2015-16 School Evaluation Report

HEKETI COMMUNITY CHARTER SCHOOL

Visit Date: April 19, 2016
Report Date: August 1, 2016

INTRODUCTION

This School Evaluation Report offers an analysis of evidence collected during the school visit on April 19, 2016. 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 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.

SCHOOL BACKGROUND

Opening Information

Date Initial Charter Approved by SUNY Trustees	November 2010
Date of School Opening	September 4, 2012

Location and 2015-16 Enrollment

Address	District	Facility	Chartered Enrollment	Grades
403 Concord Avenue Bronx, NY 10454	NYC CSD 7	Private	306	K-5

2014-15 SCHOOL PERFORMANCE REVIEW

During 2014-15, the first year any measures in Heketi Community Charter School's ("Heketi's") Accountability Plan were applicable, the school did not meet its key academic Accountability Plan goal in English language arts ("ELA"). The school met its mathematics goal and is in good standing in the state's No Child Left Behind ("NCLB") accountability system. The school's science goals and growth measures were not yet applicable.

ELA

Heketi did not meet its ELA goal in 2014-15, failing to meet any of the available measures. The school's 3rd graders enrolled in at least their second year slightly underperformed New York City Community School District 7 (the "district"), with only 14 percent scoring at or above proficiency. Additionally, in comparison to schools across the state enrolling similar concentrations of economically disadvantaged students, the school performed lower than expected. Finally, the school's aggregate Performance Level Index failed to meet the state's Annual Measureable Objective. Heketi did not yet enroll 4th grade students producing growth scores during 2014-15.

Mathematics

In its first year with available data, Heketi met its mathematics goal. The percentage of students enrolled in at least their second year scoring at or above proficiency on the state's math exam exceeded the district by 27 percentage points. The school performed higher than expected to a large degree compared to schools with similar proportions of economically disadvantaged students across the state. The school did not yet enroll 4th grade students producing growth scores in 2014-15.

Science

The New York State exam in science is only administered in the 4th and 8th grades. As of 2014-15, Heketi did not enroll students past 3rd grade, and therefore did not yet have results in science.

NCLB

Heketi met its NCLB goal and is in good standing. The school was not identified on the state's priority or focus school list for 2014-15.

		2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Enrollment (N) Receiving Mandated Academic Services		(14)	(18)	(38)
Results	Tested on State Exams (N)	(N/A)	(N/A)	(6)
	School Percent Proficient on ELA Exam	N/A	N/A	0.0
	Percent Proficient Statewide	5.0	5.2	5.8

		2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
ELL Enrollment (N)		(15)	(28)	(35)
Results	Tested on NYSESLAT[1] Exam (N)	(15)	(27)	(35)
	School Percent 'Commanding' or Making Progress[2] on NYSESLAT	0.0	7.4	25.7

[1] New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test, a standardized state exam.
[2] Defined as moving up at least one level of proficiency. As of 2014-15, student scores can fall into five categories/proficiency levels: Entering (formerly Beginning); Emerging (formerly Low Intermediate); Transitioning (formerly Intermediate); Expanding (formerly Advanced); and, Commanding (formerly Proficient).

Heketi Community Charter School

REQUIRED MEASURE DESCRIPTION	ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN GOAL	MATHEMATICS ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN GOAL
Comparative Measure: District Comparison. Each year, the percentage of students at Heketi in at least their second year performing at or above proficiency in **ELA** and **mathematics** will be greater than that of students in the same tested grades in CSD 7.	15 14 — 2015	46 20 — 2015
Comparative Measure: Effect Size. Each year, Heketi will exceed its predicted level of performance by an Effect Size of 0.3 or above in **ELA** and **mathematics** according to a regression analysis controlling for economically disadvantaged students among all public schools in New York State.	-0.20	1.15
Comparative Growth Measure: Mean Growth Percentile. Each year, Heketi's unadjusted mean growth percentile for all students in grades 4-8 will be above the state's unadjusted median growth percentile in **ELA** and **mathematics.**	**Comparative Growth data not yet available.** Growth data becomes available after the school enrolls and administers the state ELA and mathematics exams to students in 4th grade.	

