



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

## **South Buffalo Charter School**

---

### **School Evaluation Report 2011-2012**

Visit Date: December 14-15, 2011

Final Report Issued: April 11, 2012

Charter Schools Institute  
State University of New York  
41 State Street, Suite 700  
Albany, New York 12207  
518/433-8277, 518/427-6510 (fax)  
<http://www.newyorkcharters.org>

## INTRODUCTION

This School Evaluation Report includes three components. The first section, titled School Overview, provides descriptive information about the school, including enrollment and demographic data, as well as historical information regarding the life of the school. The second section provides background information on the conduct of the evaluation visit, including the date of the visit and information about the evaluation team, and puts the visit in the context of the school's current charter cycle. Finally, in a third section entitled School Evaluation Visit, the report presents overall benchmark conclusions (in italics) and an analysis of evidence collected for each of the respective benchmarks.

The Qualitative Educational Benchmarks (a component of the Renewal Benchmarks) address the academic success of the school, focusing on teaching and learning (i.e., curriculum, instruction, and assessment), and the effectiveness and viability of the school organization, including board oversight and organizational capacity. The Institute uses the established criteria on a regular and ongoing basis to provide schools with a consistent set of expectations leading up to renewal.

**The report below provides more detailed conclusions, and evidence to support these conclusions, for some benchmarks in order to highlight areas of concern and provide additional feedback. In contrast to the format of reports issued in previous years and in an effort to issue reports in a timelier manner, the Institute now approaches the presentation as an exception report and deliberately emphasizes areas of concern. As such, limited detail and evidence about positive aspects of the 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. However, it does summarize the various strengths of the school and note areas in need of improvement based on the Qualitative Educational Benchmarks.

## SCHOOL OVERVIEW

### Opening Information

Date Initial Charter Approved by SUNY Trustees	January 25, 2000
Date Initial Charter Approved by Operation of Law	April 4, 2000
School Opening Date	September 2000

### Location

School Year(s)	Location(s)	Grades	District
2000-Present	2219 South Park Ave., Buffalo NY	K-8	Buffalo City Schools

### Renewal

Type of Renewal	Date
Initial Full-Term Renewal	March 1, 2005
Subsequent Full-Term Renewal	March 16, 2011

### Current Mission Statement

We are a Professional Learning Community. Our focus on learning is driven by research, data and collaborative reflection to increase student achievement. We are South Buffalo Charter School.

### Current Key Design Elements

• Professional Learning Communities;
• New York State Standards-Based Curriculum;
• Technology Integration;
• Character Education;
• Extended Day and School Year;
• Professional Development; and
• Parent/Guardian Involvement and Engagement.

## School Characteristics

School Year	Original Chartered Enrollment	Revised Chartered Enrollment	Actual Enrollment <sup>1</sup>	Original Chartered Grades	Actual Grades	Days of Instruction
2000-01	234	234	220	K-4	K-4	195
2001-02	432	305	304	K-5	K-5	195
2002-03	504	383	384	K-6	K-6	195
2003-04	576	458	458	K-7	K-7	195
2004-05	648	533	531	K-8	K-8	195
2005-06	582	N/A	598	K-8	K-8	195
2006-07	607	643	641	K-8	K-8	195
2007-08	632	680	631	K-8	K-8	195
2008-09	657	705	644	K-8	K-8	195
2009-10	657	705	644	K-8	K-8	195
2010-11	668	668	669	K-8	K-8	195
2011-12	800	672	672	K-8	K-8	195

