

# THE SUNY CHARTER SCHOOLS INSTITUTE

*FIRST YEAR SCHOOL EVALUATION REPORT  
DESTINE PREPARATORY CHARTER SCHOOL  
VISIT DATE: MAY 3, 2023  
REPORT DATE: JUNE 22, 2023*

*SUNY Charter Schools Institute*

*H. Carl McCall SUNY Building*

*353 Broadway*

*Albany, NY 12246*

*518.445.4250*

*[www.newyorkcharters.org](http://www.newyorkcharters.org)*



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

# CONTENTS

## 1

Introduction and Report Format

## 2

Charter Background

## 3

Executive Summary

## 4

Benchmark Summary

## Appendices

A: Charter School Overview

B: SUNY Renewal Benchmarks





# INTRODUCTION

## INTRODUCTION

This report outlines the SUNY Charter Schools Institute's (the "Institute's") observations and findings from its May 3, 2023 first year school evaluation visit to Destine Preparatory Charter School ("Destine Prep").

## REPORT FORMAT

Throughout the charter term, the Institute may conduct a number of formal evaluative visits including in the first year of operation. Each formal evaluative visit produces a written report based on data gathered during these visits. These reports form the foundation of qualitative data on the charter's effectiveness.

At the conclusion of the charter term, the Institute provides the State University of New York Board of Trustees (the "SUNY Trustees") a renewal recommendation based on its evaluation of the academic, organizational, legal, and fiscal aspects of the charter's program using the SUNY Renewal Benchmarks (see attachment), which incorporates the school's attainment of its Accountability Plan goals and evidence of the quality of the charter's educational program gathered in its formal evaluative visits. For first year evaluation visits, the Institute focuses on specific qualitative benchmarks that provide a fixed standard for determining the quality of the academic program as the charter progresses toward renewal.





## CHARTER BACKGROUND

# DESTINE PREPARATORY CHARTER SCHOOL

530 Franklin Street, Schenectady, NY | Grades: K-1 | Schenectady CSD

The SUNY Trustees approved the original charter for Destine Prep on October 7, 2021. The charter opened in fall 2022, serving 116 students in Kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> grade.

**MISSION**  
*Destine Preparatory Charter School develops scholars in Kindergarten – 5<sup>th</sup> grade to become future change makers through rigorous academics, social and emotional learning, and affirmation of their identities.*

### CURRENT CHARTER

Serves: Kindergarten – 1<sup>st</sup> Grade  
Chartered Enrollment: 116  
Charter Expiration: July 31, 2027

### ANTICIPATED 2026-27

Grades Served: Kindergarten – 5<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Chartered Enrollment: 435

### KEY DESIGN ELEMENTS

Rigorous academic programming that extends student thought;	+
Equitable systems and structures; and,	+
Family and community partnerships.	+

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In its first year of operation, Destine Prep is establishing effective systems to track and monitor student progress through the regular analysis of assessment data; implementing a rigorous curriculum with a focus on cultivating students' reading skills; and, providing teachers with consistent classroom observations, coaching, and feedback. Destine Prep has opportunities for growth regarding consistent management of student behavior across classrooms and the development of schoolwide systems that will enable teachers to collaborate effectively as the school grows. Destine Prep works to maintain its chartered enrollment, but had difficulty filling all available seats this year. Leaders and board members have clear plans in place to conduct community outreach in an effort to recruit additional families. The school also identifies attendance as an area of concern during the first year of operation. Leaders mitigated this by hiring an attendance officer during this school year, which, along with other efforts, contributed to a significant improvement in attendance over time. Destine Prep board members, leaders, and staff members have reasonable, feasible, and achievable goals and plans for achieving those goals which should facilitate the charter's development as the charter term continues.

Pursuant to the Institute's inspection of Destine Prep at the above address on August 23, 2022, and documentation provided to or inspected by the Institute at that visit and prior/post thereto, the Institute determined that Destine Preparatory Charter School (the "education corporation") had completed substantially all of the Prior Actions required of it as defined in the Charter Agreement between the education corporation and the SUNY Trustees (the "Charter Agreement") for the operation of the school. Therefore, per Section 3.1 of the Charter Agreement, the Institute permitted the education corporation to provide instruction at the school to students in accordance with the plan provided in the Charter Agreement.