SCIENCE
ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN GOAL

Science: Comparative Measure. Each year, the percentage of students at Heketi in at least their second year performing at or above proficiency in **science** will exceed that of students in the same tested grades in the district.	**Science data not yet avilable.** Science data becomes available after the school enrolls and administers the state science exam to students in the 4th and/or 8th grades.	

QUALITATIVE EDUCATION BENCHMARKS

The SUNY Renewal Benchmarks, grounded in the body of research from the Center for Urban Studies at Harvard University,[3] 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.[4]

Use of Assessment Data

Heketi has in place an assessment system that should enable the school to improve instructional effectiveness and student learning.

- The school continues to administer the Fountas and Pinnell ("F&P") assessment to measure reading level and growth, and Fundations to measure phonemic awareness, decoding skills and sight-word recognition.   Heketi leaders note that interim F&P results did not correlate to student performance on the 2014-15 state ELA assessment, but the school continues to rely heavily on this measure. Additionally, the school conducts interviews to gauge students' mathematic understanding in Kindergarten–2nd grades and administers *Go Math!* assessments in 3rd–4th grades. Teachers administer formative assessments using a combination of TERC Investigations and EngageNY.

- The accessibility of student performance data highlights Heketi's pursuit of a data-driven culture and its attempts to hold teachers accountable for providing quality instruction and improving academic success. Teachers, school leaders, and board members continually access the school's assessment data via shared folders on Google Drive. Instructional leaders create presentations of assessment analyses to present at board meetings and professional development sessions. Teachers also have access to a data wall that displays all students' reading levels, color-coded by grade, to gain an understanding of the school's academic performance.

- Heketi typically examines assessment data at the student, class, grade, and school level. However, the school does not disaggregate assessment results for subgroups to evaluate performance of students at risk of academic failure. As such, teachers are unaware of how these students perform throughout the school year in comparison to the larger student body.

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[3] An extensive body of research identifying and confirming the correlates of effective schools exists dating back four decades. Selected sources include: www.mes.org/correlates.html; scholar.harvard.edu/files/fryer/files/dobbie_fryer_revision_final.pdf; and, gao.gov/assets/80/77488.pdf.
[4] Additional details regarding the SUNY Renewal Benchmarks, including greater specificity as to what the Institute looks for at each school that may demonstrate attainment of the SUNY Renewal Benchmarks, is available at: www.newyorkcharters.org/suny-renewal-benchmarks/.

- School leaders use assessment results to develop professional development and coaching strategies. Teachers consistently use assessment results to meet students' needs by adjusting classroom instruction, reteaching concepts, and arranging students during small-group instruction. However, the school's process for identifying students for special intervention is not systematic and relies largely on conversations with students, notes taken during small-group instruction, and other qualitative reporting.
- The school regularly communicates with parents/guardians regarding students' progress and growth. The school provides two report cards and a progress report per year and hosts meetings during which students present their academic achievements and difficulties to parents twice per year. Teachers also contact parents during the school year if students require academic interventions or other support.

Curriculum

Heketi's curriculum supports teachers in the planning and delivery of instruction, but its ELA program has not produced strong academic outcomes. In addition to building academic knowledge and skills, the school's culturally relevant curriculum focuses on students' social and emotional development.

- Heketi has a curriculum framework that provides a fixed, underlying structure across grades. Instructional leaders establish school-wide goals prior to the start of the academic year. Teachers access an abundance of supporting materials that provide a bridge between the curriculum framework and lesson plans, including curriculum maps, pacing guides, leveled readers, textbooks, and graphic organizers. The totality of these materials, however, has not proven sufficient to prepare students to meet grade level performance standards on the state ELA assessment.

- Teachers work individually and within grade-level teams to ensure lateral alignment of curriculum. Teachers develop weekly unit plans and submit plans to instructional leaders before the start of the school week. Instructional leaders review unit plans and provide feedback where appropriate. Based on the systems in place and the documents available, teachers know what to teach and when to teach it.

- The school has an adequate process for developing and reviewing its curriculum documents. Teachers provide ongoing feedback to instructional leaders regarding curriculum implementation. For example, teachers communicate to instructional leaders when particular topics require more instructional time than originally allotted. At the end of the year, instructional leaders adjust curriculum maps as necessary based on feedback.

