

# THE SUNY CHARTER SCHOOLS INSTITUTE

*FIRST YEAR SCHOOL EVALUATION REPORT  
INTELLECTUS PREPARATORY  
CHARTER SCHOOL*

*VISIT DATE: MAY 18, 2023*

*REPORT DATE: AUGUST 25, 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 18, 2023 first year school evaluation visit to Intellectus Preparatory Charter School (“Intellectus 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. 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

# INTELLECTUS PREPARATORY CHARTER SCHOOL

175 -177 Gramatan Ave Mount Vernon, NY 10550 | Grades: 6 -7 | Mount Vernon

The SUNY Trustees approved the original charter for Intellectus Prep on June 15, 2021. The charter opened in fall 2022, serving 112 students in 6<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> grade.

### “ MISSION

*Intellectus Prep delivers an equitable educational experience for scholars in grades 6 –12. Through experiential learning, restorative practice, and personal development, scholars are prepared to compete academically, contribute socially, and choose their pathway to college and career.*

### CURRENT YEAR

Serves: 6<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup>

Chartered Enrollment:  
112

Charter Expiration:  
July 31, 2027

### ANTICIPATED 2026-27

Grades Served: 6<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup>

Chartered Enrollment:  
528

### KEY DESIGN ELEMENTS

Experiential learning;	-
Enjoyment of learning;	-
Counseling for all;	+
Pathway choice;	+
Family and community partnerships; and,	+
Continuous improvement.	-

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During its first year of operation, Intellectus Prep has yet to develop the necessary instructional systems and organizational capacity to achieve its goals. As a result of teacher vacancies and operational challenges, instructional leaders currently teach multiple lessons and have diminished capacity to deliver high quality coaching. The school's primary challenges are maintaining high levels of student engagement and successfully managing student behavior across all classrooms. At the time of the visit, the majority of lessons of observed had poor classroom management and inconsistent student engagement. As the school grows, instructional leaders have the opportunity to strategically delegate operational responsibilities to free up their time to support teachers in building student engagement.

School leaders are acutely aware that student enrollment, alarmingly low in Intellectus Prep's first year of operation, is of paramount concern. In its first year, the school only had 53% of its chartered enrollment. However, the board and school leadership do not operate with sufficient urgency to aggressively address the enrollment challenge given that the school's projections for next year are still below the allowable enrollment threshold. The school reports it received only 38 applications for 164 available seats by the date of its lottery. Intellectus Prep has the opportunity to dramatically escalate its efforts in the summer to increase enrollment and ensure its long term sustainability.

Despite these challenges, the school has established a clear mission and vision that is communicated across the staff and some of its key design elements are authentically present. For example, the school delivers a full period of counseling and mental health services to all students four times a week supplemented by a weekly schoolwide community circle. Leaders recognize that while they were able to successfully implement these components of the program, the school must work urgently to improve teaching and learning.

Pursuant to the Institute's inspection of Intellectus 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 Intellectus Prep (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

Intellectus Prep is developing an assessment system that supports student learning and instructional effectiveness. Although teachers and leaders have access to data from a variety of standardized and curriculum-based assessments, the school has the opportunity to establish stronger systems for using data to adjust instruction and interventions accordingly. Teachers administer i-Ready assessments three times per year in both English language arts ("ELA") and mathematics to diagnose baseline achievement levels and track student growth throughout the year. Teachers also administer interim assessments twice per year using i-Ready resources aligned to New York State Next Generation Learning Standards. In addition to these standardized assessments, teachers across content areas develop a variety of internally created curriculum-based unit assessments.

While teachers and leaders can speak to broad trends in student performance, Intellectus Prep does not yet have the system to make assessment results actionable such that teachers can make the granular adjustments necessary to meet all students' needs. Teachers access i-Ready results through the program's portal and use an internally created tracker to view interim and unit assessment data. Following each round of interim assessments, teachers attend a professional development day focused on analyzing data and action planning. However, instructional coaching cycles do not result in concrete action plans based on data analysis and the school fails to equip teachers with strategies for data-driven differentiation. Instructional leaders do not adequately evaluate whether curricular modifications or re-teaching strategies are effective based on student assessment results. Although the school uses an extensive teacher evaluation template, at the time of the visit, there was no evidence showing that the school utilized assessment results to formally evaluate teacher effectiveness.

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

Intellectus Prep is developing a curriculum that supports teachers to plan high quality, standards aligned lessons. Instructional leaders have the opportunity to establish systems of accountability that ensure teachers make the necessary curricular modifications to meet student needs. Strong school programs typically deliver high quality professional development around lesson internalization and intellectual preparation. Although the school provides opportunities to make changes based on students' needs during weekly professional development sessions and designated data days, teachers do not consistently annotate and supplement lessons with sufficient differentiation or scaffolding.

