

THE SUNY CHARTER SCHOOLS INSTITUTE

SCHOOL EVALUATION REPORT
**TRUXTON ACADEMY CHARTER
SCHOOL**

VISIT DATE: MAY 24 – 25, 2023

REPORT DATE: JUNE 29, 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 School Evaluation Report offers an analysis of evidence collected during the school visit to Truxton Academy Charter School (“Truxton”) on May 24 – 25, 2023. While the SUNY Charter Schools Institute (the “Institute”) conducts a comprehensive review of evidence related to all the State University of New York Charter Renewal Benchmarks (the “SUNY Renewal Benchmarks”) near the end of a charter term, most mid-cycle charter school evaluation visits focus on a subset of these benchmarks addressing the academic success of the charter and the effectiveness and viability of the charter school organization. It provides a framework for examining the quality of the educational program, focusing on teaching and learning (e.g., curriculum, instruction, assessment, and services for at-risk students), as well as leadership, organizational capacity, and board oversight. The Institute uses the established criteria on a regular basis to provide schools with a consistent set of expectations leading up to renewal.

Appendix A to the report contains a Charter Overview with descriptive and historical information about the school, as well as background information on the conduct of the visit. Together this information puts the visit in the context of the school’s current charter cycle. Appendix B provides the SUNY Renewal Benchmarks.

This report does not contain an overall statement that would specify the school’s prospects for renewal. Rather, it serves as a summary of the school’s program based on a subset of the SUNY Renewal Benchmarks. The Institute intends this selection of information to be an exception report in order to highlight areas of concern. As such, limited detail about positive elements of the educational program does not indicate the Institute does not recognize the program’s overall effectiveness.





CHARTER BACKGROUND

TRUXTON ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOL

6337 Academy St, Truxton, NY 13158 | Grades: K-5 | Homer Central School District

The State University of New York Board of Trustees (the “SUNY Trustees”) approved the original charter for Truxton on October 18, 2018. The school opened in fall 2019, serving 69 students in Kindergarten – 3rd grade.

MISSION
Truxton Academy Charter School will cultivate an enthusiasm for learning through a project based curriculum that celebrates our rural life, environmental stewardship, and our agricultural heritage. Using real world, student centered learning we will plant a foundation for future academic success.

CURRENT CHARTER
Serves: Kindergarten – 5th
Chartered Enrollment: 117
Charter Expiration: July 31, 2024

KEY DESIGN ELEMENTS

Project-based learning;	—
Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (“STEM”) with an agricultural and environmental focus;	—
Spanish elementary curriculum; and,	+
School culture.	—

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Truxton experienced the departure of its founding school leader after the 2021-22 school year and struggled with considerable turnover in staff members during the 2022-23 school year. As a result, the school's adult culture deteriorated since the previous school year, which is negatively impacting student culture and achievement. At the time of the spring 2023 visit, the entire school leadership team was new and every stakeholder group cited a breakdown in communication, school culture, and systems across the school.

The school's current leadership team is ineffective in righting the school culture problems and running a sound educational program as measured by the qualitative education benchmarks. Board members and school leaders are not aligned on a vision for the school's adult culture or educational priorities. The school reconfigured its organizational structure multiple times this year in response to the departure of several staff members and emerging issues related to student behavior and performance. The school hired a new student achievement coordinator in February 2023, but quickly moved that individual into a dean of students role. As a result of multiple conflicts between the head of school and teachers, the school shifted the dean of students role a second time to be the primary point of contact and support for teachers. Leaders and the board have not identified or communicated clear priorities or effectively navigated the challenges the school has faced throughout the 2022-23 school year. The school has no systems in place to develop teachers' pedagogical skills nor its curricular program in alignment with Truxton's key design elements and Accountability Plan goals.

The Institute's analysis of the school's program finds a lack of consistent, effective systems across each benchmark area. Most notably, the school's teaching and learning is not sufficiently rigorous to prepare students to meet and exceed state standards. Although teachers establish safe and welcoming environments, the school does not have a common set of teaching practices or an instructional framework supporting cohesive teaching systems across the school. Teachers select supplemental curricular materials with little to no oversight or guidance from instructional leaders. The school's lack of systems gives teachers significant leeway in choosing supplemental instructional materials and little coordination to ensure their effective implementation. Some teachers prioritized previous grade standards and reported not meeting the rigor of the current grade's standards, specifically in mathematics, leading to students falling further behind in grade level work. Leaders and the board recognize problems with the current curricular programs but do not have clear, realistic, and achievable plans for improvement.

