

# THE SUNY CHARTER SCHOOLS INSTITUTE

*SCHOOL EVALUATION REPORT*  
**STOREFRONT ACADEMY  
CHARTER SCHOOL**

*VISIT DATE: APRIL 16-17, 2018*  
*REPORT DATE: JUNE 19, 2018*

*SUNY Charter Schools Institute*

*SUNY Plaza*

*353 Broadway*

*Albany, NY 12246*

*518.445.4250*

*518.320.1572 (fax)*

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



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



A collection of colorful pencils and paper clips on a dark grey background. The pencils are arranged diagonally from the top left to the bottom right, showing a variety of colors including green, blue, red, pink, orange, yellow, green, orange, blue, purple, and brown. Some pencils have erasers attached. In the bottom right corner, there are several paper clips in various colors: orange, green, pink, blue, and black.

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353 Broadway  
Albany, NY 12246

# INTRODUCTION & SCHOOL BACKGROUND

## INTRODUCTION

This School Evaluation Report offers an analysis of evidence collected during the school visit on April 16-17, 2018. 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 (i.e., curriculum, instruction, assessment, and services for at-risk students), as well as leadership, organizational capacity, and board oversight. The Institute uses the established criteria on a regular basis to provide schools with a consistent set of expectations leading up to renewal.

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

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

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# INTRODUCTION & SCHOOL BACKGROUND

## SCHOOL BACKGROUND

The SUNY Trustees approved the original charter for Storefront Academy Charter School (“Storefront”) on June 4, 2014. The school opened its doors in the fall of 2015, initially serving 100 students in Kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> grade. Storefront is in the third year of its initial charter term, currently enrolling 113 students in grades Kindergarten – 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.

Unique among any other schools authorized by SUNY, Storefront has faced significant facilities challenges in its first three years of operation. While the Storefront board of trustees (the “board”) worked diligently to locate the school in a permanent, private facility without necessitating significant fundraising, in three years it has operated across five facilities, four of which were in this school year alone. This school year was particularly difficult in that the facade of one facility fell the week before students entered the building trapping instructional materials inside for weeks while the school scrambled to relocate in a temporary facility. Not until April 2018 was the school able to move to its privately leased space at 609 Jackson Avenue, Bronx, NY in New York City School District (“CSD”) 7 where the school intends to remain for the rest of this charter term.

Due to its facilities challenges, and the relocations of its program, some families made other choices over the school year and some families persisted, but Storefront has also managed challenges associated with changing enrollment. The school’s instructional program was also significantly affected by the facilities challenges as classrooms were combined, materials were at times limited, and leadership focus was necessarily drawn to facilities and logistics issues at a cost to a coherent and persistent focus on the school’s academic program.

The school’s board and its leadership displayed an unwavering commitment to ensuring a safe, permanent home for the school and, throughout all the bricks and mortar challenges, have been in constant contact with the Institute. The board rightly conveys a sense of urgency to focus now on solidifying a strong academic program now that it has addressed its facilities challenges.

The mission of Storefront is:



*Storefront Academy seeks to provide children of varied academic strengths quality educational opportunities, preparing them academically, socially and emotionally to become critical thinkers, high-achieving students and well-rounded individuals. Working in partnership with families and community members, Storefront Academy instills a powerful sense of self, and gives its students the tools to own the future and create meaningful adult lives.*

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353 Broadway  
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# BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

## QUALITATIVE BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

The SUNY Renewal Benchmarks, grounded in the body of research from the Center for Urban Studies at Harvard University,<sup>1</sup> describe the elements in place at schools that are highly effective at providing students from low-income backgrounds the instruction, content, knowledge, and skills necessary to produce strong academic performance. The SUNY Renewal Benchmarks describe the elements an effective school must have in place at the time of renewal.<sup>2</sup>

### SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 1A

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

Storefront enrolled students in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade during the 2017-18 school year. Therefore the school has not yet produced student test results. This school year is the first year the school administered the state test to students as such data to evaluate attainment of the school's required Accountability Plan goals is not yet available.

### SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 1B

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

Storefront regularly administers assessments to gauge student performance. However, the school has yet to establish valid and reliable systems to ensure its assessments gauge student learning consistently across the school. Teachers use assessment data to adjust instruction but do not systematically use these data to identify students requiring interventions.

- The school administers Fountas and Pinnell ("F&P") benchmark assessments in ELA and the NWEA Measures of Academic Progress ("MAP") assessments in ELA and mathematics three times per year to monitor student performance. Additionally, teachers administer curriculum based end-of-unit assessments for ELA, teacher developed unit assessments in mathematics, as well as pre-unit assessments and daily exit tickets in all content areas. The school has not provided training to teachers to ensure reliable administration of F&P assessments. Additionally, the school does not have a clear process to ensure the rigor of all teacher developed assessments align to state standards.
- Storefront has yet to solidify a valid and reliable process for scoring and analyzing assessments. The school does not ensure teachers are normed on the curriculum provided writing rubric, and teachers do not consistently grade student work collaboratively to ensure the scoring is normed. A review of student writing samples

1. An extensive body of research identifying and confirming the correlates of effective schools exists dating back four decades. Selected sources include: <https://www.gao.gov/assets/80/77488.pdf>; and [http://scholar.harvard.edu/files/fryer/files/dobbie\\_fryer\\_revision\\_final.pdf](http://scholar.harvard.edu/files/fryer/files/dobbie_fryer_revision_final.pdf).

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

# BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

revealed similar writing assignments across multiple grades and similar length and quality of writing across grades. Additionally, teachers use a common writing rubric across grades that range from a score of 70-100, thereby inflating all scores to a passing grade, including the writing samples that did not demonstrate mastery of grade level expectations.

- Storefront makes assessment data accessible to teachers, school leaders, and board members. Leaders share MAP data with teachers within 24 hours of administration and facilitate data meetings with grade level teams to discuss student performance. The principal provides the school board with data trends after each administration of MAP assessments.
- Teachers use assessment results to meet students' needs by adjusting classroom instruction and grouping students, but the school does not have a system in place for utilizing data to identify students struggling academically. School leaders facilitate data meetings after administration of schoolwide assessments to support teachers in analyzing MAP data, identifying standards to reteach, and creating homogenous groupings of students based on areas in which they need support. In between administrations of interim assessments, teachers work with leaders to discuss student progress, reconfigure groupings, and identify students of concern. The school has not established consistent guidelines or mechanisms for teachers or leaders to identify struggling students.
- School leaders do not use student assessment results to evaluate teacher effectiveness. The school has not yet produced state assessment results, and teacher evaluations do not consider student performance on interim assessments. The school does not use assessment data to provide targeted and differentiated professional development.

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

Although Storefront has a curricular framework with tools to support teachers with instructional planning, leaders do not consistently ensure that lessons plans provide sufficient detail to ensure high quality lessons.

- Storefront has a curricular framework that provides a fixed, underlying structure for ELA and mathematics. The school uses Journeys and Foundations for ELA and Singapore Math. With approval from instructional leaders, teachers supplement the curriculum with additional materials pulled from online resources. The school uses the state learning standards to guide instructional planning for social studies and science.

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# BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

- The school provides supporting tools that provide a bridge between the curricular framework and lesson plans. Teachers access scope and sequence documents from the school's curricular programs for ELA and mathematics and curriculum maps from the NYC Department of Education website for social studies and science. Instructional leaders work with teachers to modify the pacing of lessons based on pre-unit assessments. Teachers know what to teach and when to teach it based on these documents.
- Lesson development varies across classrooms, and it is unclear, given the variation in detail and focus across the lessons reviewed and observed during the Institute's visit, if teachers receive the support, coaching, and feedback necessary to consistently support students in attaining the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the expectations of state standards. Teachers develop weekly lesson plans that utilize a gradual release structure driven by an essential question that the teacher expects students to answer by the end of the lesson. However, despite this structure, only a few teachers identify critical thinking questions and detailed differentiation strategies in lesson plans.

