



New York State Education Department

***Remote Renewal Site Visit Report for BoR-Authorized Charter Schools under the
2015 Charter School Performance Framework
2020-2021***

Brighter Choice Charter School for Girls

Remote Renewal Site Visit Dates: November 17-18, 2020

Date of Report: February 11, 2021

[Charter School Office](#)

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SCHOOL DESCRIPTION

Charter School Summary¹

Name of Charter School	Brighter Choice Charter School for Girls
Board Chair	Martha Snyder
District of location	Albany City School District
Opening Date	Fall 2002
Charter Terms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial Term: January 10, 2001 - January 9, 2006 • First Renewal Term: January 10, 2006 - January 10, 2011 • Second Renewal Term: January 11, 2011 - June 30, 2015 • Third Renewal Term: July 1, 2015 - June 30, 2018 • Fourth Renewal Term: July 1, 2018 - June 30, 2021
Current Term Authorized Grades/ Approved Enrollment	K - Grade 5/ 325 students
Proposed Renewal Term Authorized Grades/ Proposed Approved Enrollment	K - Grade 5/ 325 students
Comprehensive Management Service Provider	None
Facilities	250 Central Avenue, Albany - Private Space
Mission Statement	<p><i>The mission of the Brighter Choice Charter Schools is to ensure that Brighter Choice Charter School scholars have the same opportunities for future success as scholars attending the best public schools in the region. There are 3 significant components to achieving this mission:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Exemplary instruction that ensures competency and mastery in reading, writing and mathematics.</i> • <i>Focus on the development of social, behavioral, and organizational skills necessary for future school success.</i> • <i>An education beyond the basics that includes performing arts, visual arts, science, and history.</i>
Key Design Elements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An intense and serious focus on academic achievement • An equally rigorous standard for scholar behavior, with an emphasis on core values • Single-gender classroom instruction • An extended school day and extended school year • Mandatory school uniforms • A high level of parental/guardian participation in the life of the school • Frequent standardized testing, beginning in kindergarten.
Requested Revisions	Beginning in the 2021-2022 school year, amend the mission and Key Design Elements of the school's charter to align them with those proposed for the Brighter Choice Charter School for Boys

¹ The information in this section was provided by the NYS Education Department Charter School Office.

Noteworthy: The Brighter Choice Charter School for Girls (BCCS-G) has developed a strong single-sex model, including curriculum designed specifically to engage girls and a culture that focuses on sisterhood to support growth and achievement.

Renewal Outcomes

Pursuant to the Board of Regents Renewal Policy, the following are possible renewal outcomes:

- **Full-Term Renewal:** A school’s charter may be renewed for the maximum term of five years. For a school to be eligible for a full-term renewal, during the current charter term the school must have compiled a strong and compelling record of meeting or exceeding Benchmark 1, and at the time of the renewal analysis, have met substantially all other performance benchmarks in the Framework.

- **Short-Term Renewal:** A school’s charter may be renewed for a shorter term, typically of three years. As discussed above, the Regents will place an even greater emphasis on student performance for schools applying for their second or subsequent renewal, which is consistent with the greater time that a school has been in operation and the corresponding increase in the quantity and quality of student achievement data that the school has generated. In order for a school to be eligible for short-term renewal, a school must either:
 - (a) have compiled a mixed or limited record of meeting Benchmark 1, but at the time of the renewal analysis, have met substantially all of the other performance benchmarks in the Framework which will likely result in the school’s being able to meet Benchmark 1 with the additional time that short-term renewal permits, **or**
 - (b) have compiled an overall record of meeting Benchmark 1 but falls far below meeting one or more of the other performance benchmarks in the Framework.

- **Non-Renewal:** A school’s charter will not be renewed if the school does not apply for renewal or the school fails to meet the criteria for either full-term or short-term renewal. In the case of non-renewal, a school’s charter will be terminated upon its expiration and the school will be required to comply with the Charter School Office’s Closing Procedures to ensure an orderly closure by the end of the school year.

Please Note: The Regents may include additional terms, conditions, and/or requirements in a school’s Full-Term or Short-Term Renewal charter to address specific situations or areas of concern. For example, a school may meet the standards for full-term renewal or short-term renewal with regard to its educational success but may be required to address organizational deficiencies that need to be corrected but do not prevent the Regents from making the required legal findings for renewal. A school may also meet the standards for full-term renewal or short-term renewal of only a portion of its educational program (e.g., for the elementary school program, but not the middle school program). Such additional terms and/or requirements may include, but are not limited to, restrictions on the number of students and grades to be served by the school, additional student performance metrics, heightened reporting requirements, or specific corrective action.

COVID-19 PANDEMIC NOTE: As of the publication of this report, New York State is in the midst of responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. NYSED understands that these are not normal times and state assessments for grades 3-8 as well as high school students were canceled for the 2019-2020 school year (see the applicable memos at <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/psc/aboutcharterschools/lawsandregs/law.html>). The

NYSED Charter School Performance Framework is a robust document that allows NYSED to continue to use it as an evaluative tool even during the current statewide crisis. With state assessments cancelled for the 2019-2020 school year, Benchmark 1 allows for the use of longitudinal data and NYSED has been continuing to monitor and evaluate schools through the lens of the Performance Framework during the current crisis as Board of Regents-authorized charter schools have been implementing robust continuity of learning plans and adhering to NYSED’s [Remote Monitoring and Oversight Plan](#). Therefore, NYSED will continue to use the Performance Framework and Board of Regents renewal policies to evaluate, in a summative manner, applicable charter schools for renewal recommendation determinations.

SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS

Current Grade Levels and Approved Enrollment

	Year 1 2018 to 2019	Year 2 2019 to 2020	Year 3 2020 to 2021
Grade Configuration	K - Grade 5	K - Grade 5	K - Grade 5
Total Approved Enrollment	325	325	325

Proposed Renewal Term Grade Levels and Projected Enrollment Requested by the School²

	Year 1 2021 to 2022	Year 2 2022 to 2023	Year 3 2023 to 2024	Year 4 2024 to 2025	Year 5 2025 to 2026
Grade Configuration	K - Grade 5	K - Grade 5	K - Grade 5	K - Grade 5	K - Grade 5
Total Proposed Enrollment	325	325	325	325	325

METHODOLOGY

A two-day remote renewal site visit was conducted at Brighter Choice Charter School for Girls (BCCS-G) on November 17-18, 2020. The New York State Education Department’s Charter School Office (CSO) team conducted interviews with the board of trustees, school leadership team, special populations support staff, culture/climate staff, teachers, and parents.

² This proposed chart was submitted by BCCSG in its renewal application. It is subject to change pending the final renewal recommendation and approval by the Board of Regents.

The team conducted eight remote classroom observations in K - Grade 5. The observations were approximately 20 minutes in length and conducted jointly with instructional leaders. NYSED utilizes the CSO's remote Classroom Observation Worksheet as a lens for remote classroom observations. It is shared with the school prior to the site visit, and can be found in the [Renewal SV Protocol](#).

The documents and data reviewed by the team before, during, and after the site visit included the following:

- **Current 2020-2021 organizational chart;**
- **A 2020-2021 master school schedule;**
- **Board materials (roster, minutes, and strategic plan, if applicable) and a narrative describing the board's self-evaluation process;**
- **Narrative describing the process used to evaluate school leadership;**
- **Narrative describing the process school leadership uses to evaluate teachers;**
- **Spring 2020 CSO COVID-19 Parent Survey Results;**
- **Current school policies, including the discipline policy, complaint policy, enrollment and admissions policy, and by-laws;**
- **NYSED Attachment 1: Academic and Enrollment Data;**
- **NYSED Attachment 2: Fiscal Dashboard Data;**
- **Narrative describing the school's progress and efforts made toward reaching its enrollment and retention targets;**
- **Admissions and Waitlist information;**
- **Faculty/Staff Roster;**
- **Fingerprint Clearance Certificates for all instructional and non-instructional staff;**
- **School-submitted Annual Reports during current charter term;**
- **Pre-Renewal Site Visit School Self-Evaluation;**
- **Prior CSO monitoring reports (check-in, midterm, renewals);**
- **Spring 2020 Continuity of Learning Plan;**
- **School's 2020 renewal application; and**
- **Any supplementary evidence or data submitted to NYSED by the school.**

BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

The 2015 Performance Framework, which is part of the oversight plan included in the Charter Agreement for each school, outlines 10 Performance Framework benchmarks in three key areas of charter school performance:

- Educational Success
- Organizational Soundness
- Faithfulness to Charter and Law

Observational findings from the review of the renewal application, supporting data, and the site visit will be presented in alignment with the 2015 Performance Framework benchmarks and Indicators according to the rating scale below. A brief summary of the school's strengths will precede the benchmark analysis. Each benchmark will be rated; and the report narrative will provide evidence-based information relative to each indicator.

Level	Description
Exceeds	The school meets the performance benchmark; potential exemplar in this area.
Meets	The school generally meets the performance benchmark; few concerns are noted.
Approaches	The school does not meet the performance benchmark; a number of concerns are noted.
Falls Far Below	The school falls far below the performance benchmark; significant concerns are noted.

For the site visit conducted from November 17-18, 2020 at BCCS-G, see the following Performance Framework benchmark ratings and narrative.

**New York State Education Department
2015 Charter School Performance Framework Rating³**

2015 Performance Benchmark		Level
Educational Success	Benchmark 1: Student Performance: The school has met or exceeded achievement indicators for academic trends toward proficiency, proficiency and high school graduation. At all grade levels and all assessments, scoring proficiently means achieving a performance level of 3 or higher (high school Regents and Common Core Regents exam score of 65 or higher).	Meets
	Benchmark 2: Teaching and Learning: School leaders have systems in place designed to cultivate shared accountability and high expectations and that lead to students’ well-being, improved academic outcomes, and educational success. The school has rigorous and coherent curriculum and assessments that are aligned to the New York State Learning Standards (NYSLS) for all students. Teachers engage in strategic practices and decision-making in order to address the gap between what students know and need to learn so that all students experience consistent high levels of engagement, thinking and achievement.	Meets
	Benchmark 3: Culture, Climate, and Family Engagement: The school has systems in place to support students’ social and emotional health and to provide for a safe and respectful learning environment. Families, community members and school staff work together to share in the responsibility for student academic progress and social-emotional growth and well-being. Families and students are satisfied with the school’s academics and the overall leadership and management of the school.	Meets
Organizational Soundness	Benchmark 4: Financial Condition: The school is in sound and stable financial condition as evidenced by performance on key financial indicators.	Meets
	Benchmark 5: Financial Management: The school operates in a fiscally sound manner with realistic budgets pursuant to a long-range financial plan, appropriate internal controls and procedures, and in accordance with state law and generally accepted accounting practices.	Meets
	Benchmark 6: Board Oversight and Governance: The board of trustees provides competent stewardship and oversight of the school while maintaining policies, establishing performance goals, and implementing systems to ensure academic success, organizational viability, board effectiveness and faithfulness to the terms of its charter.	Meets
	Benchmark 7: Organizational Capacity: The school has established a well-functioning organizational structure, clearly delineated roles for staff, management, and board members. The school has systems and protocols that allow for the successful implementation, evaluation, and improvement of its academic program and operations.	Meets
Faithfulness to Charter & Law	Benchmark 8: Mission and Key Design Elements: The school is faithful to its mission and has implemented the key design elements included in its charter.	Meets
	Benchmark 9: Enrollment, Recruitment, and Retention: The school is meeting or making annual progress toward meeting the enrollment plan outlined in its charter and its enrollment and retention targets for students with disabilities, English language learners, and students who are eligible applicants for the free and reduced priced lunch program; or has demonstrated that it has made extensive good faith efforts to attract, recruit, and retain such students.	Approaches
	Benchmark 10: Legal Compliance: The school complies with applicable laws, regulations, and the provisions of its charter.	Meets

³ Charter schools authorized or renewed beginning in the 2019-2020 school year and thereafter use the [2019 Charter School Performance Framework](#), and all other charter schools use the [2015 Charter School Performance Framework](#) until renewal. Refer to the appropriate framework for the applicable benchmark standards.