Truxton is not meeting its Accountability Plan goals, and it does not provide evidence for a high quality educational program as measured by the Institute's qualitative benchmarks. In alignment with the SUNY Trustees' Policies for the Renewal of Not-for-Profit Charter School Education Corporations and Charter Schools Authorized by the Board of Trustees of the State University of New York ("SUNY Renewal Policies"), Truxton is far from meeting the SUNY Trustees' criteria for renewal in its fourth year. The Institute provided a Performance Review to the school indicating it did not meet either its English language arts ("ELA") or mathematics goal in 2021-22. Truxton's performance must improve to make the strongest case possible for renewal as the charter's renewal is currently in jeopardy.

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

2021-22 CHARTER PERFORMANCE REVIEW

At the beginning of the Accountability Period,¹ the school developed and adopted an Accountability Plan that set academic goals in the key subjects of ELA and mathematics. For each goal in the Accountability Plan, specific outcome measures define the level of performance necessary to meet that goal. Throughout the charter term, the Institute examines results for five required Accountability Plan measures on an annual basis and provides an Accountability Dossier to each school detailing the school's progress toward meeting its Accountability Plan goals. Because the Act requires charters be held "accountable for meeting measurable student achievement results"² and states the educational programs at a charter school must "meet or exceed the student performance standards adopted by the board of regents"³ for other public schools, SUNY's required accountability measures rest on performance as measured by statewide assessments. More information about the required Accountability Plan measures can be found on the [Institute's website](#).

In 2021-22, the first year with credible scores from the state's ELA and mathematics assessments suitable for analysis following the cancellation of the exams in 2019-20, Truxton did not meet either of its key academic Accountability Plan goals in ELA or mathematics. The charter must improve from this baseline performance level to make a compelling case for earning a renewal in fall 2023.

In 2021-22, Truxton did not meet its ELA goal. With 22% of students enrolled in at least their second year scoring at or above proficiency on the state's ELA assessment for students in 3rd and 4th grade, the charter scored lower than the local district's proficiency rate by about 15 percentage points and much lower than the absolute performance target of 75%. Given that the charter enrolls a plurality of its students from a different district than the local district, Truxton has the opportunity to establish a more suitable additional comparison group for accountability purposes. Truxton posted a comparative effect size of -1.43 in ELA. This indicates the charter performed far lower than expected in comparison to schools throughout the state enrolling similar percentages of economically disadvantaged students.

Truxton did not meet its mathematics goal in 2021-22. That year, about 17% of students enrolled in at least their second year scored at or above proficiency on the state's mathematics assessment for students in 3rd and 4th grade. At 17%, the charter scored 34 percentage points lower than the local district and 58 percentage points lower than the absolute target of 75% proficiency. In comparison to schools across the state enrolling similar concentrations of economically disadvantaged students, Truxton's effect size of -2.05 demonstrates the charter performed lower than expected to a large degree.

1. Because the SUNY Trustees make a renewal decision before student achievement results for the final year of a charter term become available, the Accountability Period ends with the school year prior to the final year of the charter term. In the case of initial renewal, the Accountability Period covers the first four years of the charter term.

2. Education Law § 2850(2)(f).

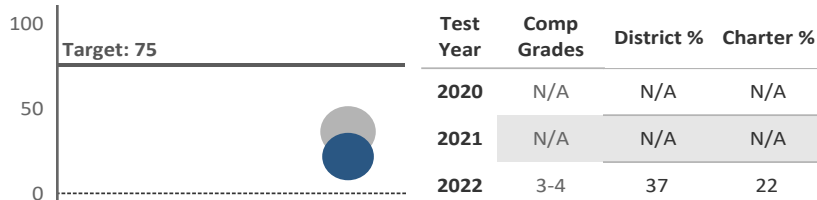
3. Education Law § 2854(1)(d).