## IS HIGH QUALITY INSTRUCTION EVIDENT THROUGHOUT STOREFRONT?

Instruction at Storefront is generally effective. Most teachers deliver purposeful lessons and check for understanding during small group instruction. However, many lessons observed during the visit did not include strong questioning techniques or demand that students utilize higher order thinking skills. Many lessons were not tightly focused and conveyed a lack of urgency in supporting students for academic success. As shown in the chart below, during the evaluation visit, Institute team members conducted 21 classroom observations following a defined protocol used in all visits.

		G R A D E				
		K	1	2	3	Total
CONTENT AREA	ELA	1	3	3	2	9
	Math	1	3	2	1	7
	Soc Stu				2	2
	Science		1	2		3
	Total	2	7	7	5	21

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BENCHMARK  
1D



# BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

- Most teachers deliver purposeful lessons with clear objectives aligned to the school's curriculum (15 out of 21 lessons observed). Lesson activities are generally purposeful and align with the objective posted on the board. Instruction at Storefront typically follows a gradual release structure, in which teachers first model the lesson activities and then reduce instructional scaffolding supports until students can work on their own. The school does not consistently utilize multiple adults in the classroom strategically, as some co-teachers mostly monitor student behavior rather than provide targeted content related support.
- Most teachers regularly and effectively use techniques to check for student understanding (14 out of 21 lessons observed). Students frequently work in pairs or groups during activities, and teachers monitor group progress throughout the lesson. However, some teachers do not circulate effectively and therefore do not assess all students' understanding. For instance, two co-teachers separated the class into five groups and worked with one group each, but failed to realize at least one unattended group did not understand the instructions and could not complete the task in the time allotted.
- Some lessons at Storefront developed higher order thinking and problem solving skills (7 out of 21 lessons observed). Teachers frequently ask questions that can potentially build students' critical thinking skills, but accept low level responses rather than probing students to expound upon their answers. Although teachers ask targeted questions in small group sessions, students working in groups not facilitated by a teacher do not engage in rich peer-to-peer discussions or use new knowledge and skills to investigate open ended problems.
- About half of teachers maximize learning time in classrooms (11 out of 21 lessons observed). Teachers utilize effective classroom management strategies, and students are typically on task during instruction. However, lessons across the school generally lack sufficient urgency to maintain a strong and consistent focus on academic achievement. Poor pacing and slow transitions result in insufficient time to complete tasks.

## DOES STOREFRONT HAVE STRONG INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP?

As noted earlier in this report, Storefront's challenges, driven by circumstances not experienced by any other charter authorized by SUNY, have made it difficult for leaders to focus on supports for teachers and the instructional program in its third year of operation. As a result, the school has few systems established to ensure strong instructional leadership supports the development of its teachers, and so the school must act with urgency to establish clear and commonly embraced expectations for how teachers will strengthen student achievement.

# BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

- The school's leadership has not established clear expectations regarding teacher performance or student achievement. Teachers and instructional leaders cite wide-ranging priorities for the current academic year, none of which include measurable goals. While most teachers and leaders identify general goals of increasing performance on MAP assessments, none provide specific targets or methods to monitor progress between administrations of the assessment.
- Storefront does not yet provide a sustained and systemic coaching program. In previous academic years, teachers worked with leaders to develop individual professional development goals at the beginning of the year that drove their coaching agenda. Because leaders focused extensively on addressing facility issues, the school did not maintain strong coaching systems. Currently, assistant principals conduct informal observations that vary in frequency with no clear coaching agenda and do not consistently provide feedback. Leaders plan to reinstate the professional development plans and develop a formal coaching plan.
- Instructional leaders provide multiple opportunities and guidance for teachers to plan instruction within grade levels. Teachers meet in grade teams during weekly common planning time. Assistant principals also facilitate weekly grade level meetings that focus on lesson planning, data analysis, and students at risk of academic failure.
- Storefront has not implemented a comprehensive professional development program that develops the competencies and skills of all teachers. Although the school utilizes an early dismissal for students once a week with the intention of delivering professional development, the school limited these sessions to staff meetings rather than focusing on targeted and specific development needs of teachers. Leaders report that they could not deliver effective professional development due to the space constraints of the previous facility. Now that the school has secured a permanent facility, instructional leaders should have the capacity to offer professional development activities interrelated with classroom practice. However, leaders determine the professional development agenda based on informal classroom observations and teacher requests; the school does not use assessment data to provide targeted and differentiated professional development.
- Instructional leaders do not conduct regular teacher evaluations with clear criteria that accurately identify teachers' strengths and weaknesses. Although the school intends to conduct formal evaluations of teachers three times per year using the Danielson rubric, leaders have only evaluated teachers once, midway through the year. Evaluations focus on only a subset of domains in the rubric and do not provide sufficient detail regarding strengths and weaknesses leading to the evaluation rating. Additionally, leaders do not consider student performance in teachers' evaluations.

# BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

## SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 1F

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

Storefront does not meet the needs of at-risk students. The school has not developed systems for identifying and supporting at-risk students. Leaders provide limited professional development regarding effective strategies to support these students.

- Storefront does not have clear procedures for identifying at-risk students. The school identifies ELLs using the Home Language Identification Survey (“HLIS”) and subsequent administration of the New York State Identification Test for English Language Learners (“NYSITELL”). School leaders report suspicion that families do not always complete the HLIS truthfully and were unaware the school could implement additional strategies for identifying these students. The Institute corrected this misunderstanding during the visit. Storefront relies on teachers to refer students struggling academically for RTI intervention. However, the school has not established written guidelines that define what level of performance indicates concern. To identify students with disabilities, the special education coordinator confirms the status of newly enrolled students on the city’s Special Education Student Information System (“SESIS”). Additionally, the special education coordinator works with teachers to complete special education referrals for students who the school already identified as struggling, but are not making progress. Nevertheless, because the school does not adequately equip teachers to identify struggling students, it is unclear whether the school accurately identifies all students with disabilities.
- Storefront’s intervention programs are inadequate to meet the needs of at-risk students. The school’s response to intervention (“RTI”) process lacks clear intervention services at each tier and progress monitoring procedures that determine when to increase the intensity of interventions or discontinue the process for particular students. The school’s part time interventionist only provides ELA support. Although Storefront provides an after-school program three times per week for ELA and mathematics, teachers and leaders are not purposeful in maximizing this time to provide a structured intervention program with targeted supports. Storefront provides push-in and pull-out supports for ELL students; however, the school does not have a staff member or teacher with specialized training in language learning or English language acquisition strategies. Additionally, the school has not provided English language acquisition supports to ELLs whom the school did not appropriately identify. The school provides integrated co-teaching (“ICT”) services, though co-teachers frequently serve to monitor on-task behavior rather than provide content related supports.



# BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

- The school does not adequately monitor the progress and success of all at-risk students. Storefront lacks appropriate program documentation for RTI and ELL supports, resulting in limited teacher knowledge of students' progress and goals. Coordination between teachers and intervention staff is primarily informal and not well documented. Though school leaders review ELL students' progress on interim assessment data, the school does not have clear, short-term English language acquisition goals for ELLs and relies on results from the annual New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test ("NYSESLAT") to evaluate progress. Teachers are knowledgeable about students with disabilities, having received students' individualized education plan ("IEP") goals at the beginning of the school year. Teachers plan lessons and report student progress with this information and in consultation with the Special Education Coordinator.
- Storefront does not provide adequate professional development to its teachers and staff to identify at-risk students and to help teachers meet students' needs. The school is receptive to individual staff member requests to participate in identified and relevant outside training. However, the school is not purposeful or systematic in ensuring all teachers are adequately prepared to support at-risk students.

