

Board Focus Questions

2025-26 Academic Year

As a board member, knowing when to prioritize key issues helps you plan and use board meetings effectively and efficiently throughout the year. This set of questions is designed to provide guidance to boards during the period between when your charter is approved and when the school opens for instruction, a time commonly referred to as the “planning year.” Each question is annotated to denote which renewal benchmarks, sections of relevant New York State law, and sections of your charter agreement lead to or pertain to that item.

Please note that some items may not apply to all schools, and that this list is not exhaustive—there are other items not listed here that boards may need to focus on depending on their priorities. Each board must plan its time to address specific issues of strategic importance to their school(s). If you have questions or are interested in learning more about any particular items, please reach out to an Institute staff member.

Operational Schools

Ongoing

- Are there reporting systems in place to ensure the board meets compliance requirements to submit minutes, school leadership changes, and changes in board membership to the Institute? (*Renewal Benchmark 2F, 3C*) (*Charter Agreement Exhibit B Monitoring Plan*)
- If the board is stuck or struggling with strategic initiatives, has a member reached out to the Institute for information as to best practices and resources? (*Renewal Benchmark 2E*)

Annual Strategic / Organizational Meeting / Retreat Topics

- How is the board ensuring the school’s long-term fiscal health? (*Renewal Benchmark 3A*)
- What systems and structures do the board evaluate its own performance? (*Renewal Benchmark 2E*)
- Does the board legal, governance, accountability, or fiscal training from the Institute? (*Renewal Benchmark 2E*)
- If the board uses a committee structure, how does the full board assess the effectiveness of that structure and adjust if needed? (*Renewal Benchmark 2D, 2E*)
- Is the board considering applying for expansion schools as part of its long-range strategic plans? (*Renewal Benchmark 2E, 3A*)
- When is the next time the school is due for renewal? If renewal may be in doubt, does your strategic plan reflect priorities that, if effectively implemented, would make it more likely that the

school would earn a positive renewal recommendation? (*Renewal Benchmark 1A, 2D, 2E*) (*Charter Agreement § 8*)

- Addendum: If the school was granted a renewal with conditions, has the board set benchmarks and is it on track to meet the conditions?
- Has the board considered whether it wishes to expand or adjust its membership to increase its ability to guide the school in achieving its strategic goals? (*Renewal Benchmark 2E*) (*Corporate Bylaws*)
- Does the board foresee requiring any large-scale facilities projects in future years? If so, has the board designated the appropriate planning resources?? (*Renewal Benchmark 2E, 4D*)

Topical Questions by Month

July

Staff and Student Recruitment

- How is the board evaluating the outcomes of staff recruitment and attrition from the prior school year? Are there any indications that it may be necessary to review benefits, culture, etc. to attract and retain well-qualified staff? (*Renewal Benchmark 2C*)
- What staff positions remain unfilled, and what is the plan to fill them with appropriately qualified people? What contingency plans are in place should certain staff roles remain unfilled before school opening? (*Renewal Benchmark 2C, 2D*)
- Is the school on track to meet its chartered student enrollment? If not, does the board need to make staffing or budgetary adjustments? (*Renewal Benchmark 2C, 3A*)
- Is the school on track to meet its special population enrollment targets? If not, what is the plan to do so? (*Renewal Benchmark 2C, 3A*)

Academics

- As part of the board's strategic plan, what data has the board identified/requested that should be included in the management/school leader's board reports? (*Renewal Benchmark 1A, 1B, 2D*)
- What summer PD topics are scheduled for teachers? How do these topics align with yearly strategic goals and other identified strategic initiatives? (*Renewal Benchmark 1E, 2D*)
- How did ELLs who were assessed on the NYSESLAT exam in the spring perform? How did ELLs person on the state assessments? How does this compare with the accountability plan and strategic plan goals for this student population? (*Renewal Benchmark 1B, 1F*)

- How is the board ensuring that school leaders have all the equipment, books, and other materials required to operate successfully from the first day of school? (*Renewal Benchmark 2F*)

Fiscal

- Is the school on target to meet the budgeted student count? If not, should the board consider a contingency budget? (*Renewal Benchmark 2C, 3A*)
- Does the board need to take any action with respect to any variance between the enrollment billed on June 1 versus likely actual enrollment? Does the school need to adjust its projected enrollment billing for the August 1 bills to districts? (*Renewal Benchmark 2C, 3A*)
- Did the districts pay the correct amounts of tuition based on the June 1 billing? If not, who in leadership is responsible for tracking the amounts and contacting the districts? (*Renewal Benchmark 2C, 3A*)
- Has the annual independent financial audit process started? If not, has time been scheduled and has there been communication between administration and the auditors? (*Renewal Benchmark 2C*)
- Are accounts being reconciled and ready for the auditors? (*Renewal Benchmark 2C*)
- Is school staff prepared to meet August 1st compliance deadlines for submitting unaudited June 30th financials to the Institute and the Annual Report to NYSED? (*Renewal Benchmark 2C*)

Facilities

- How are any summer maintenance/renovation projects progressing? Are they within budget, and will they be completed in time for the start of school? (*Renewal Benchmark 2F*)

Legal/Compliance

- Revisit topics from June.
- How is the board ensuring that the required Annual Report is being prepared for submission to NYSED by August 1? Have all trustees filled out the Disclosure of Financial Interest form, including those who served but departed the board during the previous school year? (*Renewal Benchmark 2F*)
- Many certificates of liability insurance run July 1 to June 30. Has the insurance been renewed and updated to include covering any new sites? (*Renewal Benchmark 2F*)