## Demographics<sup>2</sup>

	2007-08		2008-09		2009-10	
	Percent of School Enrollment	Percent of Buffalo CSD Enrollment	Percent of School Enrollment	Percent of Buffalo CSD Enrollment	Percent of School Enrollment	Percent of Buffalo CSD Enrollment
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>						
American Indian or Alaska Native	2	2	2	1.5	2	1
Black or African American	18	57	17	57.7	19	56
Hispanic	9	15	12	14	13	15
Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander	1	2	1	1.5	1	4
White	70	25	68	23	65	23
Multiracial	0	0	0	2	0	1
<b>Special Populations</b>						
Students with Disabilities <sup>3</sup>	15	-	15	-	17	-
Limited English Proficient	0	8	0	6	0	9
<b>Free/Reduced Lunch</b>						
Eligible for Free Lunch	50	55.6	57.2	74	63	70
Eligible for Reduced-Price Lunch	23	16.5	18	8	21	7

<sup>1</sup> Source: SUNY Charter School Institute's Official Enrollment Binder. (Figures may differ slightly from New York State Report Cards, depending on date of data collection.)

<sup>2</sup> Source: New York State Report Cards, New York State Education Department.

<sup>3</sup> New York State Education Department does not report special education data.

**Current Board of Trustees<sup>4</sup>**

Board Member Name	Position/Committees
Jim Neimeier	President, Building and Finance Committees
Kathy Linhardt	Secretary, Building and Personnel Committees
Chris Schafer	Parent Representative
Bill DiLorenzo	Treasurer, Building Committee
Steve Nigrelli	Building and Personnel Committees
Kristi Maggio	Personnel Committee
Anne Marie Tryjankowski	Vice President, Personnel Committee
Susan Swartz	Trustee

**School Leader(s)**

School Year	School Leader(s) Name and Title
2000-01	Donald Graff, Director
2001-02 to 2004-05	Gregory Speranza, Director
2004-05	Larry Gustina, Director
2005-06 to 2007-08	Cedrick Ellis, Director
2008-09 to Present	Carrie Dzierba, Head of Schools

**School Visit History**

School Year	Visit Type	Evaluator (Institute/External)	Date
2000-01	First Year Visit	Institute	May 25, 2001
2001-02	Second Year Visit	Institute	April 9, 2002
2002-03	Third Year Visit	External (SchoolWorks)	January 7-8, 2003
2004-05	Initial Renewal Visit	Institute	October 13-14, 2004
2006-07	Subsequent Visit	Institute	March 29, 2007
2009-10	Subsequent Renewal Visit	Institute	November 10, 2009
2011-12	Subsequent Visit	Institute	December 14-15, 2011

<sup>4</sup> Source: Institute board information.

## CONDUCT OF VISIT

### Specifications

Date(s) of Visit	Evaluation Team Members	Title
December 14-15, 2011	Sean Fitzsimons	Program Analyst
	Danielle Keen	Analyst for School Evaluation
	Lori Clement	Senior Analyst

### Context of the Visit

Charter Cycle <sup>5</sup>	
Charter Period	2 <sup>nd</sup> Year of Third Charter Term
Accountability Period	3 <sup>rd</sup> Year of Five-Year Accountability Period
Impending Renewal Visit	Fall 2014

---

<sup>5</sup> Because the Institute makes a renewal decision in the last year of a Charter Period, the Accountability Period ends in the next to last year of the Charter Period. For initial renewals, the Accountability Period is the first four years of the Charter Period. For subsequent renewals, the Accountability Period includes the last year of the previous Charter Period through the next to last year of the current Charter Period.

## SCHOOL EVALUATION VISIT

### Benchmark Conclusions and Evidence

#### **1. B Use of Assessment**

***South Buffalo Charter School (South Buffalo) has a robust system to gather assessment and evaluation data and uses it to improve instructional effectiveness and student learning.***

The school regularly administers standardized assessments, including the Terra Nova, Diagnostic Online Reading and Math Assessments (DORA DOMA), Academic Improvement Monitoring System (AIMSweb) and mock state assessments. The achievement coordinator oversees the systematic collection and analysis of assessment data. Results are accessible to teachers, administrators and the school community as appropriate. The school uses data to assign students for intervention, to group students within general education classes and to adjust the school's curriculum and instructional methods. Additionally, the school ensures that teachers and administrators have a common understanding of the meaning and consequences of assessment results. School staff meets during monthly grade-level data meetings to discuss student performance and to norm the grading of assessments. Teachers also administer a variety of interim assessments derived from the school's commercial curriculum. Teachers receive training on how to create valid and reliable formative and summative assessments aligned to their curriculum. School leaders and teachers report that the school is in the process of creating, but has not yet administered a formal writing evaluation.

