



Charter Schools Institute
The State University of New York

Amber Charter School

School Evaluation Report 2011-2012

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Report Issued: January 18, 2012

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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 than others 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 an organization such as a school, 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 in terms of the Qualitative Educational Benchmarks. To the extent appropriate and useful, we encourage school boards to use this evaluation report for ongoing planning and school improvement efforts.

SCHOOL OVERVIEW

Opening Information

Date Initial Charter Approved by SUNY Trustees	January 21, 2000
Date Initial Charter Approved by Board of Regents	April 4, 2000
School Opening Date	September 2000

Location

School Year(s)	Location(s)	Grades	District
2000-2002	125 th St and Lenox Avenue, New York, NY	All	New York CSD 5
2002-Present	220 East 106 th Street, New York, NY	All	New York CSD 4

Renewal

Type of Renewal	Date
Initial Full-Term Renewal with Conditions	March 1, 2005
Subsequent Renewal	January 15, 2010

Current Mission Statement

Amber Charter School's mission is to provide its students with an academically rigorous and well-rounded education, along with strong character development, that will enable them to prosper in top middle schools and beyond.

Current Key Design Elements

• 90 minutes a day in literacy instruction;
• Spanish as a Foreign Language in Elementary School (FLES);
• Programs for struggling students including Title I reading and special education services;
• Daily mathematics block of 90 minutes through fifth grade;
• 90 minutes a week in science instruction;
• 90 minutes a week in social studies instruction;
• Enrichment instruction in any and all of the following: art, music, physical education and technology;
• Strong parental engagement; and
• Fostering teacher leadership through participation in the board of trustees, curriculum, assessment and hiring committees.

School Characteristics

School Year	Original Chartered Enrollment	Revised Chartered Enrollment	Actual Enrollment ¹	Original Chartered Grades	Actual Grades	Days of Instruction
2000-01	120	120	120	K-1	K-1	181
2001-02	160	160	160	K-2	K-2	181
2002-03	200	200	180	K-3	K-3	181
2003-04	240	240	240	K-4	K-4	181
2004-05	280	280	291	K-5	K-5	181
2005-06	300	N/A	325	K-6	K-6	181
2006-07	350	N/A	364	K-6	K-6	181
2007-08	460	400	370	K-6	K-6	181
2008-09	460	425	356	K-6	K-5	181
2009-10	460	425	394	K-6	K-5	181
2010-11	425	N/A	419	K-5	K-5	181
2011-12	425	N/A	-	K-5	K-5	181

Demographics²

	2007-08		2008-09		2009-10	
	Percent of School Enrollment	Percent of NYC CSD 5 Enrollment	Percent of School Enrollment	Percent of NYC CSD 5 Enrollment	Percent of School Enrollment	Percent of NYC CSD 5 Enrollment
Race/Ethnicity						
American Indian or Alaska Native	0	0	1	0	0	0
Black or African American	65	59	53	58	46	57
Hispanic	33	37	44	37	52	38
Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander	0	2	1	2	1	2
White	1	2	1	2	0	2
Multiracial	0	0	0	0	1	0
Special Populations						
Students with Disabilities ³	6	N/A	8	N/A	7	N/A
Limited English Proficient	4	11	7	11	6	11
Free/Reduced Lunch						
Eligible for Free Lunch	71	71	75	74	75	72
Eligible for Reduced-Price Lunch	11	7	11	6	10	6

¹ 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.)

² Source: New York State Report Cards, New York State Education Department.

³ New York State Education Department does not report special education data.

Current Board of Trustees⁴

Board Member Name	Position/Committees
David Briggs	Chairman
Solidad Hiciano	Trustee
Jessica Jimenez	Trustee
Luis Miranda	Trustee
Julio Rodriguez	Trustee
Julio Sandoval	Trustee
Michael Stolper	Trustee
Francina Yaw	Trustee
Vasthi Acosta	Trustee

School Leader(s)

School Year	School Leader(s) Name and Title
2000-01 to 2004-05	Evelyn Marzan and Jon Moscow, Co-Directors
2005-06 to 2007-08	Rafael Ortiz, Head of School
2008-09 to Present	Vasthi Acosta, Head of School and Principal

School Visit History

School Year	Visit Type	Evaluator (Institute/External)	Date
2000-01	First Year	Institute	June 6, 2001
2001-02	Second Year Visit	Institute	May 16, 2002
2002-03	Third Year Visit	External	March 18-19, 2003
2004-05	Initial Renewal Visit	Institute	November 3-5, 2004
2006-07	Subsequent Visit	Institute	April 25, 2007
2007-08	Subsequent Visit	Institute	April 3, 2008
2009-10	Subsequent Renewal Visit	Institute and External	October 1, 2009
2011-12	Subsequent Visit	Institute	November 3, 2011

⁴ Source: Institute board information.