- Staying true to a key design element, Heketi implements a dual language immersion program for students in Kindergarten–2nd grades that offers intensive language acquisition supports to English language learners ("ELLs"). Students in heterogeneous classes varying

in English proficiency learn instructional material in Spanish three times per week and in English twice per week. Dual language teachers receive sufficient coaching and supervision to enable them to meet students' needs. The school's English as a Second Language ("ESL") teacher assists the general education teachers during instruction, and the ELA specialist coaches dual language teachers weekly.

▪ In addition to an academic focus, Heketi's curriculum also emphasizes social emotional development. For example, younger students display emotional restraint during interactions, settling disputes with peers by holding conversations that conclude with either a hug or a high five. Evidence gathered during the visit highlights Heketi's promotion of multicultural inclusivity. School leaders invite ethnically diverse community mentors to speak to students about their childhoods and journeys to their respective professions. A ConEdison worker made several visits to the school to help students apply engineering concepts covered in a thematic unit. Recently, an African-American woman discussed with students her decision to become a firefighter despite not having seen women of color in the field previously.

Pedagogy

Adequate instruction is evident throughout Heketi classrooms. Teachers deliver focused lessons and implement effective classroom management techniques but do not challenge students with activities that develop higher-order thinking skills. While checks for student understanding are sufficient during whole class instruction, monitoring during small group activities is ineffective. The school's ELA performance may link to this lack of rigor and inconsistent monitoring of students' progress toward meeting learning objectives in Heketi classrooms. As shown in the chart below, during the evaluation visit, Institute team members conducted 12 classroom observations following a defined protocol used in all evaluation visits.

		Grade					
		K	1	2	3	4	Total
Content Area	ELA		2		1	1	4
	Math			1	2	1	4
	Science	1					1
	Soc Stu			1			1
	Other				1	1	2
	Total	1	2	2	4	3	12

▪ Teachers deliver purposeful and focused lessons aligned to the school's curriculum (11 of 12 classroom observations). Teachers communicate clear learning objectives that build on

students' previous skill and knowledge. Students are knowledgeable of learning objectives and can verbalize these goals. School leaders and teachers make significant efforts to ensure curriculum materials are culturally relevant and include aspects of social emotional learning.

- While the majority of lessons include adequate techniques to check for student understanding (7 of 12 classroom observations), teachers do not employ checks consistently throughout lesson activities. Teachers effectively check for understanding during whole-class instruction with techniques such as randomly selecting Popsicle sticks, called equity sticks, to determine the next participant to answer a question. However, monitoring activities are less efficient during group work. In several instances, attention was not evenly distributed to all groups, leaving some students with unanswered questions. During one lesson, a student held his hand up to ask a question for more than five minutes before ultimately becoming disengaged with the activity when the teacher did not respond to him.

- A minority of lessons challenges students with questions and activities that develop depth of understanding and higher-order thinking and problem solving skills (5 of 12 classroom observations). Although students actively engage in peer-to-peer discussions, many lessons miss opportunities to ensure student interactions invoke deep engagement in the material, particularly in ELA. Lesson plans include opportunities for high-level student discourse monitored by teachers. However, rather than challenge students to analyze material critically and defend and elaborate upon answers, questioning techniques largely require students to recall factual evidence. For instance, a second grade lesson about the Lenape did not culminate in a rich group discussion but instead concluded with students completing a handout in which they drew a picture or wrote a sentence about the Native American tribe.

- Teachers establish and maintain consistent focus on academic achievement (10 of 12 classroom observations). Classrooms maximize learning time with appropriate pacing during the lesson and efficient transitions between activities. Teachers also utilize effective classroom management techniques and routines that sustain student engagement in classroom activities and minimize behavioral disruptions. For example, without any direction from the teacher, students that were finished with their individual assignments selected a book from the class library and read independently until the class was ready to move on to the next lesson.

Instructional Leadership

Heketi's instructional leadership communicates high expectations for teacher performance and student achievement. The school director and two instructional coaches support teacher development with targeted coaching, professional development activities, and curriculum

planning guidance. These supports are beginning to equip teachers with the pedagogical skills necessary to meet the needs of all students in ELA as well as mathematics.