#### **1. C Curriculum**

***South Buffalo has a clearly defined curriculum and uses it to prepare students to meet state performance standards.***

The school has well-defined, fixed curriculum frameworks that provide an underlying structure and clear expectations for all core subject areas. School leaders created this framework based on both the New York State standards and commercial curriculum programs. These documents are organized, easy to understand and readily accessible to teachers through an on-line curriculum and assessment database, Performance Plus. Typically, the school leader modifies this framework once a year in response to teacher needs and assessment results. At the time of the visit, the school leader was in the process of modifying the framework for alignment with the Common Core state standards. Mathematics and English language arts frameworks align across grades; however, the school is still in the process of vertically aligning the science and social studies frameworks.

Teachers meet regularly within grade level teams and informally within departments during professional development sessions to develop units and lessons based on the curriculum frameworks, which they document in individual teacher maps stored in Performance Plus. The school's administrators oversee and support this process by regularly attending planning meetings and guiding professional development. The school has an informal process for reviewing and revising curriculum throughout the year. School leaders expect teachers to reflect on their lessons

after implementation. Performance Plus facilitates the revision process by storing the reflections in the same space as unit and lesson plans. The administration requires teachers to submit lesson plans one week in advance of implementation, but they rarely return lessons with comments and suggestions.

### **1. D Pedagogy**

***High quality instruction is evident in all classes throughout the school.***

Lessons are purposeful and generally focus on learning objectives that specify clear expectations for what students should know and be able to do. Teachers engage students in relevant learning activities. Instruction is rigorous and promotes depth of understanding and, particularly in the upper grades, engages students in higher order thinking; it prompts them to explore provocative topics and make connections to the world around them. For example, in one class students used persuasive writing, debate and statistical analysis in order to form their own opinions about the death penalty for juveniles, using the shootings at Columbine as a lens. Teachers report differentiating lessons to meet students needs, and, during the school's "What I Need (WIN)" period, when teachers provide small group and differentiated instruction in English language arts and mathematics during an entire period. Teachers use effective instructional strategies such as flexible grouping of students, checks-for-understanding and clear routines. Transitions are efficient and teachers maximize learning time with a clear sense of urgency.

### **1. E Instructional Leadership**

***South Buffalo has strong instructional leadership.***

South Buffalo's leadership structure is adequate to support the development of the teaching staff. The instructional leadership team is composed of the head of schools, assistant principal, achievement coordinator, special services coordinator, instructional coach and the teacher on special assignment for curriculum. The instructional coach, achievement coordinator and teacher on special assignment provide teachers with sustained coaching and modeling for curriculum, instruction, data analysis and assessment building. During regularly scheduled common prep times, teachers have opportunities to plan curriculum and instruction within, and across, grade levels.

Instructional leaders regularly conduct teacher evaluations with clear criteria. New this year, South Buffalo uses the Danielson model for teacher evaluations. Teachers report that this process is lengthy, yet meaningful and that it provides accurate, specific and actionable feedback. Using the Danielson model, instructional leaders conduct at least two formal observations per year and regular walkthroughs, which inform an end-of-year summative evaluation. At the time of the visit, instructional leaders had completed half of the first round of formal evaluations. Teachers may also receive feedback from the instructional coach and/or achievement coordinator regarding instructional practices through the walkthrough process. The achievement coordinator and instructional coach meet regularly with the head of schools and assistant principal to ensure that they are consistent in utilizing the walkthrough process with staff. Teachers also receive multiple informal observations from the instructional coach and curriculum coordinator, who meet regularly with the head of schools and assistant principal to ensure that they all use the same process for observing and providing feedback.