CONDUCT OF VISIT

Specifications

Date(s) of Visit	Evaluation Team Members	Title
November 3, 2011	Sean Fitzsimons (Lead)	Program Analyst
	Danielle Keen	Analyst for School Evaluation
	Lori Clement	Senior Analyst
	Jenn David-Lang	External Consultant

Context of the Visit

Charter Cycle ⁵	
Charter Period	2 nd Year of 3 rd Charter Term
Accountability Period	3 rd Year of Five-Year Accountability Period
Impending Renewal Visit	Fall 2014

⁵ Because a renewal decision is made 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: Amber Charter School ("Amber") has a system to gather assessment data and uses it to improve instructional effectiveness and student learning.

The school regularly conducts standardized and unit assessments that are aligned to the school's curriculum framework and state standards. The school regularly collects data and has recently developed a systematic data analysis tool. Teachers are responsible for analyzing the data, with school leaders providing oversight to this process. School leaders use assessment data to make changes to the curriculum and inform instruction. Teachers regularly use the data to adjust and improve instruction, primarily through regrouping students, pull-out sessions during morning meetings and extended learning strategy groups. The school communicates each student's progress and growth to families.

1. C Curriculum: Amber has a well-defined curriculum and uses it to prepare students to meet state performance standards.

Subject area scope and sequence documents clearly outline the school's curriculum. These documents align to both New York State and Common Core standards. School leaders and teachers carefully analyze commercial and teacher selected curricula at weekly grade-level team meetings throughout the course of the year and more comprehensively at the beginning and end of each year. Teachers compare commercial curricula to the school's scope and sequence documents to identify areas of deficiency and to address areas of misalignment with the standards. Additionally, teachers create and use pacing guides to plan units in more depth and adjust them throughout the year based on assessment results and as necessary. The school's curriculum planning documents are consistent within each grade. Additionally, the school's regular curriculum review meetings and the instructional team's ongoing oversight ensures vertical alignment of the curriculum from grade to grade. Teachers develop lesson plans collaboratively using pacing guides in conjunction with the commercial curriculum's stated objectives.

1. D Pedagogy: At the time of the visit, high quality instruction is evident in most classes throughout Amber.

Teachers' lesson plans inform instruction and demonstrate alignment to New York State and Common Core standards. In most classes, learning objectives specify clear expectations for what students must know and be able to do in each lesson, and students, when asked, are able to articulate these objectives and explain how they drive classroom activities. In a limited number of classes, teachers do not effectively check for understanding and not all students demonstrate mastery of the content. On the other hand, in some classes, students are challenged with higher order thinking questions; for example, some teachers ask students to "explain the higher meaning" of their responses and address ethical dilemmas. All students are cognitively engaged in grade appropriate learning activities.

Teachers use a variety of instructional modes, including direct instruction, independent practice, partner work and small group instruction. In the school's heterogeneously grouped classes, teachers use assessment data, as well as student observations to strategically place

students in flexible, small groups. Most teachers use effective classroom management techniques to maximize learning time, such as having students use hand signals to silently communicate needs and answers; nevertheless, some classes lack urgency and transitions between activities are slow in these classes.

1.E Instructional Leadership: Amber has strong instructional leadership.

The school's assistant principal and staff developer serve as the primary instructional leaders. The assistant principal is responsible for providing feedback on lesson plans and assigned homework; whereas, the staff developer provides teachers with instructional strategies and professional development opportunities. In addition, each grade team has a teacher leader who is the primary contact for addressing instructional concerns. Both the staff developer and teacher leaders model lessons, provide resources and troubleshoot with teachers. The staff developer organizes a mentor system in which more senior teachers serve as mentor teachers for new teachers, frequently observing them and providing written feedback. Teachers are evaluated regularly both formally and informally by either the principal or assistant principal. Teachers set goals for themselves and their students at the beginning of the year and are evaluated on their progress towards these goals. These goals are chosen through a process of self-assessment and data analysis. High expectations are evident throughout the school and school leaders hold teachers accountable for meeting their goals and the goals they have set for their students. School leaders regularly evaluate the school's academic program. When they identify weaknesses, leaders strategize to ameliorate them. For example, the leadership commissioned a teacher-based inquiry team to revamp the creation and assignment of homework after reviewing past homework assignments and finding that they lacked rigor.

1.F At-Risk Students: Amber is effective in helping academically struggling students, students with disabilities and English language learners.

