

THE SUNY CHARTER SCHOOLS INSTITUTE

*FIRST YEAR SCHOOL EVALUATION REPORT
ROCHESTER ACADEMY OF SCIENCE
CHARTER SCHOOL*

VISIT DATE: MAY 23, 2023

REPORT DATE: JUNE 23, 2023

SUNY Charter Schools Institute

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Charter Schools Institute
The State University of New York

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

This report outlines the SUNY Charter Schools Institute's (the "Institute's") observations and findings from its May 23, 2023 first year school evaluation visit to Rochester Academy of Science Charter School ("Roc Sci").

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

ROCHESTER ACADEMY OF SCIENCE CHARTER SCHOOL

150 Floverton Street Rochester, NY 14610 | Grades: K-1 | Rochester City School District

The SUNY Trustees approved the original charter for Roc Sci on October 7th, 2021. The school opened in Fall 2023, serving 88 students in Kindergarten and 1st grade.

MISSION

Roc Sci will provide an excellent Kindergarten — 12th grade academic experience that ensures all students are prepared for college and careers of the highest potential as academically, socially, emotionally, and physically well-rounded and contributing citizens.

CURRENT YEAR

Serves:
Kindergarten — 1st

Chartered Enrollment:
88

Charter Expiration:
July 31st, 2027

ANTICIPATED 2026-27

Grades Served:
Kindergarten — 5th
9th — 12th

Chartered Enrollment:
720

KEY DESIGN ELEMENTS

| | |
|--|---|
| STEM-infused program; | - |
| Data-driven decision making and continuous improvement; | + |
| Challenging curriculum; | + |
| Closing the gaps by providing instructional support for all students; | + |
| Character development, social-emotional-physical well-being, and healthy lifestyles; | + |
| Teacher training; | + |
| Parents as partners; and, | + |
| College for all. | + |

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The SUNY trustees approved Roc Sci on October 7th, 2021 as a replication of the New York State Board of Regents authorized Buffalo Academy of Science Charter Schools (“Buff Sci”), two STEM focused educational programs serving students in Buffalo. A shared services team supports the Buff Sci schools and Roc Sci with curriculum development, facilities, data collection and reporting, fiscal management, and human resources. In its founding year, Roc Sci successfully replicates the Buff Sci model and will grow to serve Kindergarten — 5th and 9th — 12th grade by the end of the charter term.

Roc Sci utilizes strong assessment and curricular systems provided by the shared services team, which have proven to be effective in the Buff Sci model. Teachers regularly review data and modify the provided curricular materials as needed to support students’ needs. The shared services team provides the school with a clear curricular framework, including pacing guides and lesson plans, for all core content areas. The Roc Sci program administers the provided assessments and curriculum with fidelity, and teachers use capacity that would otherwise be devoted to planning to establish warm classroom environments, strong classroom routines, and frequent checks for student understanding within the lesson.

School leaders effectively established a strong culture of high expectations and academic growth among teachers and students at Roc Sci. However, the articulated plan to expand the leadership team with a principal in residence may not be sufficient to sustain the differentiated observation, coaching, and feedback program necessary to meet the school’s high expectations as the school expands its elementary program while founding the high school program. An executive director and two curriculum and instruction coordinators from the shared services team support Roc Sci. Nearly all of the shared services team is located in Buffalo, New York, and Roc Sci remains geographically isolated from some shared services resources that would be best delivered locally, such as facilities support and on site professional development. In a departure from the school’s original application, members of the shared services team visit Roc Sci one to two times a month rather than every day as originally proposed. The school, shared services team, and board are presently working together to strategically expand leader capacity at Roc Sci and balance time between Rochester and Buffalo until the program is large enough to fiscally support a Rochester based support team.

In its founding year, Roc Sci struggled to maintain enrollment due to initial challenges with the Rochester common charter school application, and the program continues to navigate facility renovations as it prepares a new building for the 2023-24 school year. The board and shared services team evolved to address the enrollment and facilities issues and Roc Sci is poised to begin the 2023-24 school year fully enrolled in the new facility.

Pursuant to the Institute’s inspection of Roc Sci at the above address on August 24th, 2022, documentation provided to or inspected by the Institute at that visit and prior/post thereto the Institute determined that Roc Sci (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,¹ 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.²

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

Roc Sci has a suite of assessments in place that improves instructional effectiveness and student learning. Roc Sci utilizes many of the Buff Sci assessments including internally created benchmark assessments for each quarter in English language arts ("ELA") and mathematics. At the beginning of each year, teachers administer FastBridge diagnostic assessments for ELA and mathematics. The school also administers Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System ("F&P") running records to gather student reading level information. Roc Sci collects data at the beginning of the year to determine specific groupings and individual needs of students. The shared services team supports Roc Sci with the use of its data tracking tools, and these tools support teachers and leaders with analyzing and using data to drive instruction.