### **1. F At-Risk Students**

***South Buffalo effectively helps students who are struggling academically.***

The school has a robust approach to assisting students at risk of academic failure, centered on a three-tiered Response to Intervention (RTI) process. Tier I includes data-driven instruction in all general education classes, while tier II includes small group or one-to-one instruction based on individualized student needs. One period per day is devoted to small group services for all students regardless of level. There is a clear process for identifying students in need of intervention. Teachers divide students into three groups based on beginning-of-year diagnostic performance. Math and reading intervention teachers pull-out groups of students who in need of academic intervention services, while general education teachers provide targeted small group instruction to proficient students. In addition, the school's enrichment teacher provides enrichment to students that have scored beyond proficient on diagnostics. Intervention teachers use additional assessments to further pinpoint student needs, provide leveled texts and monitor progress within these small groups. The school re-evaluates student groups periodically throughout the year in response to benchmark assessment results, though teachers may move students between groups based on observations or informal assessments. Tier III of the RTI process is currently in development. This year, the school has provided on-going whole school professional development workshops, led by both internal staff and external developers, on how to implement Tiers I and II of the RTI process.

The school has a process for identifying and supporting special education students. Certified special education teachers provide consultant teacher services and therapists provide speech, physical and occupational therapy. General education teachers demonstrate knowledge of their student's Individualized Education Program goals and meet weekly with special education teachers in order to plan lessons aimed at providing instructional strategies that assist students in meeting those goals. Special education and intervention teachers consistently and systematically monitor the progress of both at-risk and special education students. They keep an assessment data binder on each student and report to grade teams on student progress at least three times per year.

The school does not currently provide a program for English language learners (ELLs); at the time of the visit, the school did not enroll any ELLs.

### **1. G Student Order and Discipline**

***South Buffalo promotes a culture of learning and scholarship.***

The school is safe and orderly. There is a documented and standardized K-8 discipline system. Misbehavior is not evident in the school; however, teachers report that the behavior system is consistently applied. Infractions in the discipline system may result in a visit to the "Problem Solving Room," during which students are required to reflect on, and write about, their actions. Teachers deeply invest students in classroom behavior monitoring systems, such as color-coded cards that students must flip when they misbehave. These routines result in a culture in which learning is valued to the extent that students appear visibly upset when redirected.

## **1. H Professional Development**

***Instructional leaders implement a comprehensive professional development program that develops the competencies and skills of all teachers.***

Teachers receive five days of professional development during the summer, as well as five full days of professional development during the school year. In addition, teachers may take advantage of external conferences and workshops. Developers from BOCES, curriculum consultants and school coaches lead various professional development workshops. Instructional leaders plan and coordinate the full calendar of professional development and choose topics based on identified school and teacher needs, as well as from informal teacher survey data.

## **2. C Organizational Capacity**

***The organization of South Buffalo effectively supports the delivery of the educational program.***

South Buffalo demonstrates effective management of day-to-day operations. The school defines clear lines of accountability, staff roles and responsibilities. The head of schools manages the operational and fiscal concerns including the construction of a new facility, while the assistant principal and related staff focuses on the daily operations of the academic program. The school's leadership team regularly evaluates and monitors the school's programs and makes changes as necessary. For example, the school has increased math instruction based on analysis of the prior year's state test results.

The school has established clear priorities and allocated sufficient resources toward achieving its mission and Accountability Plan goals. This year, the school's focus is on aligning curriculum and assessments to the new Common Core standards, and it has provided staff with training, prep time and processes to facilitate this change. The school's management has a robust hiring process with several rounds of interviews incorporating demo lessons and input from administrative and teaching staff. In addition, the school successfully retains high quality staff and provides multiple opportunities for teacher leadership. School leaders believe that the school's new evaluation process will allow them to quickly identify ineffective staff, provide support and remove them if necessary. The school has an enrollment waitlist and plans to increase enrollment to meet community demand.

