

THE SUNY CHARTER SCHOOLS INSTITUTE

SCHOOL EVALUATION REPORT
**DESTINE PREPARATORY
CHARTER SCHOOL**

VISIT DATE: APRIL 9, 2025

REPORT DATE: JUNE 24, 2025

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 Destine Preparatory Charter School (“Destine Prep”) on April 9, 2025. 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 school 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, pedagogy, 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.

The Appendix to the report contains a School 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 term.

This report serves as a summary of the school’s program based on the Qualitative Education 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 is not an indication that the Institute does not recognize other indicators of program effectiveness.

While the Institute posts the evaluation report on its website and makes it publicly available, the Institute encourages school leaders to share the report with its stakeholders including, but not limited to, the full board of trustees, staff members, and families.





CHARTER BACKGROUND

DESTINE PREPARATORY CHARTER SCHOOL

530 Franklin Street, Schenectady, NY 12305 | Grades: K-3 | Schenectady City School District



MISSION

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

CURRENT CHARTER

Opened:
2022

Serves:
Kindergarten – 3rd

Chartered Enrollment:
261

Charter Expiration:
July 31, 2027

KEY DESIGN ELEMENTS

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

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As Destine Prep has grown to serve Kindergarten – 3rd grade students in its third year of operation, the school continues to refine effective assessment, instructional leadership, and operational systems evident during the first year visit. The school’s leadership team increased its capacity to effectively deliver the educational program consistent with the school’s key design elements by adding a director of scholar supports, an instructional coach, and a director of operations, in addition to outsourced human resources services. Instructional leaders provide consistent observation, coaching, and development cycles to strengthen teaching and learning, and the school leverages high quality practices for data collection, analysis, and response in alignment with clearly defined goals. The school’s high average daily attendance and low chronic absenteeism rates indicate strong student and family engagement systems managed by the operations team.

Although Destine Prep has built out structures to ensure each member of the leadership team is responsible and accountable for distinct functions within the organization, the school faces some challenges with enrollment, staff culture, and behavior support systems. Board members are aware of the financial impact of enrollment declines and are working on strategies to promote the school and build out new partnerships as Destine Prep is the only charter school in the Schenectady community. Leaders are working to balance high expectations for teachers while providing sufficient support. Teachers are aligned with the school’s mission and appreciative of the high quality professional development opportunities, but cite a need for clearer communication, dedicated time for collaborative planning, and consistent personnel for behavior interventions, co-teaching, and coverage for absences and vacancies. As the school grows to include two more grades over the remainder of the charter term, leaders intend to add additional instructional and behavioral support roles, and the school’s new human resources partner is working with leaders to understand how best to recruit and retain staff members who can execute the school’s vision for student success.

BENCHMARK SUMMARY

QUALITATIVE BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

The SUNY Renewal Benchmarks, grounded in the body of research from the Center for Urban Studies at Harvard University,¹ describe the elements in place at schools that are highly effective at providing students from low-income backgrounds the instruction, content, knowledge, and skills necessary to produce strong academic performance.

ASSESSMENT

Destine Prep implements an assessment system that improves instructional effectiveness and student learning. Individuals across the organization, including teachers, instructional leaders, administrators, and board members, use data deliberately in their evaluation of the school's existing programs and planning for future success. The school uses i-Ready and NWEA Map alongside interim mock state tests three times annually to measure proficiency in both English language arts ("ELA") and mathematics. Through unit assessments, weekly quizzes, and daily monitoring of student work across content areas, teachers establish a thorough understanding of student performance and make corresponding adjustments to instruction to address learning gaps. Teachers are attuned to students' performance goals and growth areas and plan with those needs in mind. During daily reading room classes, teachers work with small, mixed-grade groups of students based on reading data to target literacy instruction at each student's developmental level.

The school makes assessment data readily accessible to teachers, school leaders, and board members via shared dashboards to inform planning and evaluation of instructional decisions. During coaching meetings, daily team meetings, weekly professional development time, and quarterly data days, teachers and leaders work together to analyze student progress and create action plans to address learning gaps. At the time of the visit, the school was conducting a new effort to reteach skills in accordance with grade level standards students had not yet mastered. Each week, teachers target a specific strand, design differentiated practice opportunities, and assess progress to improve proficiency levels across the grade. Leaders develop detailed trackers to monitor progress, identify students for additional support, and determine which teachers are best positioned to work with students who demonstrate the greatest need.