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

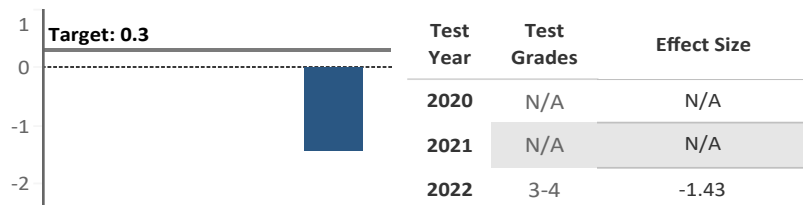
TRUXTON ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOL

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN GOAL

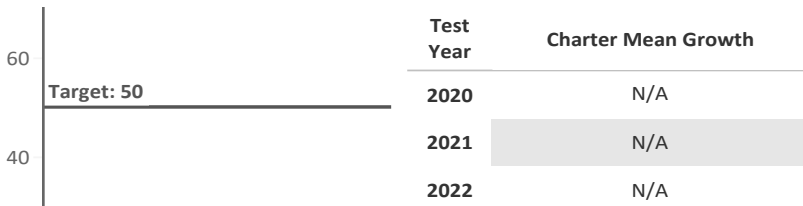
District Comparison. The percentage of students at **the charter** performing at or above proficiency in ELA compared to the district.



Effect Size. The chart shows charter's effect size above its predicted level of performance in **ELA** according to a regression analysis controlling for economically disadvantaged students among all public schools in New York State.

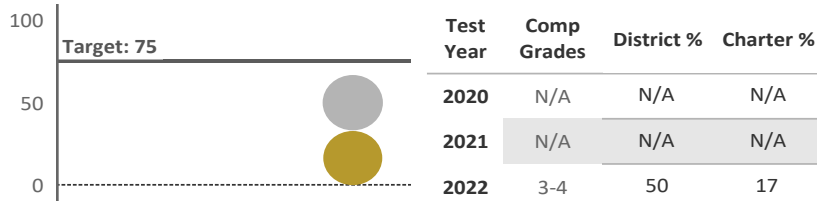


Comparative Growth Measure: Mean Growth Percentile. The charter's unadjusted mean growth percentile for all students in grades 4-8 will be above target of 50 in **ELA**.

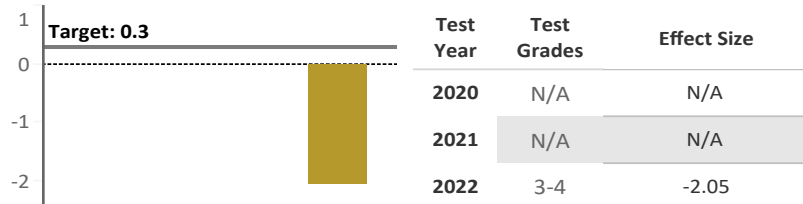


MATHEMATICS ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN GOAL

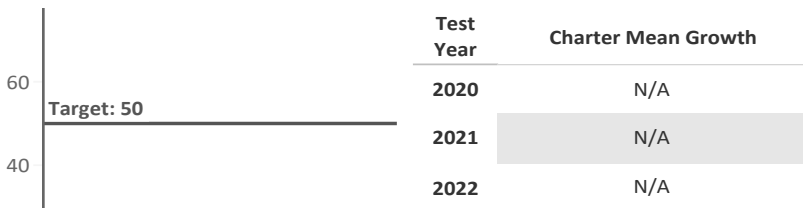
District Comparison. The percentage of students at **the charter** performing at or above proficiency in mathematics compared to the district.



Effect Size. The chart shows charter's effect size above its predicted level of performance in **mathematics** according to a regression analysis controlling for economically disadvantaged students among all public schools in New York State.



Comparative Growth Measure: Mean Growth Percentile. The charter's unadjusted mean growth percentile for all students in grades 4-8 will be above target of 50 in **mathematics**.



ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

TRUXTON ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOL



SPECIAL POPULATIONS PERFORMANCE*	
2022	
Students with Disabilities Enrollment	7
Tested on State Exam	5
Charter Percent Proficient on ELA Exam	s
District Percent Proficient	0.0
ELL Enrollment	1
Tested on NYSESLAT Exam	1
Charter Percent 'Commanding' or Making Progress	s

* The academic outcome data about the performance of students receiving special education services and English language learners ("ELLs") above is not tied to separate goals in the charter school's formal Accountability Plan. The NYSESLAT, the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test, is a standardized state exam. "Making Progress" is defined as moving up at least one level of proficiency. Student scores fall into five categories/proficiency levels: Entering; Emerging; Transitioning; Expanding; and, Commanding. In order to comply with Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act regulations on reporting education outcome data, the Institute does not report assessment results for groups containing five or fewer students and indicates this with an "s".

