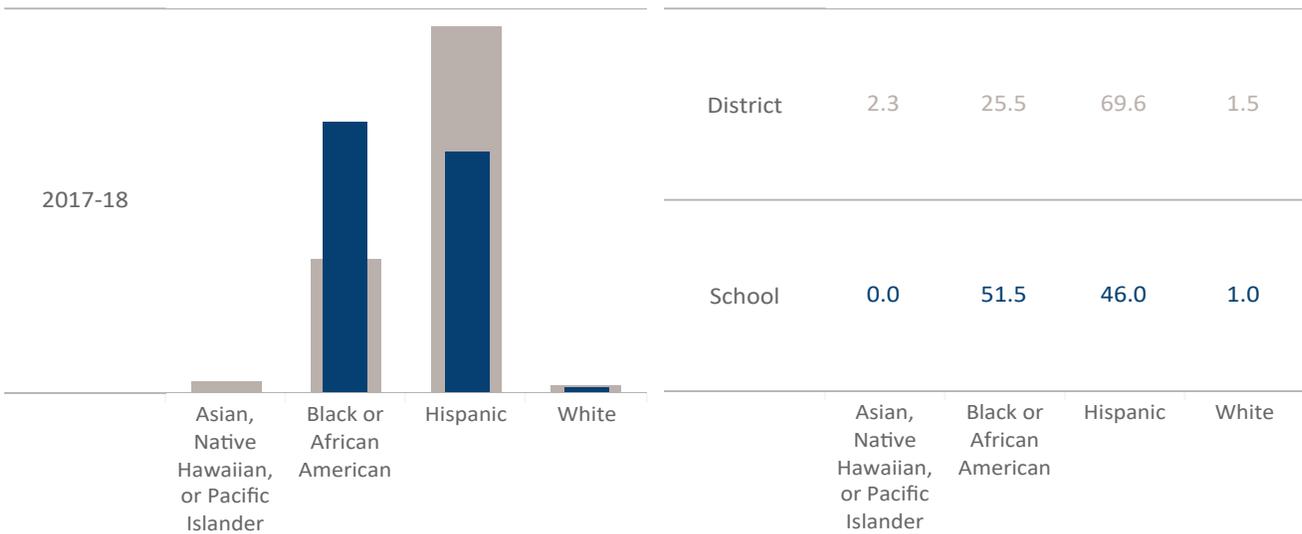
## Student Demographics: Special Populations



## Student Demographics: Free/Reduced Lunch



## Student Demographics: Race/Ethnicity

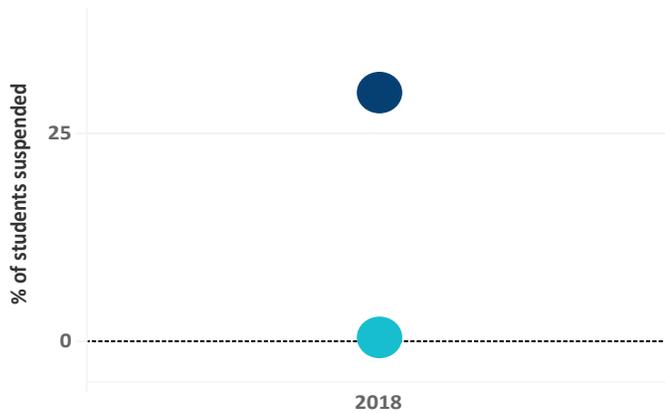


Data reported in these charts reflect BEDS day enrollment counts as reported by the New York State Education Department

# APPENDIX A: School Overview

## New Visions AIM Charter High School II

CSD 12



	School ISS Rate	School OSS Rate
2018	0.5	30.0

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

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

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



Year	Expulsions
2018	3

### New Visions AIM Charter High School II's Enrollment and Retention Status: 2017-18

		District Target	School
Enrollment	economically disadvantaged	89.1	83.5
	English language learners	22.4	7.5
	students with disabilities	18.5	51.5
Retention	economically disadvantaged	88.6	72.5
	English language learners	87.2	50.0
	students with disabilities	88.2	70.5

