

# THE SUNY CHARTER SCHOOLS INSTITUTE

*SCHOOL EVALUATION REPORT*  
**LITTLE WATER PREPARATORY  
CHARTER SCHOOL**

*VISIT DATE: APRIL 8, 2025*

*REPORT DATE: JULY 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 Little Water Preparatory Charter School (“Little Water Prep”) on April 8, 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

# LITTLE WATER PREPARATORY CHARTER SCHOOL

68 Dutchess Avenue, Poughkeepsie, NY 12601 | Grades: K-3 | Poughkeepsie City School District

### “ MISSION

*In partnership with the community, Little Water Prep provides an affirming and rigorous environment for all Kindergarten – 5<sup>th</sup> grade scholars through reflective, data driven teaching and a responsive curriculum that allows scholars to recognize their power and have agency over their futures.*

### CURRENT CHARTER

Opened:  
2022

Serves:  
Kindergarten – 3<sup>rd</sup>

Chartered Enrollment:  
240

Charter Expiration:  
July 31, 2027

### KEY DESIGN ELEMENTS

A conceptual, deeper learning approach	—
An interdisciplinary and culturally relevant approach to literacy	—
An affirming school environment that supports growth and identity development	+
Knowledgeable, culturally competent, data-informed teachers	+

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Little Water Prep opened in 2022 and is in the early stages of developing the systems required to implement its academic program with fidelity. During the charter term, the school experienced significant staff member and leadership turnover, which hindered progress toward establishing consistent instructional and operational practices. The unexpected departure of the school's founding leader in early 2025 compounded ongoing programmatic and operational challenges, disrupting progress toward stabilizing key systems. The current team is working to rectify issues and distribute leadership to ensure the school is building effective systems to support student learning.

At the time of the Institute's visit, the school had established basic structures to support instructional planning, assessment administration, and schoolwide operations. However, critical systems for curriculum implementation, instructional leadership, and supports for at-risk students remain inconsistently applied or underdeveloped. With the founding leader's recent departure at the time of the Institute's visit, current leaders are working to define leadership roles and internal accountability structures. With these systems not clearly defined, the school's ability to drive instructional improvement is limited.

## BENCHMARK SUMMARY

### QUALITATIVE BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

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

#### ASSESSMENT

Little Water Prep is developing an assessment system to support instructional decision-making and monitor student progress. The school administers the NWEA MAP three times per year and uses weekly formative assessments, such as exit tickets, to gather data on student learning. Teachers also use writing rubrics and performance tasks aligned to internal benchmarks.

Teachers and leaders analyze assessment data in weekly meetings and use findings to adjust instruction. However, leaders recognize a need to continue building teachers' skills to make instructional modifications. Despite having a large source of student achievement data, teachers do not fully utilize the data to drive instructional decisions. Leaders recognize that assessments are often too frequent and reduce available planning time, limiting opportunities for instructional adjustment and lesson refinement. Teachers report that the assessment calendar lacks alignment with unit pacing, which further undermines their ability to respond to data effectively. While the school has myriad data on student performance, leaders have not yet systematized the review process for teachers to fully use student data to drive instruction.

#### CURRICULUM

Little Water Prep's curriculum does not yet fully support teachers with instructional planning. While the school has many available resources that align to state standards, leaders do not yet have systems in place to monitor the implementation of the programs. The school uses a combination of instructional materials in English language arts ("ELA") and mathematics, including Success for All for foundational phonics, Leveled Literacy Intervention ("LLI") for reading, and Investigations in Number, Data, and Space, Cognitively Guided Instruction, and Contexts for Learning Mathematics. The school relies on LLI as a core instructional resource rather than as the targeted, supplemental intervention program it is designed to be, which limits students' access to comprehensive, grade level reading instruction.

