

THE SUNY CHARTER SCHOOLS INSTITUTE

SCHOOL EVALUATION REPORT
**DREAM CHARTER SCHOOL
HIGHBRIDGE**

VISIT DATE: MARCH 20, 2025
REPORT DATE: AUGUST 4, 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 DREAM Charter School Highbridge (“DREAM Highbridge”) on March 20, 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

DREAM CHARTER SCHOOL HIGHBRIDGE

1162 River Avenue, Bronx, NY 10452 | Grades: K-2, 6 | Bronx CSD 8



MISSION

The mission of DREAM Charter School is to prepare students for high-performing high schools, colleges, and beyond through a rigorous academic program that develops critical thinkers who demonstrate a love of learning, strong character, and a commitment to wellness and active citizenship. DREAM Charter School inspires all students to recognize their potential and realize their dreams.

CURRENT CHARTER

Opened:
2022

Serves:
Kindergarten – 2nd & 6th

Chartered Enrollment:
292

Charter Expiration:
July 31, 2027

KEY DESIGN ELEMENTS

An innovative, research-based curriculum that emphasizes critical thinking, conceptual understanding, criticality, and curiosity



A co-teaching model that reduces the teacher-to-student ratio and integrates special needs students into the general school population



A robust data cycle that uses data to inform all aspects of teaching and learning



A whole child approach to teaching and learning that deeply integrates social emotional competencies, health, wellness, music, and the arts into the overall school program



An extended day and an extended year model that maximizes learning hours



An active family engagement program that fosters parent/guardian participation, leadership, and advocacy



A focus on teacher motivation, development, and retention



A universal pre-Kindergarten program that ignites learning in children



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

DREAM Highbridge opened its doors in the fall of 2022 with 60 students in Kindergarten, and the school has expanded to include Kindergarten – 2nd grade and 6th grade in its third year of operation. DREAM Highbridge is one of three charter schools within the DREAM Charter Schools (“DREAM Schools”) education corporation, a not-for-profit charter school education corporation. DREAM Schools partners with the New York not-for-profit corporation DREAM, a community based organization providing back office services to schools for operations, facilities management, curriculum, professional development, and fundraising along with services to families in the areas of food access, affordable housing, and legal support.

In accordance with DREAM Schools’ educational philosophy, DREAM Highbridge provides students with rigorous, culturally responsive curriculum in English language arts (“ELA”) and mathematics rooted in constructivist principles to foster conceptual understanding and hands-on learning. Students have access to extracurriculars in sports and music along with free afterschool and summer programming as part of the school’s commitment to extended learning. The school actively uses data driven, collaborative planning to drive growth and continuous improvement among teachers, staff members, and students.

DREAM Highbridge actively monitors the progress of students receiving reading intervention while consistently measuring the impact of intervention efforts. For example, to deliver reading intervention within its elementary program, the school leverages small group instruction while supplementing its core ELA curriculum with materials from Core Knowledge Language Arts (“CKLA”) based on the Science of Reading framework. To track student progress, the school relies on the i-Ready adaptive learning platform as an assessment tool, and teachers meet with instructional leaders weekly to review student progress toward pre-determined proficiency goals. As a result of this careful monitoring of outcomes, instructional leaders can cite the proportion of students on track to close gaps for specific standards with the ability to discern which intervention approaches have been most effective.

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

DREAM Highbridge has an assessment system that improves instructional effectiveness and student learning. The school uses i-Ready, a valid, reliable assessment instrument, to measure student growth against state standards each quarter. Teachers use daily exit tickets and end of unit assessments to track student progress and plan academic intervention groups. Teachers set weekly student i-Ready performance milestones, and learning specialists pull students for daily small group intervention if students miss weekly targets. Students meeting or exceeding weekly targets also have the opportunity to extend their learning through the i-Ready MyPath adaptive platforms. Teachers track the effectiveness of intervention by administering biweekly mastery check quizzes.

The school makes assessment data accessible to teachers, school leaders, and board members. During weekly “comp stat” meetings, academic leaders meet with the school’s curriculum team to analyze student growth by standard and develop response to data lessons for high priority standards. As a result, academic coaches demonstrate an awareness of student performance levels by grade and use this information to prioritize support for teachers in the highest need classrooms. Teachers also gather with other DREAM Schools campuses three times per year to isolate common performance trends to inform instructional priorities at the network level.

CURRICULUM

DREAM Highbridge’s curriculum supports teachers with instructional planning. The school delivers a curricular framework aligned to state standards. In ELA, the school uses Wit & Wisdom in the elementary program and Fish Tank in the middle school program to support students with close reading as well as craft and structure. In mathematics, the school uses Illustrative Math. The school provides teachers supporting tools that provide a bridge between the curricular framework and lesson plans. Teachers create lesson plans within core subjects, and academic leadership provides scope and sequence and pacing documents to ensure that lesson content aligns to the New York State standards. To internalize key lesson objectives within the curricula, teachers engage in weekly lesson study protocols as a grade during which they internalize lesson content and practice teaching with guidance from coaches who ensure that lessons incorporate techniques to foster student engagement, demonstration of learning, and academic ownership.

