



Charter Schools Institute
The State University of New York

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www.newyorkcharters.org

April 23, 2013

VIA ELECTRONIC AND FIRST CLASS MAIL

Francisco Lugovina, Board Chair
c/o Family Life Academy Charter School II
296 East 140th Street
Bronx, NY 10454

Re: First Year School Evaluation Visit

Dear Mr. Lugovina:

This letter outlines the State University of New York's Charter Schools Institute's observations and findings from its April 9, 2013 first year school evaluation visit to the Family Life Academy Charter School II ("FLACS II"). The visit team consisted of Ron Miller, Ph.D., Executive Deputy Director for Accountability and Eileen Coppola, Ed.D, consultant to the Institute. Allow us first to place this letter and the conclusions set forth below into context.

As with all SUNY authorized charter schools, on a periodic basis throughout the term of your school's charter the Institute conducts a number of formal site visits. The Institute reports in writing to the school on data gathered during these visits. Cumulatively, the information in letters such as this, as well as reports provided in later years, forms the foundation of qualitative data on the school's effectiveness. At the conclusion of the school's charter term, the Institute provides the State University of New York's Board of Trustees an analysis of your school's performance over the term of its charter that includes this qualitative information. The Institute makes a renewal recommendation for your school based on two components: the school's attainment of its academic Accountability Plan goals and evidence of the quality of the school's educational program collected during school evaluation visits.

At renewal, the Institute evaluates the academic, organizational, legal and fiscal aspects of the school's program using SUNY's Charter School Renewal Benchmarks (see attachment). A copy of the Renewal Benchmarks is included for your information. For formal school evaluation visits conducted prior to renewal, the Institute focuses on specific academic and organizational Renewal Benchmarks (called Qualitative Educational Benchmarks). They provide a fixed standard for determining the quality of the academic program as the school progresses toward renewal.

To Learn
To Search
To Serve



For this first year visit, the Institute narrows the expectation for each benchmark in recognition of the school program's limited development. As a first year school is in its formative stage which has not yet completed an annual cycle, the visit focus is on the initial implementation of basic practices and procedures in each benchmark area. The center of attention is on the quality of instruction and related benchmarks, which heavily affect the progress that a school is able to demonstrate in meeting its Accountability Plan goals during the charter period. By the time a school comes to renewal, a school is expected to have moved from the beginning of implementation and the promise of future growth to full and effective implementation of a quality program.

Although the information provided in this letter is not intended as a prescription, the Institute would expect you to review thoroughly the issues highlighted below and, to the extent you find them helpful, use them to assist in guiding the school's leadership team to further develop the school's academic program or other aspects of the school. In this regard, please be aware that although the Institute takes very seriously the conclusions provided, we are cognizant of the fact that a one-day site visit may not yield information on all facets of a school's program.

Please find the team's findings from the first year visit below.

Instructional Leadership

FLACS II has strong instructional leadership.

- The leadership promotes a culture of learning and scholarship through a continually articulated belief that all students can learn and that they will take different paths to success. The school leadership has established clear expectations for student achievement, including promotional criteria.
- The school's instructional leadership personnel, consisting of an experienced principal and assistant principal, are adequate to support the development of the teaching staff. The assistant principal acts as a staff development and literacy coach, spending sustained periods of time in classes and modeling lessons. The school also benefits from the support of an executive consultant, the former leader of the original Family Life Academy Charter School ("FLACS I").
- Instructional leaders provide sustained and systematic coaching and supervision through regular informal walkthroughs, providing immediate verbal and written feedback. Because of the small staff, instructional leaders are fully aware of teachers' pedagogical skills. The school leaders coordinate their feedback so that teachers receive consistent messages regarding pedagogical skill development. However, given that all faculty members are in their first year of teaching, they would benefit from even more frequent and intensive coaching.
- The school schedule provides teachers with common planning time in which to develop grade level lessons, monitor student achievement and track the progress of at-risk students.
- The school has regular professional development activities that assist teachers in meeting student academic needs. The school provided 15 days of intensive summer training to prepare the inexperienced teachers for the school year. The school has weekly afternoon

and monthly half-day faculty or professional development meetings. The leaders have repeatedly revised the school year professional development calendar based on classroom observations and discussions with teachers.