Summary of Findings

- BCCS-G is in year 19 of operation and serves students in K - Grade 5. During its current charter term, the school is rated in the following manner: meeting nine benchmarks and approaching one benchmark. A summary of those ratings is provided below.
- **Summary of Areas of Strengths:** Over the course of the charter term, BCCS-G has consistently outperformed the district of location in ELA and math for all students in the aggregate, English language learners (ELLs), and students who are economically disadvantaged (ED); due to the school's small enrollment of students with disabilities (SWDs), data for this subgroup population is unavailable. For the last two years of academic proficiency data, 2017-2018 and 2018-2019, these three student populations also outperformed the state in ELA. BCCS-G has a cohesive curriculum in place that it continues to modify based on assessed student needs. As evidenced during the site visit, the school has a clear understanding of rigorous instruction and has developed an academic model around the specific needs of educating girls. The school demonstrates a strong school culture, including a character education program, and actively communicates with and engages parents. BCCS-G has a stable leadership team that provides active supervision of and support to its faculty and offers targeted professional development (PD), especially with respect to adapting the school's academic model to remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Finally, the board provides active oversight and strategic planning.
- **Summary of Areas in Need of Improvement:** While the school has consistently met its targets for enrolling ED students, it continues to struggle to enroll a comparable number of SWDs and ELLs in relation to the district of location. In addition, BCCS-G has not implemented the 190 instructional days required in the charter. Finally, operational procedures need to be developed to ensure the school meets all legal operational requirements such as fingerprinting mandates.

Benchmark 1: Student Performance

The school has met or exceeded achievement indicators for academic trends toward proficiency, proficiency, and high school graduation. At all grade levels and all assessments, scoring proficiently means achieving a performance level of 3 or higher (high school Regents and Common Core Regents exam score of 65 or higher).

Finding: Meets

See Attachment 1 for data tables and additional academic information.

Note: State assessments were not administered in the 2019-2020 school year. As such, NYSED is not able to include results from that academic year in the analysis of this benchmark.

Benchmark 2: Teaching and Learning

School leaders have systems in place designed to cultivate shared accountability and high expectations and that lead to students’ well-being, improved academic outcomes, and educational success. The school has rigorous and coherent curriculum and assessments that are aligned to the New York State Learning Standards (NYSL) for all students. Teachers engage in strategic practices and decision-making in order to address the gap between what students know and need to learn so that all students experience consistent high levels of engagement, thinking and achievement.

Finding: Meets

<i>Element</i>	<i>Indicators</i>
1. <i>Curriculum</i>	<p>a. The school has a documented curriculum that is aligned to the NYSL.</p> <p>b. Teachers use unit and lesson plans that introduce complex materials, stimulate higher order thinking, and build deep conceptual understanding and knowledge around specific content.</p> <p>c. The curriculum is aligned horizontally across classrooms at the same grade level and vertically between grades.</p> <p>d. The curriculum is differentiated to provide opportunities for all students to master grade-level skills and concepts.</p> <p>e. The curriculum is systematically reviewed and revised.</p>
2. <i>Instruction</i>	<p>a. The school staff has a common understanding of high-quality instruction, and observed instructional practices align to this understanding.</p> <p>b. Instructional delivery fosters engagement with all students.</p>
3. <i>Assessment and Program Evaluation</i>	<p>a. The school uses a balanced system of formative, diagnostic and summative assessments.</p> <p>b. The school uses qualitative and quantitative data to inform instruction and improve student outcomes.</p> <p>c. The school uses qualitative and quantitative data to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of the academic program and modifies the program accordingly.</p>
4. <i>Supports for Diverse Learners</i>	<p>a. The school provides supports to meet the academic needs for all students, including but not limited to: students with disabilities, English language learners, and economically disadvantaged students.</p> <p>b. The school has systems to monitor the progress of individual students and facilitate communication between interventionists and classroom teachers regarding the needs of individual students.</p>

Academic Program for Elementary School:

- BCCS-G is a single-sex elementary school for girls that uses heterogeneous classes to deliver instruction.

- The school uses core English language arts (ELA) and math curricula that are modified and integrated with other subjects, such as social studies.
- The school employs an extended day and year to provide additional time for student learning and teacher planning and collaboration.
- The school emphasizes social-emotional development as part of its curriculum and implements a formal character education program.

Academic Program for Students with Disabilities and English language learners (ELLs):

- SWDs:
 - BCCS-G uses a direct consultant teacher model to provide push-in and pull-out special education (SPED) services.
 - The school implements integrated co-teaching (ICT) classes.
 - The school provides resource room services.
 - The school provides speech and occupational therapy.
 - The school provides mandatory and non-mandatory counseling to students.
- ELLs:
 - The school has a dedicated English as a new language (ENL) teacher who targets support to ELL students and collaborates with teachers on lesson planning.