The school has a process for selecting, developing, and reviewing its curricula, and leaders demonstrate responsiveness to feedback received through curriculum implementation. To select curricula, network leaders conduct needs assessments consisting of focus groups with teachers, parents, and students and evaluate

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

potential curricula against pre-determined criteria tied to academic rigor and cultural responsiveness. Upon selection, the network pilots new curricula before implementing it at scale. As part of its curriculum review process, curriculum directors gather ongoing feedback from stakeholders during implementation and make adjustments as needs arise. For example, DREAM Highbridge has found that its current ELA curriculum for Kindergarten – 2nd grade provides standards aligned content and rigorous skill development in accordance with curriculum selection criteria. However, teachers and coaches spend considerable time modifying and supplementing the curriculum to increase student engagement and dialogue, access to culturally responsive texts, clarity of lesson goals, and writing instruction. In response to this kind of feedback, the school holds curriculum town halls for teachers to voice concerns formally for network leadership.

PEDAGOGY

High quality instruction is evident across most DREAM Highbridge classrooms. Teachers across grade levels implement well-structured lessons aligned with clear objectives while effectively checking for student understanding via turn-and-talks, student-generated summaries, and exit tickets. Teachers challenge students to develop depth of understanding through accountable talk, peer discussion, and independent tasks that foster critical thinking. In several classrooms, the Institute observed students demonstrate higher order thinking by articulating their reasoning, challenging peers' ideas, and making connections to prior learning. Teachers use effective small group instruction, such as phonics small groups to build foundational literacy skills, to differentiate student learning. Teachers report lesson preparation practices, including annotating plans and collaborative planning, help maximize instructional time and maintain alignment with the school's instructional vision.

INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERS

DREAM Highbridge has strong instructional leadership. Instructional leaders provide sustained, systematic, and effective coaching and supervision that improves teachers' instructional effectiveness while establishing an environment of high expectations for teacher performance. Instructional leaders regularly conduct teacher evaluations with clear criteria that accurately identify teachers' strengths using the Teacher Career Pathway ("TCP") rubric, and instructional coaches follow a quarterly coaching cycle that incorporates classroom observations twice per week for each content area. During these cycles, teachers set performance goals, and coaches support teachers in reaching these goals by providing live coaching, post-observation reflection sessions, and supervision of intellectual preparation at the grade team level. Coaches log observation notes and next steps in the School Mint platform and track teacher progress in areas related to student engagement, demonstration of learning and transferable skills, academic ownership, and independence.

Instructional leaders implement a comprehensive professional development program that develops the competencies and skills of leaders and teachers. Elementary and middle school principals deliver support for coaches via weekly one on one sessions in which leaders conduct co-observations, review student performance data, and observe coach-led intellectual preparation sessions. Coaches also receive professional support from the school's director of curriculum and instruction ("DCI") who meets with coaches weekly to plan intellectual preparation support for teachers. Principals prepare for their roles by completing the education corporation's principal-in-residence program during which they shadow the school's current leader and receive coaching

BENCHMARK SUMMARY

from a network managing director. In-service principals from each campus gather weekly to collaborate and receive ongoing professional development from the network chief academic officer. Despite the network's ample provision of staff development opportunities, teachers express a desire for professional development that deepens knowledge of content and the vertical alignment of grade level skills.

AT-RISK PROGRAM

DREAM Highbridge meets the educational needs of most at-risk students. The school implements a responsive, data-informed approach to supporting at-risk students, including those with academic, behavioral, and social-emotional needs, though structured supports for English language learners ("ELLs") are not yet developed. DREAM Highbridge employs a multi-tiered system of supports ("MTSS") to identify and serve students at risk of academic failure or social emotional challenges. The school tracks student data to initiate the Response to Intervention ("RTI") process for students with persistent learning struggles. Monthly student support team meetings monitor progress and adjust interventions based on student performance. Staff members deliver targeted, small-group instruction and social emotional learning groups tailored to students' evolving needs. Teachers report productive collaboration with the school's intervention team, and leaders demonstrate a strong commitment to inclusion and early intervention. However, the school does not yet offer a fully developed ELL program. While individual teachers and the dedicated ELL specialist provide informal supports, including visuals, sentence frames, and modified materials, these practices are not yet systematized across classrooms. Teachers express a clear desire for additional professional development and resources to support ELLs more effectively.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

DREAM Highbridge has established clear structures, systems, and accountability practices to support the effective delivery of its academic program. The school maintains a well defined organizational structure with clear roles and responsibilities across all levels of leadership with comprehensive operational systems enabling the school to implement its academic program effectively. The school's administrative team maintains consistent discipline procedures and transparent communication channels. Leaders actively involve staff members in school improvement efforts contributing to a culture of shared ownership. For example, staff members across departments engage in cross-functional collaboration, particularly through regular "What's Going On" meetings, which serve as a forum to identify needs, develop responsive action plans, and monitor progress. As a result, teachers describe the school as an environment where they feel supported, respected, and included in decision making processes.