Leaders effectively support teachers with data meetings on a weekly basis. Teachers use time in these meetings for various activities, including analyzing data from recent assessments, creating action plans to support differentiating instruction for students, and looking at student work to fully understand student misconceptions. Leaders also work with teachers to build effective strategies for checking understanding in the moment and responding to misconceptions during lesson delivery. The Institute observed evidence that teachers integrate data on student performance in lesson planning and lesson delivery as demonstrated by consistent checks for understanding aligned with learning outcomes. As a result, students regularly receive tailored instruction based on assessment results that drives their understanding and accelerates learning.

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

CURRICULUM

The shared services team furnishes Roc Sci with a comprehensive set of curricular resources that supports teachers with instructional planning. The school uses Eureka for mathematics instruction and Wit & Wisdom and Foundations for ELA instruction. The school stores lesson plans, unit plans, and pacing guides in shared folders so that instructors across all the charters can access materials at any time. Grade level teachers at both Buff Sci and Roc Sci share common planning time to facilitate formal and informal collective planning and collaboration. In this way, teachers and academic leaders across sites share trends that impact modifying lessons and planning for best strategies. Teachers and leaders evaluate lesson materials and pacing guides in conjunction with student performance data to modify pacing as needed. The Institute observed purposeful and focused lessons supported by strong curricular materials in all classroom observations conducted at the time of the visit. Lessons were horizontally aligned and prepared students for future grade-level expectations. Systems to support integrating assessment results with planning and horizontal and vertical alignment will support the school in seamlessly expanding rigor and improving student outcomes as the program continues to expand.

At the time of the visit, science instruction was embedded within the Kindergarten – 1st grade literacy program. While Roc Sci implements a rigorous literacy and mathematics program aligned with state standards, the Institute did not observe lesson formats, content, or enrichment blocks that provided students access to science, technology, or engineering experiences as aligned with the school's key design element of STEM-infused instruction.

PEDAGOGY

Instruction at Roc Sci is rigorous and demonstrates strong classroom routines and systems to check for understanding that support teachers in implementing strategies to increase higher-order thinking. The classroom environment at Roc Sci is warm, and students demonstrate an understanding of internalized routines and expectations. All teachers deliver lessons that are purposeful and aligned with the school's curricula and state standards. Teachers implement the guided release model of instruction that includes a launch, guided practice, independent practice, and assessment activity where students articulate their understanding. Throughout the day, teachers use different lesson formats, such as whole-group instruction, small-group instruction, and individual support. The Institute observed teachers employing varied and regular means to check for understanding including choral response, hand signals, conferring, and circulating to check student work. Teachers checked the understanding of all students more than once during a class period and provided direct feedback to correct misunderstandings in the moment. However, one area leaders recognize for improvement is incorporating more opportunities for students to speak and discuss content during lessons. The Institute observed missed opportunities to showcase student work and facilitate student to student debate and discussion. Some foundational practices exist in the school's story problem content area, which asks students to explain strategies for solving mathematics story problems.

BENCHMARK SUMMARY

INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

Roc Sci's leadership team sets an environment of high expectations and academic accountability for staff members and students alike. The program currently employs a principal as the instructional leader and plans to employ an assistant principal and an academic coordinator in the upcoming school year. As the program continues to expand, experienced teachers will take on additional coaching and observation responsibilities to support the leadership team. Two curriculum and instruction coordinators from the shared services team also periodically support teachers on-site with observation and feedback. At the time of the visit, teachers regularly coordinated with counterparts at Buff Sci during common planning to prepare for the week's upcoming lessons. Some Roc Sci teachers informally meet to review assessment data and plan interventions. All stakeholders report that the principal and shared services team members are responsive to needs and clearly communicate expectations for success. For example, during this school year, leaders emphasized three primary priorities, which include establishing systems and routines, using data to support literacy, and implementing the curriculum with fidelity. All stakeholders effectively convey these priorities, and these focal areas are evident during classroom observations. However, systems are not yet in place to systematically support teacher development. Outside of a formal evaluation, leaders inconsistently conduct observation and coaching or whole staff professional development that supports teachers in developing their practice. As is typical for a school in its initial year, all stakeholders cite scheduling, facility limitations, and the aforementioned priorities as taking precedence over formalizing systems and routines for coaching. As the program expands to serve Kindergarten – 2nd grade and 9th grade in the 2023-24 school year, the program will require differentiated and sustained professional development as well as observation and coaching systems to support instructional effectiveness of a larger teaching staff. If strategically expanded as proposed, Roc Sci's leadership team will be poised to adequately support the teaching staff of both the elementary and future high school programs.

AT-RISK PROGRAM

Roc Sci meets the educational needs of students struggling academically, students with disabilities, and English language learners ("ELLs"). The school implements a clear set of identification strategies that align with compliance requirements to identify ELLs. For students struggling academically, the school has a clear process for analyzing diagnostic data at the beginning of the year to identify students for Response to Intervention ("RTI") services. At the various benchmark points in the school year, leaders review data to verify the effectiveness of student interventions. Outside of these benchmark periods, teachers refer students to the special education coordinator. The school recognizes that the process has been largely informal but effective this school year. Recognizing the informality of the process, the special education coordinator has specific plans in place for the 2023-24 school year and beyond to implement a more dedicated structure and program. The school closely monitors students' progress during the RTI process, and the school, in coordination with families, will refer those not making adequate progress to the district Committee on Special Education.