Governance

- Does the board need to review and update any of its policies? (*Renewal Benchmark 2E*)

- Has the board developed a scope and schedule of meetings for the school year ahead and communicated that to trustees, officers, school leaders, parents, and other stakeholders? (*Renewal Benchmark 2E*)
- Has the board renewed trustees whose terms have expired, elected new officers, etc.? Has the corporate secretary updated the corporate records to reflect the elections? (*Renewal Benchmark 2E, 2F*)
- Is the board keeping appropriate track of terms and number of seats to calculate quorum? (*Renewal Benchmark 2E, 2F*)
 -
 - What systems does the board have in place to ensure that recurring compliance items such as board minutes, school leadership changes, changes in board membership, etc., are reported properly to the Institute? (*Renewal Benchmark 2F, 3C*)

August

Staff and Student Recruitment

- Revisit student and staff recruitment topics from July.

Academics

- State exam scores should be released by the end of this month. How will the board review results in relation to the school's accountability plan goals, internal strategic plan, and school leader evaluation process? (*Renewal Benchmark 1A, 1B, 2D*)
- Based on state exam results, what was the return on investment for allocated resources last school year? Are there any additional resources needed for the year ahead based on student test scores, including ELLs and students with disabilities? (*Renewal Benchmark 1A, 1B, 2D*)
- Based on state exam results, what adjustments to strategic goals for the year ahead may be needed? (*Renewal Benchmark 2D*)
- (For high schools) Based on June and August Regents results, how is your school performing at preparing all students to meet graduation requirements? (*Renewal Benchmark 1A, 1B, 2D*)
- (For high schools with graduating classes) What is the school's college acceptance rate for 2- and 4-year colleges? How is the school tracking college persistence data for its graduates? (*Renewal Benchmark 1A, 1B, 2D*)
- How does the school ensuring that it will be ready to serve new students with disabilities and ELLs? Who is reviewing new student applications/records for ELL status and IEPs? Has the school been in contact with the district Committees on Special Education (CSE) regarding settings,

services and potentially amending IEPs? (*Renewal Benchmark 1F*) (*Charter Agreement §§ 3.5(b) & 3.7 and Exhibit C Students with Disabilities Assurances*)

Fiscal

- Revisit any district billing issues from July.
- Does the school need to look into intercepts from any districts that did not pay on July 1? (*Renewal Benchmark 2C, 3A*)
- Did the school provide its final enrollments to the districts? What was the result of the per pupil reconciliation? (*Renewal Benchmark 2C, 3A*)
- If not fully enrolled, how is the board ensuring the school is on track to fill all seats? Has the board reviewed contingency plans for being underenrolled? (*Renewal Benchmark 2C, 3A*)
- What is the status of the financial audit? Is the auditor on target to meet the deadline as noted in the audit engagement letter? When can the board (or audit/finance committee – if appropriate) expect to see a draft of the report? (*Renewal Benchmark 3A*)

Facilities

- Revisit topics from July.
- Are all certificates of occupancy and insurance in place for the upcoming school year? (*Renewal Benchmark 2F*)

Legal/Compliance

- Are all staff appropriately fingerprinted? (*Renewal Benchmark 2F*)
- Is the teaching staff appropriately certified or exempt under the Charter Schools Act? Who tracks this information and the impact of new hires/staff departures? (*Renewal Benchmark 2F*)
- (NYC only) Will the school need to submit a request for co-location for the school year after next? If so, how will the board ensure it is ready to submit that application in October? (*Renewal Benchmark 2F*)

Governance

- How has the board communicated its strategic goals and key metrics it will be tracking (academic, fiscal, etc.) for the upcoming school year? How will the board know whether all constituencies understand and are prepared to act upon those goals? (*Renewal Benchmark 1A, 1B, 2D, 2E*)
- Does the community understand and support the mission and goals of the school? What else can be done to promote the school in the community? (*Renewal Benchmark 2A, 2E*)
- How will the board stay involved with the school community throughout the school year? (*Renewal Benchmark 2E*)

September

Staff and Student Recruitment

- Revisit staff recruitment topics from July. If vacant positions remain, what is the plan to fill those roles and how can the board support (e.g., by approving increased salaries, etc.)? (*Renewal Benchmark 2C, 2D*)

Academics

- How is the board ensuring that school leaders have an accurate process in place for identifying students with disabilities and ELLs among newly enrolled students? (*Renewal Benchmark 1F*) (*Charter Agreement §§ 3.5(b) & 3.7 and Exhibit C Students with Disabilities Assurances*)

Fiscal

- Revisit district payment and billing issues from July and August.
- Did the auditor present the audit report to the board? If not, is the auditor on the October board meeting agenda? (*Renewal Benchmark 3A*)
- Did the audit contain any findings and/or recommendations? If so, is the administration preparing a response for the board's consideration at the next meeting? (*Renewal Benchmark 3A, 3B, 3C, 3D*)
- Is school staff prepared to meeting October 1st compliance deadlines for submitting unaudited September 30th financials to the Institute? (*Renewal Benchmark 3A, 3C*)

Facilities

- Are all summer maintenance/renovation projects complete? Were any additional projects identified for work during the school year? (*Renewal Benchmark 2F*)

Legal/Compliance

- Have new students been identified for at-risk services and have interventions begun? How are school leaders ensuring all students with disabilities and ELLs receive services they are legally entitled to? (*Renewal Benchmark 1F, 2F*)