DREAM Highbridge

Ax

APPENDICES

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DREAM CHARTER SCHOOLS BOARD OF TRUSTEES¹

CHAIR	TRUSTEES
Ashish Doshi	Liz Rich
VICE CHAIR	Vicki Zubovic
Michele Joerg	Zainab Ali
TREASURER	Don C. Sawyer III
Charlie Howe	Adam Miller

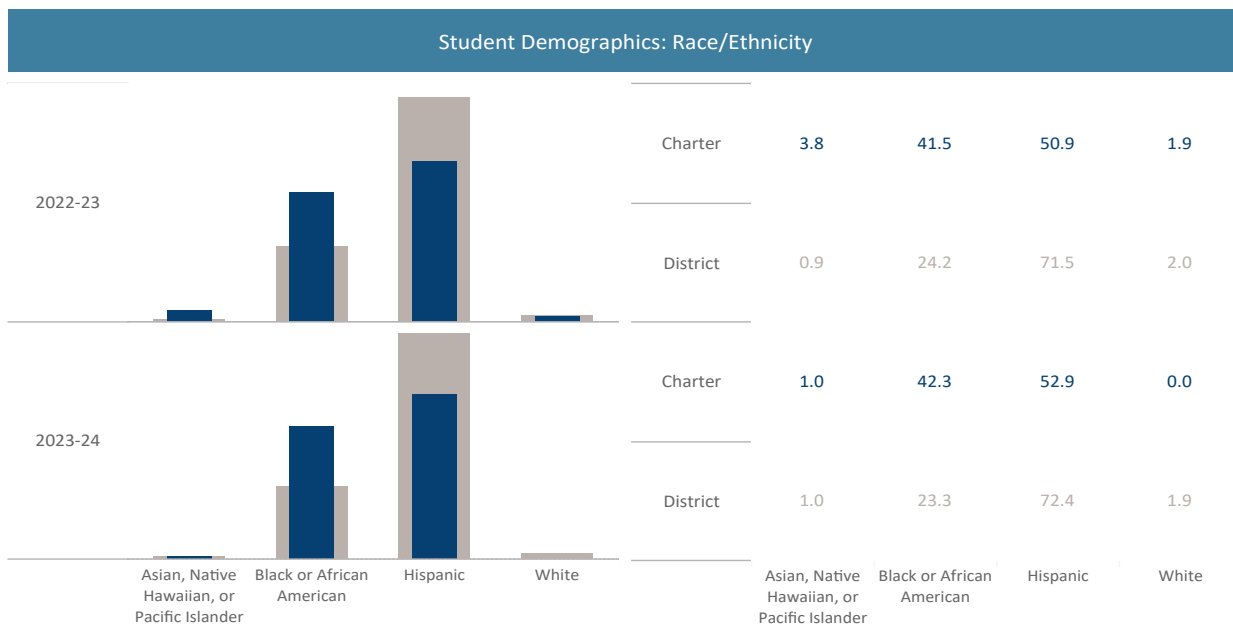
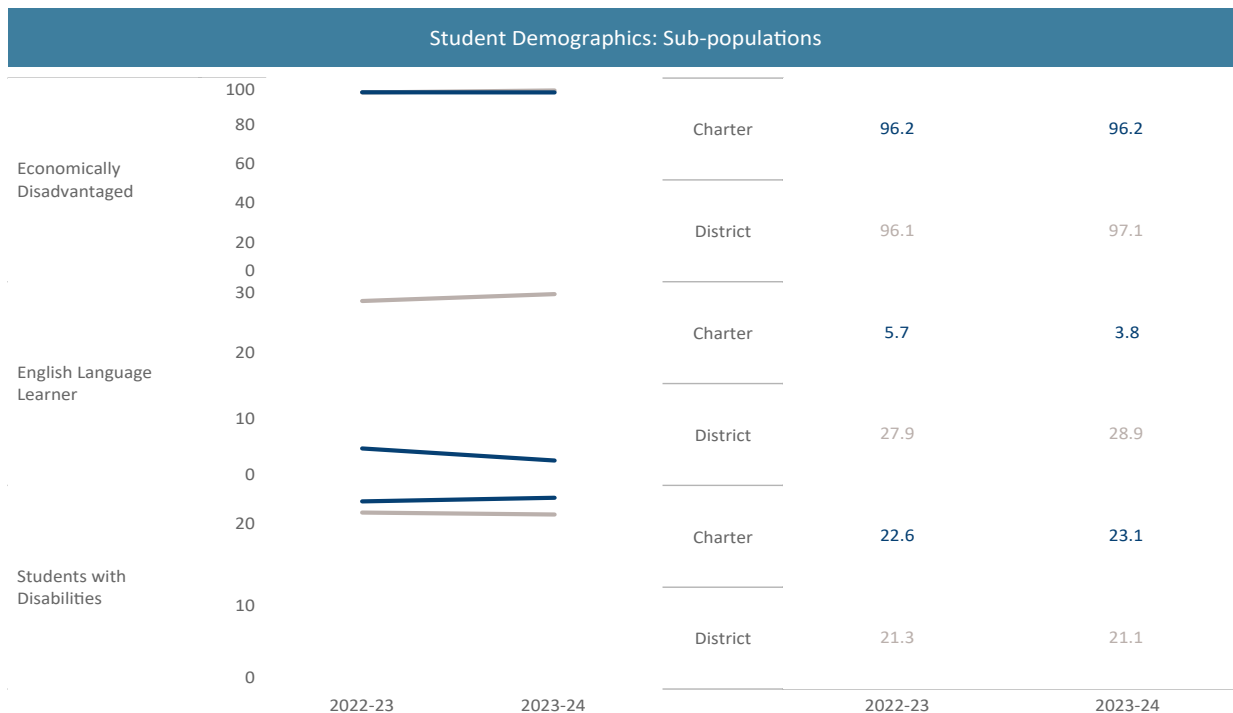
CHARTER CHARACTERISTICS