## BENCHMARK SUMMARY

### QUALITATIVE BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

The SUNY Renewal Benchmarks, grounded in the body of research from the Center for Urban Studies at Harvard University,<sup>1</sup> describe the elements in place at schools that are highly effective at providing students from low-income backgrounds the instruction, content, knowledge, and skills necessary to produce strong academic performance. The SUNY Renewal Benchmarks, found in Appendix B, describe the elements an effective school must have in place at the time of renewal.<sup>2</sup>

For first year visits, the Institute focuses on academic program benchmarks to establish a baseline measure of the quality of the school's systems and procedures, which heavily affect the progress that a school is able to demonstrate in meeting its Accountability Plan goals during the charter term. The Institute expects a school to have moved from the beginning of implementation and the promise of future growth to full and effective implementation of a quality program by the time the school comes to renewal.

### ASSESSMENT

Destine Prep has an assessment system that improves instructional effectiveness and student learning. The school administers the norm-referenced STEP and MAP assessments in reading and mathematics, respectively, at the beginning, middle, and end of the school year to evaluate and track student progress over time. Students also take internally developed reading and writing interim assessments as well as curriculum-based assessments in science and social studies. The school has a robust system for adjusting instruction according to assessment results, and teachers use assessment data from classrooms and daily exit tickets to determine mathematics and reading interventions for students on a day-to-day basis. Teachers meet weekly to review student assessment data and complete progress reports on student mastery, which provide teachers with a detailed understanding of student progress relative to individual student goals. To further adjust instruction to align with student needs, teachers reteach classroom content if assessment data indicate a majority of students did not master the learning objective. Teachers align on the scoring of assessments at the beginning of the school year to ensure consistency across classrooms and grade levels. The school shares weekly assessment data and real time student updates with families using an online platform called ClassDojo.

### CURRICULUM

Destine Prep has a curricular framework that provides a fixed, underlying structure and aligns with state standards. The charter implements Fishtank for English language arts ("ELA") and social studies, which includes materials designed to support students at all proficiency levels. The STEP literacy curriculum includes 30 minutes of daily phonics instruction as well as daily guided reading in leveled groups based on assessment data. In mathematics, teachers utilize resources from Eureka, which closely aligns with New York State standards. Mathematics instruction implements Cognitively Guided Instruction ("CGI"), an approach that develops students' conceptual understanding of mathematics. The school also uses FOSS, a science program that provides hands-on science experiment kits for student inquiry and exploration. Each curriculum includes

1. An extensive body of research, including a [report from Harvard](#) and a [report from the United States General Accounting Office](#), identifying and confirming the correlates of effective schools exists dating back four decades.

2. Additional details regarding the SUNY Renewal Benchmarks are available on the [Institute's website](#).

## BENCHMARK SUMMARY

scope and sequence documents and unit maps that support teachers' development of unit and lesson plans so teachers know what to teach and when to teach it. Each teacher on the grade level team is responsible for developing the lesson plans for one subject, and then share with the grade team during weekly meetings. Instructional leaders are responsive to teacher feedback on curricular materials. For example, teachers noted that the mathematics curriculum was dense and inadequately paced for students' needs. As a result, the school adjusted professional development to support teachers in unpacking and re-pacing the curriculum, and will work over the upcoming summer to better align the scope and sequence for future years. Similarly, the charter intends to implement a different social studies curriculum next year in response to teacher feedback on the quality of materials in the current program. Following the first year of curriculum implementation, leaders and teachers recognize a need for better alignment across grade levels and adjustments to the scope and sequence documents and unit guides to more effectively meet the academic needs of incoming students. As the school continues to expand and add grade levels, it can codify processes to ensure consistent evaluation and review of the curricular program and the charter's progress toward its goals.

### PEDAGOGY

Destine Prep is developing effective instructional practices across the academic program. Most lessons include clear objectives and aligned lesson activities. During daily reading blocks, teachers respond to data by grouping students according to literacy levels and differentiating instruction to meet the needs of each small group. Teachers present clear strategies for students to use in developing phonics, fluency, and comprehension skills. During mathematics, science, and social studies lessons, however, differentiation is limited and the role of the co-teacher in each classroom is not clearly defined or leveraged effectively to support the needs of students. Teachers circulate regularly to check students' progress on each step of the lesson, but do not consistently respond to misconceptions or provide targeted feedback to students. Leaders recognize that authentic checks for understanding are an area of growth, and recently conducted a professional development session to support teachers in developing abilities to assess trends in student work and provide batched feedback to groups of students in the moment.