Summative Evidence for Benchmark 2:

1. Element: ***Curriculum:***

- **Indicator a:** BCCS-G has a comprehensive curriculum in place. According to the renewal application, the school uses *Expeditionary Learning* as part of its English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum for Grades 2-5, along with *Fountas and Pinnell Classroom* for K-Grade 1 and Jan Richardson's *The Next Step Forward* for K-Grade 5 guided reading classes. For math, the curriculum for K-Grade 4 is *Eureka's A Story of Units* and for Grade 5, *enVisions*. In the focus group, school leadership indicated that the school has been modifying ELA curriculum in the lower grades to better align with their guided reading program and added *Cognitive Guided Instruction (CGI)* lessons to their math instruction after consulting with other schools who had been implementing the program. Participants of the teacher focus group highlighted the change to the *Fountas and Pinnell* program for lower grades that incorporated read alouds, phonics, and guided reading, which they supplement with diverse books. *Leveled Literacy Intervention* is used for literacy remediation and the *Second Step Program* for social-emotional development. As reported in both the renewal application and school leadership focus group, the school felt the need to move from thematic science integrated into the ELA program to a more structured science program and thus piloted *Mystery Science* in 2018-2019 and then *Rozzy Science* in 2019-2020, with which it plans to continue. School leaders indicated that the latter was more relevant and provided career exposure. They also explained how the school has modified curriculum and instruction during the pandemic, including increasing phonics instruction and expanding the use of *Lexia Core 5* and *Zearn Math*, computer-based programs.
- **Indicator b:** The renewal application indicates that the school uses a common template for lesson planning. Plans are submitted to instructional leadership for review two weeks in advance, after which, teachers receive verbal or written feedback. The renewal application also indicates that teachers collaboratively create unit plans using the *Understanding by Design* model. Review of sample lesson plans provided during the renewal site visit demonstrated an alignment to standards, with activities and assessments aligned to clearly-outlined learning objectives. The

lesson plan template includes a prompt for teachers to specify differentiation methods for content and/or learning environment.

- **Indicator c:** The school uses several curricular programs, such as *EngageNY*, that are vertically aligned. In addition, the renewal application indicates that the school has developed a vertically-aligned scope and sequence, which is reviewed and revised regularly by instructional staff. The renewal application also suggests some evidence of horizontal alignment, including the integration of social studies into the ELA curriculum. During the site visit, school leaders indicated that grade-level teams engage in curriculum alignment. Teachers stated that these teams meet with one other to address vertical alignment and closing the achievement gap.
- **Indicator d:** During the site visit, school leaders and teachers described several curricular programs that provide differentiated resources, including guided reading books and computer-based programs. Teachers said they are encouraged to differentiate and to supplement curriculum and that they work closely with SPED and ENL teachers to modify curriculum. Teachers also noted that speech and language specialists provide them with materials to integrate into their lessons. A review of sample lesson plans showed evidence of curriculum differentiation, such as scaffolded charts, notes, and manipulatives. Finally, the school distributes paper packets to all students to support remote learning at home, which, teachers indicated, are differentiated based on student needs.
- **Indicator e:** The renewal application states that “Annually, school leadership reviews the school’s curricular tools to ensure that teachers have the foundation necessary for planning standards-aligned, meaningful, and purposeful lessons.” In addition, the renewal application indicates that staff meet each summer and throughout the school year to analyze student performance and use the results to refine scope and sequences. In the focus group, teachers noted that, in the summer, “data lines the walls.” They indicated that the school offers a more collaborative way to look at curriculum and that there are “opportunities to diverge to make meaning for students and make curriculum come alive as long as standards are being addressed.” The teachers stated that, with any changes they propose, they need to present data to validate the need and, upon implementation, proof that it is working.

2. Element: ***Instruction:***

- **Indicator a:** The renewal application indicates that the school has developed “an instructional rubric that ensures school wide consistency” and that “observations and feedback by school leadership based on this shared instructional rubric ensure alignment in the understanding of rigorous instruction.” In addition, it states that teachers use a standard framework to guide their planning and instruction, which emphasizes scholar discourse, close reading, and writing across the curriculum. Finally, the renewal application notes that the school uses *Teach Like a Champion’s* strategies to establish schoolwide instructional norms. During the site visit, school leaders described shared expectations for classroom instruction, management, engagement, and feedback. They look for lesson flow that includes a hook, modeling, direct instruction, and guided and independent practice. They encourage teachers to ask rigorous, open-ended questions, to consistently check for understanding, and to approach misconceptions from the student’s view. Teachers also emphasized instructional practices for girls, including cooperative learning. Observation of remote and live classrooms demonstrated organized and purposeful lessons with clear learning objectives. Many teachers asked higher order thinking questions, provided adequate wait time for answers, and challenged students to explain their answers. For example, during a remote math lesson a teacher asked a student to show her how she got $9 - 3 = 7$ and then praised her for self-correcting her answer. Observed teachers also used subject-specific vocabulary and had their students use it as well. Debriefs with instructional leaders after

observations identified effective use of *Teach Like a Champion's* strategies, such as "No Opt Out." There was also some evidence of teachers fostering student-directed learning. For example, a 5th grade discussion of a novel had active participation with the teacher directing students to "pick a friend to build off of you"; in the ensuing discussion, one student politely responded to another, saying "I can't build off of you because I disagree" and then went on explain her point of view. Instructional leaders reported that they use protocols, such as passing the torch and thanking peers for sharing the floor, to promote student discussion.

- **Indicator b:** During most observed instruction, students were attentive and cognitively engaged. Teachers used a variety of technology tools to engage students, including sharing screens, digital projection equipment, and online polling. Students also used the chat function in Zoom to communicate with teachers. Many teachers used cold-calling techniques and opportunities for students to show their work, such as holding up work done on individual white boards. Observed teachers frequently used positive reinforcement and encouragement, such as a teacher asking a remote student to speak "loud and proud." One teacher presented a math story problem using a student's name that was special for her birthday. Teachers also found ways to provide individual feedback during remote instruction, for example, using digital breakout rooms while the rest of the class did independent work.