Governance

- Has the board discussed a calendar of board member development opportunities that align with the organizational goals and strategic plan? (*Renewal Benchmark 2E*)
- How is the board supporting school leader morale in the opening weeks of school? (*Renewal Benchmark 2E*)

October

Staff and Student Recruitment

- Revisit topics from July.
- If positions are still vacant, what is the plan to fill, eliminate, or modify that role, and how are school leaders ensuring the functions of that role are being completed? (*Renewal Benchmark 2C, 2D*)
- If the school is underenrolled, what adjustments to the program may be required in the short term? What caused underenrollment and who will be responsible for adjusting recruitment plans for next year? (*Renewal Benchmark 2C, 3A*)

Academics

- How is the school performing in early year indicators of school culture and discipline such as absences, tardies, and suspensions? How does this compare with strategic goals the board has established? (*Renewal Benchmark 1E, 2C*)
- How does the board ensure that data it receives from school leaders is accurate and comprehensive? Are systems in place to quickly get the board additional data if needed? (*Renewal Benchmark 1B, 2D*)

Fiscal

- Revisit district billing and intercept issues from August.
- How close was the actual student count on BEDS day compared to the projected count and chartered enrollment? (*Renewal Benchmark 3A*)
- Did the board vote to approve or accept its audit? If the audit contained any findings and/ or recommendations, did the board approve a response? (*Renewal Benchmark 3A*)
- How is the board ensuring the school's annual audit is properly submitted to the Institute by the November 1st due date and submitted to NYSED as part of the annual report by the same date? (*Renewal Benchmark 3C*)
- How did the unaudited financial reporting compare to the audited financial statements? What steps can be taken to tighten up the unaudited financial reporting upon which the board relies? (*Renewal Benchmark 3A*)

Facilities

- Is there a long-term capital project plan for replacement of items like roofs, HVAC systems, etc.? If not, who should oversee studying and developing a plan for board review? (*Renewal Benchmark 2F*)

Legal/Compliance

- If the school has populations of any subgroups (students with disabilities, ELLs, economically disadvantaged) that fall below the average of the district, have school leaders presented viable plans to address those gaps? (*Renewal Benchmark 2C, 2F*)
- Are there any changes in the facility for the following school year? Does the school have a complete facility timeline? Who is responsible for facilities plans and keeping the board updated? (*Renewal Benchmark 2F*)
- Do the school's student application documents need changes or are they ready for board approval? Does the board need to seek a charter revision to add lottery weighting or an enrollment preference? (*Renewal Benchmark 2F*)
- If student applications have not already been approved, they must be submitted to the Institute by November 3. (*Renewal Benchmark 2F*)

Governance

- How is the board assessing staff morale? Are there plans in place for the board to keep a pulse on this? How can the board support? (*Renewal Benchmark 2E*)
- What is the communications plan and what are the roles of board members and staff if a crisis arises? The board may also want to review the SAVE plan at this time. (*Renewal Benchmark 2C, 2E*)

November

Staff and Student Recruitment

- Revisit staff recruitment topics from October.

Academics

- How is the school progressing compared to the metrics and measures in its accountability plan and internal yearly strategic plan? Are there any additional resources needed based on student outcomes? (*Renewal Benchmark 1A, 1B, 2D*)
- Have all new ELLs and students with IEPs been identified and are they receiving the proper programming? Have student IEPs been amended to the charter school's settings and services? (*Renewal Benchmark 1F*) (*Charter Agreement §§ 3.5(b) & 3.7*)

Fiscal

- Revisit district payment and billing issues from July and August.
- What is the school's fund balance? How does it compare to the board's goal? (*Renewal Benchmark 3A*)

- How is the board ensuring that school leaders meet reporting due dates for the quarterly unaudited financials (due to the Institute by November 15)? (*Renewal Benchmark 3C*)

Facilities

- Revisit topics from October.

Legal/Compliance

- Are there any charter amendments your school might need to consider to make its goals for growth, new grades, new facilities, etc. a reality? If so, has the school leader or board chair contacted the Institute to discuss these plans? (*Renewal Benchmark 2E*)

Governance

- Has the board reexamined its new board member orientation program to ensure maximum impact? (*Renewal Benchmark 2E*)

December

Academics

- How is the board checking in with the school leader on midyear progress against their performance goals? Does the board have plans and resources in place to support the school leader's development against those goals? (*Renewal Benchmark 2D*)
- How is the board ensuring that curriculum and other academic resources are effectively helping leaders and teachers meet academic achievement goals? Does the academic committee and/or school leaders feel that any adjustments to curriculum choices or resources are needed, and if so, what are they and why? (*Renewal Benchmark 1C, 2D*)
- How is the board ensuring that school leaders have clear processes in place to notify families if a student's promotion is in doubt? (*Renewal Benchmark 2D*)

Fiscal

- Revisit district billing and intercept issues from August.
- How does the current cash flow compare with last year's? (*Renewal Benchmark 3A, 3B*)
- Has the board established a timeline and priorities for formulating next year's budget, including time to discuss any changing resource needs (e.g., new curricula, etc.) with school leaders? (*Renewal Benchmark 3A*)
- Has the board reviewed enrollment targets and plans for the upcoming school year, including school leaders? How will the board receive updates on progress through the spring recruitment season? (*Renewal Benchmark 2C, 2D, 3A*)
- Is school staff prepared to meet January 2nd compliance deadlines for submitting unaudited December 31st financials to the Institute? (*Renewal Benchmark 3A, 3C*)

Facilities

- Revisit topics from October.