Teachers missed opportunities for engaging students in higher order thinking activities such as open-ended questioning, student discourse, and student directed work. Some teachers maximize learning time and implement effective classroom management techniques in order to maintain engagement with the academic content, and most classrooms maintain a focus on academic achievement. However, the Institute observed inconsistency in pacing and clarity of instructions across lessons. The school leader recognizes that inexperienced teachers struggle with whole group management and student transitions and plans to add instructional coaches in the future to develop teachers in classroom management skills and foundational teaching techniques.

### INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

Instructional leaders at Destine Prep establish a culture of high expectations for teachers. The head of school observes most classrooms on a daily basis and provides feedback to teachers in their preferred modality including coaching in real time, modeling instructional techniques, and supporting with one-on-one debriefs



## BENCHMARK SUMMARY

or planning sessions. Despite staffing challenges, instructional leaders have provided consistent guidance and development to teachers throughout the school year. While the level of instructional support is adequate given the small size of the current program, the head of school plans to add an additional instructional coach next year and is considering creating a new director of culture position to sustain a high level of observation and coaching for teachers. Destine Prep's coaching cycle ensures that teachers are aware of individual goals, and school leaders periodically attend grade level team meetings to support teachers in facilitating data analysis and response. While leaders maintain professional development time on Friday afternoons, there is not yet a clear system for selecting and differentiating training topics to meet the distinct needs of the teachers. The school has an opportunity to provide more targeted professional development for new teachers and to further leverage the expertise of experienced staff members.

### AT-RISK PROGRAM

Destine Prep is establishing an effective program to support the needs of at-risk students. Destine Prep uses clear procedures for identifying students struggling academically, students with disabilities, and English language learners ("ELLs"), and the school did not enroll any ELLs in its first year of operation. The school implements targeted interventions for students in accordance with the established response to intervention ("RTI") cycle. While tier 1 instruction addresses students' basic skills and progress through in-class instruction in most lessons, tier 2 interventions generally address behavioral concerns and students who entered late in the year or struggled with consistent attendance. Teachers implement tier 3 supports during pull-out intervention blocks in mathematics and ELA based on data collected on a daily and weekly basis using phonics records and exit tickets as well as formal interim assessments, including MAP and STEP. Teachers and service providers are familiar with students' progress toward individualized goals and record data in tutoring and intervention trackers daily for grade level review each week.

Teachers are aware of students' individualized education program ("IEP") goals and collaborate with special education staff members both during weekly data meetings and informally throughout the school day. After the departure of the special education coordinator early in the school year, a teacher with experience in special education absorbed some of the responsibilities of the role and identified some initial delays with accessing student records and coordinating with the district. However, Destine Prep corrected these issues with the district committee on special education ("CSE"), and the CSE has since been responsive to the evaluation and referral needs of the school. As the school adds additional grades, it has the opportunity to build out its integrated co-teaching ("ICT") classrooms and capacity among the special education coordinator and staff members to maintain the required quality and quantity of support for both students and teachers.

### ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Destine Prep has an organizational structure that allows the school to carry out its academic program appropriately. While this structure enables the charter to operate effectively at its current size, leaders acknowledge the need to systematize processes that currently take place organically as a result of the school's small size. At present, most staff members perform multiple tasks in addition to their core role. As the charter expands, it has the opportunity to clearly define staff members' roles and ensure staff members have the resources necessary to communicate and collaborate when not regularly in close proximity.

## BENCHMARK SUMMARY

Attendance was a challenge for Destine Prep during the first part of the school year. In response to daily attendance rates in the mid-80% range, the school hired an attendance officer and supported families in ensuring students attended school daily. As a result of these efforts, daily attendance has increased to approximately 95%. The charter has likewise struggled to maintain adequate enrollment with its current enrollment at about 75% of chartered enrollment. Destine Prep hired an enrollment coordinator to ensure the charter engages community members and organizations that can support its enrollment efforts, and adjusted the enrollment process to build an accurate list of prospective families after leaders realized the school was losing students between the initial interest and registration stages. Recent efforts aimed at increasing enrollment include tabling at community events, organizing door-to-door canvassing, and employing targeted social media advertising. The school anticipated 62 enrolled Kindergarten seats in the fall, and leaders were considering adding an additional section for the grade if interest persists.