- The instructional leaders conduct two formal annual observations for each teacher, which form the basis of their yearly evaluations. Leaders base these evaluations on the Danielson framework, and utilize a pre- and post- observation cycle. Both school leaders provide extensive, detailed feedback and work with teachers to set personal pedagogical goals. Teachers are aware of the criteria of the formal observations and report that the results are fair and accurate.

Use of Assessment Data

FLACS II gathers assessment and evaluation data and uses it to improve student learning.

- The school administers the Fountas & Pinell benchmark reading assessment three times yearly, and the Terra Nova standardized test twice annually as well as Open Court, Math In Focus, and Journeys curriculum assessments monthly. In addition, the school administers teacher-developed science and social studies assessments each month. Teachers use the monthly assessments to make immediate instructional decisions.
- The school makes assessment results accessible to school board members, teachers and parents. The school reports to the board on Fountas & Pinell, Terra Nova and writing assessments. School leaders have immediate access to all assessment results and are able to monitor student progress. Teachers have data binders in which they track student performance on an individual basis and use them to group students by skill level. The school sends report cards home three times annually, and also informs parents when students are not meeting benchmarks or when their promotion is in doubt.
- School leaders have focused on norming the evaluation of student writing, math constructed responses and student projects through the use of rubrics and collaborative grading. They rely on exemplars from the Common Core Learning Standards as a benchmark for evaluating student work.
- The school is beginning to implement a system for using fine-grained assessment data to modify instruction. With the support of the school leaders, teachers regularly utilize the data to adjust instruction by evaluating individual student's strengths and weaknesses and developing group and individual action plans. Based on their analysis, they determine what to re-teach to the whole class, how to group students for specific skill instruction and which students to recommend for special intervention.

Curriculum

FLACS II is in the process of developing a curriculum that supports teachers in their planning and delivery of instruction.

- Based on careful attention to alignment with the Common Core State Standards, leaders and teachers have developed curriculum maps for all subjects. They have modified the Journeys curriculum for ELA; they use Open Court to teach phonics, and adopted Math In Focus commercial material for math. Teachers have created their own curricula for science

and social studies. The school offers an after-school reading program for students who have not reached their reading benchmarks utilizing Fountas & Pinnell's intensive reading program.

- Teachers have pacing guides for all subjects, enabling them to know what to teach and when to teach it. They create detailed and focused lesson plans for each subject, drawing on the above-referenced commercial materials. Leaders review lesson plans weekly and provide comments as needed.
- In their classrooms, teachers have access to ample curriculum materials, including books, workbooks, manipulatives and online resources.

Pedagogy

Teachers are beginning to provide adequate instruction.

- Teachers deliver purposeful lessons, but the objectives are not consistently clear. Learning objectives build upon students' previous skills and knowledge. Some teachers present lessons with clarity such that students can immediately grasp the concept or skill. Teachers generally work at a slow pace, so that some students are easily distracted. They do not adequately script their lessons to fill the time well for students.
- With the support of the teaching assistants, teachers regularly check for student understanding by asking recall questions and circulating around the room while students are working. Teachers do not regularly use techniques to evaluate learning at the end of a lesson.
- Teachers generally include limited opportunity in their lessons to challenge students with questions and activities that develop depth of understanding and higher-order thinking and problem solving skills. Their questions center on summary and recall. The teachers do not challenge students to defend and elaborate on their answers and do not ask students to investigate open ended problems. Students infrequently interact with peers when engaging in learning activities.
- Teachers do not fully maximize learning time for students, because they do not adequately redirect low-level talking and off-task behavior in order to fully focus the class. When this occurs, other students become distracted from devoting their full attention to the work. In addition, pacing of lessons was often inappropriate to fully engage the students in whole group instruction with students requiring varying amounts of time to complete a task. Teachers provide smooth transitions between lessons.
- Writing is at grade level, with age-appropriate mechanics, structure, coherence and voice. Teachers base scoring on a developmentally appropriate rubric, which enables students to understand expectations for their writing.