CURRICULUM

Destine Prep is developing its curriculum to support teachers with instructional planning. The school has an underlying curricular framework aligned to state standards. Leaders recognize a need to better align and develop the school's programs to meet the needs of students. The school engages in annual curricular audits using student data and teacher feedback as it prepares to add a new grade level each year. Following this evaluation process, leaders elected to make several program shifts during the charter term. The school implements RedThread and Reading Mastery for Kindergarten – 2nd grade ELA, Fishtank and Scholastic Guided Reading for 3rd grade ELA, and Go Math for mathematics. The school also uses Into Social Studies and FOSS kits for social studies and science, respectively. Teachers recently began to use i-Ready to support targeted skills acquisition based on gaps in reading and mathematics proficiency. The curricular programs are structured

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.

BENCHMARK SUMMARY

and sufficiently detailed to ensure teachers know what to teach and when. As the school expands its grade levels, leaders diagnosed specific areas of improvement within the various programs and continue to refine the curriculum to ensure an effective and cohesive program is in place.

Most teachers plan purposeful and focused lessons from the school's curricula. Leaders expect teachers' plans to contain clear objectives, alignment to grade level standards, and exemplar responses to checks for understanding. Teachers modify scripted lesson materials to include small groups for differentiation and questions to increase rigor. Teachers strategically use small group instruction throughout the school day. However, Destine Prep does not yet have a codified process for sourcing and supplementing materials for intervention and small group learning. Without this system fully developed, some teachers do not leverage vetted, high quality resources to support planning and instruction for intervention and small group work.

PEDAGOGY

High quality instruction is evident throughout the majority of Destine Prep classrooms. Across most grade levels, teachers deliver purposeful lessons that reflect the school's instructional priorities including data informed differentiation and targeted questioning. Teachers are prepared to lead lessons and offer clear directions to students before assigning independent work, and students display strong internalization of classroom routines and expectations resulting in classroom environments that support academic achievement. During most lessons, teachers promote student voice and challenge students to engage in higher order thinking. The Institute observed students incorporating advanced vocabulary during classroom dialogue. Teachers tailor questions to reach low, intermediate, and high performing students in accordance with the school's prioritization of instructional rigor. The school creates structures to reach all students by consistently offering differentiated content and assigning co-teachers and interventionists to pull students for small group work by performance level.

Some teachers do not refer to established learning objectives during lessons resulting in a lack of alignment between lesson activities in some classrooms. While teachers use many strategies to check for understanding during independent practice, some teachers do not consistently and effectively address student misconceptions. School leaders communicate the expectation that teachers should plan for misconceptions within lesson plans. However, some teachers are not yet fully prepared to notice or react to misconceptions as they arise during student work time.

Although most classrooms exhibit a warm rapport between teachers and students, some teachers have not yet established strong, positive relationships with students and struggle to effectively address off-task behaviors. In these classrooms, this results in lost learning time and an over-reliance on redirections from interventionists or co-teachers. In some classrooms, teachers paused individualized instruction to address student disruptions, which limited their ability to focus on the small group instruction.

BENCHMARK SUMMARY

INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

Destine Prep exhibits several elements of strong instructional leadership, but leaders have not yet established structures to facilitate collaboration and planning across the full program. Although the school establishes an environment of consistently high expectations for student and teacher performance, leaders have not allocated sufficient administrative and instructional support to ensure staff members are equipped to meet the demands of Destine Prep's vision for teaching and learning.