## **2. D Board Oversight**

***South Buffalo's board has worked effectively to achieve the school's mission and provide oversight to the school.***

The school board, which meets monthly, has created specialized committees. Members have adequate skills and expertise to ensure rigorous oversight of the school, including members with experience in finance, law, education and real estate. The school board receives regular reports from the head of schools about the health of the school; however, there is not a formalized dashboard or specific set of indicators used to consistently monitor the school beyond New York State assessment results. While the board's evaluation of the school leader is largely subjective, at

the time of the visit, the board was creating a more data driven evaluation process for the school leader.

The board conducts informal review of its own effectiveness, taking into account overall fiscal management and student performance on state assessments, as primary indicators of success. Additionally, the board considers the overall performance of individual members and has asked members to step down in the past, due to low board member attendance. The board provides professional development through governance training workshop and seminar opportunities. At the time of the visit, the board's main priority was to build a new facility – a task that they have approached with considerable due diligence, including multiple evaluations of potential locations. Additionally, the board is anticipating significant growth in student enrollment and has begun planning for the implications of this growth.

## APPENDIX A: RENEWAL BENCHMARKS USED DURING THE VISIT

*An excerpt of the State University Charter Renewal Benchmarks follows.*

*Visit the Institute's website at: <http://www.newyorkcharters.org/documents/renewalBenchmarks.doc> to see the complete listing of Benchmarks.*

Benchmarks 1B – 1H, and Benchmarks 2A – 2E were using in conducting this evaluation visit.

	Renewal Question 1 Is the School an Academic Success?
<u>Evidence Category</u>	<u>State University Renewal Benchmarks</u>
<b>State University Renewal Benchmark 1B</b>  <b>Use of Assessment Data</b>	<p>The school has a system to gather assessment and evaluation data and uses it to improve instructional effectiveness and student learning.</p> <p>Elements that are generally present include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the school regularly uses standardized and other assessments that are aligned to the school's curriculum framework and state performance standards;</li> <li>the school systematically collects and analyzes data from diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments, and makes it accessible to teachers, school leaders and the school board;</li> <li>the school uses protocols, procedures and rubrics that ensure that the scoring of assessments and evaluation of student work is reliable and trustworthy;</li> <li>the school uses assessment data to predict whether the school's Accountability Plan goals are being achieved;</li> <li>the school's leaders use assessment data to monitor, change and improve the school's academic program, including curriculum and instruction, professional development, staffing and intervention services;</li> <li>the school's teachers use assessment data to adjust and improve instruction to meet the identified needs of students;</li> <li>a common understanding exists between and among teachers and administrators of the meaning and consequences of assessment results,</li> </ul>

	<p>e.g., changes to the instructional program, access to remediation, promotion to the next grade;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the school regularly communicates each student's progress and growth to his or her parents/guardians; and</li> <li>the school regularly communicates to the school community overall academic performance as well as the school's progress toward meeting its academic Accountability Plan goals.</li> </ul>
<p><b>State University Renewal Benchmark 1C</b></p> <p><b>Curriculum</b></p>	<p>The school has a clearly defined curriculum and uses it to prepare students to meet state performance standards.</p> <p>Elements that are generally present include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the school has a well-defined curriculum framework for each grade and core academic subject, which includes the knowledge and skills that all students are expected to achieve as specified by New York State standards and performance indicators;</li> <li>the school has carefully analyzed all curriculum resources (including commercial materials) currently in use in relation to the school's curriculum framework, identified areas of deficiency and/or misalignment, and addressed them in the instructional program;</li> <li>the curriculum <i>as implemented</i> is organized, cohesive, and aligned from grade to grade;</li> <li>teachers are fully aware of the curricula that they are responsible to teach and have access to curricular documents such as scope and sequence documents, pacing charts, and/or curriculum maps that guide the development of their lesson plans;</li> <li>teachers develop and use lesson plans with objectives that are in alignment with the school's curriculum;</li> <li>the school has defined a procedure, allocated time and resources, and included teachers in ongoing review and revision of the curriculum; and</li> <li>the curriculum supports the school's stated mission.</li> </ul>