SCHOOL YEAR	CHARTERED ENROLLMENT	ACTUAL ENROLLMENT ²	ACTUAL AS A PERCENTAGE OF CHARTERED ENROLLMENT	GRADES SERVED
2022-23	60	52	87%	K
2023-24	120	96	80%	K-1
2024-25	292	350	120%	K-2, 6

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.)

DREAM Charter School Highbridge

Bronx CSD 9

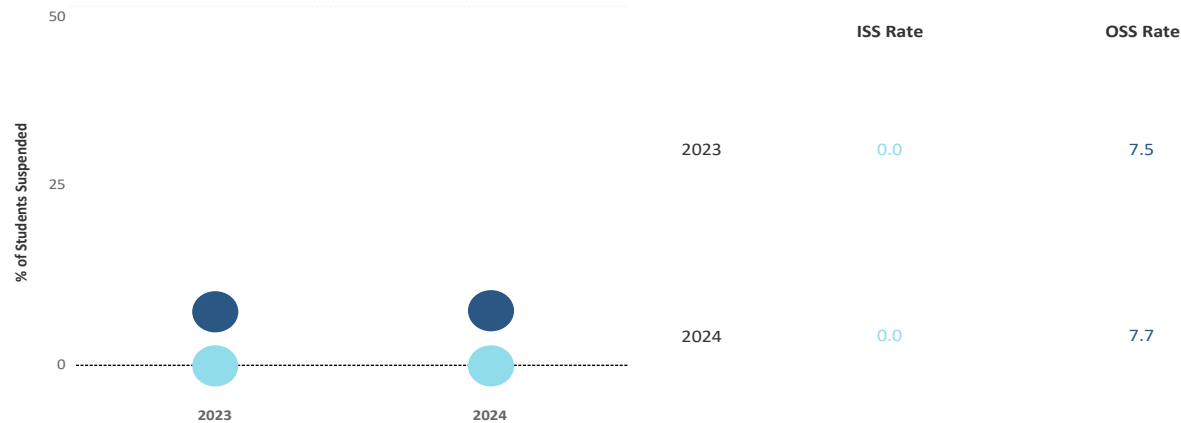


Data reported in these charts reflect BEDS day enrollment counts as reported by the NYSED.

APPENDIX A: SCHOOL OVERVIEW



DREAM Charter School Highbridge



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	69.2	0

DREAM Charter School Highbridge's Enrollment and Retention Status: 2023-24			Target	Charter
enrollment	economically disadvantaged		92.9	96.2
	English language learners		27.4	3.8
	students with disabilities		22.4	23.1
retention	economically disadvantaged		86.8	68.0
	English language learners		88.0	100.0
	students with disabilities		86.2	81.8

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	February 28, 2023
2024-25	Evaluation Visit	March 20, 2025

CONDUCT OF THE VISIT

DATE(S) OF REVIEW	EVALUATION TEAM MEMBERS	TITLE
March 20, 2025	Ciani Jones	Senior Analyst
	Desree Cabrall-Njenga	School Evaluator

CHARTER CYCLE CONTEXT

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

