



Charter Schools Institute
The State University of New York

Achievement First Apollo Charter School

School Evaluation Report 2012-13

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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, a third section entitled School Evaluation Visit presents an analysis of evidence collected during the school visit. Following these sections, an appendix provides the State University of New York Charter Renewal Benchmarks (the "SUNY Renewal Benchmarks").

While the Institute conducts a comprehensive review of evidence related to all Renewal Benchmarks near the end of a charter term, most mid-cycle evaluation visits focus on a subset of these benchmarks. These Qualitative Education Benchmarks address the academic success of the school and the effectiveness and viability of the school organization. They provide a framework for examining the quality of the educational program, focusing on teaching and learning (i.e., curriculum, instruction, and assessment), as well as organizational capacity, board oversight and governance. The SUNY Charter Schools Institute (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 benchmark conclusions and evidence to support these conclusions in order to highlight areas of concern and provide additional feedback. The Institute intends this selection of information to be an exception report, which deliberately emphasizes areas of concern. As such, limited detail and evidence about positive elements of the educational program are not an indication that the Institute does not fully recognize evidence of program effectiveness.

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

SCHOOL OVERVIEW

Opening Information

Date Initial Charter Approved by SUNY Trustees	January 15, 2008
Date Initial Charter Approved by Operation of Law	May 20, 2008
School Opening Date	August 2010

Location

School Year(s)	Location(s)	Grades	District
2010-11 to Present	350 Linwood Street, Brooklyn NY 11208	K-3	NYC CSD 19

Partner Organizations

	Partner Name	Partner Type	Dates of Service
Partner	Achievement First, Inc.	CMO	2010-Present

Current Mission Statement

The mission of the Achievement First Apollo Charter School will be to provide students with the academic and character skills they need to gain admission to top colleges, to succeed in a competitive world, and to serve as the next generation of leaders in their communities.

Current Key Design Elements

• More time on task;
• Character education;
• College focus;
• Rigorous standards-based curriculum;
• Powerful use of on-going assessments;
• Excellent teaching; and
• Parents as partners.

School Characteristics¹

School Year	Original Chartered Enrollment	Actual Enrollment	Original Chartered Grades	Actual Grades
2010-11	168	175	K-1	K-1
2011-12	249	245	K-2	K-2
2012-13	411	344 ²	K-3	K-3

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

² Visit Data Collection Form, March 2013.

Student Demographics³

	2010-11		2011-12	
	Percent of School Enrollment ⁴	Percent of NYC CSD 19 Enrollment	Percent of School Enrollment	Percent of NYC CSD 19 Enrollment
Race/Ethnicity				
American Indian or Alaska Native	0	1	1	1
Black or African American	86	53	79	51
Hispanic	13	40	17	41
Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander	2	6	2	6
White	0	1	0	1
Multiracial	0	0	0	0
Special Populations				
Students with Disabilities ⁵	N/A	N/A	7 ⁶	13 ⁷
English Language Learners	2	13	3	13
Free/Reduced Lunch				
Eligible for Free Lunch	77	84	74	82
Eligible for Reduced-Price Lunch	7	5	9	5

Current Board of Trustees⁸

Board Member Name	Position/Committees
Andrew Hubbard	Board Chair
Matthew Klein	Trustee
Nathaniel Chefer	Trustee
Ambrose Wooden, Jr.	Treasurer
Mirian Rodriguez	Parent Representative

³ Source: 2011-12 New York State Report Cards.

⁴ Source 2010-11 New York State Report Cards. (AF Apollo's 2011-12 Report Card does not contain data for 2010-11.)

⁵ Source: District-level Students with Disabilities enrollment data are not available for 2010-11. The State Education Department ("SED") released these district data for the first time in spring 2012. Please note that SED releases data up to a full year after the conclusion of any one school year. As such, the data presented in this table may differ from current information reported by the school and included in this report.

⁶ SED's Empirical Analysis of Enrollment Targets.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Source: Institute board information.