Intellectus Prep implements the basic foundations of a sound curriculum including a framework with student performance expectations aligned to state standards for both mathematics and ELA. For mathematics, the school utilizes resources available through i-Ready. For ELA, the school began the year using EL Education but changed course mid-year and transitioned away from the program as a result of instructional leaders' reflection that the curriculum was not working for the student population. The school also offers an internally-developed Latin course to all students. Intellectus Prep implements a robust counseling program driven by the Ripple Effects Whole Spectrum Intervention System. During summer professional development, teachers and leaders developed pacing guides and scope and sequence documents. Leaders plan to formally evaluate the curriculum at the end of the year to make necessary changes in the service of improving student performance.

### PEDAGOGY

Intellectus Prep has not yet established a classroom culture that focuses on academic achievement in its first year of operation. In the majority of lessons, teachers inconsistently applied management strategies such as a merit system. Transitions between lessons and between activities are often slow and sometimes chaotic. As a result, instructional time is lost to redirections, instructions, and behavior management. Although some classrooms featured the majority of students engaged in the lesson, many students opt out of instructional activities altogether and whole class engagement varies. In some classrooms, students participate in serious disruptions and disrespectful behavior which distracts the whole class from the academic content. For example, in one lesson the teacher asked a small group of students to stop talking loudly about non-academic topics. Although the teacher made multiple requests, the students remained non-compliant which resulted in other students becoming distracted from the activity. In one notable exception to the schoolwide trend, a teacher used a system in which students in the class kept the record of merits and demerits and quickly stifled any disruptions. The teacher maintained focus on the academic content and virtually all students were engaged. Intellectus Prep's leadership team has the opportunity to establish a set of schoolwide routines, procedures, and common strategies for mitigating disruptions and maintaining focus on academic achievement.



## BENCHMARK SUMMARY

In lessons where classroom culture was not a barrier to instruction, Intellectus Prep is still beginning to develop quality instruction. While most lesson plans include clear objectives aligned to purposeful activities, teachers do not consistently implement effective checks for understanding, develop higher order thinking and problem solving skills, or maintain classrooms focused on academic achievement. Across classrooms, teachers use some strategies to gauge student understanding including circulating the room, turn and talks, and cold calling. However, in some cases teachers do not conduct whole class readjustments or rephrase directions based on these checks. In some lessons, teachers did not get coverage of the entire classrooms during their circulations as a result of spending time with a single student or small group. Although most lesson plans included opportunities for teachers to develop higher order thinking and problem solving skills, teachers do not consistently ask rigorous questions nor do they push students to elaborate on their initial responses. In some lessons, teachers provided answers before students could complete the cognitive lift.

### INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

Intellectus Prep is developing effective instructional leadership to support teachers. Leaders explicate the school's mission clearly and communicate that student growth and the social emotional well being of students are paramount. However, the school is still defining a clear vision for high quality teaching that can be consistently articulated across all instructional staff members. Leaders acknowledge the need to effectively communicate expectations for teachers and set more granular student growth goals. Given that instructional leaders have teaching responsibilities and shoulder many operational tasks, the capacity for leaders to reinforce expectations and regularly deliver high quality coaching is diminished. When leaders do coach teachers, they use a variety of methods including modeling, observation and debrief, and real-time feedback. Leaders capture strengths and weaknesses, action steps, and their formal evaluations in the SchoolMintGrow digital platform for teachers to access. As a result of the capacity challenges at the school, observations and feedback varied in frequency and intensity throughout the year. The school is still establishing the staffing and systems necessary to deliver coaching effectively tailored to teacher needs. While the school has ample planning time for teachers and weekly half-day professional development time, teachers report the need for better quality professional development, observation, and feedback. Intellectus Prep does not yet use professional improvement plans to hold teachers accountable for quality instruction, instead relying on its limited coaching and observation cycles.

### AT-RISK PROGRAM

Intellectus Prep's at-risk program addresses the needs of its students with disabilities and those at-risk of academic failure. The school has clearly defined screening procedures for identifying at-risk students and provides them with the appropriate interventions. Staff members use a tiered intervention system while implementing a Universal Design for Learning ("UDL") model, ensuring all students receive some level of tier 1 support. The school identifies students requiring targeted tier 2 interventions based on data collected via interim assessments, quarterly grades, and teacher referrals. Students who do not show adequate progress on these interventions move to tier 3 and receive intensive individualized instruction. At the time of the first-year visit, the school did not enroll any English Language Learners ("ELLs") but provided clear processes for identifying potential ELL students through the Home Language Identification Survey.

## BENCHMARK SUMMARY

The school has adequate interventions to meet the needs of at-risk students, using an integrated co-teaching (“ICT”) model for mathematics and ELA, in which two or more teachers work in concert to provide instruction. The school also provides students’ mandated counseling services in addition to its counseling and mental health course for all students. The special populations coordinator works with at-risk program staff and general education teachers to implement strategies to support students within the general education program. Teachers and instructional leaders collaborate weekly to discuss best practices to implement the intervention recommendations of the school’s child study team. The school adequately monitors the progress and success of at-risk students. The special populations coordinator regularly reviews and evaluates student work to design instruction and assessments that can be used to determine progress toward meeting individualized education program (“IEP”) goals.