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

Considerable challenges in securing a permanent facility impeded the school organization from effectively supporting the delivery of the educational program. The school faced initial challenges in teacher and leader turnover, student attrition, and a lack of systems within the administrative structure. Now, in its new facility, Storefront is building its organizational capacity.

- Storefront struggles to establish an administrative structure with staff, operational systems, policies, and procedures that allow the school to carry out its academic program. The school has held its program in four separate locations over the span of 10 months. School leaders spent a majority of the academic year focusing on securing a permanent location and did not develop clear systems and procedures in critical areas of the educational program. For instance, instructional leaders are unable to locate certain records, including enrollment data from 2015-16 and progress monitoring reports of students currently enrolled in the RTI program.

# BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

- The organizational structure establishes distinct lines of accountability with clearly defined roles and responsibilities. Teachers know to report to the assistant principal of their grade band for instructional matters and can seek out the special education coordinator for support regarding students with disabilities as well as the ELL teacher for matters concerning students who are ELLs.
- Storefront has a discipline system that teachers consistently apply across classrooms. Teachers utilize behavior charts with an emphasis on positive behaviors. Notwithstanding a consistently applied system, the school reports that suspension data from the 2016-17 school year was lost during its move to a new facility and is unable to report suspension data to the Institute.
- The school is beginning to retain quality instructional staff. The school lost a third of its instructional staff over the summer of 2017. However, in spite of relocating numerous times throughout the year, almost all teachers on the roster at the beginning of the school year have remained with the school.
- Due to the facilities' challenges, Storefront has faced difficulties with maintaining student enrollment. At the time of the visit, the school enrolled 125 students, significantly below its chartered enrollment of 198. After moving to its permanent facility, Storefront enrolled nine students to mitigate the low enrollment. Now that the school is in its permanent facility, the school predicts steady levels of enrollment that match or exceed its chartered enrollment for 2018-19.
- Storefront does not adequately monitor its progress toward meeting enrollment and retention targets. Although the school makes good faith efforts toward enrolling economically disadvantaged students, ELLs, and students with disabilities, the school does not meet its targets for enrollment. As of the time of this report, the school failed to report accurate retention data for the same subgroups, and so the Institute is unable to report on the school's progress toward meeting its retention goals for these subgroups of students.

# BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

## SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 2D

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

Storefront's board works effectively to achieve the school's Accountability Plan goals.

- 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 to ensure the school's future as an academically successful, financially healthy, and legally compliant organization. Members have experience in education, business operations, development, finance, and social service. The board seeks to bring on new members with various backgrounds including education, law, and community members. The board operates academic, development, finance, and human resources committees.
- The Storefront board requests and receives sufficient information to provide oversight of the school's program and finances. Board members worked with the principal to develop a dashboard with pertinent school information. The dashboard includes information regarding student assessment results, special events, and budgeting. In previous years, the board asked teachers to give presentations on their class activities during board meetings.
- The board establishes clear priorities, objectives, and long-range goals. In addition to securing a permanent facility, the board focused on identifying sources of funding to maintain operations and retain the school's staff in spite of low student enrollment. The board is aware that current financial difficulties will rollover into early next academic year and has secured a loan to cover financial obligations.
- The board does not regularly evaluate the performance of the school leader. Though the school leader and board worked together to select an evaluation tool, the board has not evaluated the principal since her arrival at the start of the 2016-17 school year.
- The Board effectively communicates with the school community, including school leadership, staff, parents, and students. During transitions between facilities, the board held frequent meetings with parents to keep them updated on issues about the facility. Board members visit the school frequently and have informally mentored students in previous years.