School Leader(s)

School Year	School Leader(s) Name and Title
2010-11 to Present	Jabari Sims, Principal

School Visit History

School Year	Visit Type	Evaluator (Institute/External)	Date
2010-11	First Year	Institute	June 7, 2011
2012-13	Routine Visit	Institute	March 6, 2013

CONDUCT OF THE SCHOOL EVALUATION VISIT

Specifications

Date(s) of Visit	Evaluation Team Members	Title
March 6, 2013	Natasha Howard, Ph.D	Director of School Evaluation
	Danielle Keen	Senior Analyst

Context of the Visit

Charter Cycle	
Charter Term	3 rd Year of Initial Charter Term
Accountability Period ⁹	3 rd Year of the Four-Year Accountability Period
Anticipated Renewal Visit	Fall 2014

⁹ Because the SUNY Trustees make a renewal decision in the last year of a Charter Term, the Accountability Period ends in the next to last year of the Charter Term. For initial renewals, the Accountability Period is the first four years of the Charter Term. For subsequent renewals, the Accountability Period includes the last year of the previous Charter Term through the next to last year of the current Charter Term.

SCHOOL EVALUATION VISIT

Benchmark Conclusions and Evidence

1. B Use of Assessment Data

Achievement First Apollo Charter School (“AF Apollo”) has an assessment system that improves instructional effectiveness and student learning.

- AF Apollo regularly administers valid and reliable standardized assessments that align to the school’s curriculum. The school administers the Strategic Teaching and Evaluation of Progress (“STEP”) literacy assessment every six to eight weeks. Using interim assessments (“IAs”) created by its managing organization, Achievement First, Inc. (“AF”), the school also administers periodic assessments in English language arts (“ELA”) and math in all grades. AF provides the school with detailed reports on IA results. In addition, the school administers regular on-demand assessments in writing. Some grade teams administer weekly and/or daily quizzes and exit tickets.
- Instructional leaders model appropriate teacher scoring of student writing and STEP assessments and provide oversight to ensure reliability. AF Apollo analyzes STEP and IA results in both whole-school and grade teams. All staff members take part in “Data Days” every six weeks, during which they discuss growth across the school, create intervention plans for individual students and re-evaluate student groupings for guided reading and pull-out services.
- The principal and instructional deans use assessment data and information collected during classroom observations to develop professional development and coaching strategies. In addition, the principal places a strong emphasis on data as evidence of teacher success in teacher evaluations and continuation of employment.
- The school regularly communicates student progress to parents/guardians, sending out explanations of students’ IA results as well as traditional report cards.

1. C Curriculum

The school’s curriculum supports teachers in their instructional planning.

- The school has a curriculum framework, with scope and sequence documents created by AF that provides a fixed, underlying structure across all subjects and grades.
- Grade teams meet before implementing each unit of study to analyze the scope and sequence. They work together to make adjustments to the sequence of learning objectives and decide whether certain objectives will require more instructional focus given student performance on previous assessments.
- The principal and academic deans regularly review and make adjustments to the school’s curriculum based on their observations of implemented lessons and IA data. With AF assistance the school has updated its curricula to align to the Common Core.

- Grade teams divide lesson planning duty, with each team member responsible for planning one area of study. Lesson plans are purposeful and have clear objectives for student learning.

1. D Pedagogy

Adequate instruction is evident throughout the school.

- Teachers deliver purposeful and focused lessons in all grades and subjects, clearly outlining the objective of each lesson for students. In most classrooms, two teachers instruct small groups, while other students work independently or on computers.
- Teachers effectively check for student understanding during small group instruction, frequently using a variety of techniques such as Popsicle stick agreement flags and cold-calling.
- Except in a minority of classes, teachers do not challenge students to develop higher-order thinking skills.
- AF Apollo does not consistently maximize learning time. Teachers attempt to use tools, such as call and response to engage students and communicate a sense of urgency; however, many of these attempts are ineffective. Across the school, transitions are loosely structured. Many students are off-task, engaging in low-level misbehavior.

1. E Instructional Leadership

AF Apollo has strong instructional leadership.

