



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

41 State Street, Suite 700
Albany, New York 12207

www.newyorkcharters.org

March 30, 2015

VIA ELECTRONIC AND FIRST CLASS MAIL

Ms. Gail Golden, Board Chair
Icahn Charter School 5
1500 Pelham Parkway S
Bronx, NY 10461

Re: Final 2013-14 School Evaluation Report

Dear Ms. Golden:

Enclosed you will find the SUNY Charter Schools Institute's (the "Institute's") final report of its school evaluation visit to Icahn Charter School 5 ("Icahn 5") conducted on December 5, 2013. Please accept my sincere apologies for the delay in sending the report to you. I understand that certain details of the school's program have likely changed in the current school year, but I do hope that you find this record of information shared during the visit team's debrief with school leaders helpful.

This report is one component of the Institute's ongoing school oversight and evaluation process. At the conclusion of the school's charter term, the Institute provides the State University of New York Board of Trustees (the "SUNY Trustees") an analysis of the school's progress toward meeting the standards detailed in *State University of New York Charter Renewal Benchmarks* (the "SUNY Renewal Benchmarks"). The Institute makes a renewal recommendation to the SUNY Trustees based on two factors: the school's attainment of its Accountability Plan goals and evidence of the quality of the school's educational program as assessed using the Qualitative Education Benchmarks.

The Institute is aware of the inherent shortcomings of arriving at conclusions based on a short site visit; nonetheless, we are confident that our conclusions provide an accurate assessment of the school's strengths and areas of challenge at the time of the visit. To assist you in putting the conclusions and evidence in the report into context, the *Policies for the Renewal of Not-for-Profit Charter School Education Corporations and Charter Schools Authorized by the Board of Trustees of the State University of New York* and other resources related to renewal are available on the Institute's website at www.newyorkcharters.org.

To Learn
To Search
To Serve

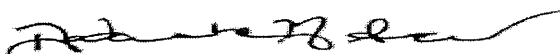


Ms. Gail Golden
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As is its standard practice, the Institute will make this report publicly available through its website. Should you wish to correct any factual inaccuracies or otherwise comment on the report, you may submit a written response, which the Institute will append to the posted report.

Please contact us if you have any questions or concerns as Icahn 5 progresses through the charter term.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Natasha M. Howard".

Natasha M. Howard, PhD
Managing Director of Program

Enclosure

c: Lawford Cunningham, Principal (*via email*)
Jeff Litt, Superintendent (*via email*)



Charter Schools Institute
The State University of New York

2013-14 School Evaluation Report

Icahn Charter School 5

VISIT DATE: DECEMBER 5, 2013

REPORT ISSUED: MARCH 30, 2015

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INTRODUCTION

This School Evaluation Report presents the school's 2013-14 Performance Review and Summary, which provide an analysis of the attainment of the key academic goals in the school's Accountability Plan. Following these achievement results, the report offers an analysis of evidence collected during the school visit on December 5, 2013. 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. They provide a framework for examining the quality of the educational program, focusing on teaching and learning (i.e., curriculum, instruction, and assessment), 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.

The appendix 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 offers 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. Finally, the appendix presents the SUNY Renewal Benchmarks.

The report below provides benchmark conclusions and evidence to support these conclusions in order to highlight areas of concern and provide additional feedback. The Institute intends this selection of information to be an exception report, which deliberately emphasizes areas of concern. As such, limited detail and evidence about positive elements of the educational program are not an indication that the Institute does not fully recognize evidence of program effectiveness.

Because of the inherent complexity of a school organization, this School Evaluation Report does not contain a single rating or comprehensive indicator that would specify at a glance the school's prospects for renewal. It does, however, summarize the various strengths of the school and note areas in need of improvement based on the Qualitative Education Benchmarks.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Opened in September 2011, the Icahn Charter School 5 (“Icahn 5”) now serves 216 students in grades K-5 and is in its 4th year of operation. The school provides a high quality learning environment for traditionally underserved students in Bronx, NY. The mission of Icahn 5 is as follows:

The mission of Icahn Charter Schools is to use the Core Knowledge curriculum, developed by E.D. Hirsch, to provide students with a rigorous academic program offered in an extended day/year setting. Students will graduate armed with the skills and knowledge to participate successfully in the most rigorous academic environments, and will have a sense of personal and community responsibility.