Storefront

# Ax

## APPENDICES

### PAGES Ax 1-19

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# APPENDIX A: School Overview

## STOREFRONT ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOL BOARD OF TRUSTEES<sup>1</sup>

### CHAIR

Jonathan Stearns

### VICE CHAIR

Wendy Reynoso

### TRUSTEES

Angela Bergeson

Carrie Sealy

Daniel Sternberg

Eileen Niedzwiecki

Ray Cameron

Richard Bayles

## SCHOOL LEADERS

### PRINCIPAL

*Lisette Nieves, Principal (2015-16)*

*Elisa Istueta, Executive Director (2015-16 to 2016-17)*

*Nicole Garcia, Ed.D, Principal (2016-17 to Present)*

## SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS

SCHOOL YEAR	CHARTERED ENROLLMENT	ACTUAL ENROLLMENT <sup>2</sup>	ACTUAL AS A PERCENTAGE OF CHARTERED ENROLLMENT	PROPOSED GRADES	ACTUAL GRADES
2015-16	100	95	95%	K-1	K-1
2016-17	150	133	89%	K-2	K-2
2017-18	198	117	59%	K-3	K-3

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

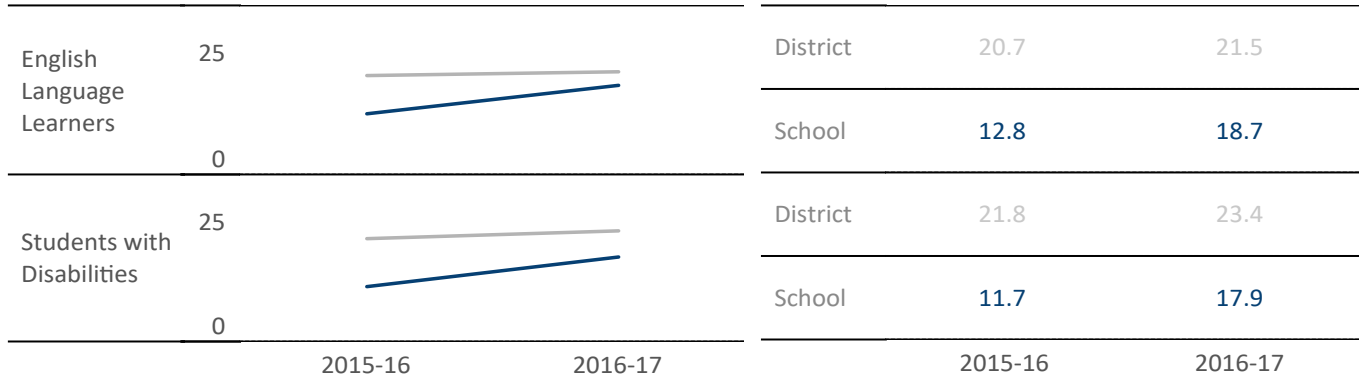
2. Source: Institute's Official Enrollment Binder. (Figures may differ slightly from New York State Report Cards, depending on date of data collection.)