Destine Prep has a discipline system that, when applied appropriately, creates an environment where student learning is paramount. However, while teachers implement behavior management plans with students in need of additional support, classroom climate varies significantly from one classroom to another. The school can better support teachers in effectively managing classrooms to ensure all students are consistently on task and engaged. With the potential addition of a director of culture position next year, Destine Prep can continue to develop its systems and processes for maintaining a positive school culture throughout the charter term.

### BOARD OVERSIGHT & GOVERNANCE

The Destine Prep board of trustees provides appropriate oversight of the school with opportunities for development as the charter term continues. Board members possess a wide range of skills and experience including law, finance, elementary education, and real estate. The board has put in place structures that allow it to govern the school effectively. Board members acknowledge a need for more academic capacity on the board and are seeking additional membership with academic knowledge as well as a parent representative to provide input from the community the board serves. The board also acknowledges the importance of increasing the school's enrollment and ensuring strong attendance rates. Board members monitor enrollment and attendance as well as academic and personnel data via a dashboard the school leader shares at board meetings. Board members are also in regular communication with the school leader by phone, email, and in-person meetings, which provides information on school performance as well as the performance of the school leader. As of the date of the visit, the board had not yet conducted its formal evaluation of the school leader but identified multiple criteria on which the board intends to assess the leader's performance. The board has the opportunity to conduct a more thorough evaluation of its performance relative to specific goals. To date, the board's self-evaluation to date has been largely informal.

Destine Prep

# Ax

## APPENDICES

PAGES Ax 1-14

<sup>A</sup>  
**CO**  
CHARTER  
OVERVIEW

PAGE Ax 1

<sup>B</sup>  
**SB**  
SUNY RENEWAL  
BENCHMARKS

PAGE Ax 3



DESTINE PREPARATORY CHARTER SCHOOL BOARD OF TRUSTEES<sup>1</sup>

CHAIR	TRUSTEES
Raysheea Turner	Georgina Parsons
VICE CHAIR	Chrisheena Hill
Mark Muscatiello	Andrea Leighton
TREASURER	Ashley Whiteside
Raul Castillo	Cheryl Almonte Lare

CHARTER LEADERS

PRINCIPAL
Re’shawn Rogers, Principal (2022-23 to Present)

CHARTER CHARACTERISTICS

SCHOOL YEAR	CHARTERED ENROLLMENT	ACTUAL ENROLLMENT <sup>2</sup>	ACTUAL AS A PERCENTAGE OF CHARTERED ENROLLMENT	GRADES SERVED
2022-23	116	87	75%	K-1

1. Source: The Institute’s board records at the time of the visit.  
2. Source: Institute’s Official Enrollment Binder. (Figures may differ slightly from New York State Report Cards, depending on date of data collection.)

## APPENDIX A: CHARTER SCHOOL OVERVIEW



### CHARTER SCHOOL VISIT HISTORY

SCHOOL YEAR	VISIT TYPE	DATE
2022-23	First Year Visit	May 3, 2023

### CONDUCT OF THE VISIT

DATE(S) OF REVIEW	EVALUATION TEAM MEMBERS	TITLE
May 3, 2023	Maureen Foley	External Consultant
	Katy Clayton	School Evaluation Analyst
	Saadia Santos	Performance and Systems Analyst
	Kathryn Connell-Espinosa	Interim Executive Director

### CHARTER CYCLE CONTEXT

CHARTER TERM	ACCOUNTABILITY PERIOD	ANTICIPATED RENEWAL VISIT
Initial	First Year of a Four Year Accountability Period	Fall 2026





### VERSION 5.0, MAY 2012

### INTRODUCTION

The State University of New York Charter Renewal Benchmarks<sup>1</sup> (the “SUNY Renewal Benchmarks”) serve two primary functions at renewal:

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

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

Precisely how the Institute uses the SUNY Renewal Benchmarks, during both the renewal process and throughout the charter period, is explained in greater detail in the Practices, Policies and Procedures for the Renewal of Charter Schools Authorized by the State University of New York (the “SUNY Renewal Practices”), available on the Institute’s website at: <http://www.newyorkcharters.org/renewal/>. 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.

