

THE SUNY CHARTER SCHOOLS INSTITUTE

SCHOOL EVALUATION REPORT
**BRILLA-PUBLIC PREP JOINT HIGH-
SCHOOL PROGRAM**

VISIT DATE: JANUARY 28 – 29, 2025
REPORT DATE: DECEMBER 23, 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 Vertex Partnership Academies (“Vertex High”), the joint high school program between Brilla Public Charter Schools and Public Prep Charter Schools Academies, on January 28 – 29, 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 term, most mid-cycle evaluation visits focus on a subset of these benchmarks addressing the academic success of the program and the effectiveness and viability of the charter school organizations. 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. Vertex High is in its third year of operation, and therefore has not yet graduated a cohort of students. Therefore, the Institute will provide the school with an overview of its performance after the program graduates its first cohort of students after the 2025-26 school year.

The Appendix to the report contains a Program Overview with descriptive and historical information about the program, as well as background information on the conduct of the visit.

This report serves as a summary of the 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.





PROGRAM BACKGROUND

BRILLA-PUBLIC PREP JOINT HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAM (VERTEX PARTNERSHIP ACADEMIES)

1160 Beach Avenue, Bronx, NY 10472 | Grades: 9-11 | NYC Community School District 12



MISSION

The mission of Vertex Partnership Academies is for all students to be candidates for the International Baccalaureate Diploma or the International Baccalaureate Career Certificate. As a school community, we want to develop the ability to use our minds well so that, through our thoughts and actions, we make the world a better place.

PROGRAM INFORMATION

Grades Served 2024-25:
9th – 11th Grade

Chartered Enrollment
2024-25:
292

KEY DESIGN ELEMENTS

Professional community of practice	+
Teacher leaders	+
Collaborative leadership	+
Professional development system	+
Evidence-based practice	+
Tools and strategies	+
Challenging curriculum	+
Focus and coherence	+
Allocation of resources	+
Community engagement	+

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Vertex High is steadily establishing the systems, practices, and instructional alignment necessary to support the International Baccalaureate (“IB”) model. Now in its third year of operation, the program demonstrates strong adult investment in its vision, high levels of student engagement in classrooms, and growing alignment between instructional delivery and academic expectations. The program has made significant strides in developing foundational systems, and demonstrates a strong capacity to implement its academic model with consistency and clarity.

Teachers demonstrate commitment to achieving high academic outcomes through engaging classroom environments, and students are active participants in their learning. Teachers implement core instructional strategies with fidelity, including cold calling and modeling. Leaders recognize a need to develop teachers’ skills in providing consistent opportunities for students to engage in higher order thinking and problem solving activities.

The program’s academic leaders, the principal and IB coordinator, provide consistent coaching and professional development to teachers. Leadership expectations are clear, but inconsistently implemented, particularly in the use of assessment data and instructional planning. Leaders have begun to respond to program-wide academic gaps, such as credit accumulation shortfalls, by adjusting course sequencing and expanding supports for at-risk students.

The program is refining its curriculum structure. While originally designed to offer the IB Diploma Programme, IB Career-related Programme, and IB Middle Years Programme, Vertex High is adjusting its model to target specific IB elements to ensure it is providing students with a high quality educational experience. As the program is in its third year, leaders actively reflect upon the first few years and make curricular and program adjustments to ensure the program targets specific needs of its students. Leaders are aware of the startup challenges the program faced and are working to build more intentional academic tracks and intervention systems.

The boards and management organization continue to refine their oversight roles to ensure they can effectively support the unique structure of a joint high school program. As the program moves toward its first graduating cohort, leaders prioritize clarifying leadership roles, developing academic systems, and ensuring teachers deliver consistently high quality instruction.

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

Vertex High has an assessment system that provides teachers and leaders with sufficient data to monitor student progress and inform instruction. Teachers understand where students stand academically and use assessment results to adjust classroom instruction and identify students for special interventions. The school administers benchmark assessments three times annually in each core subject, culminating in mock Regents exams. To assess incoming students, teachers administer the NWEA MAP assessment three times a year in English language arts (“ELA”) and mathematics. Teachers use regular exit tickets and checks for understanding to monitor student learning during lessons.

Instructional leaders assist teachers in creating assessments aligned with unit goals, curriculum priorities, and state and IB standards. Teachers rely on released Regents and IB items to guide assessment design. Leaders review drafts and support teachers in adjusting curriculum based on student results. Vertex High uses internal tracking systems to collect and analyze student data after each benchmark cycle.