The school has a Response to Intervention system to identify and support the full range of student needs present in their student population and deploys sufficient resources to provide academic interventions including Title I, SETTS, a Child Study Team and after-school intervention programs. The school has clearly defined and commonly understood screening procedures for identifying academically, socially and emotionally struggling students as well as English language learners and providing them with the appropriate interventions. General education teachers use effective strategies with training, resources and guidance from the school-based support team to support at-risk students within the regular education program. The school provides one regular opportunity per trimester for general education teachers and specialists to collaborate on meeting the needs of students receiving services, however most communication between these two groups occurs informally. Communication, collaboration and coordination amongst the school's at-risk support team concerning students receiving at-risk interventions also occur informally.

1.G Student Order and Discipline: Amber promotes a culture of learning and scholarship through clear communication of student expectations and school values.

All members of the school community have internalized the school values and expectations and use them to create a safe and orderly environment where learning is valued. These values and expectations are posted throughout the school in hallways and classrooms. The school has a well-documented discipline policy; low-level misbehavior is not evident in

classrooms.

The school's dean of student affairs assists teachers by addressing behavioral issues when they do arise.

1.H Professional Development: Amber's professional development program assists teachers in refining their practice to meet student academic needs and improve identified weaknesses in their individual skill sets.

The school provides sufficient time, personnel, materials and funding to support a comprehensive professional development program, including the use of consultants to ensure that teachers are maximizing commercial curriculum programs. The school completes a needs assessment at the beginning of the school year using quantitative and qualitative data from the previous year, as well as teacher surveys in order to evaluate professional development needs for the coming year. In addition, Amber's staff developer uses data from teacher observations in order to create differentiated professional development opportunities for all teachers based on their individual needs and goals.

2.C Organizational Capacity: Amber has a well functioning organizational structure with staff, systems and procedures that allow the school to carry out its academic program. The school organization effectively supports the delivery of the educational program.

The school has updated its mission to better reflect a commitment to preparing students to attend high quality middle schools, and has established priorities, schedules and a new organizational structure in order to achieve this mission, including placing a greater emphasis on leadership development and changing the principal's role to increase the school's public exposure and bolster its image. The roles and responsibilities of the school's staff are well-defined with distinct lines of accountability. The school's management effectively communicates practices and priorities throughout the school community, by holding regular meetings with staff, issuing written notices and providing opportunities for parents to learn about the school and to interact with the school's board. The school has hired and retained quality staff with very little staff turnover. Nevertheless, it has made decisions to remove ineffective staff when warranted.

2. D Board Oversight: Amber's board has worked effectively to achieve the school's mission and provide oversight to the total educational program.

Overall, the board devotes adequate time and board members have sufficient skills, board experience and expertise to provide rigorous oversight of the school; however, the board intends to recruit one or more members with greater experience in education. The board understands the importance of addressing student achievement and has re-focused the school's mission, with corresponding changes to the school's leadership structure, in order to boost student outcomes and prepare students for admission to prestigious middle schools. The board oversees the school's academic program through the regular analysis of mid-term assessments, Terra Nova assessments and New York State assessment results. The board acknowledges that it needs to better understand the school's operational activities and has recruited a member with organizational management expertise to address this issue. The board evaluates the school's principal through an analysis of assessment results, as well as an annual goal-setting process. The board regularly engages in activities to increase their own effectiveness, including an annual board retreat that includes board training conducted by an independent consultant.

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>
<p>State University Renewal Benchmark 1B</p> <p>Use of Assessment Data</p>	<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"> • the school regularly uses standardized and other assessments that are aligned to the school's curriculum framework and state performance standards; • 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; • the school uses protocols, procedures and rubrics that ensure that the scoring of assessments and evaluation of student work is reliable and trustworthy; • the school uses assessment data to predict whether the school's Accountability Plan goals are being achieved; • 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; • the school's teachers use assessment data to adjust and improve instruction to meet the identified needs of students; • a common understanding exists between and among teachers and administrators of the meaning and consequences of assessment results, e.g., changes to the instructional program, access to remediation, promotion to the next grade; • the school regularly communicates each student's progress and growth to his or her parents/guardians; and • 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.
<p>State University</p>	<p>The school has a clearly defined curriculum and uses it to prepare students to</p>