Icahn 5 is one of seven SUNY authorized schools affiliated with the Icahn Charter Schools network¹ (“Icahn network” or the “network”). Icahn 5 remains an independent education corporation.²

The school is currently co-located with Icahn Charter School 3 and Icahn Charter School 4 in a private facility at 1500 Pelham Parkway, Bronx, NY, in New York City’s Community School District (“CSD”) 11. The Icahn network’s central offices are also in the building.

¹ The school partners with the Foundation for a Greater Opportunity (the “Foundation”), a not-for-profit corporation that formally employs network-based staff. Each school in the network contributes a pro-rata share of Foundation staff salaries. In addition to key academic supports, the Foundation has grown to provide back office, financial and human resources support to network schools.

² Legally, charter schools in New York are not-for-profit education corporations. Throughout this report, the Institute uses both “education corporation” and “charter school” to indicate the same legal entity.

2013-14 School Performance Review

Performance Summary

During 2013-14, the third year of Icahn Charter School 5's ("Icahn 5's") four-year Accountability Period, the school continues to meet its key Accountability Plan goals of English language arts ("ELA") and mathematics. The school also met its science and NCLB goals.

Note: This year, the Institute is not using absolute measure #1 under the ELA and math goals when evaluating goal attainment. Because of the high standards in the new state testing program only a handful of schools statewide met the absolute proficiency target. The Institute will resume the use of this measure during 2014-15. This year, the Institute is resuming the use of absolute measure #2 because the state has recalibrated the absolute Annual Measurable Objective.

ELA

Based on results of the four available measures in its Accountability Plan, Icahn 5 continued to meet its ELA goal. The school continued to outperform Community School District 11 (the "district") by a significant margin. Based on the Institute's Effect Size analysis, Icahn 5 continued to perform higher than expected in comparison to schools with similar proportions of economically disadvantaged students, increasing in its performance from the 2012-13 school year. Icahn 5 also met its growth measure benchmark, surpassing the target of the statewide median by ranking higher than the 50th percentile.

Math

Based on results of the one absolute measure, the two comparative measures, and the one growth measure in its Accountability Plan, Icahn 5 continued to meet its math goal. Despite a slight decline in performance from the previous testing year, in comparison to schools with similar proportions of economically disadvantaged students, Icahn 5 still performed higher than expected to a large degree. Icahn 5 also outperformed the district as it had during 2012-13. The school, however, did not meet its growth measure benchmark, ranking slightly lower than the 50th percentile.

Science

With 91.4 percent of the school's 4th graders scoring at or above proficiency, Icahn 5 met its science goal during 2013-14. The school exceeded the district's performance and its performance benchmark of 75 percent of students scoring at or above proficiency.

NCLB

Icahn 5 has met its NCLB goal and remains in good standing under the state's accountability system.

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE SUMMARY: English Language Arts