BENCHMARK SUMMARY

QUALITATIVE BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

The SUNY Renewal Benchmarks, grounded in the body of research from the Center for Urban Studies at Harvard University,⁴ 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 charter school must have in place at the time of renewal.⁵

ASSESSMENT

Truxton routinely collects assessment data from several sources but does not implement systems to support teachers in effectively using assessment data to improve instructional effectiveness and student learning. The school administers the NWEA MAP (“MAP”) assessment three times in the school year. Some staff members are unaware of how to access data and are unaware of all the resources available to support students, such as Khan Academy. The school primarily uses assessments from TERC Investigations, but teachers do not have clear expectations for scoring or administering assessments. Leaders do not use assessment results to evaluate teacher effectiveness or develop professional development and coaching strategies.

Teachers use some data to inform classroom instructional practices. Teachers assign teaching assistants (“TAs”) groups based on MAP data, the Fountas & Pinnell benchmark assessment system (“F&P”), and other formative assessment results to support with small group instruction. TAs play an active role in the day to day teaching and learning but do not have access to student performance results to inform their practice.

The school ineffectively communicates information about student performance results to families. Teachers do not use a consistent set of grading standards, and one class did not receive any grades or scores until a teacher transition occurred mid-year. Students and parents are largely unaware of student performance due to mixed expectations for teachers to score and assign grades. Leaders did not share the school’s spring 2022 state test results or the district comparison data with teachers in a timely fashion, which led to teachers not having a clear understanding of student performance until late in the school year.

CURRICULUM

Truxton, at the time of the visit, did not have a clear curricular program in place for any subject with the exception of a pilot of the CKLA ELA curriculum in Kindergarten and 1st grade, with plans to implement the program across all grades in 2023-24. For mathematics, the school provided TERC Investigations for all grades. However, teachers reported mixed utilization of the curriculum and often supplemented the program with a wide range of materials. Leaders do not have a system for vetting supplemental materials, and a consistent experience in mathematics for students across all grade levels is not evident. During the spring 2022 visit, previous leaders recognized the deficits in the mathematics program and shared a plan to develop the

4. 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.

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

BENCHMARK SUMMARY

Investigations curriculum to better align with the rigor of the New York State standards by restructuring the scope and sequence documents and adding high quality supplemental materials. However, the school did not complete this work, and so leaders do not make appropriate adjustments or provide adequate oversight of a curricular program with minimal alignment to the rigor of the state standards.

This year, leaders demonstrated a promising practice by implementing a targeted instruction protocol. Teachers use available data to determine specific, small groupings of students. Multiple staff members support classroom teachers by delivering targeted instruction to each small group in a push in or pull out format. TAs and other staff members support this effort using a variety of programs such as Road to Reading, Reading A-Z, and more. However, while the school has access to a wide range of curricular materials, it does not have a clear system for communicating what is available to teachers or direction on how to use the materials and resources. Teachers sometimes find out about available resources from students having used a program in a previous grade, or from other teachers.

In addition to a lack of overall curricular systems, leaders provide little to no oversight over daily lesson plans, and teachers do not use a consistent template or have clear expectations for what should be included in lessons.

Truxton provides teachers with materials from Investigations and the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project, but leaders do not provide clear guidance on what to teach and when to teach it. As a result, teachers do not consistently use these resources to adhere to a defined, aligned curricular program. For mathematics, some teachers reported going back to spend the beginning few months of school on previous grade's standards, with little to no oversight from leadership, causing students to fall further behind as teachers report not having enough time to cover the rigor of standards for their current grade level. Based on the inconsistencies in accessing available resources and the lack of a clear curricular framework, teachers do not know what to teach and when to teach it. The school's curriculum committee, primarily made up of board members and leaders with minimal representation of experienced Truxton teachers, has been exploring different options for new curricular programs for the better part of a year, with no firm decisions or roll out timelines in place.

PEDAGOGY

Truxton's instruction is ineffective and not sufficiently rigorous to prepare students to meet and exceed state standards. There is limited evidence of project-based learning, a key design element on which the school was founded. Most lessons are not driven by clear objectives or an underlying curricular structure. While some lessons had an objective written or posted, the objectives were not aligned with the rigor of state standards, nor did lesson activities drive toward a single learning goal. The Institute observed most teachers using questioning techniques such as hand signals, cold calling, or choral response to increase engagement and gauge understanding. However, since teachers had not internalized the lesson objective with common misconceptions, these checks for understanding were often ineffective and misaligned with the lesson.