At Risk Students

FLACS II is addressing the educational needs of at-risk students.

- With an English-as-a-Second-Language ("ESL") teacher serving 15 students, and a special education teacher providing services for 10 students with disabilities, the school deploys

sufficient resources including staff and materials to provide academic interventions for student mandated to receive those services. In addition, the school provides additional academic support in an after-school program and through additional support from the special education and ESL teachers.

- The school is developing coherent screening procedures for identifying at-risk students with a common understanding among all teachers. Analyzing data from routine assessments, teachers identify students who need additional support. They review assessment results with colleagues to determine after-school reading intervention placement; finally, teachers act as case managers, monitoring students' progress in the after-school program and reviewing achievement with school leaders and teacher specialists.
- Benefitting from the class placement of at-risk students, the ESL and special education teachers coordinate their instruction with that of the at-risk students' classroom teachers, reinforcing the skills and knowledge students are expected to acquire in their mainstream classroom.

Organizational Capacity

FLACS II's organization is beginning to support the delivery of the educational program.

- After facing daunting opening and start-up challenges, the school has an adequate administrative structure for carrying out the academic program. In its first year, with a small staff and four classes, the school relies on a largely part-time operations team. Earlier in the year, the assistant principal held the title of director of operations. Her role as an instructional leader has recently been more clearly defined; however, she still assumes a number of operational responsibilities.
- The teaching staff is enthusiastic and dedicated, but without exception has no prior teaching experience. As such, despite extensive professional development, instruction is inevitably rudimentary. The absence of any peer mentoring limits the benefits of collegial collaboration as a professional development experience. From teacher reports, FLACS II's teachers have had few opportunities to interact with their counterparts at FLACS I, despite the potential advantages of learning from experienced, effective fellow teachers.
- The school has established a safe and orderly environment. The teaching staff collaborated during the summer professional development to develop a school code of conduct. Teachers have received training in a series of workshops on implementing the Ramapo Behavior Management program. Teachers implement a three-level daily behavior monitoring system, which school leaders have normed and reinforced.
- School leaders have commenced creating systems and protocols to ensure a well functioning school organization. The school has put in place a set of comprehensive assessment procedures. It has instituted a viable structure for teacher evaluation and has laid the foundation for a Response to Intervention ("RTI") process. Leaders are formulating defined curriculum development, review and revision procedures. While the school has extensive pedagogical training and intensive coaching for particular teachers, the uniformly inexperienced teaching staff is just beginning to develop its pedagogical competence in the absence of colleagues to serve as role models.

Board Oversight

The school board monitors student achievement and provides oversight to the total educational program.

- The board's skill set includes education, finance, law and management. It benefits from its affiliation with the FLACS I board and its partnership with the Latino Pastoral Action Center. The board chair draws on his experience as the longstanding chair of the FLACS I board. The board has two standing committees: accountability and finance. The accountability committee is actively engaged in monitoring instruction and reviewing assessment data. Finance committee members frequently interact with the school's business manager and monitor the budget and expenditures. The board has no plans to expand its membership beyond its current five members.
- The board receives sufficient information from the school leader to provide oversight. At each board meeting, the principal makes a presentation on program implementation -- including teacher training, curriculum development and services to at-risk students, as well as assessment results. The board has focused in particular on Fountas & Pinnell benchmark assessments and the accompanying after-school intervention program. After consulting with the board on the assessments, the principal modified the content of instruction in the intervention program. Subsequently, the board monitored the next round of Fountas & Pinnell results to determine if the instructional changes were effective.
- The board has not yet developed clear criteria for evaluating the school leader. Thus far, the board has only identified program implementation goals for determining the leader's effectiveness. While student achievement data may be limited in a K-1 school, the board's current focus centers on principal efforts and resourcefulness at the exclusion of student outcomes. The board has just begun to embrace the notion that a principal evaluation should align with charter school accountability for student achievement results.