While these materials offer various tools for lesson planning, teachers report that curricular implementation lacks vertical alignment and instructional coherence. For example, the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade mathematics, science, and social studies curricula remain underdeveloped with unclear pacing and minimal resource guidance to support lesson design and instructional execution. The school provides scope and sequence documents and supporting materials for ELA and mathematics. Teachers engage in unit unpacking sessions using a consistent structure that includes exploring the content, completing the student work, and working collaboratively to understand the standards and objectives of the unit. While this structure supports planning, teachers have identified a need for improved pacing guides, clearer alignment of assessments to end-of-unit outcomes, and

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

more coherent scaffolding to support students who enter below grade level, particularly in mathematics. The school does not have a process to determine if supplementary materials are high quality, rigorous, and aligned to standards. Leaders do not yet ensure assessments are fully aligned to curriculum pacing or rigor, resulting in data that inadequately informs instruction or supports student mastery. School leaders recognize these challenges and plan to review curriculum coherence and alignment with particular focus on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.

### PEDAGOGY

Instructional quality at Little Water Prep is uneven across classrooms. Teachers do not yet deliver effective and purposeful lessons. While teachers prepare materials in advance of lessons, the current implementation of the curricular programs lack rigorous content as teachers supplement materials with little oversight from leaders. The exception to this is when teachers deliver test preparation lessons, which provide students rigorous grade level materials. In the most effective lessons, teachers deliver small group instruction with strong routines. Teachers engage students in a range of checks for understanding including hand signals, whiteboards, and turn and talks. However, most checks for understanding focus on recall level questions.

Few teachers consistently engage students in rigorous questioning or tasks that require deep thinking. In the few classrooms where rigorous instruction was evident, students engaged in extended discourse and demonstrated conceptual understanding beyond surface level tasks. In other classrooms, instruction lacked rigor and cognitive demand, and students had limited opportunities for meaningful dialogue or active participation. Teachers miss opportunities to promote higher order thinking or support students in applying learning to new contexts. Teachers use effective routines and discipline systems to establish environments with a focus on academic achievement. Teachers create classrooms environments that are organized, print-rich, and display a wide range of instructional materials including pre-made charts and student work. Most classrooms reflect clear routines and procedures, and teachers demonstrate positive relationships with students, contributing to a calm and focused learning environment.

### INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

Following the departure of the school's founding leader, Little Water Prep's instructional leadership is developing. Current school leaders have reestablished expectations and rebuilt trust among staff members following the transition from the founding leader. Teachers report increased confidence in the leadership team and a greater willingness to reflect on and improve their practice. However, the new leadership team has not yet established a clear instructional vision. Both the principal and the instructional coach are new to their roles and are still developing the necessary capacity to effectively lead instructional improvement.

The new leadership team has established foundational systems for coaching and recognizes a need to ensure it is consistently supporting teacher practice across all grades. The school implements weekly lesson plan submissions, unit unpacking sessions, and Wednesday professional development to support instructional planning. However, these practices are inconsistently effective, as they lack alignment to a clear instructional vision and do not yet result in improved instructional quality across classrooms. Teachers engage in structured planning that includes reviewing content, completing student work, and analyzing standards and objectives. However, staffing shortages limit the leadership team's ability to deliver sustained, high quality coaching.



## BENCHMARK SUMMARY

Leaders collect classroom data and conduct teacher check-ins, but do not deliver consistent, high quality feedback. Leaders spend time covering classes and handling facilities-related responsibilities, which limit the team's capacity to support instruction consistently.

Teachers participate in self-reflection during evaluations, but student achievement data does not inform performance ratings or guide professional development. Some teachers report unclear expectations, limited access to resources, and the need to supplement the curriculum heavily. The leadership team acknowledges the need to build internal capacity, clarify roles, strengthen feedback systems, and align planning, coaching, and evaluation systems to improve instruction schoolwide.

### AT-RISK PROGRAM

Little Water Prep does not yet meet the needs of at-risk students. The school has compliant processes for identifying students with disabilities and English language learners ("ELLs"). Due to the absence of a cohesive intervention model, limited staff member capacity, and inconsistent implementation of academic and social-emotional supports, the school struggles to provide an effective at-risk program. Special education teachers collaborate with general education teachers to deliver both push-in and pull-out services. At the time of the visit, a single staff member served as both the special education coordinator and the ELL teacher, limiting the school's capacity to provide differentiated, specialized support. This dual role, coupled with limited schoolwide training in language acquisition and inclusive instructional strategies, indicates that current staffing and planning are insufficient to fully meet the academic needs of at-risk populations.