- School leaders instill high expectations for teacher performance and student achievement with clear, school-wide and individual goals. The school's principal consistently communicates his expectations for teacher performance and has dismissed teachers who had failed to meet stated expectations.
- In addition to the principal, two academic deans serve as primary instructional leaders. The academic deans work with the principal to create tailored coaching and feedback plans for struggling teachers. Deans observe and provide feedback to new and struggling teachers one to two times per week; more experienced teachers receive less consistent feedback. The dean of students and the associate dean of students also observe and provide feedback to teachers having difficulty with classroom management.
- Teachers set professional development goals with their assigned instructional leader and revisit progress toward meeting these goals every four weeks, setting new goals as they achieve previously determined ones.
- In the summer, new teachers receive three weeks of pre-service professional development and returning teachers receive two weeks. Topics addressed during the pre-service training include strategies for effective guided reading and literacy instruction, use of the Investigations math curriculum and a review of school procedures. Teachers also participate in two hours of professional development every week in addition to scheduled weekly grade team and content area meetings.

- School leaders set the school’s professional development agenda based both on teacher observed needs and strategic yearlong initiatives determined prior to the start of the year. Priorities for the 2012-13 year include consistent literacy instruction, consistent academic and behavior interventions and building staff ownership of positive school culture.
- At the start of the school year, one teacher per subject at each grade level creates lesson plans for the entire grade. New teachers begin the year with no planning responsibilities until they gain facility with classroom management and lesson implementation. Instructional deans regularly review lesson plans and assist grade teams in the curriculum planning process.
- The principal regularly conducts teacher evaluations with clear criteria that accurately identify teachers’ strengths and weaknesses. Teachers set overarching goals at the beginning of the year for what they would like their students to achieve, as well as goals on professionalism and organizational core values. As part of the school’s mid-year review process, teachers use a common AF-wide rubric and student achievement data to conduct an analysis of their teaching effectiveness and reflect on their progress towards meeting professional development goals. The principal provides final teacher ratings at the end of the year, factoring in results of peer and parent surveys and scores from four formal evaluations.

1. F At-Risk Students

AF Apollo has robust intervention programs in place and effectively utilizes substantial resources to meet the educational needs of at-risk students.

- AF Apollo has a clear process for identifying students at-risk of academic failure. Teachers who have concerns about struggling students document classroom interventions for four to six weeks before reaching out to other teachers and parents for additional strategies. If initial interventions prove ineffective, the special services coordinator creates an individualized learning plan for the student. AF Apollo administers the Home Language Survey and Lab-R to identify students in need of English-as-a-Second Language (“ESL”) services.
- The school employs three special education teachers, in addition to the special services coordinator, who provide adequate, small group pull-out services for low-performers. Interventionists use Foundations, Reading Recovery, Leveled-Literacy Intervention and the Visualization and Verbalization program to support struggling students. They pull students out both in small groups based on STEP levels and individually if they fail to master a specific objective on a weekly quiz. Interventionists make changes to student groupings in response to STEP results every six weeks.
- Two additional special education teachers provide collaborative team teaching (“CTT”) services for the school’s 10 students with academic Individualized Education Program (“IEPs”) and one ESL interventionist provides small group pull-out instruction to the school’s 15 ELLs based on their NYSESLAT level.
- The special services coordinator regularly observes interventionists and provides feedback on their teaching practice.

- Teachers are aware of their students' IEPs. The special education coordinator creates "IEP at a Glance" summary documents for teachers and consults them when evaluating student progress toward meeting IEP goals.
- Though general education teachers do not have formal meeting time with interventionists, the school has an online document with which teachers share the at-risk students' progress and challenges each week. Using this observational data in addition to assessments built into the school's intervention curricula, interventionists create lesson plans for the following week.

2. C Organizational Capacity

AF Apollo's organization effectively supports the delivery of the educational program.