BENCHMARK SUMMARY

Furthermore, Institute staff observed effective strategies to encourage higher order thinking in fewer than 20% of all lessons observed. Truxton would benefit from structured professional development program that develops teachers' capacity to plan and deliver effective lessons, check for understanding, and deepen the understanding of all students.

School leaders and the board identified remediating negative behaviors and implementing a more cohesive behavior management plan as a priority for the 2023-23 school year. As evidence of this prioritization, most classrooms are warm and inviting, and students are engaged and eager to learn. Students have opportunities to access content in different ways and to receive individualized attention from different adults in the room. There was evidence of some effective differentiation processes in place. Institute staff members rarely observed instances of misbehavior that detracted from the classroom environment. Truxton urgently needs to implement a comprehensive plan to develop teachers' capacity to plan and deliver effective instruction at Truxton while maintaining warm classroom environments conducive to learning.

INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

Truxton experienced leader turnover during the 2022-23 school year, and the new instructional leadership is not yet effective in its support of teachers. The board has not yet established systems to support an instructional leadership team in developing teachers to effectively deliver the academic program. Furthermore, while the school has some collaborative meetings and routines such as bi-monthly staff meetings and weekly co-planning, instructional and non-instructional staff members report the time is ineffective and often used to address emergent issues, or not used at all. At the time of the Institute's visit, all staff members reported breakdowns in communication and support systems, which resulted in confusion, frustration, and lack of classroom support. Leaders do not provide sustained and effective coaching and supervision that improves pedagogical skills, nor are systems in place to provide teachers with regular professional development or collaborative planning across grade levels and content areas. At the time of the Institute's visit in late May, instructional staff members had not received formal evaluation feedback or any written or verbal feedback from informal observations. Teachers were unaware of their strengths, weaknesses, criteria for success, and alignment with schoolwide priorities. The school delivers little to no professional development including opportunities to build teachers' skills and knowledge with analyzing and using student assessment data to drive instruction.

Truxton's leadership team does not work cohesively with the board to remedy the negative elements of adult school culture. The board does not effectively hold leaders accountable for maintaining a school environment conducive to high quality instruction and professionalism. Across all stakeholder groups the Institute interviewed, the school does not have a sense of trust among instructional staff members that supports establishing an organizational climate favorable to implementing systems that would improve the effectiveness of the educational program.

BENCHMARK SUMMARY

AT-RISK PROGRAM

Truxton does not have the systems and procedures required to consistently meet the educational needs of at-risk students. The school, at the time of the Institute's visit, recently hired a special education coordinator to support the delivery of services to students with disabilities. The program has rudimentary systems in place to deliver a response to intervention ("RTI") program based on fall and winter NWEA MAP performance data with the support of two interventionists. During the school evaluation visit, the Institute observed students receiving push-in and pull-out intervention services. However, Truxton staff members report that the school does not have clear procedures for teachers to access individualized education programs ("IEPs"), refer students in need of additional services, or track special education teacher support services ("SETSS") delivery. Multiple staff members, including special education providers and general education staff members, report delays in accessing students' IEPs as well as progress monitoring for IEP goals. The program has not provided formal professional development on differentiation strategies for students with disabilities or English language learners ("ELLs"). Teachers informally collaborate during common planning time, but leaders have not established clear expectations for the content for or frequency of collaboration between support staff members and general education teachers. Truxton does not have the systems to adequately monitor the academic progress of students at risk of academic failure or to support students in making sufficient academic progress.

The program identifies and monitors the academic progress of its single ELL student through the administration of the New York State Identification Test for English Language Learners ("NYSITELL") and New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test ("NYSESLAT"), respectively. The school provides additional supports and teaching to its ELL student, but teachers and other staff members were largely unaware of how to best support ELL students.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Truxton does not have a consistent administrative structure in place with clearly defined roles and responsibilities that support the delivery of school's educational program. Beginning with the departure of the founding school leader in July 2022, the school has experienced ongoing turnover of operational and instructional leaders, teachers, and board members. In addition to these transitions, the head of school and the charter's board elected to restructure the leadership team, eliminating the school leader's responsibility for directly managing the teaching staff. As of the May 25, 2023 visit, the student achievement coordinator had shifted into a dean of students role in response to student discipline issues. The board also tasked the dean of students with managing the school's data systems and overseeing all instructional staff. The school has not clearly outlined the roles and responsibilities of the different leadership team members including confusion with reporting structures. The school does not currently maintain operational systems, policies, and procedures to ensure continuity in delivery of the academic program. Teachers report not knowing where to go for support or school related questions, and communication is a significant challenge at Truxton. The board, school leader, leadership team, and teachers all identify different priorities for the academic year, and