Leaders acknowledge that response to intervention ("RTI") practices are informal and not supported by clear procedures and existing interventions are not consistently tracked or evaluated for effectiveness. Teachers report uncertainty around how to monitor progress for students struggling academically or determine when more intensive support is necessary. Staff members report that while leaders communicate clear expectations for tier 1 supports, they provide minimal guidance or training to implement tier 2 and 3 interventions. Teachers express a need for more training on how to differentiate instruction and implement accommodations effectively within general education classrooms.

Tensions in the school's relationship with the local district contribute to ongoing challenges in securing timely services and funding. At the time of the visit, the leadership team was strategizing ways to improve the school's working relationship with the district and ensure that students with disabilities receive the services and funding entitled to them.

### ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Little Water Prep is building the capacity to support its academic program but has not yet established the organizational structures necessary to sustain improvement. The current leaders introduced schoolwide systems for arrival, transitions, and classroom behavior in the transitional period of the founder's departure. Staff members report that the current leadership team promotes a respectful and collaborative culture.

## BENCHMARK SUMMARY

While the school has improved operational consistency, staffing instability and ambiguity of roles continue to limit progress. The school has not clearly defined responsibilities across the leadership team, and frequent classroom coverage hinders the team's ability to monitor instruction and provide teacher development. Leaders report that they are often pulled away from instructional supervision duties to address facilities concerns, operational issues, or absences. As a result, the implementation of core systems, including those related to curriculum oversight, assessment coordination, and special populations support, remains inconsistent. The school's executive director directed most systems, operations, and day-to-day decisions with little delegation of responsibilities to other staff members, which limited distributed leadership and long-term sustainability. Current leaders are building an understanding of distributing responsibilities and ensuring they are fully aware of the former executive director's duties to ensure the school meets compliance and other operational requirements.

### BOARD OVERSIGHT & GOVERNANCE

The Little Water Prep board is developing its oversight and governance skills to effectively govern the school. The board maintains regular oversight of operations and finance, but has not yet established strong systems for monitoring academic performance. Board members meet monthly and receive updates from the school's leadership team regarding enrollment, staffing, and school culture. Members bring experience in education, law, and finance and engage in regular strategic planning.

While the board receives broad academic updates, it does not consistently review student outcome data or evaluate progress. Board members have recently introduced academic reporting protocols. The board is navigating the transition of the school's founder and working with the acting principal to ensure that reporting structures are in place for clearly communicating academic results to the board. The board is adjusting its evaluation systems and plans to identify a clear system to hold leadership accountable which includes academic performance.

Little Water Prep

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APPENDICES

PAGES Ax 1-4



LITTLE WATER PREPARATORY CHARTER SCHOOL BOARD OF TRUSTEES<sup>1</sup>

CHAIR	TRUSTEES
Jordan Schinella	Tanicqua Pryor
TREASURER	Kadeem Talent Davis
Steven Strom	Nicholas Ennis