- Heketi leaders deliver sustained, systemic, and effective coaching to develop the skills and abilities of all teachers. Mirroring the expectation for teachers to know students well, instructional leaders target supports to individual teachers' needs. Weekly coaching sessions include guidance with instructional planning, opportunities to practice specific lesson activities and classroom management techniques and extensive exploratory conversations to deepen teachers' content knowledge. One common focus of coaching in the current school year was strengthening teachers' conceptual understanding as mathematicians rather than instructional practitioners. In addition to formal coaching and supervision by instructional leaders, Heketi implements a mentor program whereby new and/or struggling teachers receive support from experienced peers.
- Formal blocks in the school's daily schedule provide ample opportunities for teachers to plan curriculum and instruction. In response to teachers' requests for additional leadership guidance, Heketi now dedicates two planning periods per week to curriculum mapping in crew teams. Leaders believe this increased support, in addition to teachers' own daily planning, will increase instructional effectiveness as teachers become increasingly comfortable with curriculum content.
- Heketi's instructional leaders hold teachers accountable for high quality instruction. When teachers do not meet performance expectations, leaders increase the frequency of individual coaching and classroom observations. If struggling teachers do not make adequate progress with these increased supports, the school director creates a performance improvement plan, which she works closely with instructional coaches to implement. While school leaders attempt to minimize turnover in order to provide students and families with stability in the classroom, Heketi dismisses teachers who do not meet improvement goals. The school director chose not to rehire three teachers following the 2014-15 school year. Over the course of the charter term, Heketi has dismissed eight teachers due to poor performance.

At-Risk Students

Heketi addresses the educational needs of at-risk students with a staffing structure sufficient to serve all students in need and with appropriate programs and data monitoring. One limitation of the school's at-risk programs is a lack of disaggregated data; Heketi does not compare the performance of students receiving interventions to that of the larger school population during the school year and is therefore unable to evaluate the effectiveness of its interventions systematically and in a timely manner.

- Heketi has clear procedures for identifying and serving ELLs. The school administers the Home Language Identification Survey to newly registered families and conducts follow up interviews of families and students if indicating potential limited English proficiency. A staff person then administers the New York State Identification Test for English Language Learners, when appropriate. The school's dual language immersion program serves as the primary support for ELLs in Kindergarten – 2nd grade. At the upper grades, a certified English as a Second Language ("ESL") teacher provides push-in and pull-out instruction, which she coordinates with classroom teachers.

- The school director, two instructional specialists, reading specialist, ESL teacher and classroom teachers comprise the instructional support team ("IST"), which uses the results of school-wide assessments and teacher referrals to identify students in need of additional academic supports. Once the IST creates an action plan and assigns a case manager for each referred student, the school deploys tiered interventions in six- to eight-week cycles. The IST monitors student progress using data from assessments tied to commercial intervention programs such as Tiger Tuesday, Fundations and F&P Leveled Literacy Intervention. If a student does not make adequate progress after several intervention cycles, Heketi makes a referral for evaluation for special education services. Heketi serves its 41 students with Individualized Education Programs ("IEPs") mandating academic services in integrated co-teaching classrooms ("ICT") and with special education teacher support services ("SETSS").

- Despite monitoring individual students' progress closely, Heketi does not have procedures to evaluate the overall effectiveness of its intervention programs in place. At-risk program staff do not disaggregate student achievement data to compare the performance of students receiving intervention services to that of the general student body, which limits the school's ability to evaluate the effectiveness of its programs during the school year and make appropriate adjustments. The results of 2014-15 state tests show mixed results for Heketi's at-risk students. Similar to their school peers, at-risk students performed better in mathematics than in ELA. Though students with disabilities performed close to the same proficiency level as the school overall (40% compared to 48%), the percentage of ELLs scoring proficient or above in mathematics (20%) was less than half that of the school overall. ELA performance was markedly lower for both ELLs and students with disabilities.

Organizational Capacity

The school organization supports effective delivery of the educational program with fidelity to Heketi's mission and key design elements. School leaders emphasize the importance of establishing and maintaining a strong sense of community to embody the meaning of the school's name. "Heketi" means "one" in the Taino language, which is native to the Caribbean.