<p><b>State University Renewal Benchmark 1D</b></p> <p><b>Pedagogy</b></p>	<p><b>High quality instruction is evident in all classes throughout the school.</b></p> <p>Elements that are generally present include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• teachers demonstrate subject-matter and grade-level competency in the subjects and grades they teach;</li> <li>• instruction is rigorous and focused on learning objectives that specify clear expectations for what students must know and be able to do in each lesson;</li> <li>• lesson plans and instruction are aligned to the school's curriculum framework and New York State standards and performance indicators;</li> <li>• instruction is differentiated to meet the range of learning needs represented in the school's student population, e.g. flexible student grouping, differentiated materials, pedagogical techniques, and/or assessments;</li> <li>• all students are cognitively engaged in focused, purposeful learning activities during instructional time;</li> <li>• learning time is maximized (e.g., appropriate pacing, high on-task student behavior, clear lesson focus and clear directions to students), transitions are efficient, and there is day-to-day instructional continuity; and</li> <li>• teachers challenge students with questions and assignments that promote academic rigor, depth of understanding, and development of higher-order thinking and problem-solving skills.</li> </ul>
<p><b>State University Renewal Benchmark 1E</b></p> <p><b>Instructional Leadership</b></p>	<p><b>The school has strong instructional leadership.</b></p> <p>Elements that are generally present include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the school's leadership establishes an environment of high expectations for student achievement;</li> <li>• the school's leadership establishes an environment of high expectations for teacher performance (in content knowledge, pedagogical skills and student achievement);</li> <li>• the school's instructional leaders have in place a comprehensive and on-going system for evaluating teacher quality and effectiveness;</li> <li>• the school's instructional leaders, based on classroom visits and other available data, provide direct ongoing support, such as critical feedback, coaching and/or modeling, to teachers in their classrooms;</li> <li>• the school's leadership provides structured opportunities, resources and guidance for teachers to plan the delivery of the instructional program within and across grade levels as well as within disciplines or content areas;</li> <li>• the school's instructional leaders organize a coherent and sustained professional development program that meets the needs of both the</li> </ul>

	<p>school and individual teachers;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the school's leadership ensures that the school is responding to the needs of at-risk students and maximizing their achievement to the greatest extent possible in the regular education program using in-class resources and/or pull-out services and programs where necessary ; and</li> <li>the school's leadership conducts regular reviews and evaluations of the school's academic program and makes necessary changes to ensure that the school is effectively working to achieve academic standards defined by the State University Renewal Benchmarks in the areas of assessment, curriculum, pedagogy, student order and discipline, and professional development.</li> </ul>
<p><b>State University Renewal Benchmark 1F</b></p> <p><b>At-Risk Students</b></p>	<p><b>The school is demonstrably effective in helping students who are struggling academically.</b></p> <p>Elements that are generally present include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the school deploys sufficient resources to provide academic interventions that address the range of students' needs;</li> <li>all regular education teachers, as well as specialists, utilize effective strategies to support students within the regular education program;</li> <li>the school provides sufficient training, resources, and support to all teachers and specialists with regard to meeting the needs of at-risk students;</li> <li>the school has clearly defined screening procedures for identifying at-risk students and providing them with the appropriate interventions, and a common understanding among all teachers of these procedures;</li> <li>all regular education teachers demonstrate a working knowledge of students' Individualized Education Program goals and instructional strategies for meeting those goals;</li> <li>the school provides sufficient time and support for on-going coordination between regular and special education teachers, as well as other program specialists and service providers; and</li> <li>the school monitors the performance of student participation in support services using well-defined school-wide criteria, and regularly evaluates the effectiveness of its intervention programs.</li> </ul>
<p><b>State University Renewal Benchmark 1G</b></p> <p><b>Student Order &amp; Discipline</b></p>	<p><b>The school promotes a culture of learning and scholarship.</b></p> <p>Elements that are generally present include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the school has a documented discipline policy that is consistently applied;</li> <li>classroom management techniques and daily routines have established a culture in which learning is valued and clearly evident;</li> <li>low-level misbehavior is not being tolerated, e.g., students are not being allowed to disrupt or opt-out of learning during class time; and</li> <li>throughout the school, a safe and orderly environment has been established.</li> </ul>