Legal/Compliance

- Was the school's annual fire inspection completed by December 1st and reported to the Institute by December 16th? Is any remedial action required? If not, who is responsible for contacting the proper fire department authority to perform the inspection? (*Renewal Benchmark 2F*)

Governance

- With the school at the mid-year point, where is the organization making or not making progress as to its annual goals and long-term strategic plan? What adjustments need to occur to ensure accomplishment of the annual goals and the strategic plan? (*Renewal Benchmark 2E*)
- How is the board evaluating the effectiveness of its committee structure? (*Renewal Benchmark 2E*)

January

Staff and Student Recruitment

- Has the board reviewed student recruitment and marketing plans? (*Renewal Benchmark 2C, 3A*)
- How will the school make good faith recruitments efforts for SWDs, FRPLs, ELLs populations based on goals set from last year's outcomes? Are these efforts reflected in the student marketing plans? (*Renewal Benchmark 1F, 2C, 2F*)

Academics

- Revisiting culture: How is the school performing on indicators of school culture and discipline such as absences, tardies, and suspensions? How does this compare with strategic goals the board has established, and how does it compare to these indicators from earlier in the school year? (*Renewal Benchmark 1E, 2C, 2D*)

Fiscal

- Revisit district payment and billing issues from July and August.
- Has the board identified any long-term financing needs? Are there opportunities to refinance existing loans? (*Renewal Benchmark 3A*)
- Has the board and administration established priorities for next year's budget? (*Renewal Benchmark 3A*)
- Has the board reviewed its Financial Policies and Procedures Manual, updated it to reflect most current systems and structures, and approved it by vote? (*Renewal Benchmark 3A*)
- Has the fiscal team reviewed any grant opportunities the school may be eligible for, including SSF grants? (*Renewal Benchmark 3A*)

Facilities

- Revisit topics from October.

Legal/Compliance

- As the school enters staff recruitment season, how is the board ensuring that any staff who manage hiring decisions are fully aware of certification requirements for teachers? (*Renewal Benchmark 2F*)

Governance

- Has the board reviewed its insurance coverages to ensure they are appropriate? (*Renewal Benchmark 3A*)
- Have parents, students and teachers been informed as to completing the NYC School Survey or other tool the school is using? If outside NYC, what are the plans to receive feedback from parents, students, and teachers? (*Renewal Benchmark 2B*)

February

Academics

- Based on midyear benchmark assessments, how is the school performing against its accountability plan and internal strategic plan goals for the year? (*Renewal Benchmark 1A, 1B, 2D*) (*Charter Agreement § 8*)
- What does the school's data indicate about its strengths and areas for improvement? How do these strengths and weaknesses reflect the ways in which the board has allocated resources, and how may the board want to adjust resources going forward? (*Renewal Benchmark 1A, 1B, 2D*)
- (For high schools) Based on January Regents results, how is your school performing at preparing all students to meet graduation requirements? (*Renewal Benchmark 1A, 1B, 2D*)

Fiscal

- Revisit district billing and intercept issues from August.
- What was the spring student count? Was there a substantial change from the fall student count? (*Renewal Benchmark 2E, 3A*)
- December 31 quarterly unaudited financials should be reviewed and submitted to the Institute this month. (*Renewal Benchmark 3C*)
- Has the audit (or finance) committee reviewed the current audit contract and discussed a contract for the next fiscal audit? When will it make a recommendation to the full board? (*Renewal Benchmark 3C*)

Facilities

- Revisit topics from October.

Legal/Compliance

- Has the school finalized the school calendar for the following year? (*Renewal Benchmark 2C, 2F*)

Governance

- Are the board's policies and procedures working effectively? Are any changes needed to improve the board's functioning, and if so, what might those changes be? (*Renewal Benchmark 2E*)
- How does the board maintain a presence and active involvement in the school community? (*Renewal Benchmark 2D, 2E*)

March

Staff and Student Recruitment

- How is student recruitment progressing? (*Renewal Benchmark 2C, 3A*)
- How is the board monitoring student recruitment efforts for specific populations? (*Renewal Benchmark 1F, 2C, 2F*)

Academics

- What preparations have been made for the administration of the state assessments? What do current academic results indicate about likely outcomes of state assessments? What efforts are in place to support all students, including students who are at risk of failure, in meeting or exceeding proficiency? (*Renewal Benchmark 2D*)

Fiscal

- Revisit district payment and billing issues from July and August.
- What contracts are set to expire on/before June 30th? Has the board designated someone on the board to review, and someone in school leadership to negotiate expiring contracts? (*Renewal Benchmark 2F, 3A, 3B*)
- Has the finance committee received a draft budget for next fiscal year? (*Renewal Benchmark 3A*)
- Is school staff prepared to meet April 1st compliance deadlines for submitting unaudited March 31st financials to the Institute? (*Renewal Benchmark 3A, 3C*)

Facilities

- Are there any changes in the facility for the following school year? Will the school have all the necessary documents to submit to the Institute by May 15th? Is the timeline for completion feasible and currently on time? (*Renewal Benchmark 2F*) (*Charter Agreement § 3.14*)

Legal/Compliance

- Has the school set up a date, time, location, and public notice for the lottery on or after April 1st, including a third-party entity or observer? Are processes in place to notify students and parents

of acceptance/waitlist status, and to request information needed for enrollment? (*Renewal Benchmark 2F*)