- Heketi establishes an administrative structure with clearly defined roles and responsibilities. Teachers know who to turn to for support and appreciate frequent clear communications from administrators.

- The school environment is warm and engaging. Area rugs, throw pillows and exercise balls create comfortable areas for students to immerse themselves in selections from the school's extensive classroom libraries. Along with the abundant student work that decorates the walls, the school's implementation of the dual language program and selection of a variety of native language books reinforce Heketi's commitment to celebrating multilingual literacy.

- Consistent with its prioritization of cultural relevance and curricular connections to community, Heketi allocates significant resources to enable teachers to create field learning experiences and purchase additional classroom materials. Leaders encourage teachers to do one field project per month and provide each teacher with a discretionary budget of $1,000 per year. Recent trips include a 4th grade Bronx Historical Society excursion during which students explored a house taken over by British soldiers and connected artifacts to what they learned about the American Revolution and a 1st grade class interview of commercial bakers, which connected to mathematics, science and ELA instruction. In addition to school-provided resources, teachers source external support using GoFundMe and other fundraising activities.

- Heketi retains high quality staff. In addition to the founding school director, six current teachers have at least three years of experience in Heketi classrooms. Eleven of 14 teachers returned following the 2014-15 school year; the school director chose not to rehire the other three. Teachers credit the school's community culture and effective professional development for strong satisfaction and retention.

Appendix A
School Overview

SUNY Charter Schools Institute | 41 State Street, Suite 700 | Albany, New York

Mission Statement

The mission of Heketi Charter School is to provide an exceptional educational solution, focused on preparing every student for NYC's most competitive high schools and leadership in their chosen careers through and integrated educational design with high expectations, extensive academic and social-emotional support, and a high level of family and community engagement.

Board of Trustees[5]

Board Member Name	Position	Board Member Name	Position
Jamie Knox	Chair	Niki Simoneaux	Vice Chair
Tina Perez	Secretary	Rohita Land	Treasurer
Samantha Valerio	Trustee		

School Characteristics

| School Year	Chartered Enrollment	Actual Enrollment[6]	Proposed Grades	Actual Grades
2012-13	88	91	K-2	K-1
2013-14	132	136	K-3	K-2
2014-15	208	198	K-4	K-3
2015-16	258	245	K-5	K-4

Key Design Elements

- Clear and Transparent Accountability;
- Relentless commitment to high expectations for all;
- Data-Driven Instruction;
- Investment in Social-Emotional Support; and,
- Dual Language Immersion Program.

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[5] Source: The Institute's board records at the time of the visit.
[6] Source: Institute's Official Enrollment Binder. (Figures may differ slightly from New York State Report Cards, depending on date of data collection.)