<p><b>State University Renewal Benchmark 1H</b></p> <p><b>Professional Development</b></p>	<p>The school's professional development program assists teachers in meeting student academic needs and school goals by addressing identified shortcomings in teachers' pedagogical skills and content knowledge.</p> <p>Elements that are generally present include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the school provides sufficient time, personnel, materials and funding to support a comprehensive and sustained professional development program;</li> <li>• the content of the professional development program dovetails with the school's mission, curriculum, and instructional programs;</li> <li>• annual professional development plans derive from a data-driven needs-assessment and staff interests;</li> <li>• professional development places a high priority on achieving the State University Renewal Benchmarks and the school's Accountability Plan goals;</li> <li>• teachers are involved in setting short-term and long-term goals for their own professional development activities;</li> <li>• the school provides effective, ongoing support and training tailored to teachers' varying levels of expertise and instructional responsibilities;</li> <li>• the school provides training to assist all teachers to meet the needs of students with disabilities, English language learners and other students at-risk of academic failure; and</li> <li>• the professional development program is systematically evaluated to determine its effectiveness at meeting stated goals.</li> </ul>
--	--

	<p><b>Renewal Question 2</b></p> <p><b>Is the School an Effective, Viable Organization?</b></p>
<p><u><b>Evidence Category</b></u></p>	<p><u><b>State University Renewal Benchmarks</b></u></p>
<p><b>State University Renewal Benchmark 2A</b></p> <p><b>Mission &amp; Key Design Elements</b></p>	<p>The school is faithful to its mission and has implemented the key design elements included in its charter.</p> <p>Elements that are generally present include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• stakeholders are aware of the mission;</li> <li>• the school has implemented its key design elements in pursuit of its mission; and</li> <li>• the school meets or comes close to meeting any non-academic goals contained in its Accountability Plan.</li> </ul>