# APPENDIX A: School Overview

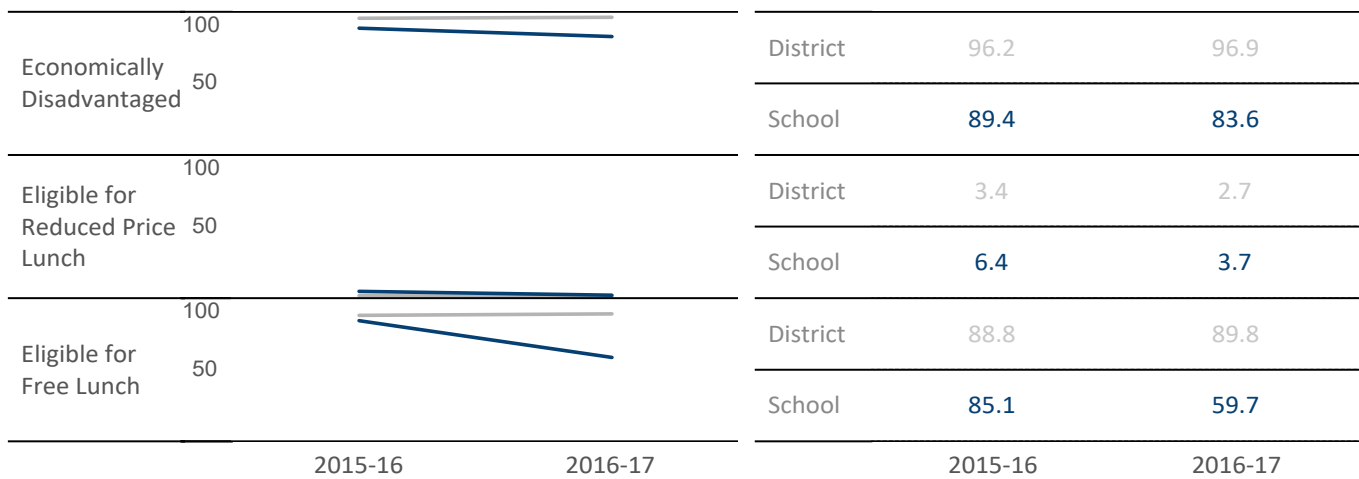
## Storefront Academy Charter School

Bronx CSD 7

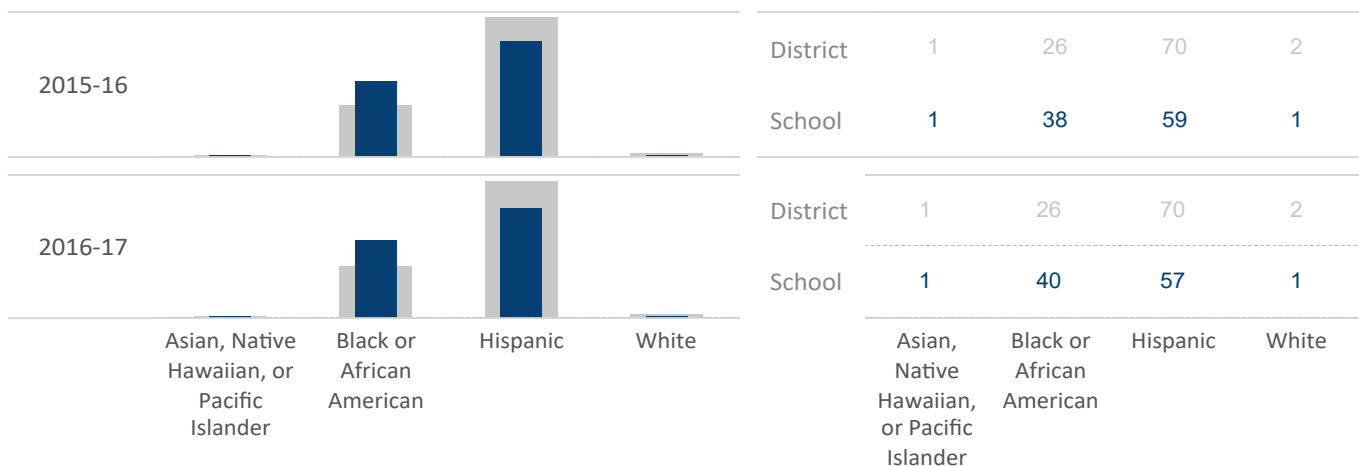
### Student Demographics: Special Populations