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

- Despite the fact that the Accountability Plan comprises only a single benchmark, a school’s performance on that benchmark is critical. In fact, it is so important that while the Institute may recommend non-renewal for fiscal and organizational failures (if sufficiently serious), excellence in these areas will not excuse poor academic performance.
- The Institute does not use every benchmark during every kind of renewal review, and how the benchmarks are used differs depending on a school’s circumstances. For example, the Qualitative Education Benchmarks (Benchmarks 1B-1F, 2C and 2D) are given far less weight in making a renewal decision on schools that the Institute has previously renewed. Similarly, less weight is accorded to these benchmarks during an initial renewal review where a school has consistently met its academic Accountability Plan goals.
  - The Institute also may not consider every indicator subsumed under a benchmark when determining if a school has met that benchmark, given the school’s stage of development or its previous track record.
- Aside from Benchmark 1A on academic Accountability Plan goals (which is singular in its importance), no school should fear that a failure to meet every element of every benchmark means that it is not in a position to make a case for renewal. To the contrary, the Institute has yet to see a school that performs perfectly in every respect. The Institute appreciates that the benchmarks set a very high standard collectively. While the Institute certainly hopes and expects that schools aim high, it is understood that a school’s reach will necessarily exceed its grasp in at least some aspects.

In this fifth edition of the SUNY Renewal Benchmarks, the Institute has made some revisions to the Qualitative Educational Benchmarks, namely those benchmarks used for ongoing school evaluation visits, to streamline the collection of evidence. For example, the Institute has incorporated Student Order and Discipline into Pedagogy, and Professional Development into Instructional Leadership. The Institute has rewritten some of the overarching benchmark statements to capture the most salient aspects of school effectiveness, organizational viability, legal compliance, and fiscal soundness. Some of the bulleted indicators within benchmarks have been recast or eliminated. Finally, the Institute has added some indicators to align the benchmarks with changes in the Charter Schools Act (e.g., provisions in meeting enrollment and retention targets when assigned and abiding by the General Municipal Law).

It is important that the entire school community understand the renewal process. All members of a school’s leadership team and board should carefully review both the SUNY Renewal Benchmarks and the SUNY Renewal Practices. Note that a renewal overview document for parents, teacher and community members is also available on the Institute’s website at: <http://www.newyorkcharters.org/renewal/>. Please do not hesitate to contact the Institute with any questions.



**RENEWAL QUESTION 1**  
**IS THE SCHOOL AN ACADEMIC SUCCESS?**

**1A – ACADEMIC ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN GOALS**

**OVER THE ACCOUNTABILITY PERIOD, THE SCHOOL HAS MET OR COME CLOSE TO MEETING ITS ACADEMIC ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN GOALS.**

*The Institute determines the extent to which the school has met the Accountability Plan goals in the following areas:*

- 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.

**1B – USE OF ASSESSMENT DATA**

**THE SCHOOL HAS AN ASSESSMENT SYSTEM THAT IMPROVES INSTRUCTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS AND STUDENT LEARNING.**

*The following elements are generally present:*

- 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.

**1C – CURRICULUM**

**THE SCHOOL’S CURRICULUM SUPPORTS TEACHERS IN THEIR INSTRUCTIONAL PLANNING.**

*The following elements are generally present:*

- 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.

---

## **1D – PEDAGOGY**

### **HIGH QUALITY INSTRUCTION IS EVIDENT THROUGHOUT THE SCHOOL.**

*The following elements are generally present:*

- 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.

---

## **1E – INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP**

### **THE SCHOOL HAS STRONG INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP.**

*The following elements are generally present:*

- 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;
- 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.



## **1F – AT-RISK STUDENTS**

### **THE SCHOOL MEETS THE EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF AT-RISK STUDENTS.**

*The following elements are generally present:*

- 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.
-





### RENEWAL QUESTION 2

#### IS THE SCHOOL AN EFFECTIVE, VIABLE ORGANIZATION?

##### 2A – MISSION & KEY DESIGN ELEMENTS

**THE SCHOOL IS FAITHFUL TO ITS MISSION AND HAS IMPLEMENTED THE KEY DESIGN ELEMENTS INCLUDED IN ITS CHARTER.**

*The following elements are generally present:*

- the school faithfully follows its mission; and
- the school has implemented its key design elements.