<p><b>State University Renewal Benchmark 2B</b></p> <p><b>Parents &amp; Students</b></p>	<p><b>Parents/guardians and students are satisfied with the school.</b></p> <p>Elements that are generally present include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the school has a process and procedures for evaluation of parent satisfaction with the school;</li> <li>the great majority of parents with students enrolled at the school have strong positive attitudes about it;</li> <li>few parents pursue grievances at the school board level or outside the school;</li> <li>a large number of parents seek entrance to the school;</li> <li>parents with students enrolled keep their children enrolled year-to-year; and</li> <li>the school maintains a high rate of daily student attendance.</li> </ul>
<p><b>State University Renewal Benchmark 2C</b></p> <p><b>Organizational Capacity</b></p>	<p><b>The school has established a well-functioning organizational structure with staff, systems, and procedures that allow the school to carry out its academic program.</b></p> <p>Elements that are generally present include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the school demonstrates effective management of day-to-day operations;</li> <li>staff scheduling is internally consistent and supportive of the school's mission;</li> <li>the school has established clear priorities, objectives and benchmarks for achieving its mission and Accountability Plan goals, and a process for their regular review and revision;</li> <li>the school has allocated sufficient resources in support of achieving its goals;</li> <li>the roles and responsibilities of the school's leadership and staff members are clearly defined;</li> <li>the school has an organizational structure that provides clear lines for accountability;</li> <li>the school's management has successfully recruited, hired and retained key personnel, and made appropriate decisions about removing ineffective staff members when warranted;</li> <li>the school maintains an adequate student enrollment and has effective procedures for recruiting new students to the school; and</li> <li>the school's management and board have demonstrated effective communication practices with the school community including school staff, parents/guardians and students.</li> </ul>
<p><b>State University Renewal Benchmark 2D</b></p> <p><b>Board Oversight</b></p>	<p><b>The school board has worked effectively to achieve the school's mission and provide oversight to the total educational program.</b></p> <p>Elements that are generally present include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the school board has adequate skills and expertise, as well as adequate meeting time to provide rigorous oversight of the school;</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the school board (or a committee thereof) understands the core business of the school—student achievement—in sufficient depth to permit the board to provide effective oversight;</li> <li>the school board has set clear long-term and short-term goals and expectations for meeting those goals, and communicates them to the school’s management and leaders;</li> <li>the school board has received regular written reports from the school leadership on academic performance and progress, financial stability and organizational capacity;</li> <li>the school board has conducted regular evaluations of the school’s management (including school leaders who report to the board, supervisors from management organization(s), and/or partner organizations that provide services to the school), and has acted on the results where such evaluations demonstrated shortcomings in performance;</li> <li>where there have been demonstrable deficiencies in the school’s academic, organizational or fiscal performance, the school board has taken effective action to correct those deficiencies and put in place benchmarks for determining if the deficiencies are being corrected in a timely fashion;</li> <li>the school board has not made financial or organizational decisions that have materially impeded the school in fulfilling its mission; and</li> <li>the school board conducts on-going assessment and evaluation of its own effectiveness in providing adequate school oversight, and pursues opportunities for further governance training and development.</li> </ul>
<p><b>State University Renewal Benchmark 2E</b></p> <p><b>Governance</b></p>	<p><b>The board has implemented and maintained appropriate policies, systems and processes, and has abided by them.</b></p> <p>Elements that are generally present include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the school board has established a set of priorities that are in line with the school’s goals and mission and has effectively worked to design and implement a system to achieve those priorities;</li> <li>the school board has in place a process for recruiting and selecting new members in order to maintain adequate skill sets and expertise for effective governance and structural continuity;</li> <li>the school board has implemented a comprehensive and strict conflict of interest policy (and/or code of ethics)—consistent with those set forth in the charter—and consistently abided by them through the term of the charter;</li> <li>the school board has generally avoided creating conflicts of interest where possible; where not possible, the school has managed those conflicts of interest in a clear and transparent manner;</li> <li>the school board has instituted a process for dealing with complaints (and such policy is consistent with that set forth in the charter), has made that policy clear to all stakeholders, and has followed that policy including acting in a timely fashion on any such complaints;</li> <li>the school board has abided by its by-laws including, but not limited to, provisions regarding trustee elections, removals and filling of vacancies;</li> <li>the school board and its committees hold meetings in accordance with the Open Meetings Law, and minutes are recorded for all meetings including executive sessions and, as appropriate, committee meetings; and</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the school board has in place a set of board and school policies that are reviewed regularly and updated as needed.</li> </ul>
<p><b>State University Renewal Benchmark 2F</b></p> <p><b>Legal Requirements</b></p>	<p>The school has substantially complied with applicable laws, rules and regulations and the provisions of its charter.</p> <p><b>Elements that are generally present include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>during its charter period, the school has compiled 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;</li> <li>at the time of renewal, the school is in substantial compliance with the terms of its charter and applicable laws, rules and regulations;</li> <li>over the charter period, the school has abided by the terms of its monitoring plan;</li> <li>the school has designed and put in place effective systems and controls to ensure that legal and charter requirements were and are met; and</li> <li>the school has an active and ongoing relationship with in-house or independent legal counsel that reviews relevant policies, documents, transactions and incidents and makes recommendations and handles other legal matters as needed.</li> </ul>