Icahn Charter School 5



	2011-12 Grades Served: K-2			2012-13 Grades Served: K-3			2013-14 Grades Served: K-4			MET
	Grades	All Students % (N)	2+ Years Students % (N)	Grades	All Students % (N)	2+ Years Students % (N)	Grades	All Students % (N)	2+ Years Students % (N)	
ABSOLUTE MEASURES 1. Each year 75 percent of students who are enrolled in at least their second year will perform at proficiency on the New York State exam.	3	(0)	(0)	3	47.2 (36)	50.0 (26)	3	69.7 (33)	71.9 (32)	NA
	4	(0)	(0)	4	(0)	(0)	4	65.7 (35)	64.7 (34)	
	5	(0)	(0)	5	(0)	(0)	5	(0)	(0)	
	6	(0)	(0)	6	(0)	(0)	6	(0)	(0)	
	7	(0)	(0)	7	(0)	(0)	7	(0)	(0)	
	8	(0)	(0)	8	(0)	(0)	8	(0)	(0)	
	All	(0)	(0)	All	47.2 (36)	50.0 (26)	All	67.6 (68)	68.2 (66)	NA
2. Each year the school's aggregate Performance Level Index on the State exam will meet the Annual Measurable Objective set forth in the State's NCLB accountability system.	Grades	PI	AMO	Grades	PLI	AMO	Grades	PLI	AMO	YES
				3	133		3-4	157	89	
	Comparison:			Comparison: Bronx District 11			Comparison: Bronx District 11			
	Grades	School	District	Grades	School	District	Grades	School	District	
				3	50.0	21.0	3-4	68.2	23.0	
3. Each year the percent of students enrolled in at least their second year and performing at proficiency will be greater than that of students in the same grades in the local district.	% FL	Actual	Predicted	% ED	Actual	Predicted	% ED	Actual	Predicted	YES
	Effect Size			Effect Size			Effect Size			
				69.4	47.2	25.4	1.63	75.3	67.6	
4. Each year the school will exceed its predicted percent of students at proficiency on the state exam by at least a small Effect Size (at least 0.3) based on its percentage of Economically Disadvantaged students.	Grades	School	State	Grades	School	State	Grades	School	State	YES
				4	58.0		4	58.0		
GROWTH MEASURE 5. Each year, the school's unadjusted mean growth percentile will meet or exceed the state's unadjusted median growth percentile.	Grades	School	State	Grades	School	State	Grades	School	State	YES
				4	0.0		4	0.0		
			5	0.0		5	0.0			
			6	0.0		6	0.0			
			7	0.0		7	0.0			
			8	0.0		8	0.0			
	All		All	58.0		All	58.0		50.0	

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE SUMMARY: Mathematics
Icahn Charter School 5



	2011-12 Grades Served: K-2			2012-13 Grades Served: K-3			2013-14 Grades Served: K-4			MET
	Grades	All Students % (N)	2+ Years Students % (N)	Grades	All Students % (N)	2+ Years Students % (N)	Grades	All Students % (N)	2+ Years Students % (N)	
ABSOLUTE MEASURES 1. Each year 75 percent of students who are enrolled in at least their second year will perform at proficiency on the New York State exam.	3	0	(0)	3	66.7 (36)	69.2 (26)	3	72.7 (33)	75.0 (32)	NA
	4	0	(0)	4	0	(0)	4	71.4 (35)	70.6 (34)	
	5	0	(0)	5	0	(0)	5	0	(0)	
	6	0	(0)	6	0	(0)	6	0	(0)	
	7	0	(0)	7	0	(0)	7	0	(0)	
	8	0	(0)	8	0	(0)	8	0	(0)	
	All	0	(0)	All	66.7 (36)	69.2 (26)	All	72.1 (68)	72.7 (66)	NA
2. Each year the school's aggregate Performance Level Index on the State exam will meet the Annual Measurable Objective set forth in the State's NCLB accountability system.	Grades	PI	AMO	Grades	PLI	AMO	Grades	PLI	AMO	
				3	156		3-4	168	86	YES
COMPARATIVE MEASURES 3. Each year the percent of students enrolled in at least their second year and performing at proficiency will be greater than that of students in the same grades in the local district.	Comparison:			Comparison: Bronx District 11			Comparison: Bronx District 11			
	Grades	School	District	Grades	School	District	Grades	School	District	
				3	69.2	23.8	3-4	72.7	30.5	YES
	% FL Actual Predicted Effect Size			% ED Actual Predicted Effect Size			% ED Actual Predicted Effect Size			
				69.4	66.7	28.6	2.16	75.3	72.1	34.0
4. Each year the school will exceed its predicted percent of students at proficiency on the State exam by at least a small Effect Size (at least 0.3) based on its percentage of Economically Disadvantaged students.	Grades	School	State	Grades	School	State	Grades	School	State	
				4	45.6		4	45.6		
				5	0.0		5	0.0		
				6	0.0		6	0.0		
				7	0.0		7	0.0		
			8	0.0		8	0.0			
	All		All	45.6		All	45.6		50.0	NO
GROWTH MEASURE 5. Each year, the school's unadjusted mean growth percentile will meet or exceed the state's unadjusted median growth percentile.	Comparison:			Comparison: Bronx District 11			Comparison: Bronx District 11			
	Grades	School	State	Grades	School	State	Grades	School	State	
			4	45.6		4	45.6			
			5	0.0		5	0.0			
			6	0.0		6	0.0			
			7	0.0		7	0.0			
			8	0.0		8	0.0			
	All		All	45.6		All	45.6		50.0	NO

Benchmark Conclusions and Evidence

Instructional Leadership. Icahn 5 had strong leadership that maintained an environment of high expectations for teacher performance and student achievement in place at the time of the visit.