- AF Apollo has established an administrative structure with staff, operational systems, policies and procedures that allow the school to carry out its academic program. The school's director of operations and his team successfully carry out all operational tasks, enabling teachers and instructional leaders to focus on academics.
- The organizational structure establishes distinct lines of accountability with clearly defined roles and responsibilities. Teachers clearly know who to go to for each of their individual needs, and to whom they are accountable.
- AF Apollo has clear student discipline and behavior management systems in place; however, the school applies them inconsistently.
- By the start of its third year of operation, AF Apollo had experienced significant teacher turnover. At the end of the 2011-12 school year, AF Apollo lost almost one quarter (12 of 53) of its teachers; of those 12, four were not rehired and eight chose not to return.
- The school has allocated sufficient resources to support the achievement of goals. Teachers report having a wealth of materials to support implementation of the academic program.
- AF Apollo maintains adequate student enrollment; the school reports having had 1103 students on its waitlist at the time of the visit.
- AF Apollo regularly monitors and evaluates its programs and makes changes if necessary. For example, the school has created a more coherent behavior management system with clear rewards and consequences and added a dean of students to assist with consistent implementation of the student discipline policy and behavior management systems. Additionally, in response to hiring a largely novice teaching staff, the school added an academic dean to increase the coaching and professional development for inexperienced teachers.

State University of New York Charter Renewal Benchmarks

Version 5.0, May 2012

Introduction

The State University of New York Charter Renewal Benchmarks¹⁰ (the “SUNY Renewal Benchmarks”) serve two primary functions at renewal:

- They provide a framework for the Charter Schools Institute (the “Institute”) to gather and evaluate evidence to determine whether a school has made an adequate case for renewal. In turn, this evidence assists the Institute in deciding if it can make the required legal and other findings in order to reach a positive recommendation for renewal. For example, the various benchmarks that the Institute uses to determine whether the school has had fiscally responsible practices in place during the last charter period allow the Institute to determine with greater precision whether the school will operate in a fiscally sound manner during the next charter period, a finding that the New York Charter Schools Act requires the SUNY Trustees to make.
- At the same time that the SUNY Renewal Benchmarks provide a framework for the Institute to collect and review evidence, they also provide the school with a guide to understanding the Institute’s evaluative criteria. As the Institute uses the SUNY Renewal Benchmarks (or some sub-set of them) as the framework for conducting its ongoing school evaluation visits, school leaders should be fully aware of the content of the Benchmarks at the time of renewal.

The SUNY Renewal Benchmarks are organized into four inter-connected renewal questions that each school must answer when submitting a renewal application. The benchmarks further reflect the interwoven nature of schools from an academic, organizational, fiscal and/or legal perspective. For example, the Institute could reasonably place many of the academic benchmarks under the heading of organizational effectiveness. More generally, some redundancy exists because the Institute looks at the same issue from different perspectives.

Precisely how the Institute uses the SUNY Renewal Benchmarks, during both the renewal process and throughout the charter period, is explained in greater detail in the *Practices, Policies and Procedures for the Renewal of Charter Schools Authorized by the State University of New York* (the

¹⁰ Research on public school reform, known as the effective schools movement, has embraced the premise that, given certain organizing and cultural characteristics, schools can teach all children the intended curriculum and hold them to high academic standards. Over the decades, the accumulated research into effective schools has yielded a set of common characteristics that all effective schools share. These characteristics are so consistently prevalent among successful schools that they have come to be known as the *Correlates of Effective Schools*. The Renewal Benchmarks adapt and elaborate on these correlates.

-Revised May 2012-

“SUNY Renewal Policies”), 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 Policies. Note that a renewal overview document for parents, teachers and community members is also available on the Institute's website at: www.newyorkcharters.org/schoolsRenewOverview.htm. Please do not hesitate to contact the Institute with any questions.