BENCHMARK SUMMARY

the school lacks a cogent system for monitoring and evaluating the school's programs to efficiently address problems or make changes in response to clear organizational gaps and pervasive academic and cultural issues. While the school is currently within its collared enrollment, more than half of the 5th grade class exited the school midyear following a personnel issue, and leaders are discussing the need to create a blended 5th – 6th grade cohort in the upcoming academic year. While the charter was fully staffed at the time of the visit, the number of teachers planning to return in the upcoming school year was markedly lower than school leaders originally reported, indicating failures in the leadership's processes for transparently evaluating teachers, extending timely offer letters, and obtaining commitments for future staffing of the school. The Institute identified significant concerns regarding the school's ability to effectively carry out the academic program in the final year of its charter term if the organization's communication, administrative, and staffing challenges continue.

BOARD OVERSIGHT & GOVERNANCE

The Truxton board does not implement clear structures and procedures to effectively govern the school. Board members are committed to the school, rooted in the community, equipped with skills in finance, education, local business, and representative of local parent interests. The board maintains a committee structure and identifies legal expertise as an area of need as it recruits new members for recently vacated seats. However, clear systems for communication, progress monitoring, and accountability between the school organization and the board of trustees are not evident, and the board acknowledges its oversight of the academic program under the previous leader was insufficient. To correct course, the board increased involvement in day-to-day management of school operations, as evidenced by the decision to move the board secretary (non-voting) into a permanent director of operations role in the spring of 2023 to address ongoing personnel issues at the school. The board is actively involved with screening, interviewing, and hiring candidates for school-based staff members. Board members and school leaders expect to lose staff members who they believe are not aligned with the current vision of the school; however, efforts to retain existing staff members are limited, and teachers and leaders cite dissatisfaction with the salary schedule and benefits package.

When it became clear in the early months of the leadership transition that the school leader struggled with communication and culture building among staff, the board did not act quickly to bring in additional support. The board directed the new student achievement coordinator to take over student discipline, and eventually added the responsibility of managing all teacher communication, oversight, and development due to lingering conflicts between teaching staff and the school leader. While the board brought in an external partner to manage two different mediation sessions, all stakeholders acknowledge that they have not been effective, due in part to failures of communication surrounding the purpose and expectations of the time.

The board intends to build out systems, leverage consultant support, and clarify roles and ownership of responsibilities for both the board and leadership team, but does not have a clear plan to immediately address the issues with which the school has struggled throughout the fourth year of the charter term. For example, the Institute identified, and the board recognized, deficiencies in the curricular programs in spring of 2022.

BENCHMARK SUMMARY

Although the board formed a curriculum committee to remediate the deficiencies, the school continues to use the same limited programs in most grades and subjects, and leaders have not provided teaching staff with resources for the upcoming school year. As such, teachers have continued to supplement a range of resources, and instruction continues to misalign with the rigor of the grade level standards.

At the time of the visit, the board was conducting its evaluation of the new school leader, but it has not yet evaluated its performance. While the Institute heard of several different priorities for the academic year, the short and long term goals were not specific or attached to measurable benchmarks to support progress monitoring. While most stakeholders identify academic growth as a priority for the year, the growth targets were not clearly defined. The board receives regular reports from the school leader and director of operations on MAP testing data, discipline and behavior data, attendance, climate and culture, and finances, but without benchmarks to compare against, it is not equipped to determine which policy changes and interventions are producing significant positive or negative impacts on the performance of students or the health of the organization.

Truxton

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APPENDICES

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CO^A
CHARTER
OVERVIEW

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SB^B
SUNY RENEWAL
BENCHMARKS

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TRUXTON ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOL BOARD OF TRUSTEES¹

CHAIR

Stuart Young

VICE CHAIR

Krysta Austen

TREASURER

Korinne L’Hommedieu

TRUSTEES

Lucinda Denkenberger

Tom Brown

Sarah Stevens

CHARTER LEADERS

HEAD OF SCHOOL

Kerryanne Schenck, Head of School (2022-23 to Present)

Sara Petit-McClure, Head of School (2019-20 to 2021-22)

CHARTER CHARACTERISTICS

SCHOOL YEAR	CHARTERED ENROLLMENT	ACTUAL ENROLLMENT ²	ACTUAL AS A PERCENTAGE OF CHARTERED ENROLLMENT	GRADES SERVED
2020-21	69	60	87%	K-3
2021-22	95	98	103%	K-4
2022-23	117	101	86%	K-5