Leaders disaggregate data for at-risk students in the schoolwide data dashboards to closely monitor student progress. Leaders work with teachers to ensure that service providers collaborate to provide strategies during classroom lessons. For example, occupational therapists share various techniques to support each

BENCHMARK SUMMARY

student when the providers are not directly servicing students. Teachers are well aware of students' needs, accommodations, services, and goals. The school recognizes a need to include more professional development opportunities for working with at-risk students.

The school's ELL program serves students effectively as its ELL population was small this year. Teachers easily support students and implement strategies to support English language acquisition. The school projects increased ELL enrollment for the 2023-24 school year, and leaders and teachers recognize the need to implement additional systems to ensure that teachers and staff members are equipped to serve a larger ELL population.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Roc Sci's organization works effectively to deliver the educational program. The school has a clear organizational structure in which staff members are aware of who to go to for what. The structure features a co-leadership model between the principal, serving as academic leader, and director of operations, serving as operational leader. The shared services team has evolved this year to support working outside of the Buff Sci schools. Operating through a memorandum of agreement, the shared services leadership team is working to balance time between Buffalo and Rochester. As it seeks to expand its team, the shared services team plans to hire individuals based in both cities. For example, the organization hired a chief financial officer this year, and this individual is currently based in Rochester. The shared leadership team recognizes potential issues and works closely to understand specific needs to best support Roc Sci. One example of this, from an operational standpoint, is the need to effectively address facilities issues as they arise.

The school implements a clear discipline system that is consistently applied across the school. Teachers incentivize students positively with 'Roc Sci Bucks' and have clear social emotional learning supports as part of tier 1 instruction. Over the upcoming summer, leaders plan to evaluate practices from the first year of operation and will use the summer to strategically plan for improvement and development. For the academic program, the collaboration with shared services academic leaders supports providing feedback and adjusting the curricular program. For enrollment, the team closely analyzed some pitfalls from the enrollment process from summer 2022 and adjusted its strategies to work toward a healthy, full enrollment, predicted by applications received and a wait list, for the 2023-24 school year.

BOARD OVERSIGHT & GOVERNANCE

The Roc Sci board is developing procedures to effectively support the school as it navigates the unique challenges of replicating the successful Buff Sci model in a different city. Members, with the support of the shared services team, possess adequate skills such as finance and education to support the oversight of Roc Sci's operations. The board uses a committee structure, with finance, governance, and education committees meeting monthly and turnkeying relevant information to the whole board as needed. The board receives quarterly finance and academic reports that it uses to guide decision making and strategic planning. School

BENCHMARK SUMMARY

and shared services staff members periodically join board meetings and provide updates. Through this reporting structure, the board learned of enrollment challenges at Roc Sci and supported the shared services team and school leadership in advocating with Good Schools Roc to enact revisions to the common charter application. For the 2022-23 school year, the board prioritizes successfully replicating the Buff Sci model in Rochester, but has not yet established measurable goals and priorities for Roc Sci or set up systems to track progress toward such goals.

The board is composed of representatives solely from the Buffalo area and the one Rochester member of the board recently resigned. Board members are currently recruiting parent and community representatives from Rochester to join the board. In order to ensure that Roc Sci remains fully represented and resourced, the board can continue to evaluate the effectiveness of shared services delivery as well as monitor the fiscal viability of a Rochester-based support team.

Roc Sci

Ax

APPENDICES

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CHARTER
OVERVIEW

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SB^B
SUNY RENEWAL
BENCHMARKS

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ROCHESTER ACADEMY OF SCIENCE CHARTER SCHOOL BOARD OF TRUSTEES¹

| CHAIR | TRUSTEES |
|--------------------|------------------|
| Ismet Mamnoon | Dr. Selcuk Acar |
| VICE CHAIR | Betty Jean Grant |
| Dr. David Banks | |
| TREASURER | |
| Dr. Mustafa Gokcek | |
| SECRETARY | |
| Karen Wallace | |

CHARTER LEADERS

| PRINCIPAL |
|------------------------------------|
| David McBride (2022-23 to Present) |

CHARTER CHARACTERISTICS

| SCHOOL YEAR | CHARTERED ENROLLMENT | ACTUAL ENROLLMENT ² | ACTUAL AS A PERCENTAGE OF CHARTERED ENROLLMENT | GRADES SERVED |
|-------------|----------------------|--------------------------------|--|---------------|
| 2022-23 | 88 | 75 | 85% | 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 23, 2023 |

CONDUCT OF THE VISIT

| DATE(S) OF REVIEW | EVALUATION TEAM MEMBERS | TITLE |
|-------------------|-------------------------|--|
| May 23, 2023 | Erin Allen | Senior Analyst |
| | Andrew Kile | Managing Director of School Evaluation |
| | Chris Dutkiewicz | School Finance Analyst |

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 Benchmarks¹ (the “SUNY Renewal Benchmarks”) serve two primary functions at renewal:

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

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

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;
- 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.

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.
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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.