State University of New York Charter Renewal Benchmarks

	Renewal Question 1 Is the School an Academic Success?
<u>Evidence Category</u>	<u>SUNY Renewal Benchmarks</u>
<p style="text-align: center;">SUNY Renewal Benchmark 1A</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Academic Accountability Plan Goals</p>	<p>Over the Accountability Period, the school has met or come close to meeting its academic Accountability Plan goals.</p> <p>The Institute determines the extent to which the school has met the Accountability Plan goals in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English language arts; • mathematics; • science; • social studies (high school only); • NCLB; • high school graduation and college preparation (if applicable); and • optional academic goals included by the school.
<p style="text-align: center;">SUNY Renewal Benchmark 1B</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Use of Assessment Data</p>	<p>The school has an assessment system that improves instructional effectiveness and student learning.</p> <p>The following elements are generally present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school regularly administers valid and reliable assessments aligned to the school’s curriculum and state performance standards; • the school has a valid and reliable process for scoring and analyzing assessments; • the school makes assessment data accessible to teachers, school leaders and board members; • teachers use assessment results to meet students’ needs by adjusting classroom instruction, grouping students and/or identifying students for special intervention; • school leaders use assessment results to evaluate teacher effectiveness and to develop professional development and coaching strategies; and • the school regularly communicates to parents/guardians about their students’ progress and growth.

<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 1C</p> <p>Curriculum</p>	<p>The school’s curriculum supports teachers in their instructional planning.</p> <p>The following elements are generally present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school has a curriculum framework with student performance expectations that provides a fixed, underlying structure, aligned to state standards and across grades; • in addition to the framework, the school has supporting tools (i.e., curriculum maps or scope and sequence documents) that provide a bridge between the curriculum framework and lesson plans; • teachers know what to teach and when to teach it based on these documents; • the school has a process for selecting, developing and reviewing its curriculum documents and its resources for delivering the curriculum; and • teachers plan purposeful and focused lessons.
<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 1D</p> <p>Pedagogy</p>	<p>High quality instruction is evident throughout the school.</p> <p>The following elements are generally present.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teachers deliver purposeful lessons with clear objectives aligned to the school’s curriculum; • teachers regularly and effectively use techniques to check for student understanding; • teachers include opportunities in their lessons to challenge students with questions and activities that develop depth of understanding and higher-order thinking and problem solving skills; • teachers maximize learning time (e.g., appropriate pacing, on-task student behavior, clear lesson focus and clear directions to students); transitions are efficient; and • teachers have effective classroom management techniques and routines that create a consistent focus on academic achievement.
<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 1E</p> <p>Instructional Leadership</p>	<p>The school has strong instructional leadership.</p> <p>The following elements are generally present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school’s leadership establishes an environment of high expectations for teacher performance (in content knowledge and pedagogical skills) and in which teachers believe that all students can succeed; • the instructional leadership is adequate to support the development of the teaching staff; • instructional leaders provide sustained, systemic and effective coaching and supervision that improves teachers’ instructional effectiveness;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • instructional leaders provide opportunities and guidance for teachers to plan curriculum and instruction within and across grade levels; • instructional leaders implement a comprehensive professional development program that develops the competencies and skills of all teachers; • professional development activities are interrelated with classroom practice; • instructional leaders regularly conduct teacher evaluations with clear criteria that accurately identify teachers’ strengths and weaknesses; and • instructional leaders hold teachers accountable for quality instruction and student achievement.
<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 1F</p> <p>At-Risk Students</p>	<p>The school meets the educational needs of at-risk students.</p> <p>The following elements are generally present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school uses clear procedures for identifying at-risk students including students with disabilities, English language learners and those struggling academically; • the school has adequate intervention programs to meet the needs of at-risk students; • general education teachers, as well as specialists, utilize effective strategies to support students within the general education program; • the school adequately monitors the progress and success of at-risk students; • teachers are aware of their students’ progress toward meeting IEP goals, achieving English proficiency or school-based goals for struggling students; • 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.
<p>Renewal Question 2</p> <p>Is the School an Effective, Viable Organization?</p>	