Leaders use assessment results to develop professional development and coaching strategies. Leaders provide regular professional development on data analysis protocols, and department heads use the protocols regularly to identify learning trends and adjust instruction. As the program expands, leaders intend to make academic data more accessible.

CURRICULUM

Vertex High’s curriculum supports teachers with instructional planning. Vertex High effectively uses teacher-created and network-provided unit plans and pacing calendars aligned to New York State and IB standards. Leaders provide teachers with structured planning expectations, and teachers report receiving ongoing support to align lessons to curriculum objectives. With these tools, and feedback from leaders, teachers plan purposeful and focused lessons.

Vertex High has a process for reviewing its curriculum and resources that support delivery of the curriculum. In its first three years, the program demonstrates capacity to adapt its academic programming to better meet students’ needs. Initially the program aimed to provide all students with access to an IB track with students selecting either the IB Diploma Programme or the IB Career-related Programme track for 11th and 12th grades. The program’s audit of its IB curriculum implementation revealed gaps in the systems for tracking students’ Regents pass rates and credit accumulation, indicating misalignments between course sequencing

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 graduation requirements for some students. In response, Vertex High has made substantial shifts from the original curricular framework, including mid-year schedule adjustments for students needing to address unmet graduation requirements more rapidly. The program is developing a revised three pathway model that includes the IB Diploma track, IB Career-related track, and a Regents track. These shifts reflect leaders' ability to reflect on the program's initial successes and challenges and adjust effectively to best meet the needs of the program's students.

PEDAGOGY

High quality instruction is evident throughout Vertex High. Teachers deliver purposeful lessons using materials aligned to the IB program. In many classrooms, students work on assigned tasks and complete their work either independently or with guidance. Teachers regularly use techniques to check for student understanding. Teachers employ instructional techniques like cold calling and visual modeling. Teachers rely on real-time data to adjust pacing and address misconceptions. The majority of teachers include opportunities to challenge students with questions and activities that develop higher order thinking skills. Some classrooms encourage inquiry-based learning and text analysis but teachers often depend on brief questioning sequences with little student elaboration. Students do not regularly participate in extended discussions or problem-solving activities. Teachers establish classroom environments that are structured and orderly. Students follow clear routines and expectations that maximize instructional time.

INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

Vertex High is developing strong instructional leadership. The instructional leadership team provides clear expectations for instruction and the program's leadership has sufficient capacity to support teacher development. The instructional leadership team includes the head of talent, teaching, and learning, the principal, and the IB coordinator. Leaders maintain clearly defined roles and collaborate to implement the school's instructional systems. The head of talent, teaching, and learning sets instructional priorities and guides the development of school-based leaders through regular touchpoints and strategic planning. Leaders provide sustained and effective coaching that improves teachers' instructional effectiveness. Teachers report that leaders conduct frequent classroom visits, offer actionable feedback, and respond to instructional concerns in a timely manner. Leaders regularly review lesson plans and monitor instruction through formal and informal observations. However, leaders' instructional support structures do not yet ensure consistent implementation of expectations across all content areas. As Vertex High prepares for its first graduating class, leaders are refining coaching and monitoring systems to ensure instructional practices reflect schoolwide priorities across all classrooms.

Leaders deliver professional development aligned to the program's academic goals. Through regular department meetings, leaders support teachers with data analysis to drive adjustments to instruction. Leaders deliver professional development sessions consistently, and leaders design sessions based on trends in classroom instruction or from recent assessment data.

BENCHMARK SUMMARY

AT-RISK PROGRAM

Vertex High does not yet meet the educational needs of all at-risk students. At the time of the visit, the program was establishing systems to support students at risk of academic failure, but these systems were in their nascent stages and were not yet implemented consistently across student groups. The program lacks a comprehensive approach to identifying students struggling academically and students with disabilities. The program primarily relies on students being previously identified before attending the program.

For students struggling academically, the school uses transcript reviews and internal assessments to identify needs and adjust student schedules. During the 2024-25 school year, leaders implemented targeted interventions such as Regents preparation courses and limited additional support blocks. While these supports represent progress, the program has not yet implemented a formal response to intervention system. Staff members do not use consistent processes to identify student needs, track progress, or determine movement between intervention tiers.