- Has the school communicated to parents that transportation requests to the resident district must be submitted by April 1 even if they are not sure they have been accepted to the school? (*Renewal Benchmark 2C, 2F*)

Governance

- Does the board have a plan to step back and review its own performance and overall strategy? What development opportunities would the board benefit from? (*Renewal Benchmark 2E*)
- Has school leadership and the board identified and begun to evaluate contracts expiring in June, July, and August? (*Renewal Benchmark 2E, 3A*)
- Has the board started its process to evaluate school leadership and/or its CMO/EMO against the goals and priorities set at the beginning of the school year? Does the board have sufficient information to support these evaluation processes? (*Renewal Benchmark 2D, 2E*)

April

Staff and Student Recruitment

- What is the progress on the hiring plan for next school year? How many positions have been filled? How many remain unfilled? (*Renewal Benchmark 2C, 2D*)
- What were the results of the student lotteries? Should there be any changes to the student recruitment plan based on the lottery results including recruitment of target populations? (*Renewal Benchmark 2C, 3A*)

Academics

- Has the board reviewed and approved the Accountability Summary sent by the Institute? If there are questions, has the board communicated these to the Institute? (*Renewal Benchmark 1A, 1B, 2D*)
- How is the school performing against its strategic plan goals from the year? Based on data from the current school year, what type of goals does the board anticipate setting for the next school year? Does the board need to consider engaging any consultants based on what next year's strategic goals may be? (*Renewal Benchmark 1A, 1B, 2D*)
- What activities are being planned to honor the graduates at your school? (*Renewal Benchmark 2B, 2C*)
- If your school offers summer instruction, how is the board ensuring that school leaders have appropriate materials, building permissions, staffing, etc., to make it a worthwhile investment? If summer instruction is in preparation for August Regents, how is the school leader ensuring appropriately qualified staff are available to effectively prepare students? (*Renewal Benchmark 1A, 2D*)

Fiscal

- Revisit district billing and intercept issues from August.
- Is the school's administration analyzing the school's cash flow needs and identifying potential borrowing entities? (*Renewal Benchmark 3A, 4D*)
- How are unaudited quarterly reports looking and are accounts being reconciled timely prior to year-end audit work? (*Renewal Benchmark 3A, 3C*)
- Has the finance committee reviewed and provided feedback on next year's budget? Does the budget align with the priorities that were previously established by the board and school leadership? (*Renewal Benchmark 3A*)

Facilities

- If the school is adding or changing facilities, does the school have all the necessary documents to submit to the Institute by May 15th? Is the timeline for completion still feasible and currently on time? (*Renewal Benchmark 2F*)

Legal/Compliance

- Are lottery parent notifications completed? How does the school keep track of enrollment and waitlist numbers? (*Renewal Benchmark 2F*)

Governance

- Has the board considered its plans for the annual organizational meeting? (*Renewal Benchmark 1A, 2E*)
- If your school is up for renewal next year and the board intends to apply, what is the plan to prepare the necessary documentation for the renewal application? (*Renewal Benchmark 2E*)

May

Staff and Student Recruitment

- Revisit April staff recruitment issues.
- Revisit progress on student recruitment.

Academics

- How many students are graduating or have completed their final year at your school? Does your school have a process in place to track students after they graduate? (*Renewal Benchmark 1B*)
- For high schools with a mission of college preparation, what tools is the school using to assess college readiness? What evidence does the school have that its program is or is not preparing students for college, and what does this evidence suggest? (*Renewal Benchmark 1B*)
- What data is collected to ensure that the school is continuing to support the graduates of the school? How will your school track this data? (*Renewal Benchmark 1B*)

- What summer PD topics are scheduled for teachers? How do these topics align with yearly strategic goals and other identified strategic initiatives? (*Renewal Benchmark 1E, 2D*)

Fiscal

- Revisit district payment and billing issues from July and August.
- Did the board review and take a public vote on next year's budget? (*Renewal Benchmark 3A*)
- Has the board approved the audit engagement letter? (*Renewal Benchmark 3A, 3C*)
- Unaudited March 31st quarterly financials should be reviewed and submitted to the Institute. (*Renewal Benchmark 3C*)

Facilities

- Has the school submitted facility documents to the Institute by May 15 for review and approval? If all documents have not been submitted, what is the plan to submit, and who is responsible? (*Renewal Benchmark 2F*)

Legal/Compliance

- Has the school submitted the Application and Admissions Summary to the Institute by May 1? (*Renewal Benchmark 2F*)

Governance

- Has the board completed the school leader evaluation process for the year? (*Renewal Benchmark 2D, 2E*)
- Is the school leader on track to complete the performance evaluation process for all school employees? (*Renewal Benchmark 2D*)

June

Staff and Student Recruitment

- Revisit progress on April staff recruitment issues. If positions remain open, does the plan/budget need to be changed to fill the positions? (*Renewal Benchmark 2C, 2D*)
- Revisit progress on student recruitment. (*Renewal Benchmark 2C, 3A*)
- Does the school have an appropriately qualified Special Education coordinator in place for the next school year? (*Renewal Benchmark 2F*)

Academics

In reviewing the school's strategic plan consider the following:

- What has been the return on investment for the allocated resources provided for strategic improvement of teaching and learning? (*Renewal Benchmark 1B, 2D*)