- Through transparent teacher goals, clear student performance targets and regular communication with faculty in formal and informal meetings, the principal created a culture of high achievement and of continual improvement.
- At the time of the visit, the school principal served as the primary instructional leader and effectively used a variety of external consultants to support the development of the teaching staff.
- Teachers benefited from the principal's regular observations and targeted feedback, as well as network-wide inter-visitation days. These inter-visitation days consisted of teachers conducting observations of highly effective instructors across network schools. The principal often determined specific areas of practice for teachers to focus on during these professional development opportunities; teachers then incorporated these techniques into their own classroom practice.
- Icahn 5 continued to provide formal time for lower-grade-level teams to meet during the school day. Teachers across the school reported that they had sufficient time to collaborate with their colleagues although the school provided no formal time for upper grade team meetings.
- The Icahn network provided 12 days of pre-service training for all teachers. Specific time was set aside to work with new teachers. The school also participated in network-wide professional development once a month with all other Icahn schools. These professional development sessions, along with those provided by school leadership and external consultants, were effective in developing the teachers' competencies and instructional practices.
- Teachers reported regularly integrating skills learned in professional development activities into classroom practice often based on their experiences conducting inter-visitations. Through the principal's ongoing observation and feedback, teachers understood their instructional strengths and weaknesses and continually worked towards improving their pedagogical skills.
- Consistent with network practice, Icahn 5 implemented a systematic teacher evaluation process with clear criteria, of which teachers were well aware. Teachers reported consistency in observation and evaluation feedback.
- Icahn 5 held teachers accountable for high quality instruction and student achievement outcomes by considering student performance in teacher evaluations and staff bonuses. The school also used improvement plans to support and monitor the job performance of struggling teachers. The improvement plans included specific goals, which the leadership considered when making rehiring decisions.

Curriculum & Assessment. The Icahn 5 curriculum in place at the time of the visit and the school’s systematic use of assessment data supported teachers in planning instruction that improved student learning.

- Icahn 5 had in place a curriculum framework that provided a fixed, underlying structure aligned to state performance standards. Teachers used the network’s scope and sequence documents and commercial curriculum products to create a bridge between the framework and daily lesson plans. With these documents, teachers knew what to teach and when to teach it.
- The school regularly administered network-level assessments created by the director of assessment. Network staff compiled assessment data from all seven Icahn schools and created detailed analyses at the school, classroom and student level.
- With assistance from the principal, Icahn 5 teachers used assessment data to adjust classroom instruction to meet students’ needs and to identify students for intervention services.
- The principal worked in conjunction with the network to conduct ongoing review and revision of the curriculum. While large-scale changes to the curriculum occurred at the network level, the Icahn 5 principal supplemented the curriculum with additional resources to support teachers in meeting students’ individual needs.

Pedagogy. High quality instruction was evident throughout Icahn 5 at the time of the evaluation visit. As shown in the chart below, during the evaluation visit, Institute team members conducted 13 classroom observations with a defined protocol used in all school evaluation visits.

Classroom Observation Methodology: Number of Observations

		Grade					Total
		K	1	2	3	4	
Content Area	ELA		1	2			3
	Math		1		1		2
	Science			1	2		3
	Soc Stu	1			1		2
	Writing	1		1			2
	Specials					1	1
	Total	2	2	4	4	1	13

- Teachers delivered purposeful lessons with clear objectives aligned to the school’s curriculum (13 out of 13 classrooms observed). Icahn 5 teachers consistently referenced objectives, both posted and stated orally. Lesson plans carefully aligned objectives and activities with the school curriculum.