These conclusions constitute the beginning of your school's record of progress toward meeting the standards constituted in SUNY's Renewal Benchmarks. The Institute conducts formal evaluation visits multiple times during each school's initial charter term and at least once during subsequent charter terms. The cumulative evidence collected during these school evaluation and renewal visits, as well as the school's record of success at meeting Accountability Plan goals becomes part of the record that informs the Institute's renewal recommendation to the SUNY Trustees.

The number of school evaluation visits the Institute will conduct before renewal depends on a variety of factors. In addition to adhering to a regular schedule of visits, concerns raised in the conclusions of previous visits, the school's progress toward meeting Accountability Plan goals and emergent legal and compliance issues may affect the frequency and timing of the visits.

The Institute looks forward to its next visit to FLACS II and is available at any time to discuss the results of the first year visit, future visits or other concerns you may have as the school moves

Mr. Francisco Lugovina
April 23, 2013
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through its charter term and toward renewal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Susan Miller Barker", written in a cursive style.

Susan Miller Barker
Executive Director

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ron Miller", written in a cursive style.

Ron Miller, Ph.D
Executive Deputy Director for Accountability

Enclosure

c: Lourdes Arroyo, Principal

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.

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.

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:

- 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 Education 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>
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 1A Academic Accountability Plan Goals	<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.
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 1B Use of Assessment Data	<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>
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 1C Curriculum	<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.
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 1D Pedagogy	<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.
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 1E Instructional	<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

	Renewal Question 1 Is the School an Academic Success?
<u>Evidence Category</u>	<u>SUNY Renewal Benchmarks</u>
Leadership	<p>expectations for teacher performance (in content knowledge and 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.
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 1F At-Risk Students	<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

Renewal Question 1 Is the School an Academic Success?	
<u>Evidence Category</u>	<u>SUNY Renewal Benchmarks</u>
	<p>struggling students;</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>
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 2A Mission & Key Design Elements	<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.
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 2B Parents & Students	<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.
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 2C Organizational Capacity	<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

	Renewal Question 2 Is the School an Effective, Viable Organization?
<u>Evidence Category</u>	<u>SUNY Renewal Benchmarks</u>
	and makes changes if necessary.
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 2D Board Oversight	<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.
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 2E Governance	<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;

	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 board takes effective action when there are organizational, leadership, management, facilities or fiscal deficiencies; or where the management or partner organization fails to meet expectations; to correct those deficiencies and puts in place benchmarks for determining if the partner organization corrects them in a timely fashion; the board regularly reviews and updates board and school policies as needed and has in place an orientation process for new members; the board effectively recruits and selects new members in order to maintain adequate skill sets and expertise for effective governance and structural continuity; 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	<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

Renewal Question 2 Is the School an Effective, Viable Organization?	
<u>Evidence Category</u>	<u>SUNY Renewal Benchmarks</u>
	<p>the Institute in a timely manner, and meeting teacher certification (including NCLB highly qualified status) and background check requirements, FOIL and Open Meetings Law;</p> <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>
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 3A Budgeting and Long Range Planning	<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.
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 3B Internal Controls	<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

	Renewal Question 3 Is the School Fiscally Sound?
<u>Evidence Category</u>	<u>SUNY Renewal Benchmarks</u>
	<p>financial decisions and to fulfill compliance requirements;</p> <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>

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

	Renewal Question 4 If the School's Charter is Renewed, What are its Plans for the Term of the Next Charter Period, and are they Reasonable, Feasible and Achievable?
<u>Evidence Category</u>	<u>SUNY Renewal Benchmarks</u>
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 4A Plans for the School's Structure	<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.
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 4B Plans for the Educational Program	<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>
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 4C Plans for Board Oversight and Governance	<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.
SUNY Renewal Benchmark 4D Fiscal & Facility Plans	<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.