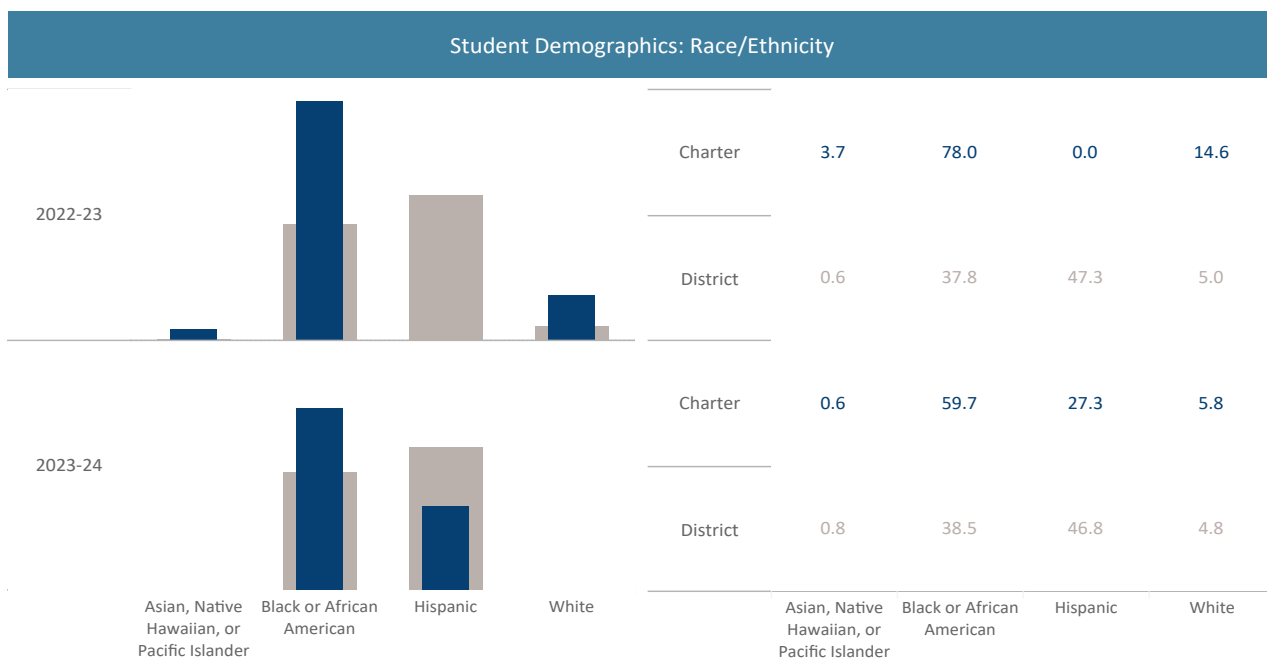
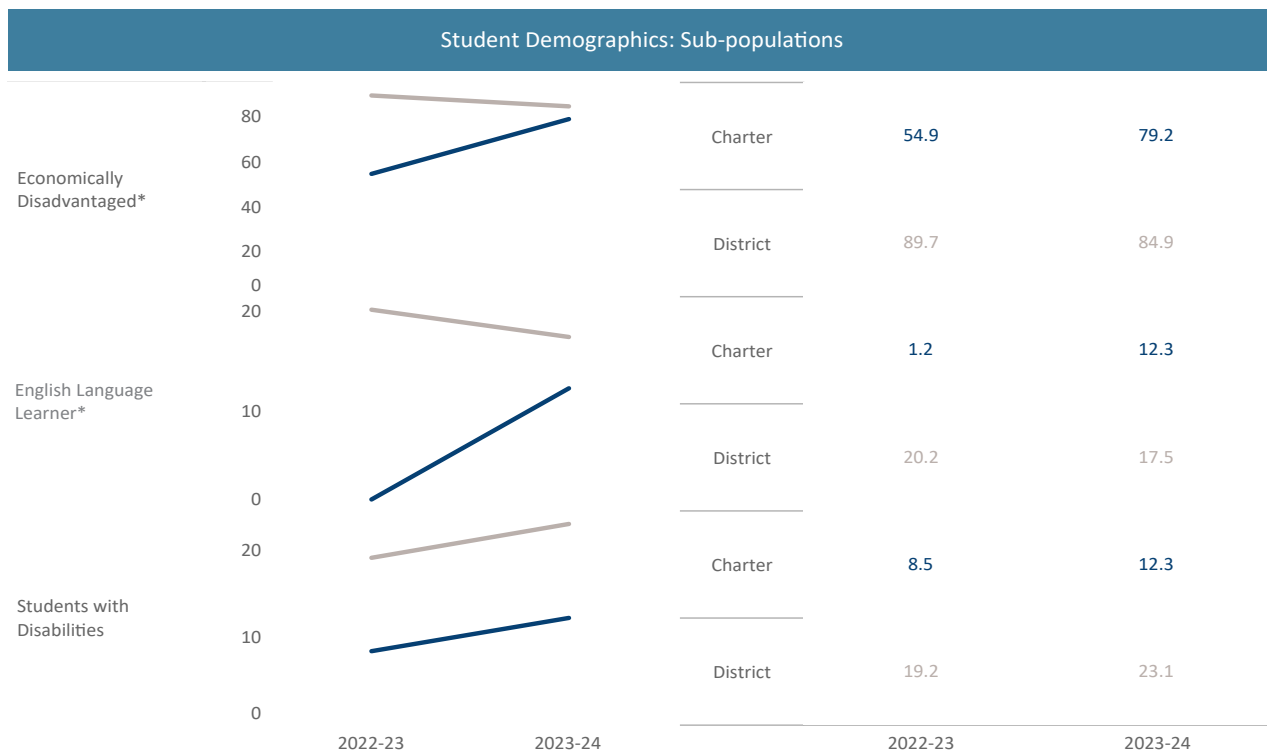
CHARTER CHARACTERISTICS