3. Element: ***Assessment and Program Evaluation:***

- **Indicator a:** The school has a comprehensive assessment system in place. The renewal application indicates that the school administers a variety of assessments, including *AIMSWeb*, *Fountas and Pinnell*, and *NWEA MAP*, as well as curriculum-based assessments and school-designed interim assessments. These assessments are used for a variety of purposes, including diagnostic to inform grouping and intervention, formative to inform lesson planning, and summative to evaluate programs. During the focus group, school leaders noted that, based on *NWEA MAP* assessments, they have seen more of a downward slide in math due to the COVID-19 pandemic than in ELA, but not much overall.
- **Indicator b:** The renewal application notes that, "After assessments are administered, data meetings are held to identify strengths, areas of weakness, strategies to implement or revise, and how to monitor progress." Furthermore, the school's self-evaluation states that BCCS-G established weekly data analysis meetings for each grade level in 2019-2020 "to review student work and assessments to continuously review where misunderstandings and misconceptions might lay and what may need to be retaught." During the site visit, school leadership described weekly analysis meetings, using data to monitor skills growth. Teachers reported that they bring exit tickets and other assessments to these meetings so that they can analyze students' work in other classes, identify glows and grows, and develop a plan for growth, focusing on "What will help scaffold them to reach the next step?"
- **Indicator c:** The renewal application states, "All data, quantitative and qualitative, supports a cycle of continuous improvement led by school leaders." During the site visit, special populations staff described frequent review of data to monitor the efficacy of their academic intervention services. As noted above, teachers engage in weekly meetings to analyze student assessment; they look for gaps in student learning and identify skills that need to be prioritized at specific grade levels.

4. Element: ***Supports for Diverse Learners:***

- **Indicator a:** BCCS-G employs a SPED coordinator and an academic intervention coordinator along with SPED and English as a new language (ENL) instructors. Participants in the special populations focus group described a tiered response to intervention (RtI) program, including differentiated classroom instruction and targeted academic and behavior interventions. They stated that the

school provides SPED services through a direct consultant teacher model and a resource room for a small group of students. During this charter term, the school has implemented integrated co-teaching (ICT) classes at select grade levels, based on students' needs. Teachers are provided with and review their students' IEP goals at the beginning of the year. There was evidence of SPED services being provided during remote learning; in one observed lesson, a student, attending class in person alongside a SPED teacher, participated with her peers (who were learning remotely) while the SPED teacher scaffolded the lesson. During the site visit, school leaders described differentiated questioning and lesson tasks, which were evident during classroom observations (e.g., use of manipulatives, visual content, and modified assignments). Special populations staff noted that ENL instructors provide both push-in and pull-out services and work with the classroom teachers before, during, and after lessons by, for example, reviewing lesson plans, pre-teaching vocabulary, drawing word problems, and offering in-the-moment assistance and scaffolding. Mandated and non-mandated counseling is provided by the school counselor, who reports working closely with teachers on behavior interventions and social-emotional issues. The counselor and character education teacher implement the school's character education and socio-emotional programs.

- **Indicator b:** The renewal application indicates that the school has systems, including a team structure, to identify needs and inform interventions and supports. For instance, the renewal application describes an RtI model with regular data analysis and action planning. In addition to an RtI team, it also notes that "Pouring Over Data (POD) meetings are held to analyze benchmarking data to determine which students may need intervention, determine the intervention and the progress monitoring tool." The school also has a Student Support Team (SST) that provides early intervention for individual behavior or academic needs and a Behavior Intervention Team (BIT) that monitors and resolves social-emotional or behavioral issues. In the focus group, special populations staff described using a variety of data sources to evaluate student needs, target interventions, and refer students for evaluation by the district committees for special education (CSEs), including standardized assessments (e.g. *AIMSWeb*, *NWEA*, *NYSESLAT*), attendance data, and results from prior interventions. In addition, they use a universal screener for assessing behavioral needs and assigning students to counseling groups. Special populations staff explained how they have modified their assessments so that they can be administered via remote learning. Participants in the teacher focus group described frequent collaboration between general education and SPED teachers as well as the ENL teacher, including collaboration on lesson planning and "in the moment" scaffolding during lessons.

Benchmark 3: Culture, Climate, and Family Engagement

The school has systems in place to support students’ social and emotional health and to provide for a safe and respectful learning environment. Families, community members and school staff work together to share in the responsibility for student academic progress and social-emotional growth and well-being. Families and students are satisfied with the school’s academics and the overall leadership and management of the school.

Finding: Meets

<u>Element</u>	<u>Indicators</u>
<p>1. <i>Behavior Management and Safety</i></p>	<p>a. The school has a clear approach to behavioral management, including a written discipline policy.</p> <p>b. The school appears safe and all school constituents are able to articulate how the school community maintains a safe environment.</p> <p>c. The school has systems in place to ensure that the environment is free from harassment and discrimination.</p> <p>d. Classroom environments are conducive to learning and generally free from disruption.</p>
<p>2. <i>Family Engagement and Communication</i></p>	<p>a. The school communicates with and engages families with the school community.</p> <p>b. Teachers communicate with parents to discuss students’ strengths and needs.</p> <p>c. The school assesses family and student satisfaction using strategies such as surveys, feedback sessions, community forums, or participation logs, and considers results when making schoolwide decisions.</p> <p>d. The school has a systematic process for responding to family or community concerns.</p> <p>e. The school shares school-level academic data with the broader school community to promote transparency and accountability among parents, students and school constituents.</p>
<p>3. <i>Social-Emotional Supports</i></p>	<p>a. The school has systems or programs in place to support the social-emotional needs of students.</p> <p>b. School leaders collect and use data to track the socio-emotional needs of students.</p> <p>c. School leaders collect and use data regarding the impact of programs designed to support students’ social and emotional health.</p>