Destine Prep has a clear and consistent coaching cycle in place to support teachers. The school's executive director, instructional coach, and director of scholar supports conduct multiple observations per week and deliver feedback in real time and via email. Teachers clearly understand both the schoolwide and personal goals for which they are responsible, and each works with a coach on individualized plans to grow pedagogical skills. Although teachers have positive, supportive relationships with coaches, many feel unable to effectively meet the full range of responsibilities leaders expect of Destine Prep teaching staff members. Teachers' planning and preparation time is strained by requirements to cover other classes due to both last minute absences and ongoing vacancies, and several classrooms lacked a consistent second adult to support the lead teacher despite the school's stated commitment to execute a co-teaching model and low student to teacher ratio. Further, the school's schedule does not allow for protected planning time between lead teachers, associate teachers, and at-risk program staff members, which results in missed opportunities to leverage the full capacity of the teaching staff to meet the needs of all students. While teachers are dedicated to the mission of Destine Prep and recognize how they have grown at the school, many are overwhelmed by the pace of new initiatives and lack confidence that sufficient efforts are underway to ensure teaching roles are sustainable. Instructional leaders recognizes the need to improve communication and enhance teacher support and collaboration. The school intends to add a director of curriculum and instruction position and an additional coach as it grows to its full grade articulation, which would allow the director of scholar supports to step back from coaching and focus on strengthening schoolwide culture and behavior systems to better support teachers.

Destine Prep implements a comprehensive professional development program to grow the competencies of teachers and leaders. The school prepares teachers with a summer training series in addition to weekly professional development sessions and quarterly data days. The professional development activities are organized into five "arcs of the year" that focus on different areas including academic foundations, culture, systems, data use, deep thinking strategies, and continuous improvement. The executive director, director of scholar supports, and instructional coach meet with one another and with external coaches to develop leadership skills and discuss progress toward clearly defined goals. While leaders laid out clear priorities for professional learning throughout the year, they have had to pivot based on unanticipated challenges, including issues with student culture and gaps in mastery of target standards based on benchmark data analysis. Leaders implemented new plans to address emergent problems, but staff members indicate a need to better align the formal evaluation criteria with the professional development arcs to ensure leaders do not conduct mid-year evaluations based on competencies for which the school has not yet provided training and coaching.

BENCHMARK SUMMARY

AT-RISK PROGRAM

Destine Prep meets the educational needs of at-risk students. The school uses compliant practices to identify students with disabilities and ELLs. For students struggling academically, the school uses a clear Response to Intervention (“RTI”) process, which includes teachers making referrals, leaders and teachers reviewing student data, and teachers identifying interventions to support students with tier 2 or 3 supports. With the school’s suite of assessments, teachers and leaders easily identify students struggling academically. The school has adequate intervention programs. The school incorporates a daily intervention block for students struggling academically, where learning specialists pull students for guided reading groups based on Scholastic curriculum resources or mathematics intervention based on i-Ready or MAP materials. For students with disabilities, the school provides one classroom with integrated co-teaching (“ICT”). Other services, including resource room, consultant teaching, and related services, are provided by the district through outside providers. For ELLs, leaders strategically place students in classrooms with bilingual teachers who provide translation as an instructional support in the classroom. ELLs also receive a period of targeted, leveled reading instruction. During the intervention periods, teachers provide ELLs with support in writing, speaking, and listening skills. For at-risk students, the special education coordinator and executive director work closely with intervention teachers to design specialized curriculum for a schoolwide reading intervention program.

General education teachers use effective strategies in the classroom to support at-risk students. From observations and lesson plan review, teachers effectively differentiate classroom instruction and often pull students in small groups to target specific needs. The school effectively monitors the progress and success of at-risk students. For students with disabilities, the special education coordinator monitors teachers’ progress reports based on implementing students’ individualized education programs (“IEPs”). Through regular meetings with teachers, leaders support teachers in tracking the progress of students struggling academically and ELLs. During coaching meetings, the special education coordinator supports teachers with reviewing at-risk student progress and creating small groups. As a result of coaching sessions and beginning of the year routines, teachers know students’ progress toward meeting IEP goals, achieving English proficiency, or school-based goals for struggling students.