At the time of the visit, Vertex High did not have special education teachers and had not filled its Special Education Teacher Support Services (“SETSS”) position. This staffing gap limited the program’s capacity to deliver mandated services. Leaders and teachers report that students with individualized education programs (“IEPs”) did not consistently receive services aligned with their plans, and leaders did not provide evidence of compensatory services. Teachers express uncertainty about special education procedures and reported confusion about where to direct questions regarding service delivery or programmatic adjustments.

Vertex High’s English language learner (“ELL”) program is in the early stages of development. Teachers report using instructional scaffolds and some modifications, but also noted a need for clearer guidance and consistent strategies to meet students’ language development needs. At the time of the visit, the program did not yet have a qualified ELL staff member or a structured system to track ELL progress or monitor the effectiveness of instructional supports across content areas.

The program does not yet provide consistent or effective opportunities for coordination between at-risk program teachers and general education teachers. Teachers and leaders do not yet have shared tools or routines for documenting interventions, tracking academic or behavioral trends, or adjusting support based on data. Leaders provide some professional development to help teachers meet students’ needs, and these have included addressing some practices such as differentiation and behavioral interventions. Leaders recognize a need to improve the program’s at-risk program to include more focus and attention to meeting subgroups of students’ needs.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Vertex High is thoughtfully growing its organizational capacity to effectively deliver its academic program. The program has established an administrative structure with sufficient staff members and allocation of resources to meet its ambitious academic goals. The strong adult and student culture results in high student and teacher retention rates.

BENCHMARK SUMMARY

The Vertex High leadership team works urgently and thoughtfully to codify and communicate clear lines of accountability with well-defined responsibilities across roles. The head of school manages accountability for all operations allowing the principal and head of talent, teaching, and learning to focus primarily on student culture, academics, and teacher development. Leaders have codified some documents outlining operational responsibilities but teachers are still developing a solid understanding of roles. For example, teachers are still improving their capacity to direct students and families to the correct administrative staff members for various requests.

The program establishes a clear student culture system teachers implement with fidelity across classrooms resulting in lessons focused on academic achievement with virtually no disruptions. Leaders communicate clear expectations for the program's merits and demerits system, which undergirds the discipline system. For example, teachers know the goal for approximate number of merits to administer daily, the ideal ratio of merits to demerits, and how to record these data in the program's centralized digital tracker. During professional development and coaching sessions, instructional leaders reiterate the types of student behavior that constitute a merit or demerit and establish the expectation for reinforcement of positive academic behaviors. During weekly advisory sessions, teachers celebrate students with particularly noteworthy culture data.

BOARD OVERSIGHT & GOVERNANCE

The education corporation boards responsible for Vertex High are in the process of formalizing shared oversight systems and improving role clarity as they continue to develop effective governance practices for the high school program.

Vertex High operates under the oversight of two education corporations: Brilla Public Charter Schools and Public Prep Charter School Academies, who partner with Vertex Partnership Academies, Inc., as the charter management organization for the high school program. While each board maintains legal responsibility for its own charters, the boards collaborate through joint committees and shared dashboards to support the high school program. With the appointment of a board liaison, the boards are improving their communication structures and governance routines.

Board members show commitment to the program's mission and report increased confidence in their ability to oversee academic, financial, and operational outcomes. However, governance structures are still evolving. Public Prep Charter School Academies plans to exit the partnership at the close of the agreed term.

The boards meet regularly and review progress using Vertex High generated data reports. As the program matures, the boards must complete governance transitions and continue building capacity to provide rigorous oversight. This includes holding the charter management organization accountable for the academic success of the program.

Vertex High

Ax

APPENDICES

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PO^A
PROGRAM
OVERVIEW
PAGE Ax 1



PUBLIC PREP CHARTER SCHOOL ACADEMIES BOARD OF TRUSTEES¹

CHAIR	TRUSTEES
Boykin Curry IV	Samuel Greene
VICE CHAIR	Tamara Zachery
Nicole Green	Khairah Klein
SECRETARY	
Laura Weil	

BRILLA COLLEGE PREPARATORY CHARTER SCHOOLS BOARD OF TRUSTEES¹

CHAIR	TRUSTEES
Eric J. Eckholdt	Aaron Brenner
TREASURER	Mary O’Grady
James Jones	Stephanie Saroki de García
SECRETARY	Brother Brian Carty FSC
David Ingles	Fr. Anthony D. Andreassi
	Leoner Francisco
	Darla Romfo