Student Demographics: Race/Ethnicity

2014-15

CSD 7: 70.1 | 26.6

School: 64.1 | 34.4

2013-14
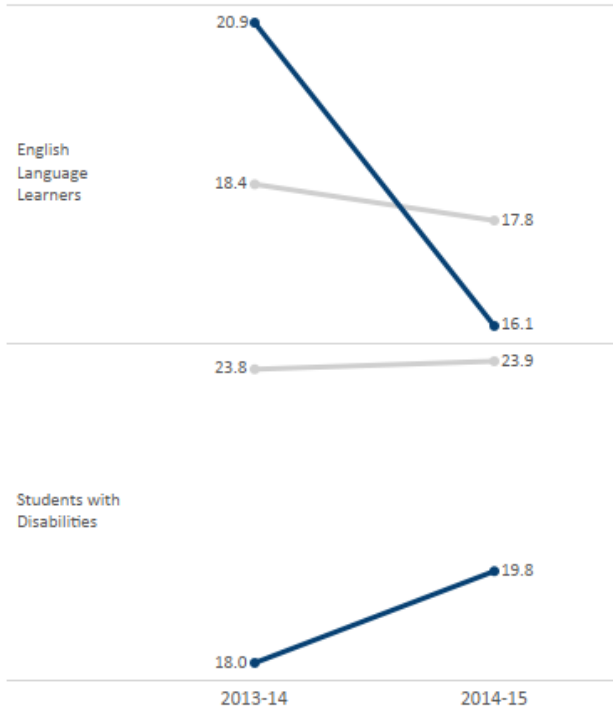
CSD 7: 69.7 | 27.5

School: 69.8 | 28.8
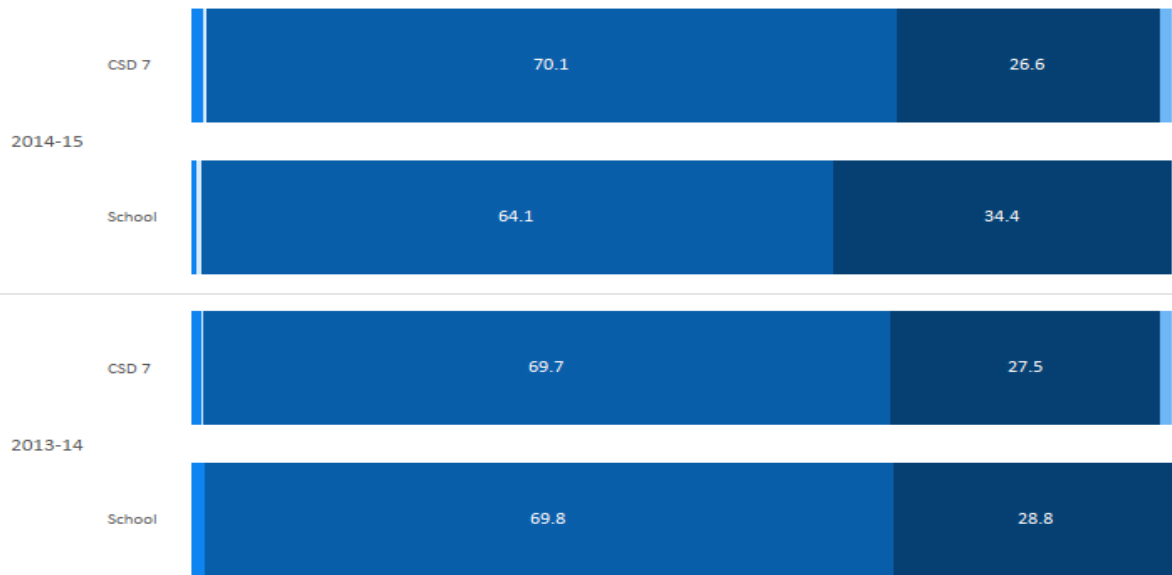
Race/Ethnicity Color Legend

American Indian or .. | Asian, Native Hawaii.. | Black or African Ame.. | Hispanic | Multiracial | White

Student Demographics: Free/Reduced Lunch

Economically Disadvantaged
- 93.5 → 84.4
- 92.4

Eligible for Reduced-Price Lunch
- 2.2 → 4.2
- 3.2

**Eligible for Free Lunch**
- 87.1 → 59.9
- 89.2

2013-14 | 2014-15

The charts show the trends in enrollment in the **school** and the district for each subgroup. Economically disadvantaged includes those students eligible for Free and Reduced-Price lunch among other qualifying income assistance programs.

Student Demographics: Special Populations

English Language Learners
- 20.9 → 16.1
- 18.4 → 17.8

Students with Disabilities
- 18.0 → 19.8
- 23.8 → 23.9

2013-14 | 2014-15

The charts show trends in enrollment in the **school** and the district for each subgroup.