- What are the key findings from the surveys sent to students, teachers, and parents? What might be some things that emerged from the survey that should be considered in the strategic planning for the following year? (*Renewal Benchmark 2B, 2D*)
- What are your school's student attendance and suspension rates for the year? How does this rate compare to last year (three years, five years)? (*Renewal Benchmark 2C, 2D*)
- Does the school have clear plans in place for the school leader to report to the board on state test results? How will the data the board receives illuminate the school's progress against its accountability plan and current strategic goals? (*Renewal Benchmark 1B, 2D*)
- Did the Institute conduct a first-year, evaluation, or renewal visit at your school this past year? If so, has the board reviewed results and discussed them with school leadership? (*Renewal Benchmark 2D*)

Fiscal

- Revisit district billing and intercept issues from August.
- Based on current estimates of enrollment for the next school year, should the education corporation bill the district(s) for the full projected enrollment? (*Renewal Benchmark 3A*)
- Remember the audit snapshot is as of June 30th; how do the accounts look? (*Renewal Benchmark 3A, 3C, 3D*)
- Has the board reviewed any loan covenants to ensure they are in good order? (*Renewal Benchmark 3A, 3D*)
- How does the board ensure that it has adequately funded the required dissolution reserve fund? (*Renewal Benchmark 3A*)

Facilities

- Revisit topics from May.

Legal/Compliance

- Does the school have all the items necessary to submit for the Annual Report, including trustee financial disclosure forms? (*Renewal Benchmark 2F*)

Governance

- How does the board plan to work with school leadership to celebrate the annual successes of the school? (*Renewal Benchmark 1A, 2D*)
- Have board policy updates been delivered, adopted, and incorporated into the policy manual in a timely fashion? (*Renewal Benchmark 2E*)

Planning Year Schools

Immediately Upon Receiving the Charter/Up to One Year Before School

Staff and Student Recruitment

- (If no school leader is identified at time of charter approval) What plan is in place to secure an excellent school leader? Who is directly responsible for the search? What qualities and skills must a prospective leader have? (*Renewal Benchmark 1E*)
- What is the overall staff hiring plan? How will the board know if key positions remain unfilled past their target hire date? (*Renewal Benchmark 2C, 2D*)
- Has the board reviewed student and staff recruitment and marketing plans? (*Renewal Benchmark 2C, 3A*) (*Charter Agreement § 3.4*)
- Has the school established a TEACH account to confirm certification and fingerprinting statuses? (*Renewal Benchmark 2C, 2D*)
- Has the board developed contingency plans if student enrollment is low? (*Renewal Benchmark 2C, 3A*)

Fiscal

- Has the board established a bank account and set up its books? (*Renewal Benchmark 3A, 3B*)
- Has the board and/or school leadership made steps to secure any grant funds such as Charter School Program (CSP) money that may be available? If applying for CSP funds, who is responsible for managing that process with NYSED? (*Renewal Benchmark 3A*)
- Has the board developed a Financial Policy and Procedures Manual? (*Renewal Benchmark 3B*)
- Has the board initiated/completed the Initial Statement Process and received the letter from the external auditor? (*Renewal Benchmark 3A, 3B*) (*Charter Agreement § 5.1*)

Facility

- (If a site is not identified) What is the plan and who is directly responsible for securing an appropriate facility? Has the board secured real estate counsel to review transaction documents? (*Renewal Benchmark 2C, 2E, 2F*) (*Charter Agreement § 3.14(a)(i)*)
- If outside NYC, has the school contacted NYSED's Facility Planning Office to ensure understanding of obtaining a certificate of occupancy from NYSED in a timely manner. (*Renewal Benchmark 2C, 2E, 2F*) (*Charter Agreement § 3.14(a)(i)*)
- What is the plan to ensure the facilities appropriately address what is needed for the nurse, food service, and transportation? (*Renewal Benchmark 2F*) (*Charter Agreement §§ 3.11 – 3.13*) (*NY Education Law §§ 912, 2854(1)(b) and 3635*) (*8 NYCRR § 114.2*)

Legal/Compliance

- Has the education corporation applied to the IRS for 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status? (*Renewal Benchmark 2F*) (*Charter Agreement § 5.6*)
- Does the board have an executed copy of its charter agreement with exhibits? Has the board reviewed its obligations under the contract and discussed relevant charter obligations with school leadership/management? (*Renewal Benchmark 2F*)
- Has the board reviewed reporting requirements for both the Institute and NYSED? (Note: Even if SUNY is your authorizer, your school still has several reporting and compliance requirements with NYSED.) (*Renewal Benchmark 2F*)
- What is the plan to secure a nurse, food service, and transportation? (*Renewal Benchmark 2F*) (*Charter Agreement §§ 3.11 – 3.13*) (*NY Education Law §§ 912, 2854(1)(b) and 3635*) (*8 NYCRR § 114.2*)

Governance

- Has the board established a strategic action plan for pre-opening (based on the Action Plan submitted in the application) with clear benchmarks? How will the board know if the plan is off track, and what would happen at that point? (*Renewal Benchmark 2D, 2E*) (*Charter Agreement § 3.1*)
- Has the board met within 30 days of the effective date of the charter to ratify by-laws and elect officers? (*Renewal Benchmark 2F*) (*Charter Agreement § 2.2(a)*)
- Has each board member read the conflicts of interest policy and code of ethics and signed off? (*Renewal Benchmark 2F*) (*Charter Agreement § 2.1*) (*NY Education Law §§ 2851(2)(v) and 2854(1)(f)*) (*NY N-PCL §§ 715 and 715-a*) (*NY General Municipal Law §§ 800-804-a, 805, 805-a, 805-b and 806*)
- Will the board establish a committee structure? (*Renewal Benchmark 2E*)
- Will the board consider engaging in governance training? (*Renewal Benchmark 2E*)
- Has the board established a procedure for providing appropriate meeting notices and minutes in accordance with the Open Meetings Law? (*Renewal Benchmark 2F*) (*NY Public Officers Law §§ 87(3)(a) and 106(1)*)
- Does the board plan to procure Directors and Officers (D&O) insurance, and if so, who is responsible for pricing and procuring? (*Renewal Benchmark 2F*)