Summative Evidence for Benchmark 3:

1. Element: ***Behavior Management and Safety:***

- **Indicator a:** The renewal application indicates that the school’s “approach to behavior management is based on the Positive Behavior Interventions and Support model.” Moreover, the school has a family handbook that is disseminated to parents and contains the school’s behavioral

expectations and policies. In the focus group, school leaders noted communication about computer usage rules and expectations during remote learning. Observed lessons demonstrated frequent use of positive reinforcement through praise and recognition of desired behaviors and habits. In the culture/climate focus group, school staff described how the school uses a color-coded system and a recovery area within classes to recognize appropriate and inappropriate behaviors and a scholar management system that tracks PICSS tickets based on a student's demonstration of the school values (perseverance, integrity, citizenship, scholarship and sisterhood). Students earn rewards such as wearing a crown and having dress down days. School leaders noted a shift from tangible tickets to digital tracking due to COVID-19 this year and indicated that student rewards during virtual instruction include students earning a certificate and a star that they can wear while attending class virtually.

- **Indicator b:** During the focus groups, all school staff and parents described the school as safe, and no disruptive or dangerous behavior was observed during the renewal visit. Students whose behaviors cannot be managed within the classroom are sent to the school's Inspiration Room (IR) where they meet with the dean of students until they are ready to return to class. During the culture/climate focus group, staff stated that removing students from the classroom is employed only after the teacher and support staff have exhausted all classroom strategies that serve to re-teach and encourage students how to meet behavioral expectations. They indicated that the IR is not supposed to be a punitive place and, when students do visit the IR, the goal is to return them to class quickly. Participants in the culture/climate focus group said that they explain the school handbook and IR procedures with parents; moreover, parents are called for all students sent to the IR and parent meetings are arranged for students with multiple referrals. School staff described several additional safety measures currently used for in-person learning during the pandemic, including mask checks, temperature checks, hand washing, and sanitizing. Students are spaced out in classrooms and have plexiglass dividers between desks. The school is also limiting the number of visitors allowed in the building at a given time.
- **Indicator c:** The school uses several resources and procedures to ensure that the environment is free from harassment and discrimination. According to the school's renewal application "Each year all staff members are required to review the BCCS-G Staff Handbook, which clearly outlines the school's harassment and discrimination policies." In addition, the application notes that the school's Family Handbook "describes the school's policies and expectations for maintaining a safe learning environment." The school partners with Northern Rivers SATRI Training and Research Center which offers staff training on the Dignity for All Students Act (DASA) and "Healing from Trauma/Protective Factors." In the culture/climate focus group, staff identified the character education teacher as the school's DASA coordinator and noted that a team investigates harassment claims. They described the school's procedure for handling instances of harassment, which include parent involvement, tracking the details, and the development of a re-entrance plan, if needed. BCCS-G uses a restorative approach and encourages students to work through problems together. Participants of the focus group also reported that the school has a box that students and parents can use to inform the school if a student has concerns and feels unsafe but does not want to talk to a teacher about it. In order to prevent bullying and harassment during remote learning, the school counselor has conducted lessons for students on bullying and social media and internet safety. In addition, the school has set up safety guards with the technology currently being used as further prevention.
- **Indicator d:** Observed classrooms were orderly and most students were cognitively engaged in learning activities. Teachers used positive reinforcement and often praised students for participation and following procedures. There was no evidence of disruptive behavior; students were generally attentive, respectful, and patient given the challenges of remote learning,

including occasional difficulty hearing and frozen internet connections. Despite COVID-19 precautions in live classrooms, teachers maintained a sense of normalcy and observed lessons maintained pacing.

2. Element: ***Family Engagement and Communication:***

- **Indicator a:** The school employs a family coordinator who facilitates the partnership between families and the school. The renewal application describes several family engagement strategies, such as having parents review and sign daily homework assignments and communicate with teachers using weekly log sheets, providing volunteer opportunities for parents, and fostering a recently re-established Parent Teacher Organization. All focus groups described a close school community, with staff greeting scholars every morning and knowing every family. Focus group participants also noted the use of phone calls, email, and Class Dojo to share information and data about students. Parents reported that they receive frequent group and private messages from the school and said they can now send messages through Zoom.
- **Indicator b:** The renewal application describes the use of weekly log sheets to facilitate communication between teachers and parents. In addition, it states that “Teachers use a variety of methods to communicate with families such as Class Dojo, text message, notes, and class newsletters.” It also notes the use of bi-annual parent-teacher conferences, progress reports, report cards, and monthly calls home, among other strategies. During the site visit, culture/climate staff said the school’s report card format was revised last year and now includes PICSS points. Parents also noted that assessment results were sent home as well as progress reports and report cards.
- **Indicator c:** The renewal application indicates that the school uses student retention, informal feedback, and an annual parent survey to measure parent satisfaction and concerns. The school’s self-evaluation notes that, according to the 2019-2020 school parent survey, “92% of our parents were extremely proud to attend BCCS-G and 91% would recommend BCCS-G to other families.” In the focus group, school leaders also reported that parent concerns are also voiced through the PTO.
- **Indicator d:** The school has a documented complaint policy, which allows parents to escalate concerns to the school board and authorizer. During the site visit, school leaders stated that they respond to parent concerns raised in surveys; for example, this year they used parent and teacher input to change the school’s uniforms and, in response to parent concerns last year when the school had to switch to remote learning, the school increased its use of synchronous instruction. Parents described the school as responsive, noting that they have open communication with the principal. Teachers communicate regularly with parents and sometimes, as needed, provide extra assignments for parents to work on at home with their children. Parents also noted that teachers are easy to reach out to when parents have questions and that parents are welcome to sit in on remote classes.
- **Indicator e:** According to school leadership and the renewal application, schoolwide data is shared with the public during school presentations, such as Open House, and is posted on the school’s website.