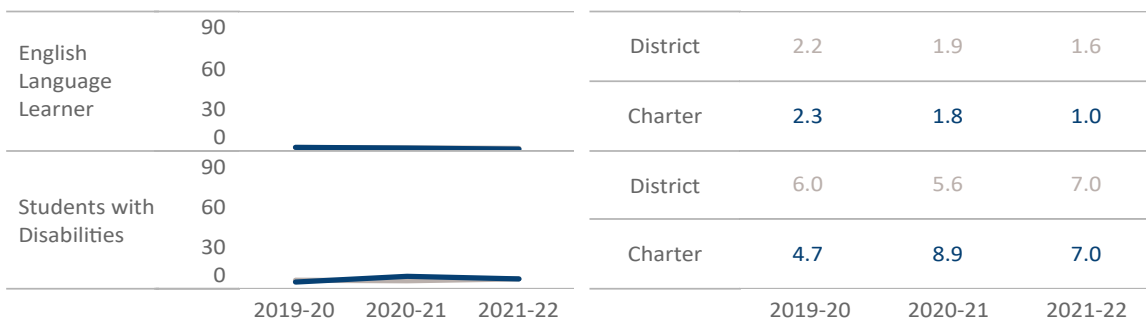
1. Source: The Institute’s board records at the time of the visit.

2. Source: Institute’s Official Enrollment Binder. (Figures may differ slightly from New York State Report Cards, depending on date of data collection.)

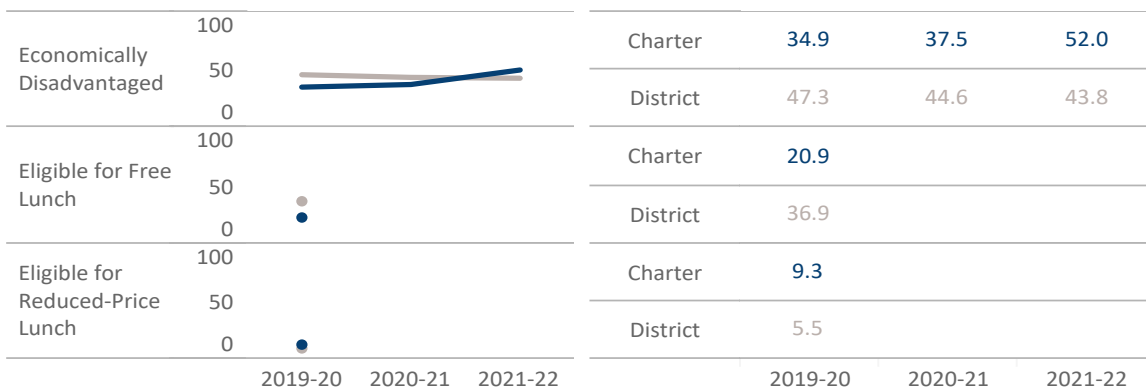
Truxton Academy Charter School

Homer Central School District

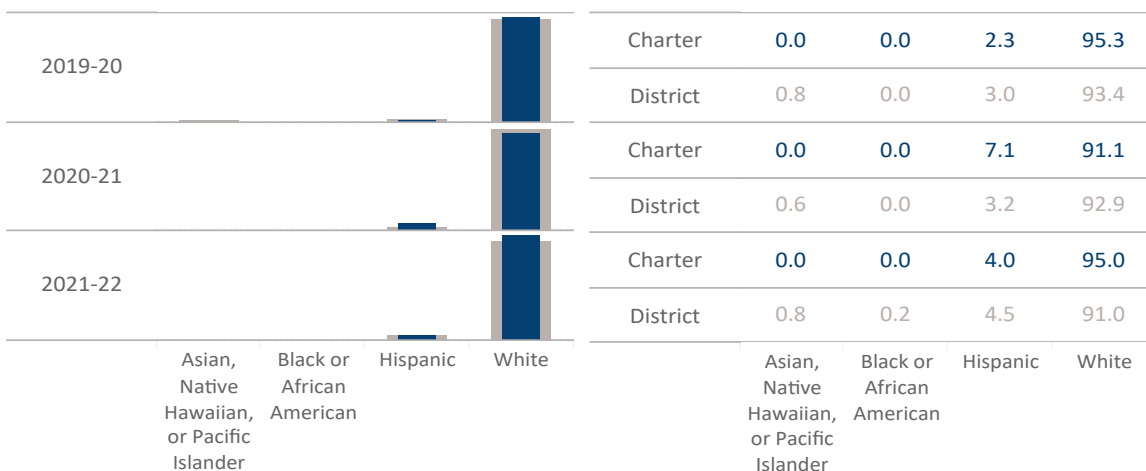
Student Demographics: Special Populations