<u>Evidence Category</u>	<u>SUNY Renewal Benchmarks</u>
<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 2A</p> <p>Mission & Key Design Elements</p>	<p>The school is faithful to its mission and has implemented the key design elements included in its charter.</p> <p>The following elements are generally present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school faithfully follows its mission; and • the school has implemented its key design elements.
<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 2B</p> <p>Parents & Students</p>	<p>Parents/guardians and students are satisfied with the school.</p> <p>The following elements are generally present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school regularly communicates each child's academic performance results to families; • families are satisfied with the school; and • parents keep their children enrolled year-to-year.
<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 2C</p> <p>Organizational Capacity</p>	<p>The school organization effectively supports the delivery of the educational program.</p> <p>The following elements are generally present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school has established an administrative structure with staff, operational systems, policies and procedures that allow the school to carry out its academic program; • the organizational structure establishes distinct lines of accountability with clearly defined roles and responsibilities; • the school has a clear student discipline system in place at the administrative level that is consistently applied; • the school retains quality staff; • the school has allocated sufficient resources to support the achievement of goals; • the school maintains adequate student enrollment; • the school has procedures in place to monitor its progress toward meeting enrollment and retention targets for special education students, ELLs and students who qualify for free and reduced price lunch, and adjusts its recruitment efforts accordingly; and • the school regularly monitors and evaluates the school's programs and makes changes if necessary.

<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 2D</p> <p>Board Oversight</p>	<p>The school board works effectively to achieve the school’s Accountability Plan goals.</p> <p>The following elements are generally present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • board members possess adequate skills and have put in place structures and procedures with which to govern the school and oversee management of day-to-day operations in order to ensure the school’s future as an academically successful, financially healthy and legally compliant organization; • the board requests and receives sufficient information to provide rigorous oversight of the school’s program and finances; • it establishes clear priorities, objectives and long-range goals, (including Accountability Plan, fiscal, facilities and fundraising), and has in place benchmarks for tracking progress as well as a process for their regular review and revision; • the board successfully recruits, hires and retains key personnel, and provides them with sufficient resources to function effectively; • the board regularly evaluates its own performance and that of the school leaders and the management company (if applicable), holding them accountable for student achievement; and • the board effectively communicates with the school community including school leadership, staff, parents/guardians and students.
<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 2E</p> <p>Governance</p>	<p>The board implements, maintains and abides by appropriate policies, systems and processes.</p> <p>The following elements are generally present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the board effectively communicates with its partner or management organizations as well as key contractors such as back-office service providers and ensures that it receives value in exchange for contracts and relationships it enters into and effectively monitors such relationships; • the board takes effective action when there are organizational, leadership, management, facilities or fiscal deficiencies; or where the management or partner organization fails to meet 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

	<p>maintain adequate skill sets and expertise for effective governance and structural continuity;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the board implements a comprehensive and strict conflict of interest policy (and/or code of ethics)—consistent with that set forth in the charter and with the General Municipal Law—and consistently abides by them throughout the term of the charter; • the board generally avoids conflicts of interest; where not possible, the board manages those conflicts in a clear and transparent manner; • the board implements a process for dealing with complaints consistent with that set forth in the charter, makes the complaint policy clear to all stakeholders, and follows the policy including acting on complaints in a timely fashion; • the board abides by its by-laws including, but not limited to, provisions regarding trustee election and the removal and filling of vacancies; and • the board holds all meetings in accordance with the Open Meetings Law and records minutes for all meetings including executive sessions and, as appropriate, committee meetings.
<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 2F</p> <p>Legal Requirements</p>	<p>The school substantially complies with applicable laws, rules and regulations and the provisions of its charter.</p> <p>The following elements are generally present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school compiles a record of substantial compliance with the terms of its charter and applicable state and federal laws, rules and regulations including, but not limited to, submitting items to the Institute in a timely manner, and meeting teacher certification (including NCLB highly qualified status) and background check requirements, FOIL and Open Meetings Law; • the school substantially complies with the terms of its charter and applicable laws, rules and regulations; • the school abides by the terms of its monitoring plan; • the school implements effective systems and controls to ensure that it meets legal and charter requirements; • the school has an active and ongoing relationship with in-house or independent legal counsel who reviews and makes recommendations on relevant policies, documents, transactions and incidents and who also handles other legal matters as needed; and • the school manages any litigation appropriately and provides litigation papers to insurers and the Institute in a timely manner.