3. Element: ***Social-Emotional Supports:***

- **Indicator a:** According to the renewal application, the school provides weekly lessons in character education using the Second Step and RULER programs. The application also describes procedures for handling social-emotional issues, such as morning meeting and classroom “recovery areas.” The school also conducts monthly assemblies focused on the school’s core values. In the focus

group, culture/climate staff indicated that this year they modified their character education to address coping with COVID-19 and other related mental health issues. They also use breakout rooms during remote learning to facilitate the RULER program.

- **Indicator b:** The renewal application states that the school assesses students' social-emotional needs using *Review360 Behavior Matters* and by administering the *Behavior Assessment System for Children*. In the focus group, special populations support staff noted that *Review360* is used universally throughout the school to identify student needs and target supports. They also reported using data from Class Dojo and PICSS points to track student behaviors, even those participating via remote learning.
- **Indicator c:** Participants in the culture/climate focus group stated that the school looks at *Review360* reports to identify trends in academic and behavioral data. They reported a decline in referrals to the IR as evidence of the efficacy of their behavior management approach. In addition, an attendance team tracks attendance data and uses it to inform attendance and tardiness intervention programs; culture/climate staff noted a decline in chronic absenteeism over the last two years.

Benchmark 4: Financial Condition

The school is in sound and stable financial condition as evidenced by performance on key financial indicators.

Finding: Meets

Summative Evidence for Benchmark 4:

See the school’s fiscal dashboard attached to the end of this report (Charter School Fiscal Accountability Summary). The fiscal dashboard provides detailed information regarding the school’s compliance with Benchmark 4 of the Charter School Performance Framework. Unless otherwise indicated, financial data is derived from the school’s annual independently audited financial statements which can be found on the NYSED website at <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/psc/csdirectory/CSLaunchPage.html>.

- Financial Composite Score
- Working Capital
- Debt to Asset
- Cash Position
- Total Margin

Financial Condition

BCCS-G is part of the Brighter Choice Elementary Charter Schools education corporation. The education corporation appears to be in good financial condition as evidenced by performance on key indicators derived from the school’s independently audited financial statements.

Overall Financial Outlook

A financial composite score is an overall measure of financial health based on a weighting of primary reserves, equity, and net income. A charter school with a score between 1.5 and 3.0 is generally considered to be in good financial health. Brighter Choice Elementary Charter Schools’ 2019-2020 composite score is 2.22.

**Composite Scores
2015-2016 to 2019-2020**

<i>Year</i>	<i>Composite Score</i>
2015-2016	.14
2016-2017	.45
2017-2018	1.12
2018-2019	1.73
2019-2020	2.22

Benchmark 5: Financial Management

The school operates in a fiscally sound manner with realistic budgets pursuant to a long-range financial plan, appropriate internal controls and procedures, and in accordance with state law and generally accepted accounting practices.

Finding: Meets

Renewal is based on evidence that the following indicators are generally present:

1. The school has an accurate and functional accounting system that includes monthly budgets.
2. The school sets budget objectives and regularly analyzes its budget in relation to those objectives.
3. The school has allocated budget surpluses in a manner that is fiscally sound and directly attends to the social and academic needs of the students attending the school.
4. The school has and follows a written set of fiscal policies.
5. The school has complied with state and federal financial reporting requirements.
6. The school has and is maintaining appropriate internal controls and procedures.
7. The school follows generally accepted accounting principles as evidenced by independent financial audits with an unqualified audit opinion, a limited number of findings that are quickly corrected, and the absence of a going concern disclosure.

Summative Evidence for Benchmark 5:

NYSED CSO reviewed Brighter Choice Elementary Charter Schools' 2019-2020 audited financial statements to determine whether the independent auditor observed sufficient internal controls over financial reporting. The auditor did not identify deficiencies in internal controls that could be considered material weaknesses.

In 2018, the Office of the State Comptroller (OSC) conducted an audit of Brighter Choice Elementary Charter Schools with the objective of determining whether internal controls were in place to ensure that employee compensation was accurate, supported, and properly authorized. OSC found that the school had effectively designed and implemented procedures to ensure that compensation payments were accurate and properly authorized. Accordingly, OSC made no recommendations as a result of the audit. (See <https://www.osc.state.ny.us/local-government/audits/charter-school> for the full audit report.)

Benchmark 6: Board Oversight and Governance

The board of trustees provides competent stewardship and oversight of the school while maintaining policies, establishing performance goals, and implementing systems to ensure academic success, organizational viability, board effectiveness and faithfulness to the terms of its charter.

Finding: Meets

<i>Element</i>	<i>Indicators</i>
1. <i>Board Oversight and Governance</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The board recruits and selects board members with skills and expertise that meet the needs of the school. b. The board engages in strategic and continuous improvement planning by setting priorities and goals that are aligned with the school’s mission and educational philosophy. c. The board demonstrates active oversight of the charter school management, fiscal operations, and progress toward meeting academic and other school goals. d. The board regularly updates school policies. e. The board utilizes a performance-based evaluation process for evaluating school leadership, itself, and providers. f. The board demonstrates full awareness of its legal obligations to the school and stakeholders.