Student Demographics: Free/Reduced Lunch



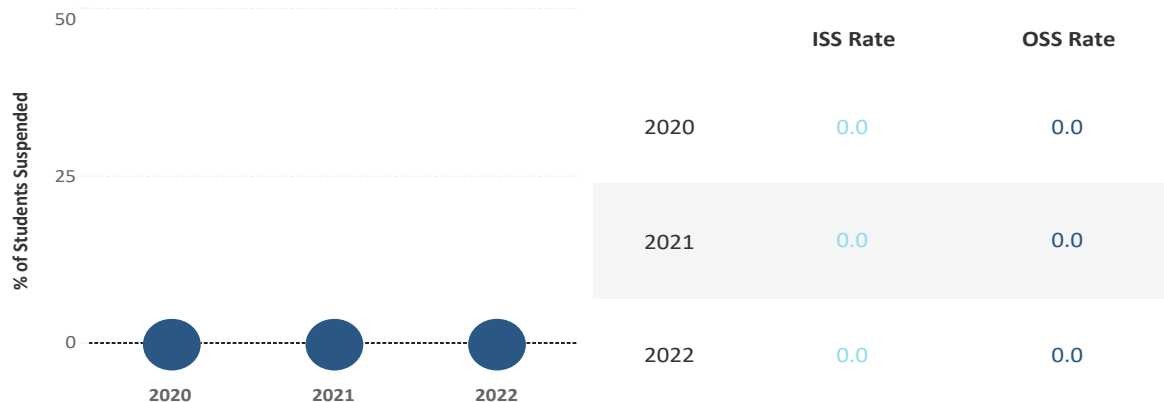
Student Demographics: Race/Ethnicity



* Data reported in these charts reflect BEDS day enrollment counts as reported by the NYSED except for the charter's 2020-21 ELL enrollment which reflects data reported by the education corporation and validated by the Institute.

Truxton Academy Charter School

Homer Central School District



Data suitable for comparison are not available. The percentage rate shown here is calculated using the method employed by NYCDOE: the total number of students receiving an in school or out of school suspension at any time during the school year is divided by the total enrollment, then multiplied by 100.

Persistence in Enrollment: The percentage of students eligible to return from previous year who did return



Expulsions: The number of students expelled from the charter each year

2020	2021	2022
0	0	0

Truxton Academy Charter School's Enrollment and Retention Status: 2021-22

		Target	Charter
enrollment	economically disadvantaged	43.4	52.0
	English language learners	0.8	1.0
	students with disabilities	11.0	7.0
retention	economically disadvantaged	93.3	85.7
	English language learners	93.8	100.0
	students with disabilities	93.2	60.0

* Data reported in these charts reflect information reported by the education corporation and validated by the Institute.

APPENDIX A: CHARTER SCHOOL OVERVIEW



CHARTER SCHOOL VISIT HISTORY

SCHOOL YEAR	VISIT TYPE	DATE
2020-21	First Year Visit (Virtual)	May 12, 2021
2021-22	Evaluation Visit	May 4, 2022
2022-23	Evaluation Visit	May 24 – 25, 2023

CONDUCT OF THE VISIT

DATE(S) OF REVIEW	EVALUATION TEAM MEMBERS	TITLE
May 24 – 25, 2023	Andrew Kile	Managing Director of School Evaluation
	Katy Clayton	School Evaluation Analyst
	Erin Allen	Senior Analyst

CHARTER CYCLE CONTEXT

CHARTER TERM	ACCOUNTABILITY PERIOD	ANTICIPATED RENEWAL VISIT
Initial	Third Year of a Four Year Accountability Period	Fall 2023

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:

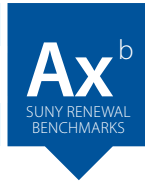
- teachers deliver purposeful lessons with clear objectives aligned to the school's curriculum;
- teachers regularly and effectively use techniques to check for student understanding;
- teachers include opportunities in their lessons to challenge students with questions and activities that develop depth 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.
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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.
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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.