6-9 Months Before Opening

Staff and Student Recruitment

- What plan is in place to secure well-qualified teachers and administrators? Is the board leveraging its contacts and resources to support recruitment? (*Renewal Benchmark 2C, 2D*)
- What controls are in place to ensure the school hires the appropriate number of certified teachers or uncertified teachers who meet the requirements of the NY Charter Schools Act? (*Renewal Benchmark 2F*) (*Charter Agreement § 4.3*) (*NY Education Law §§ 2854(3)(a-1)(i)-(iv)*)
- What is the plan to check and verify certification of teachers, and who oversees ensuring all leaders, teachers, and other staff are fingerprinted by the school? Does the school have a TEACH account? (*Renewal Benchmark 2F*) (*Charter Agreement § 4.5*) (*NY Education Law § 2854(3)(a-2)*) (*8 NYCRR Part 87*)
- How is the board checking in on the progress of student recruitment and marketing? What touch points are taking place for families? Does the board need to consider low enrollment contingencies? (*Renewal Benchmark 2E, 3A*) (*Charter Agreement § 3.4*)
- How is the board ensuring that the admissions policy aligns with the admissions policy in the charter agreement? (*Renewal Benchmark 2F*) (*Charter Agreement § 3.4*)
- What is the plan to run the school's lottery in accordance with state regulations? (*Renewal Benchmark 2F*) (*8 NYCRR § 119.5*)

Academic

- What are school leaders' plans to ensure all curricula and lessons are high-quality and aligned to state standards and the school's mission and vision? What curriculum remains to be selected or developed, and who oversees that process? (*Renewal Benchmark 1C*) (*Charter Agreement § 3.5*)
- Has the board reviewed [SUNY's renewal benchmarks](#) internally and with the school leader? (*Renewal Benchmark 1E, 2D*) (*Charter Agreement § 8*)
- How can the board support the school leader or leaders in getting training in skill areas where they may benefit from further development? (*Renewal Benchmark 2D, 2E*)

Fiscal

- Has the board reviewed and approved the final Financial Policies and Procedures Manual? How will the board ensure that the education corporation implements those policies and procedures with fidelity? (*Renewal Benchmark 2E, 3A, 3B*) (*Charter Agreement § 5*)
- Has the board completed the [Initial Statement Process](#)? (*Renewal Benchmark 2E, 3A, 3B*) (*Charter Agreement § 5.1(c)*)

- Has the education corporation contacted sending districts to obtain addresses and contacts for billing for charter school basic tuition and funding for students with disabilities? (*Renewal Benchmark 2E, 3A, 3B*) (8 NYCRR § 119.1)
- Has the school received approval for its CSP grant from NYSED, and are monies flowing? (*Renewal Benchmark 2E, 3A, 3B*)
- Is payroll operating with a vendor and contract in place, with the system being ready to take on the full staff in several months? (*Renewal Benchmark 2C, 3B*)
- If located in NYC: has the school contacted the NYC Department of Education to set up an account for billing? (*Renewal Benchmark 2C, 3B*)

Facility

- Is there a clear path and timeline for getting a local (and if outside of NYC, a NYSED) certificate of occupancy (C of O) in place prior to the start of instruction? (*Renewal Benchmark 2C, 2D*) (*Charter Agreement § 3.14*)
- How is the board ensuring that the school has a plan to procure all furniture, technology, equipment, and other materials in time for opening? (*Renewal Benchmark 2C, 2D*)
- How is the board reviewing various materials and services contracts, such as contracts for curriculum, copiers, security, food, nursing, supplemental transportation, etc.? What is the plan to ensure all service employees who will be in contact with students are fingerprinted by the school? (*Renewal Benchmark 2C, 2E*)

Legal/Compliance

- How will the board ensure the school is on track to meet all the requirements of the [Pre-Opening Checklist](#)? (*Renewal Benchmark 2D, 2E*) (*Charter Agreement § 3.1*)
- How is the board ensuring that the school meets all relevant compliance deadlines? (*Renewal Benchmark 2D, 2E*) (*See Charter Agreement generally*)

Governance

- How is the board establishing strategic academic, operational, and fiscal goals for the school? How are these goals connected to the school leader's evaluation? What key metrics will the board use to track progress against these goals, and what systems will need to be in place for the board to receive accurate and timely data on these key metrics? (*Renewal Benchmark 1A, 1B, 2D, 2E*)
- Has the board started to construct a board meeting calendar that considers resolutions the board will have to pass on a regular basis (such as selecting an auditor), elections the board will have to hold, and data and presentations the board will need to see? (*Renewal Benchmark 2E*)
- Has the board set the number of board members in accordance with the bylaws to ensure quorum to conduct business at a meeting? (*Renewal Benchmark 2E*)
- What system will the board use to evaluate the school leader? (*Renewal Benchmark 2E*)