- Throughout the school, teachers regularly checked for student understanding with techniques including whole group questioning, one-on-one consultation and circulating around the classroom during independent and group assignments (13 out of 13 classrooms observed). For example, during an ELA lesson, students struggled to match a word with its appropriate meaning during whole group vocabulary instruction. Recognizing this, the teacher reinforced the word during later portions of the lesson.
- Most teachers included opportunities in their lessons to challenge students with questions and activities that developed depth of understanding and higher-order thinking skills (10 out of 13 classrooms observed). Students engaged in peer-to-peer dialogue on examining and analyzing information. Teachers challenged students to explain and defend their answers.
- Icahn 5 teachers effectively established and maintained classroom environments consistently focused on student achievement (13 out of 13 classrooms observed). The school communicated urgency for learning and emphasized maximizing learning time.

At-Risk Students. Based on data reviewed at the time of the school visit, Icahn 5 met the educational needs of at-risk students.

- Icahn 5 had clear and appropriate procedures to identify students at-risk of academic failure. The school relied on teacher recommendations, classroom performance data, results of benchmark assessments and state test scores to identify struggling students for the school's Targeted Assistance ("TA") program. If a student failed to make academic progress through the TA program, the school referred that student for special education evaluation but did so only after exhausting all other options. The school used the New York State Identification Test for English Language Learners ("NYSITELL") to identify students requiring support to reach English proficiency.
- General education students requiring additional supports participated in small groups of up to six students five times per week through the school's TA program. TA program staff effectively monitored student progress with weekly formal and informal tests. More intense remediation in smaller student groups took place after school to supplement the TA program. Students with Individualized Education Programs ("IEPs") received pull-out special education teacher support services ("SETSS"). ELLs received pull-out support for language acquisition, both individually and in-small groups, based on English proficiency level. Icahn 5 also offered a Saturday Academy for additional instruction and remediation.
- Both special education and general education teachers were aware of students' IEP goals and used assessments to monitor progress toward meeting those goals. The ELL teacher appropriately monitored the classroom and benchmark assessment data of each ELL.
- Icahn 5 teachers received strong training that enabled them to meet the educational needs of at-risk students. Icahn network staff presented regular and effective professional development workshops on targeting instruction based on students' demonstrated skills. Additionally, teachers participated in training activities on implementing specific

instructional strategies to support students with disabilities and ELLs. Icahn 5's principal, TA teachers and the ELL teacher all provided additional ongoing support to classroom teachers.

- Icahn 5 provided time in teachers' schedules for at-risk and general education staff to collaborate effectively. TA teachers met at least once a week with classroom teachers and the principal to discuss planning and student progress. In addition, special education teachers continually shared data on students' progress in order to support general education classroom instructional planning.

Organizational Capacity. Icahn 5, with assistance from the network, effectively supported the delivery of its educational program.

- The school maintained an effective administrative structure, with staff, systems, and procedures that allowed it to carry out its academic program. As of the date of the evaluation visit, the principal acted as both principal and staff developer, successfully developing his teaching staff while performing other administrative duties with considerable network support.
- Network and school-based staff maintained distinct lines of accountability with clearly defined roles and responsibilities; teachers reported knowing whom to turn for assistance with various needs. At the network level, the superintendent, deputy superintendent and director of operations continued to support Icahn 5's operations. The network's director of assessment maintained responsibility for distributing all curriculum and assessment materials and for data analysis.
- Icahn 5, bolstered by effective professional development opportunities and other incentives, continued to retain high quality staff. More than 80 percent of 2012-13 teachers returned for the 2013-14 school year. In addition, four of six founding teachers remained at the school at the time of the evaluation visit. The Icahn network has established a clear career ladder for teachers and administrators, thereby positively influencing staff retention.
- Icahn 5 allocated its resources effectively to deploy an abundance of instructional resources and technology to support the achievement of its goals. For example, each grade had multiple computer carts available for use and each teacher received weekly training from a technology consultant to increase the integration of technology into classroom instruction. Additionally, Icahn 5 continued to share space with two other Icahn schools and the network offices, which enabled the principal to access additional supports as necessary.
- The school continued to experience high enrollment demand while keeping classes in most grades close to the school's 18:1 student-to-teacher ratio target. At the time of the visit, Icahn 5 reported a waitlist of 1,175 students.