General and special education teachers attend weekly planning meetings to discuss upcoming lessons, IEP implementation, and progress towards meeting IEP goals. The special populations coordinator is also present to observe these meetings and provide feedback on best practices. The school provides training to both general and special education teachers during summer professional development and throughout the school year around key components of its at-risk program which include UDL, differentiation, and understanding IEPs.

### ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Intellectus Prep is developing an organizational structure necessary to support the delivery of the academic program. The school has not yet established an effective system for recruiting, developing, and retaining high quality teachers. Over the course of its first year, the school’s original director of operations and several teachers left. As a result, the school’s instructional leaders have had to cover classroom instruction and absorb substantial operational responsibilities including scheduling, testing coordination, and facilities management. Leaders report that teaching core classes and executing these operational responsibilities limits the amount of classroom observations and professional development they can provide. As the school grows its grade span and student enrollment, leaders have the opportunity to better define roles and delegate responsibilities in order to maximize time spent supporting teachers.

Since its opening, Intellectus Prep has struggled to submit required documents in a timely manner. During the year, the school received notice that its temporary certificate of occupancy for the facility was expiring and that a number of non-conformances needed attention. Staff members at Intellectus Prep spent several days making significant effort to rectify an otherwise avoidable circumstance and pulling attention and human resources away from ensuring the high quality of instruction. At the time of the visit, the school obtained a renewed temporary certificate of occupancy but had not yet acquired its permanent certificate of occupancy. Also at the time of the visit, Intellectus Prep was extremely delinquent in submitting its Initial Statement Process. At the time of this report, the delinquency is resolved.

## BENCHMARK SUMMARY

The school has a discipline policy that includes a merit and demerit system that teachers can use to manage behaviors within the classroom. Teachers use the digital platform Jupiter to log the data. Despite the demerits system, culture is inconsistent across classrooms and the school does not provide teachers with sufficient training in various strategies to mitigate behavior. Leaders acknowledge that classroom management with specific emphasis on transitions is a pedagogical area of growth for the school.

Intellectus Prep is substantially underenrolled with only 53% of its chartered enrollment. Leaders recognize the need to urgently increase student enrollment but thus far the school's efforts have not resulted in a predicted enrollment that meets the chartered enrollment collar. The school's director of operations leads the recruitment efforts which include an advertising campaign that explicitly highlights the school's key design elements which include mental health services and daily counseling classes. The school anticipates higher enrollment for the 2023-24 school year as they have been building their reputation within the community through aggressive canvassing and advertising. However, the school has only received 38 by the lottery and the predicted future enrollment, while higher than current, is only 69% of the school's chartered enrollment.

### BOARD OVERSIGHT & GOVERNANCE

The Intellectus Prep board is building its capacity to effectively oversee the organization and achieve the school's Accountability Plan goals. Members have deep ties to the Mount Vernon community and possess a range of skills that support in the oversight of the school. The board is actively recruiting for new members and is seeking to increase its capacity in development and facilities management.

The board's committees have clear priorities that include demonstrating academic growth and increasing student enrollment but must work more urgently to make demonstrable progress. Members monitor progress on these priorities through regular reviews of data reported by the school's leadership. This process allows the board to revise its oversight of the program, but the board has yet to develop specific milestones for evaluating its progress. While board members can speak to various plans to increase student recruitment, there is no formal strategic plan that includes actions aligned to various possible contingencies.

Although the board is reflective about the operational hurdles faced by the school, the challenges including low student enrollment, staff turnover, and facilities persist through the end of the first school year. As part of its informal self-evaluation and evaluation of the executive director, the board acknowledges the need to recruit and retain the personnel necessary to mitigate these operational challenges and free up capacity for instructional leaders to focus on academic growth. Further, they are considering multiple options for vendors to provide back office support. The board has the opportunity to increase the intensity of its oversight to ensure that the school is operationally and academically sustainable.

Intellectus Prep

# Ax

APPENDICES

PAGES Ax 1-14

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

PAGE Ax 1

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

PAGE Ax 3



## INTELLECTUS PREPARATORY CHARTER SCHOOL BOARD OF TRUSTEES<sup>1</sup>

CHAIR	TRUSTEES
Sheuvaun Vernon	David Everett
VICE CHAIR	Dr. Edgar Hobbs
Stacy Larson	Nadia Lopez
SECRETARY	Tyrone McKinney
Terrence Turner	

## CHARTER LEADERS

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**  
*Kenyah Miller, Executive Director (2022-23 to Present)*

**PRINCIPAL**  
*Julie Miller, 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	112	59	53%	6-7

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.)



## CHARTER SCHOOL VISIT HISTORY

SCHOOL YEAR	VISIT TYPE	DATE
2022-23	First Year Visit	May 18, 2023

## CONDUCT OF THE VISIT

DATE(S) OF REVIEW	EVALUATION TEAM MEMBERS	TITLE
May 18, 2023	Sinnjinn Bucknell	Director of Performance and Systems
	Katie Maron	External Consultant

## CHARTER CYCLE CONTEXT

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



**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.