SCHOOL YEAR	CHARTERED ENROLLMENT	ACTUAL ENROLLMENT <sup>2</sup>	ACTUAL AS A PERCENTAGE OF CHARTERED ENROLLMENT	GRADES SERVED
2022-23	120	101	84%	K-1
2023-24	180	138	77%	K-2
2024-25	240	196	82%	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.)

## Little Water Preparatory Charter School

Poughkeepsie City School District

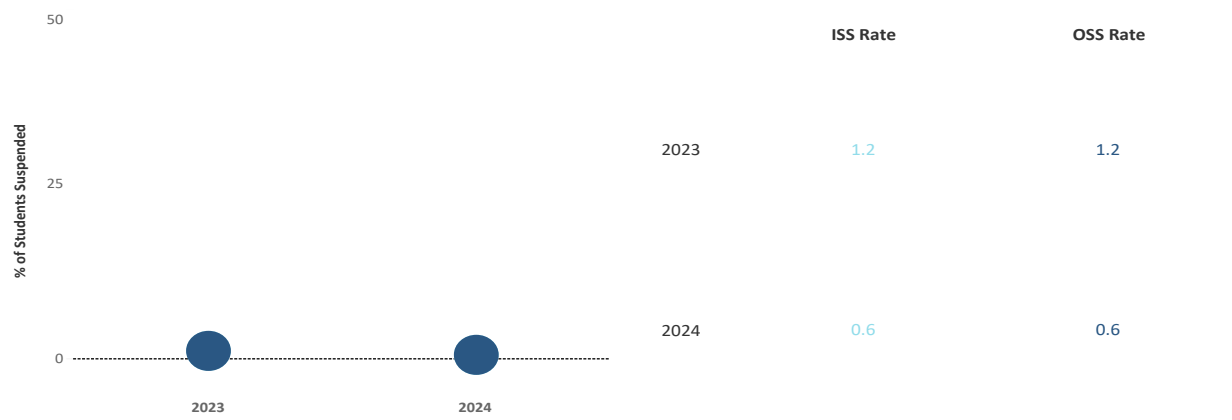


\* Data reported in these charts reflect BEDS day enrollment counts as reported by the NYSED.





Little Water 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	73.2	0	0

Little Water Preparatory Charter School's Enrollment and Retention Status: 2023-24			Target	Charter
enrollment	economically disadvantaged	<div></div>	72.3	79.2
	English language learners	<div></div>	15.7	12.3
	students with disabilities	<div></div>	14.9	12.3
retention	economically disadvantaged*	<div></div>	95.9	N/A
	English language learners*	<div></div>	97.0	N/A
	students with disabilities	<div></div>	95.4	100.0

\*Due to an error in data reporting, retention rates for English language learners and economically disadvantage students are unavailable for the 2023-24 school year.

Discipline data above reflect information reported by the education corporation and validated by the Institute. Enrollment and retention data reflect available BEDS day information as reported by the NYSED.



## CHARTER SCHOOL VISIT HISTORY

SCHOOL YEAR	VISIT TYPE	DATE
2022-23	First Year Visit	April 18, 2023
2024-25	School Evaluation Visit	April 8, 2025

## CONDUCT OF THE VISIT

DATE(S) OF REVIEW	EVALUATION TEAM MEMBERS	TITLE
April 8, 2025	Desree Cabrall-Njenga	School Evaluator
	Christina Froeb	External Consultant

## CHARTER CYCLE CONTEXT

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