APPENDIX

SCHOOL OVERVIEW

Mission Statement

Icahn Charter School 5, using the Core Knowledge curriculum developed by E. D. Hirsch, will provide its students with a rigorous academic program offered in an extended day/year setting. Students will graduate armed with the skills and knowledge to participate successfully in the most rigorous academic environments, and will have a sense of personal and community responsibility.

School Characteristics

School Year	Proposed Chartered Enrollment	Actual Enrollment	Original Chartered Grades	Actual Grades
2011-2012	108	106	K-2	K-2
2012-2013	144	144	K-3	K-3
2013-2014	180	180	K-4	K-4

Student Demographics

	2011-12³		2012-13⁴		2013-14⁵
	Percent of School Enrollment	Percent of CSD 11 Enrollment	Percent of School Enrollment	Percent of CSD 11 Enrollment	Percent of School Enrollment
Race/Ethnicity					
American Indian or Alaska Native	0	1	0	1	0
Black or African American	59	43	52	43	53
Hispanic	30	42	35	42	35
Asian, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	2	7	5	7	5
White	9	7	6	7	6
Multiracial	0	0	1	0	1
Special Populations					
Students with Disabilities	6	--	6	17	7
English Language Learners	11	10	6	10	5
Free/Reduced Lunch					
Eligible for Free Lunch	49	71	57	71	--
Eligible for Reduced –Price Lunch	13	8	11	8	--
Economically Disadvantaged	62	--	69	89	75

³ Source: 2011-12 School Report Card, New York State Education Department.

⁴ Source: 2012-13 School Report Card, New York State Education Department.

⁵ The Institute derived the 2013-14 statistics from the school's October 2013 student enrollment report to SED (2013-14 BEDS Report). District data are not yet available.

Board of Trustees⁶

Board Member Name	Position
Gail Golden	Chair
Julie Goodyear	Secretary
Seymour Fliegel	Trustee
Karen Mandelbaum	Trustee
Robert Sancho	Trustee
Edward J. Shanahan	Trustee

School Leader(s)

School Year(s)	School Leader(s) Name and Title
2011-12 to Present	Lawford Cunningham, Principal

School Visit History

School Year	Visit Type	Evaluator (Institute/External)	Date
2011-12	First Year Visit	Institute	April 24, 2012
2013-14	Evaluation Visit	Institute	December 5, 2013

⁶ Source: Institute Records.

CONDUCT OF THE SCHOOL EVALUATION VISIT

Specifications

Date(s) of Visit	Evaluation Team Members	Title
December 5, 2013	Natasha Howard, Ph.D.	Director of School Evaluation
	Aaron Campbell	Senior Analyst

Context of the Visit

Charter Cycle	
Charter Term	3 rd Year of Five-Year Charter Term
Accountability Period ⁷	3 rd Year of Four-Year Accountability Period
Anticipated Renewal Visit	Fall 2015

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 the charter term. For schools in initial charter terms, the Accountability Period is the first four years of the charter term. 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.



Charter Schools Institute
The State University of New York

State University of New York Charter Renewal Benchmarks

Version 5.0, May 2012

Introduction

The State University of New York Charter Renewal Benchmarks¹ (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.

- Revised May 2012 -

- 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?	
<u>Evidence Category</u>	<u>SUNY Renewal Benchmarks</u>
<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 1A</p> <p>Academic Accountability Plan Goals</p>	<p>Over the Accountability Period, the school has met or come close to meeting its academic Accountability Plan goals.</p> <p>The Institute determines the extent to which the school has met the Accountability Plan goals in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.
<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 1B</p> <p>Use of Assessment Data</p>	<p>The school has an assessment system that improves instructional effectiveness and student learning.</p> <p>The following elements are generally present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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?	
<u>Evidence Category</u>	<u>SUNY Renewal Benchmarks</u>
<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 1C</p> <p>Curriculum</p>	<p>The school’s curriculum supports teachers in their instructional planning.</p> <p>The following elements are generally present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.
<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 1D</p> <p>Pedagogy</p>	<p>High quality instruction is evident throughout the school.</p> <p>The following elements are generally present.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.
<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 1E</p> <p>Instructional Leadership</p>	<p>The school has strong instructional leadership.</p> <p>The following elements are generally present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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?
<u>Evidence Category</u>	<u>SUNY Renewal Benchmarks</u>
	<p>pedagogical skills) and in which teachers believe that all students can succeed;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.
<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 1F</p> <p>At-Risk Students</p>	<p>The school meets the educational needs of at-risk students.</p> <p>The following elements are generally present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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;