Enrollment and Retention Targets
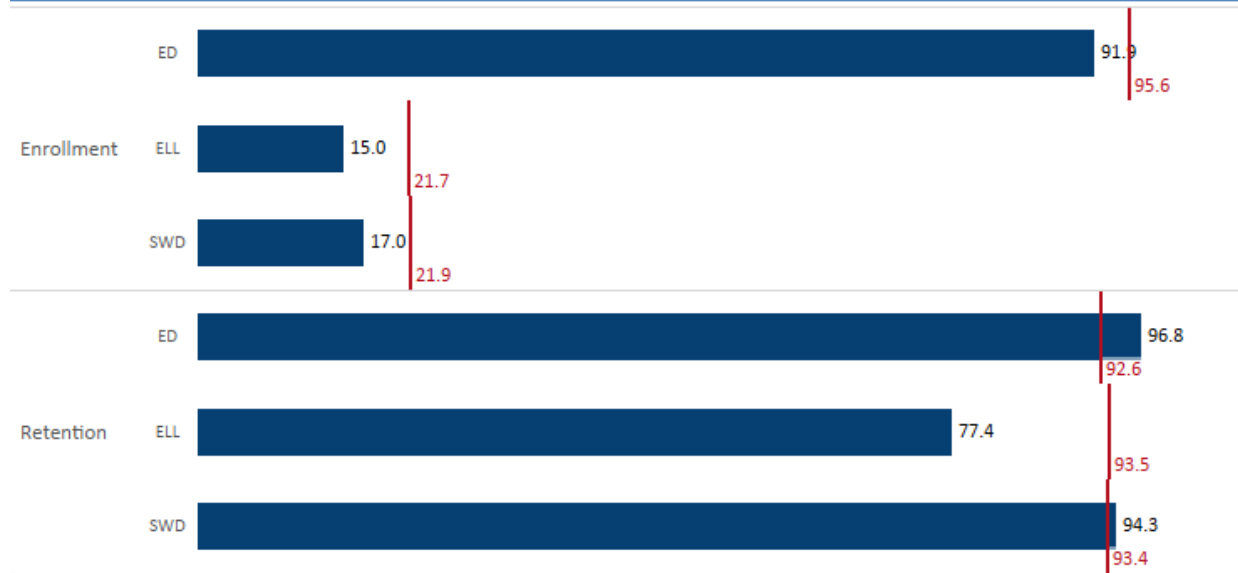
The chart illustrates the school's **current enrollment and retention percentages** against the **enrollment and retention targets**. As required by Education Law § 2851(4)(e), a school must include in its renewal application information regarding the efforts it has, and will, put in place to meet or exceed SUNY's enrollment and retention targets for students with disabilities, ELLs, and FRPL students. This analysis is based on the most recently available data provided by the school.

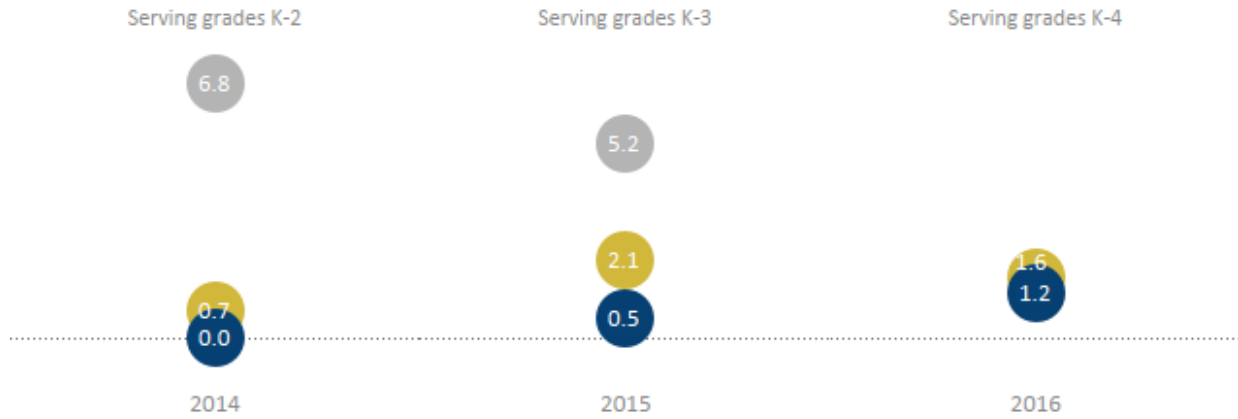## Persistence in Enrollment

Persistence in enrollment illustrates the percentage of students not scheduled to age out of the school who re-enroll from the previous year. The Institute derived the statistical information on enrollment persistence from its database. No comparative data from NYCDOE or NYSED is available to the Institute to provide either district wide or by CSD context. As such, the information presented is for information purposes but does not allow for comparative analysis.

School Discipline

Suspensions: Heketi Community Charter School's in school suspension rate and **out of school suspension rate** and the district overall suspension rate.