ENROLLMENT CHARACTERISTICS

SCHOOL YEAR	CHARTERED ENROLLMENT	ACTUAL ENROLLMENT ²	ACTUAL AS A PERCENTAGE OF CHARTERED ENROLLMENT	GRADES SERVED
2022-23	208	105	50%	9
2023-24	404	187	46%	9-10
2024-25	600	297	50%	9-11

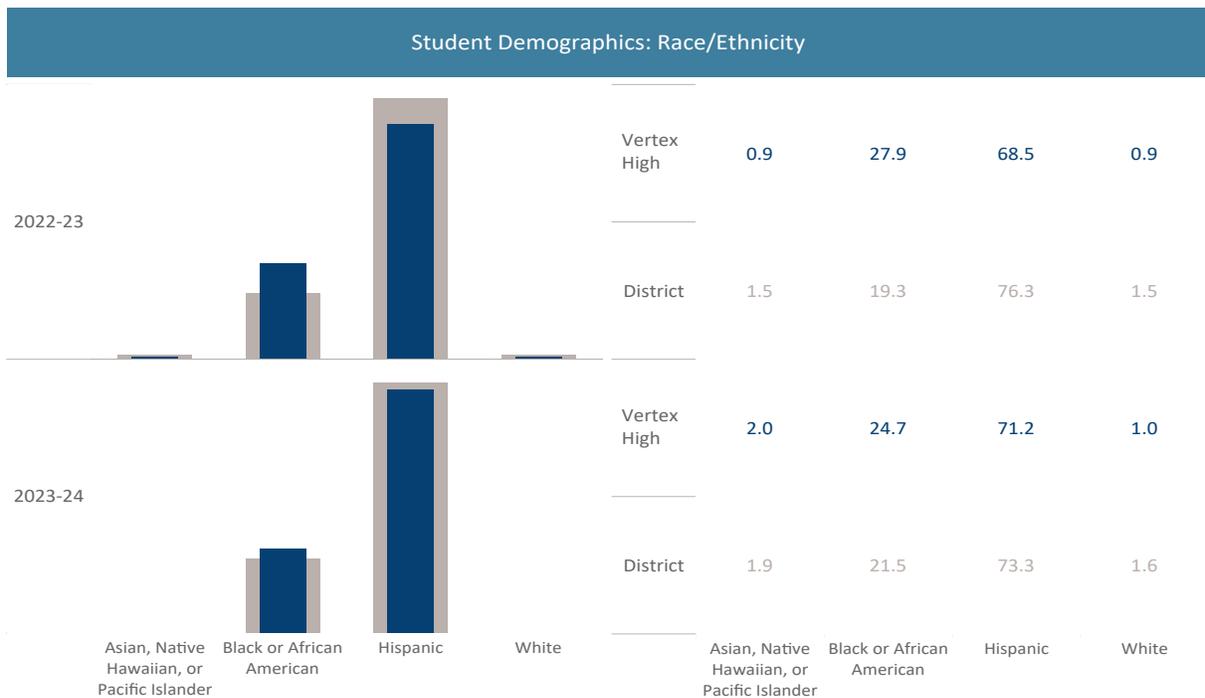
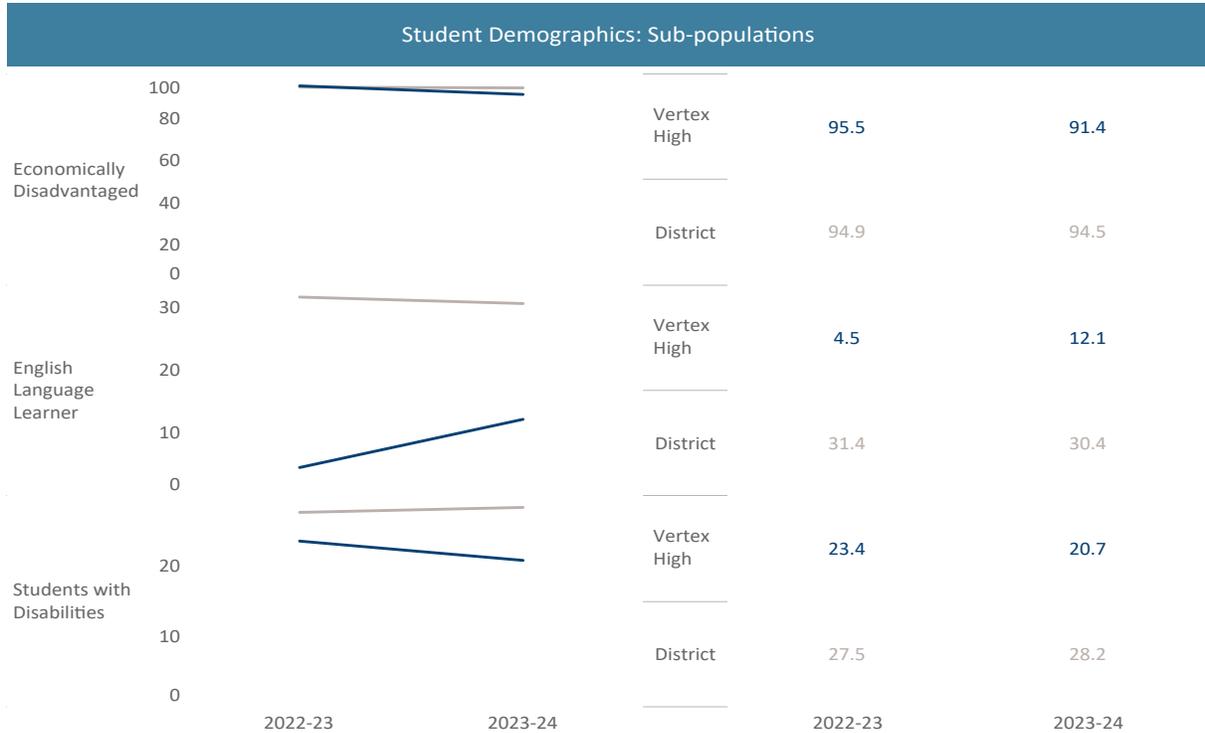
1. Source: The Institute’s board records at the time of the visit.