Destine Prep offers multiple opportunities for professional development to support teachers with designing high quality lessons and interventions to meet the needs of at-risk students. Teachers engage in professional development from Questar BOCES to learn sheltered instruction observation protocol (“SIOP”) strategies to address specific student language acquisition needs. Through coaching meetings, the special education coordinator supports both classroom and intervention teachers with developing teaching strategies to address specific learning needs. The special education coordinator observes and provides feedback to teachers regularly with a specific focus on supporting at-risk students. The school does not yet offer robust opportunities for classroom teachers to coordinate with intervention teachers and associate teachers. The school misses the opportunity to have intervention teachers support classroom teachers with lesson planning to focus on specific strategies to support at-risk students. The Institute observed inconsistent use of associate teachers during lessons due to teachers and associate teachers not having formal planning time. Furthermore, the school’s ability to provide associate teachers is variable due to issues with staff member attendance and retention, thereby compromising teachers’ ability to plan effectively to leverage the second adult and provide sufficient support to all students.

BENCHMARK SUMMARY

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Destine Prep's organizational structure works effectively to deliver the school's educational program. Leaders collaborate closely with external partners to design administrative structures and operational systems that will sustain the school's growth over the long term. The school's executive director receives targeted coaching from an external consultant in areas related to data usage protocols, school culture, teacher coaching models, and staff development. External coaches supported the executive director in crafting a comprehensive "arc of the year" tool to define goals and success criteria for the implementation of these systems over time.

The school is progressing in its effort to attract, retain, and develop high quality teachers. In the 2024-25 school year, the school engages external back office and human resources services to refine hiring practices and improve teacher selection in accordance with the school's core values. In addition, the school provides coaching to all administrative staff members through external consultants as well as the school's executive director. Leaders are beginning to establish teacher leadership opportunities by offering opportunities to facilitate professional development activities. While the school is improving its recruitment systems to attract and hire high quality teachers, it does not yet effectively retain teachers. Staff members reported increased workload and responsibilities resulting from teacher absences and departures. These challenges compromise the school's organizational capacity and create inconsistencies for students. School leaders are aware of these concerns and are beginning to introduce strategies to strengthen staff member cohesion.

Destine Prep is close to meeting enrollment targets and it has increased enrollment within student subgroups since the previous school year. However, as the school expands to include more grades, leaders recognize the need to broaden its catchment area for student recruitment while strengthening its marketing efforts among area families. Destine Prep regularly monitors and evaluates the school's programs and makes changes if necessary. The school administers surveys throughout the year to gather feedback from staff members in regard to organizational health. While leaders and teachers align in specific needs for the school, leaders have not yet communicated their plans to address these needs to teachers, which leads to teachers being unclear in the future trajectory of the program.

BOARD OVERSIGHT & GOVERNANCE

Destine Prep's board works effectively to achieve the school's Accountability Plan goals and support the delivery of the educational program. The board chair meets with the school leader weekly and academic, finance, governance, fundraising, and advisory committees convene each month to review relevant data. The board continues to recruit new members with experience in education and real estate to increase capacity to advise the school and plan for the future of the organization. For the 2024-25 school year, the board prioritizes supporting the school leader in the planning and delivery of the school's first administration of the New York State exams; monitoring the academic progress of students; and, maintaining effective oversight of the school's finances given the lower than anticipated enrollment numbers. To support the school's leadership team, the board engages external consultants to develop leaders' management skills and back-office services to expand finance and human resources capabilities at the school.

BENCHMARK SUMMARY

The board regularly evaluates the performance of the school leader and itself. During a retreat shortly before the visit, the board completed a self assessment and redefined expectations for members' time and financial commitments to the organization. The board holds the school leader accountable through an annual formal evaluation process with the support of external consultants. The board is clear in considering long term plans as the school expands to serve its full Kindergarten – 5th grade articulation. As part of the school's five year plan, the board is evaluating which targets it will need to meet in order to consider a middle school expansion to serve interested families and benefit from economies of scale. Board members are actively seeking new fundraising and partnership opportunities to ensure the fiscal health of the organization with the goal of establishing a lasting presence in the Schenectady community. The board effectively communicates with the school community and is aware of program strengths and weaknesses and holds the school leader accountable for addressing issues as they arise.