	<p align="center">Renewal Question 1 Is the School an Academic Success?</p>
<p><u>Evidence Category</u></p>	<p><u>SUNY Renewal Benchmarks</u></p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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?	
<u>Evidence Category</u>	<u>SUNY Renewal Benchmarks</u>
<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 2A</p> <p>Mission & Key Design Elements</p>	<p>The school is faithful to its mission and has implemented the key design elements included in its charter.</p> <p>The following elements are generally present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school faithfully follows its mission; and • the school has implemented its key design elements.
<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 2B</p> <p>Parents & Students</p>	<p>Parents/guardians and students are satisfied with the school.</p> <p>The following elements are generally present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.
<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 2C</p> <p>Organizational Capacity</p>	<p>The school organization effectively supports the delivery of the educational program.</p> <p>The following elements are generally present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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?	
<u>Evidence Category</u>	<u>SUNY Renewal Benchmarks</u>
<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 2D</p> <p>Board Oversight</p>	<p>The school board works effectively to achieve the school’s Accountability Plan goals.</p> <p>The following elements are generally present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.
<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 2E</p> <p>Governance</p>	<p>The board implements, maintains and abides by appropriate policies, systems and processes.</p> <p>The following elements are generally present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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?	
<u>Evidence Category</u>	<u>SUNY Renewal Benchmarks</u>
	<p>expectations; to correct those deficiencies and puts in place benchmarks for determining if the partner organization corrects them in a timely fashion;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.
<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 2F</p> <p>Legal Requirements</p>	<p>The school substantially complies with applicable laws, rules and regulations and the provisions of its charter.</p> <p>The following elements are generally present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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?	
<u>Evidence Category</u>	<u>SUNY Renewal Benchmarks</u>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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?
<u>Evidence Category</u>	<u>SUNY Renewal Benchmarks</u>
<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 3A</p> <p>Budgeting and Long Range Planning</p>	<p>The school operates pursuant to a long-range financial plan in which it creates realistic budgets that it monitors and adjusts when appropriate.</p> <p>The following elements are generally present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.
<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 3B</p> <p>Internal Controls</p>	<p>The school maintains appropriate internal controls and procedures.</p> <p>The following elements are generally present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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?
<u>Evidence Category</u>	<u>SUNY Renewal Benchmarks</u>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	<p>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.</p> <p>The following reports have generally been filed in a timely, accurate and complete manner:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	<p>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).</p> <p>The following elements are generally present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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?
<u>Evidence Category</u>	<u>SUNY Renewal Benchmarks</u>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.

	<p align="center">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?</p>
<p><u>Evidence Category</u></p>	<p><u>SUNY Renewal Benchmarks</u></p>
<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 4A</p> <p>Plans for the School’s Structure</p>	<p>Key structural elements of the school, as defined in the exhibits of the Application for Charter Renewal, are reasonable, feasible and achievable.</p> <p>Based on elements present in the Application for Charter Renewal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.
<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 4B</p> <p>Plans for the Educational Program</p>	<p>The school’s plans for implementing the educational program allow it to meet its Accountability Plan goals.</p> <p>Based on elements present in the Application for Charter Renewal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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?
<u>Evidence Category</u>	<u>SUNY Renewal Benchmarks</u>
<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 4C</p> <p>Plans for Board Oversight and Governance</p>	<p>The school provides a reasonable, feasible and achievable plan for board oversight and governance.</p> <p>Based on elements present in the Application for Charter Renewal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.
<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 4D</p> <p>Fiscal & Facility Plans</p>	<p>The school provides a reasonable, feasible and achievable fiscal plan including plans for an adequate facility.</p> <p>Based on the elements present in the Application for Charter Renewal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.