### Student Demographics: Free/Reduced Lunch



### Student Demographics: Race/Ethnicity

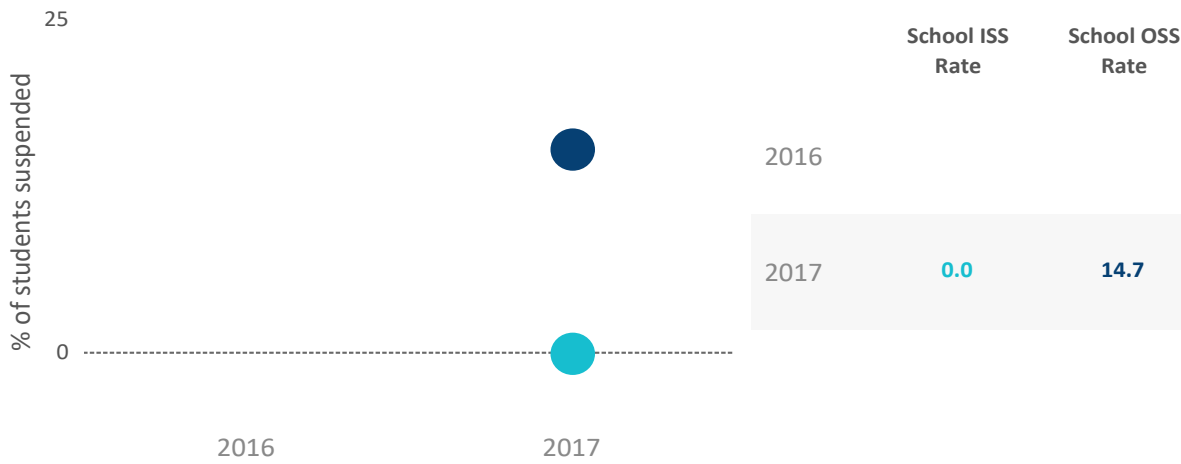




# APPENDIX A: School Overview

## Storefront Academy Charter School

Bronx CSD 7



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

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

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

2016 2017

0 0

## Storefront Academy Charter School's Enrollment and Retention

Status: 2016-17

			District Target	School
Enrollment	Economically disadvantaged	<div><div></div></div>	95.5	82.9
	English language learners	<div><div></div></div>	21.7	19.4
	Students with disabilities	<div><div></div></div>	21.9	17.1
Retention	Economically disadvantaged	<div><div></div></div>	92.6	
	English language learners	<div><div></div></div>	93.5	
	Students with disabilities	<div><div></div></div>	93.3	

# APPENDIX A: School Overview

## SCHOOL VISIT HISTORY

SCHOOL YEAR	VISIT TYPE	DATE
2015-16	First Year	June 15, 2016
2017-18	Evaluation	April 16-17, 2018

## CONDUCT OF THE VISIT

DATE(S) OF VISIT	EVALUATION TEAM MEMBERS	TITLE
April 16 -17, 2018	Chastity McFarlan, PhD	Senior Analyst
	Vanessa Threatte	Executive Deputy Director for Best Practices and Partnerships
	Jennifer Lee, PhD	External Consultant

## CHARTER CYCLE CONTEXT

CHARTER TERM	ACCOUNTABILITY PERIOD <sup>3</sup>	ANTICIPATED RENEWAL VISIT
Initial	Second year of five-year Accountability Period	Fall 2020

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

# APPENDIX A: School Overview

KEY DESIGN ELEMENTS:

ELEMENT	EVIDENT?
A rigorous, intentional and joyful community of learners, including interactive and collaborative learning every day	+
Holistic supports for learners through small school and class sizes, as well as a Response to Intervention team to address academic, psychosocial, developmental and behavioral needs	-
Utilizing evidence to understand, reflect, decide and act to ensure a culture of accountability and transparency	-



## APPENDIX B: Performance Summaries

STOREFRONT ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOL DOES NOT YET HAVE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT RESULTS AND WILL PRODUCE ITS FIRST SET OF DATA DURING THE 2017-18 SCHOOL YEAR.

# APPENDIX C: SUNY Renewal Benchmarks

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.

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- 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.

# APPENDIX C: SUNY Renewal Benchmarks

## 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.



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## 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;

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## SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 1F

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

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

*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.

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## 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.

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## SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 2D

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

*The following elements are generally present:*

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

## SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 2E

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

*The following elements are generally present:*

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

# APPENDIX C: SUNY Renewal Benchmarks

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

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

*The following elements are generally present:*

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

### SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 2F



# APPENDIX C: SUNY Renewal Benchmarks

## 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;

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## SUNY RENEWAL BENCHMARK 3C

- 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.

### 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.

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## 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.

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## 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.