Destine Prep

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APPENDICES

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DESTINE PREPARATORY CHARTER SCHOOL BOARD OF TRUSTEES¹

CHAIR	TRUSTEES
Raul Castillo	Mark Muscatiello
VICE CHAIR	Kenneth Mayfield
Raysheea Turner	Dr. Nosa A. Lebarty
TREASURER	Fereshteh (Angela) Osier
Cheryl Almonte Lare	Chrisheena Hill
SECRETARY	
Aisha White	

CHARTER CHARACTERISTICS

SCHOOL YEAR	CHARTERED ENROLLMENT	ACTUAL ENROLLMENT ²	ACTUAL AS A PERCENTAGE OF CHARTERED ENROLLMENT	GRADES SERVED
2022-23	116	89	77%	K-1
2023-24	174	144	83%	K-2
2024-25	261	219	84%	K-3

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.)

Destine Preparatory Charter School

Schenectady City School District

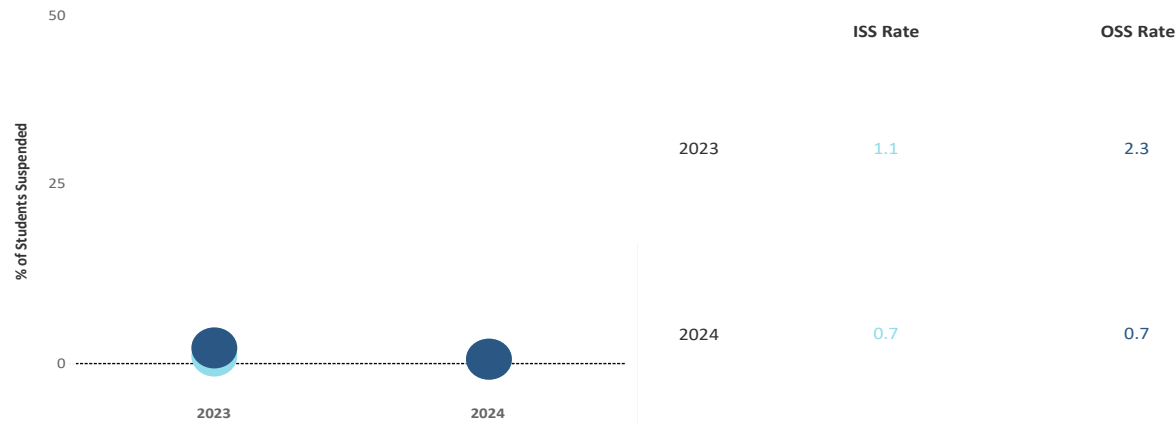


*Due to an error in data reporting, enrollment rates for students with disabilities are unavailable for the 2022-23 and 2023-24 school years. The school must work with its regional information center to ensure this data is available for future reporting.

* Data reported in these charts reflect BEDS day enrollment counts as reported by the NYSED.



Destine Preparatory Charter School



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

	2023	2024
2023-24	68.2	0

Destine Preparatory Charter School's Enrollment and Retention Status: 2023-24			Target	Charter
enrollment	economically disadvantaged		75.8	95.8
	English language learners		5.3	0.7
	students with disabilities*		12.8	N/A
retention	economically disadvantaged		91.8	70.7
	English language learners		93.1	100.0
	students with disabilities*		91.4	N/A

*Due to an error in data reporting, enrollment rates for students with disabilities are unavailable for the 2022-23 and 2023-24 school years. The school must work with its regional information center to ensure this data is available for future reporting.

* Data reported in these charts reflect BEDS day enrollment data as reported by the NYSED and information reported by the education corporation and validated by the Institute.

APPENDIX A: SCHOOL OVERVIEW



CHARTER SCHOOL VISIT HISTORY

SCHOOL YEAR	VISIT TYPE	DATE
2022-23	First Year Visit	May 3, 2023
2024-25	Evaluation Visit	April 9, 2025

CONDUCT OF THE VISIT

DATE(S) OF REVIEW	EVALUATION TEAM MEMBERS	TITLE
April 9, 2025	Katy Clayton	School Evaluator
	Ciani Jones	Senior Analyst
	Christine Lewandowski	Administrative Analyst

CHARTER CYCLE CONTEXT

CHARTER TERM	TERM YEAR	ANTICIPATED RENEWAL VISIT
Initial	Third Year of its Five Year Charter Term	Fall of 2026