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

# APPENDIX A: School Overview

## SCHOOL VISIT HISTORY

SCHOOL YEAR	VISIT TYPE	DATE
2017-18	First Year Visit	April 26, 2018
2018-19	Evaluation Visit	April 1 - 2, 2019

## CONDUCT OF THE VISIT

DATE(S) OF VISIT	EVALUATION TEAM MEMBERS	TITLE
April 1 - 2, 2019	Kerri Rizzolo	Senior Analyst
	Hannah Hansen	School Evaluation Analyst
	Andrew Kile	Director of School Evaluation
	Ashish Kapadia	External Consultant

## CHARTER CYCLE CONTEXT

CHARTER TERM	ACCOUNTABILITY PERIOD <sup>3</sup>	ANTICIPATED RENEWAL VISIT
Second year of five-year initial charter term	Second year of four-year Accountability Period	Fall 2021

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

# APPENDIX A: School Overview

## KEY DESIGN ELEMENTS:

ELEMENT	EVIDENT?
Evidence-based and technology-enabled administrative systems	+
Defined post-secondary pathways	-
Intensive and personalized academic supports	-
Flexible and personalized academic programming	+
Student advisors	+
Intensive and integrated socio-emotional supports	-

VERSION 5.0, MAY 2012

## Introduction

The State University of New York Charter Renewal Benchmarks<sup>1</sup> (the “SUNY Renewal Benchmarks”) serve two primary functions at renewal:

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Renewal Benchmarks adapt and elaborate on these correlates.

# APPENDIX B: SUNY Renewal Benchmarks

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

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

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

## RENEWAL QUESTION 1

### IS THE SCHOOL AN ACADEMIC SUCCESS?

#### SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 1A

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

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

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

#### SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 1B

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

*The following elements are generally present:*

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

## SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 1C

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

*The following elements are generally present:*

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

## SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 1D

### HIGH QUALITY INSTRUCTION IS EVIDENT THROUGHOUT THE SCHOOL.

*The following elements are generally present:*

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

## SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 1E

### THE SCHOOL HAS STRONG INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP.

*The following elements are generally present:*

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

# APPENDIX B: SUNY Renewal Benchmarks

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

## SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 1F

### THE SCHOOL MEETS THE EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF AT-RISK STUDENTS

*The following elements are generally present:*

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

## RENEWAL QUESTION 2

IS THE SCHOOL AN EFFECTIVE, VIABLE ORGANIZATION?

### SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 2A

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

*The following elements are generally present:*

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

### SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 2B

**PARENTS/GUARDIANS AND STUDENTS ARE SATISFIED WITH THE SCHOOL.**

*The following elements are generally present:*

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

### SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 2C

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

*The following elements are generally present:*

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

## SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 2D

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

*The following elements are generally present:*

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

## SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 2E

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

*The following elements are generally present:*

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

# APPENDIX B: SUNY Renewal Benchmarks

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

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

*The following elements are generally present:*

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

## SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 2F

## RENEWAL QUESTION 3

### IS THE SCHOOL FISCALLY SOUND?

#### SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 3A

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

*The following elements are generally present:*

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

#### SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 3B

#### THE SCHOOL MAINTAINS APPROPRIATE INTERNAL CONTROLS AND PROCEDURES.

*The following elements are generally present:*

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

# APPENDIX B: SUNY Renewal Benchmarks

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

## SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 3C

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

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

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

## SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 3D

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

*The following elements are generally present:*

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

## RENEWAL QUESTION 4

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

### SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 4A

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

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

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

### SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 4B

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

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

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

# APPENDIX B: SUNY Renewal Benchmarks

## SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 4C

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

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

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

## SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 4D

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

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

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