<p>Renewal Benchmark 1C</p> <p>Curriculum</p>	<p>meet state performance standards.</p> <p>Elements that are generally present include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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; • 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; • the curriculum <i>as implemented</i> is organized, cohesive, and aligned from grade to grade; • 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; • teachers develop and use lesson plans with objectives that are in alignment with the school's curriculum; • the school has defined a procedure, allocated time and resources, and included teachers in ongoing review and revision of the curriculum; and • the curriculum supports the school's stated mission.
<p>State University Renewal Benchmark 1D</p> <p>Pedagogy</p>	<p>High quality instruction is evident in all classes throughout the school.</p> <p>Elements that are generally present include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teachers demonstrate subject-matter and grade-level competency in the subjects and grades they teach; • 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; • lesson plans and instruction are aligned to the school's curriculum framework and New York State standards and performance indicators; • 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; • all students are cognitively engaged in focused, purposeful learning activities during instructional time; • 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 • teachers challenge students with questions and assignments that promote academic rigor, depth of understanding, and development of higher-order thinking and problem-solving skills.
<p>State University Renewal Benchmark 1E</p>	<p>The school has strong instructional leadership.</p> <p>Elements that are generally present include:</p>

<p>Instructional Leadership</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school's leadership establishes an environment of high expectations for student achievement; • the school's leadership establishes an environment of high expectations for teacher performance (in content knowledge, pedagogical skills and student achievement); • the school's instructional leaders have in place a comprehensive and on-going system for evaluating teacher quality and effectiveness; • 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; • 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; • the school's instructional leaders organize a coherent and sustained professional development program that meets the needs of both the school and individual teachers; • 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 • 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.
<p>State University Renewal Benchmark 1F</p> <p>At-Risk Students</p>	<p>The school is demonstrably effective in helping students who are struggling academically.</p> <p>Elements that are generally present include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school deploys sufficient resources to provide academic interventions that address the range of students' needs; • all regular education teachers, as well as specialists, utilize effective strategies to support students within the regular education program; • the school provides sufficient training, resources, and support to all teachers and specialists with regard to meeting the needs of at-risk students; • 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; • all regular education teachers demonstrate a working knowledge of students' Individualized Education Program goals and instructional strategies for meeting those goals; • 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 • 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.
<p>State University Renewal Benchmark 1G</p>	<p>The school promotes a culture of learning and scholarship.</p> <p>Elements that are generally present include:</p>

<p>Student Order & Discipline</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school has a documented discipline policy that is consistently applied; • classroom management techniques and daily routines have established a culture in which learning is valued and clearly evident; • 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 • throughout the school, a safe and orderly environment has been established.
<p>State University Renewal Benchmark 1H</p> <p>Professional Development</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"> • the school provides sufficient time, personnel, materials and funding to support a comprehensive and sustained professional development program; • the content of the professional development program dovetails with the school's mission, curriculum, and instructional programs; • annual professional development plans derive from a data-driven needs-assessment and staff interests; • professional development places a high priority on achieving the State University Renewal Benchmarks and the school's Accountability Plan goals; • teachers are involved in setting short-term and long-term goals for their own professional development activities; • the school provides effective, ongoing support and training tailored to teachers' varying levels of expertise and instructional responsibilities; • 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 • the professional development program is systematically evaluated to determine its effectiveness at meeting stated goals.

<p style="text-align: center;">Renewal Question 2</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Is the School an Effective, Viable Organization?</p>	
<p><u>Evidence Category</u></p>	<p><u>State University Renewal Benchmarks</u></p>
<p>State University 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>Elements that are generally present include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • stakeholders are aware of the mission; • the school has implemented its key design elements in pursuit of its mission; and

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

<p>Board Oversight</p>	<p>Elements that are generally present include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school board has adequate skills and expertise, as well as adequate meeting time to provide rigorous oversight of the school; • 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; • 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; • the school board has received regular written reports from the school leadership on academic performance and progress, financial stability and organizational capacity; • 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; • 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; • the school board has not made financial or organizational decisions that have materially impeded the school in fulfilling its mission; and • 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.
<p>State University Renewal Benchmark 2E</p> <p>Governance</p>	<p>The board has implemented and maintained appropriate policies, systems and processes, and has abided by them.</p> <p>Elements that are generally present include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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; • 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; • 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; • 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; • 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; • the school board has abided by its by-laws including, but not limited to, provisions regarding trustee elections, removals and filling of vacancies;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 • the school board has in place a set of board and school policies that are reviewed regularly and updated as needed.
<p>State University Renewal Benchmark 2F</p> <p>Legal Requirements</p>	<p>The school has substantially complied with applicable laws, rules and regulations and the provisions of its charter.</p> <p>Elements that are generally present include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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; • at the time of renewal, the school is in substantial compliance with the terms of its charter and applicable laws, rules and regulations; • over the charter period, the school has abided by the terms of its monitoring plan; • the school has designed and put in place effective systems and controls to ensure that legal and charter requirements were and are met; and • 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.