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



Vertex Partnership Academies

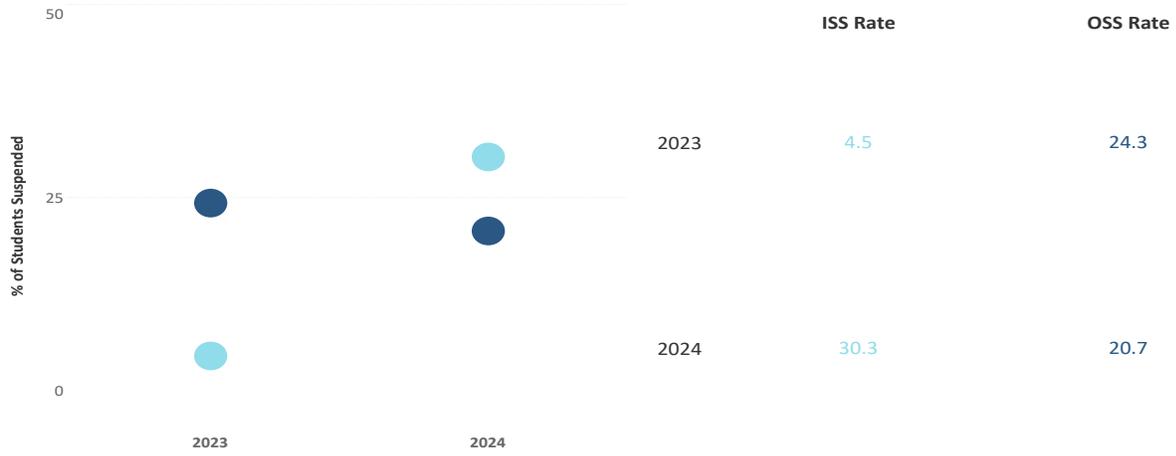
Bronx CSD 12



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



Vertex High



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	65.8	0

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



PROGRAM VISIT HISTORY

SCHOOL YEAR	VISIT TYPE	DATE
2022-23	First Year Visit	April 19, 2023
2024-25	Evaluation Visit	January 28 – 29, 2025

CONDUCT OF THE VISIT

DATE(S) OF REVIEW	EVALUATION TEAM MEMBERS	TITLE
January 28 – 29, 2025	Desree Cabrall-Njenga	School Evaluator
	Sinnjinn Bucknell	Managing Director for Accountability
	Kathleen Haywood	School Evaluator

CHARTER CYCLE CONTEXT

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