Serving grades K-2	Serving grades K-3	Serving grades K-4
6.8	5.2	
	2.1	1.6
0.7	0.5	1.2
0.0		
2014	2015	2016

Although Community School District ("CSD") and school suspension rates are presented on the same graph, a direct comparison between the rates is not possible for three primary reasons. Available CSD data includes Kindergarten through 12th grades and school data includes only the grades served by the school. CSD data are not available that show multiple instances of suspension of a single student, the overall number of suspensions, the durations of suspensions, or the time of year when the school administered the suspension. CSD data showing the difference between in school and out of school suspensions are not available. The percentage rate shown here is calculated using the method employed by the New York City Department of Education: 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.

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

2014	2015	2016
0	0	0

School Leaders

School Year(s)	Name(s) and Title(s)
2012-13 to Present	Cynthia Rosario, School Director

School Visit History

School Year	Visit Type	Date
2012-13	First Year	April 25, 2013
2015-16	Evaluation	April 19, 2016

Conduct of the Visit

Date(s) of Visit	Evaluation Team Member	Title
April 19, 2016	Natasha M. Howard, PhD	Managing Director of Program
	Chastity McFarlan, PhD	School Evaluation Analyst

Charter Cycle Context

Charter Term	4th Year of Five-Year Charter Term
Accountability Period[7]	4th Year of Four-Year Accountability Period
Anticipated Renewal Visit	Fall 2016

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[7] 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.

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Appendix B

SUNY Renewal Benchmarks

State University of New York Charter Renewal Benchmarks
Version 5.0, May 2012

Introduction

The State University of New York Charter Renewal Benchmarks[1] (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 sub-set 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: www.newyorkcharters.org/ schoolsRenewOverview.htm. Responses to frequently asked questions about the Institute's use of the SUNY Renewal Benchmarks appear below:

[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.

- 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.

  - 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, teachers and community members is also available on the Institute's website at: www.newyorkcharters.org/schoolsRenewOverview.htm. Please do not hesitate to contact the Institute with any questions.

State University of New York Charter Renewal Benchmarks

	Renewal Question 1 **Is the School an Academic Success?**
Evidence Category	**SUNY Renewal Benchmarks**
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 1A **Academic Accountability Plan Goals**	**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 **Use of Assessment Data**	**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.

	Renewal Question 1 **Is the School an Academic Success?**
Evidence Category	**SUNY Renewal Benchmarks**
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 1C **Curriculum**	**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 **Pedagogy**	**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 **Instructional Leadership**	**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

	Renewal Question 1 **Is the School an Academic Success?**
Evidence Category	**SUNY Renewal Benchmarks**
	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; • 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 **At-Risk Students**	**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;

	Renewal Question 1 Is the School an Academic Success?
Evidence Category	**SUNY Renewal Benchmarks**
	• 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?**
Evidence Category	**SUNY Renewal Benchmarks**
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 2A **Mission & Key Design Elements**	**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 & Students**	**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 **Organizational Capacity**	**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.

	Renewal Question 2 Is the School an Effective, Viable Organization?
Evidence Category	**SUNY Renewal Benchmarks**
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 2D **Board Oversight**	**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 **Governance**	**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

	Renewal Question 2 **Is the School an Effective, Viable Organization?**
Evidence Category	**SUNY Renewal Benchmarks**
	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; • 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.
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 2F **Legal Requirements**	**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;

	Renewal Question 2 Is the School an Effective, Viable Organization?
Evidence Category	**SUNY Renewal Benchmarks**
	• 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.

	Renewal Question 3 Is the School Fiscally Sound?
Evidence Category	**SUNY Renewal Benchmarks**
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 3A **Budgeting and Long Range Planning**	**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 **Internal Controls**	**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;

	Renewal Question 3 Is the School Fiscally Sound?
Evidence Category	**SUNY Renewal Benchmarks**
	• 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; • 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 **Financial Reporting**	**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 **Financial Condition**	**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;

Renewal Question 3 Is the School Fiscally Sound?	
Evidence Category	**SUNY Renewal Benchmarks**
	• 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?**
Evidence Category	**SUNY Renewal Benchmarks**
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 4A **Plans for the School's Structure**	**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 **Plans for the Educational Program**	**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.

	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?**
Evidence Category	**SUNY Renewal Benchmarks**
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 4C **Plans for Board Oversight and Governance**	**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 **Fiscal & Facility Plans**	**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.