	Renewal Question 3 Is the School Fiscally Sound?
<u>Evidence Category</u>	<u>SUNY Renewal Benchmarks</u>
<p style="text-align: center;">SUNY Renewal Benchmark 3A</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Budgeting and Long Range Planning</p>	<p>The school operates pursuant to a long-range financial plan in which it creates realistic budgets that it monitors and adjusts when appropriate.</p> <p>The following elements are generally present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school has clear budgetary objectives and budget preparation procedures; • board members, school management and staff contribute to the budget process, as appropriate; • the school frequently compares its long-range fiscal plan to actual progress and adjusts it to meet changing conditions; • the school routinely analyzes budget variances; the board addresses material variances and makes necessary revisions; and • actual expenses are equal to, or less than, actual revenue with no material exceptions.
<p style="text-align: center;">SUNY Renewal Benchmark 3B</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Internal Controls</p>	<p>The school maintains appropriate internal controls and procedures.</p> <p>The following elements are generally present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school follows a set of comprehensive written fiscal policies and procedures; • the school accurately records and appropriately documents transactions in accordance with management’s direction, laws, regulations, grants and contracts; • the school safeguards its assets; • the school identifies/analyzes risks and takes mitigating actions; • the school has controls in place to ensure that management decisions are properly carried out and monitors and assesses controls to ensure their adequacy; • the school’s trustees and employees adhere to a code of ethics; • the school ensures duties are appropriately segregated, or institutes compensating controls; • the school ensures that employees performing financial functions are appropriately qualified and adequately trained; • the school has systems in place to provide the appropriate information needed by staff and the board to make sound financial decisions and to fulfill compliance requirements; • a staff member of the school reviews grant agreements and restrictive gifts and monitors compliance with all stated

	<p>conditions;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.
<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 3C</p> <p>Financial Reporting</p>	<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.
<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 3D</p> <p>Financial Condition</p>	<p>The school maintains adequate financial resources to ensure stable operations. Critical financial needs of the school are not dependent on variable income (grants, donations and fundraising).</p> <p>The following elements are generally present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school maintains sufficient cash on hand to pay current bills and those that are due shortly; • 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

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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	Key structural elements of the school, as defined in the exhibits of the Application for Charter Renewal, are reasonable, feasible and achievable. Based on elements present in the Application for Charter Renewal: <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	The school's plans for implementing the educational program allow it to meet its Accountability Plan goals. Based on elements present in the Application for Charter Renewal: <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.
<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 4C</p> <p>Plans for Board Oversight and Governance</p>	<p>The school provides a reasonable, feasible and achievable plan for board oversight and governance.</p> <p>Based on elements present in the Application for Charter Renewal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • school trustees are likely to possess a range of experience, skills, and abilities sufficient to oversee the academic, organizational and fiscal performance of the school; • plans by the school board to orient new trustees to their roles and responsibilities, and, if appropriate, to participate in ongoing board training are likely to sustain the board’s ability to carry out its responsibilities; • if the school plans to change an association with a partner or management organization in the term of a future charter, it has provided a clear rationale for the disassociation and an outline indicating how it will manage the functions previously associated with that partnering organization; and • if the school is either moving from self-management to a management structure or vice-versa, or is changing its charter management organization/educational service provider, its plans indicate that it will be managed in an effective, sound and viable manner including appropriate oversight of the academic and fiscal performance of the school or the management organization.
<p>SUNY Renewal Benchmark 4D</p> <p>Fiscal & Facility Plans</p>	<p>The school provides a reasonable, feasible and achievable fiscal plan including plans for an adequate facility.</p> <p>Based on the elements present in the Application for Charter Renewal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school’s budgets adequately support staffing, enrollment and facility projections; • fiscal plans are based on the sound use of financial resources to support academic program needs; • fiscal plans are clear, accurate, complete and based on reasonable assumptions; • information on enrollment demand provides clear evidence for the reasonableness of projected enrollment; and • facility plans are likely to meet educational program needs.