3-6 Months Before Opening

Staff and Student Recruitment

- What staff positions remain unfilled, and what is the plan to fill them with appropriately qualified people? What contingency plans are in place should certain staff roles remain unfilled before school opening? (*Renewal Benchmark 2C, 2D*)
- Is the school on track to meet enrollment targets? If not, does the board need to make staffing or budgetary adjustments? (*Renewal Benchmark 2C, 3A*) (*Charter Agreement § 3.4*)
- How is the Board ensuring that the [Admissions Summary](#) is complete and submitted to the Institute by May 1? (*Renewal Benchmark 2F*)

Academic

- What is the plan to ensure staff are well-prepared and trained to execute their roles on day one of school? Does the board need to allocate resources to ensure pre-service teacher training is effective? (*Renewal Benchmark 1E*)
- How is the school ensuring that it will be ready to serve students with disabilities and English language learners (ELLs)? (*Renewal Benchmark 1F*) (*Charter Agreement §§ 3.5(b) & 3.7 and Exhibit C Students with Disabilities Assurances*)

Fiscal

- What is the board's plan to develop and approve the school's annual budget? (*Renewal Benchmark 2F, 3A*) (*Charter Agreement § 5.5*)
- What is the budget-to-actual on the school's start-up budget? How, if at all, will this impact the 1st year operating budget? (*Renewal Benchmark 2F, 3A*)
- What is the status of the CSP grant? What eligible costs have been reimbursed to date, and what costs are outstanding? (*Renewal Benchmark 2F, 3A*)
- If the school has experienced any challenges in securing any grant monies or other funds, has leadership reached out to the Institute for assistance? (*Renewal Benchmark 2F, 3A*)

Facility

- How is the board ensuring that all required facility information will be submitted to the Institute by May 15? (*Renewal Benchmark 2F*) (*Charter Agreement § 3.14*)
- How will school leaders ensure the facility is ready with a valid and up-to-date C of O in hand? (*Renewal Benchmark 2F*) (*Charter Agreement § 3.14*)
- If there is any concern that the building may not be ready for the start of school, what contingency plans need to be put in place? (*Renewal Benchmark 2F*)
- Is the school on track to have telephone, utilities, garbage collection, internet, nurse, food, security, janitorial and transportation services in place for opening? (*Renewal Benchmark 2F*)

Legal/Compliance

- Is the school on track to have student information systems (including student files and health files), student data systems, and other data systems in place for opening? (*Renewal Benchmark 2F*) (*Charter Agreement Exhibit B Monitoring Plan*)
- How is the process of collecting student information such as immunizations, proof of age, proof of residency, and student records proceeding? (*Renewal Benchmark 2F*) (*Charter Agreement Exhibit B Monitoring Plan*)
- What is the status of fulfilling the requirements of the Institute's [Pre-Opening Checklist](#)? What items remain outstanding? (*Renewal Benchmark 2F*) (*Charter Agreement §3.1*)

Governance

- Has the board identified key metrics it will review over the first school year to gauge the school's academic, operational, and fiscal health? Is the school leader putting systems in place to ensure those data are available in a clear and timely manner? (*Renewal Benchmark 1A, 1B, 2D, 2E*) (*Charter Agreement § 8*)
- Has the board approved all policies needed to operate the school including personnel, student, uniform, etc.? (*Renewal Benchmark 1A, 1B, 2D, 2E*)
- Has the board approved all contracts needed to operate the school? (*Renewal Benchmark 1A, 1B, 2D, 2E*)

3 Months Before Opening through the First Day of Instruction

Staff and Student Recruitment

- What staff positions remain unfilled, and what is the plan to fill them with appropriately qualified people? What contingency plans are in place should certain staff roles remain unfilled before school opening? (*Renewal Benchmark 2C, 2D*)
- Is the school on track to meet enrollment targets? If not, does the board need to make staffing or budgetary adjustments? (*Renewal Benchmark 2C, 3A*) (*Charter Agreement § 3.4*)

Academic

- What is the plan to ensure staff are well-prepared and trained to execute their roles on day one of school? Does the board need to allocate resources to ensure pre-service teacher training is effective? (*Renewal Benchmark 1E*)
- How is the school ensuring that it will be ready to serve students with disabilities and English language learners (ELLs)? (*Renewal Benchmark 1F*) (*Charter Agreement §§ 3.5(b) & 3.7 and Exhibit C Students with Disabilities Assurances*)
- Who oversees reviewing student applications/records for ELL status and Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)? Has the school been in contact with the district Committees on Special Education

(CSEs) regarding settings, services, and potentially amending IEPs if necessary? (*Renewal Benchmark 1F*) (*Charter Agreement §§ 3.5(b) & 3.7*)

Fiscal

- In terms of enrollment, what did the school bill the district(s) for on June 1 compared to the overall enrollment projection? Does the board need to take any action with respect to any variance? (*Renewal Benchmark 2F, 3A*)
- Did the education corporation receive all funds due from districts on July 1? If not, who from leadership is responsible for tracking amounts and contacting districts? (*Renewal Benchmark 2F, 3A*)

Legal/Compliance

- How is the process of collecting student information such as immunizations, proof of age, proof of residency, and student records proceeding? (*Renewal Benchmark 2F*) (*Charter Agreement Exhibit B Monitoring Plan*)
- What is the status of fulfilling the requirements of the [Institute's Preopening Checklist](#)? What items remain outstanding? (*Renewal Benchmark 2F*) (*Charter Agreement § 3.1*)

Governance

- Has the board discussed sending one or more trustees to key school events on the calendar? (*Renewal Benchmark 1A, 1B, 2D, 2E*)