##### 2B – PARENTS & STUDENTS

**PARENTS/GUARDIANS AND STUDENTS ARE SATISFIED WITH THE SCHOOL.**

*The following elements are generally present:*

- 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.

##### 2C – ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

**THE SCHOOL ORGANIZATION EFFECTIVELY SUPPORTS THE DELIVERY OF THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM.**

*The following elements are generally present:*

- 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.

## 2D – BOARD OVERSIGHT

### THE SCHOOL BOARD WORKS EFFECTIVELY TO ACHIEVE THE SCHOOL'S ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN GOALS.

*The following elements are generally present:*

- 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;
- the board 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.

## 2E – GOVERNANCE

### THE BOARD IMPLEMENTS, MAINTAINS AND ABIDES BY APPROPRIATE POLICIES, SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES.

*The following elements are generally present:*

- 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 maintain adequate skill sets and expertise for effective governance and structural continuity;
- the board implements a comprehensive and strict conflict of interest policy (and/or code of ethics)—consistent with that set forth in the charter and with the General Municipal Law—and consistently abides by them throughout the term of the charter;

- the board generally avoids conflicts of interest; where not possible, the board manages those conflicts in a clear and transparent manner;
  - the board implements a process for dealing with complaints consistent with that set forth in the charter, makes the complaint policy clear to all stakeholders, and follows the policy including acting on complaints in a timely fashion;
  - the board abides by its by-laws including, but not limited to, provisions regarding trustee election and the removal and filling of vacancies; and
  - the board holds all meetings in accordance with the Open Meetings Law and records minutes for all meetings including executive sessions and, as appropriate, committee meetings.
- 

## **2F – LEGAL REQUIREMENTS**

### **THE SCHOOL SUBSTANTIALLY COMPLIES WITH APPLICABLE LAWS, RULES AND REGULATIONS AND THE PROVISIONS OF ITS CHARTER.**

*The following elements are generally present:*

- 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?**

**3A – BUDGETING AND LONG RANGE PLANNING**

**THE SCHOOL OPERATES PURSUANT TO A LONG-RANGE FINANCIAL PLAN IN WHICH IT CREATES REALISTIC BUDGETS THAT IT MONITORS AND ADJUSTS WHEN APPROPRIATE.**

*The following elements are generally present:*

- 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.

**3B – INTERNAL CONTROLS**

**THE SCHOOL MAINTAINS APPROPRIATE INTERNAL CONTROLS AND PROCEDURES.**

*The following elements are generally present:*

- 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 conditions;
- the school prepares payroll according to appropriate state and federal regulations and school policy;
- the school ensures that employees, trustees and volunteers who handle cash and investments are bonded to help assure the safeguarding of assets; and
- the school takes corrective action in a timely manner to address any internal control or compliance deficiencies identified by its external auditor, the Institute, and/or the State Education Department or the Comptroller, if needed.

### 3C – FINANCIAL REPORTING

**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.**

*The following reports have generally been filed in a timely, accurate and complete manner:*

- 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.

### 3D – FINANCIAL CONDITION

**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).**

*The following elements are generally present:*

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





### RENEWAL QUESTION 4

**IF THE SCHOOL'S CHARTER IS RENEWED, WHAT ARE ITS PLANS FOR THE TERM OF THE NEXT CHARTER PERIOD, AND ARE THEY REASONABLE, FEASIBLE AND ACHIEVABLE?**

#### 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:*

- 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.

#### 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:*

- 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.

#### **4C – PLANS FOR BOARD OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNANCE**

##### **THE SCHOOL PROVIDES A REASONABLE, FEASIBLE AND ACHIEVABLE PLAN FOR BOARD OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNANCE.**

*Based on elements present in the Application for Charter Renewal:*

- 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.

#### **4D – FISCAL & FACILITY PLANS**

##### **THE SCHOOL PROVIDES A REASONABLE, FEASIBLE AND ACHIEVABLE FISCAL PLAN INCLUDING PLANS FOR AN ADEQUATE FACILITY.**

*Based on the elements present in the Application for Charter Renewal:*

- 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.