Summative Evidence for Benchmark 6:

1. Element: **Board Oversight and Governance:**

- **Indicator a:** The board members possess a range of skills and expertise relevant to charter school governance, including education, human resources, finance, and law. The school’s renewal application acknowledged that “At the time of this submission, we do not have a parent representative on our board.” During the focus group, board members indicated that they are seeking to fill this position but have been challenged to do so during the pandemic. The former parent representative joined the board in 2014 and served until 2019, when his child graduated from BCCS. Board members explained that they have responded to past deficiencies by recruiting additional members to expand the board’s skill sets but acknowledged that they still would like to have increased diversity on the board.
- **Indicator b:** In the focus group, board members described their efforts in working with the principals of BCCS-G and the Brighter Choice Charter School for Boys (BCCS-B) to move the schools from “good to great.” The priorities and goals identified by the board after the schools’ last renewals have included closing the academic achievement gap across grade levels and subgroup populations, increasing the enrollment of SWDs and ELLs by evaluating the schools’ recruitment strategies and programmatic supports, and building the board’s capacity by adopting a committee structure (finance, academic, and governance), and maintaining financial gains. The board was also active in revising the organizational structure and operational/financial staffing to meet the needs of its two schools. Board members reported that their finance committee has explored ways to diversify revenue. With enrollment uncertain because of COVID-19, the board indicated

it is examining enrollment models to identify any potential impact the pandemic has had on the academic model. During the site visit, school leaders noted that the board has been open to their suggestions and is responsive to any concerns/issues that are raised. BCCS-G's school leader also noted that the board has fostered her growth as a school leader by arranging to have the BCCS-B principal serve as a mentor to her.

- **Indicator c:** During the site visit, board members reported that they receive and review a variety of data, including academic performance, enrollment, and financial data. Board minutes show evidence of regular presentations and/or discussions related to data that address student performance, enrollment, and student and staff attendance. School leaders indicated that they provide monthly reports to the board and that they are held accountable for the academic performance of their students. The board uses a committee structure to delve into specific issues; for example, its academic committee examines internal and external student performance data. In the focus group, board members demonstrated active monitoring of key indicators, including familiarity with assessment results and enrollment. In response to the school's heightened needs during the pandemic, the board met bi-monthly last spring and summer. School leaders noted that they have been able to raise concerns to the board and receive feedback. For example, school leaders identified the need for a grant writer, which the board helped to secure. Board members reported that community surveys for teachers and parents help them identify concerns and issues, such as compensation and planning time. They noted that open-ended survey questions garner useful feedback.
- **Indicator d:** The board has worked with a consultant and Board on Track to systematize its processes and update policies. The school's renewal application indicates that policies are typically reviewed and revised "within two years of each renewal submission." The renewal application also notes that the board relies on input from its charter renewal consultant, school attorney, and board member expertise when updating policies.
- **Indicator e:** During the focus group, school leadership reported that the board has implemented a consistent evaluation process, which they find to be valuable. Board members described changes to their process, including a focus on leader self-evaluation and elimination of the "exceeds" rating category to focus on proficiency. Regarding board evaluation, the school's renewal application indicates that the board uses Board on Track "to monitor self-efficacy and gaps for improvement." Each August, the board engages in "self-assessment that includes knowledge of individual roles and responsibilities, skill set diversity and understanding of school performance." The board uses the self-assessment to identify targeted PD and improve the board's functionality both as a whole and within subcommittees. Finally, regarding evaluation of partners, the renewal application states, "The board relies on school leadership to monitor the activities and performance of all the vendors and partners."
- **Indicator f:** In the focus group, board members reported that they use contracted services to help the board fulfill its responsibilities and have re-adopted Board on Track to automate certain functions. The school's renewal application indicates "As a nearly twenty year old charter school, we have developed a full understanding of our obligation to maintain separation between our board's fiduciary responsibility to separate school-related business transactions from the personal and professional lives and benefit of our board members."

Benchmark 7: Organizational Capacity

The school has established a well-functioning organizational structure, clearly delineated roles for staff, management, and board members. The school has systems and protocols that allow for the successful implementation, evaluation, and improvement of its academic program and operations.

Finding: Meets

<u>Element</u>	<u>Indicators</u>
1. <i>School Leadership</i>	<p>a. The school has an effective school leadership team that obtains staff commitment to a clearly defined mission and set of goals, allowing for continual improvement in student learning.</p> <p>b. Roles and responsibilities for leaders, staff, management, and board members are clearly defined. Members of the school community adhere to defined roles and responsibilities.</p> <p>c. The school has clear and well-established communication systems and decision-making processes in place which ensure effective communication across the school.</p> <p>d. The school successfully recruits, hires, and retains key personnel, and makes decisions – when warranted – to remove ineffective staff members.</p>
2. <i>Professional Climate</i>	<p>a. The school is fully staffed with high quality personnel to meet all educational and operational needs, including finance, human resources, and communication.</p> <p>b. The school has established structures for frequent collaboration among teachers.</p> <p>c. The school ensures that staff has requisite skills, expertise, and professional development necessary to meet students’ needs.</p> <p>d. The school has systems to monitor and maintain organizational and instructional quality—which includes a formal process for teacher evaluation geared toward improving instructional practice.</p> <p>e. The school has mechanisms to solicit teacher feedback and gauge teacher satisfaction.</p>
3. <i>Contractual Relationships</i> □N/A	<p>a. The board of trustees and school leadership establish effective working relationships with the management company or comprehensive service provider.</p> <p>b. Changes in the school’s charter management or comprehensive service provider contract comply with required charter amendment procedures.</p> <p>c. The school monitors the efficacy of contracted service providers or partners.</p>

Summative Evidence for Benchmark 7:

1. Element: *School Leadership*:

- **Indicator a:** The school has a stable leadership team in place, which is composed of a principal, assistant principal, and instructional coach. In the focus group, school leaders described the school’s mission as preparing students academically for success in middle school, high school, and college. They indicated that their priorities have remained consistent and include frequent checks for understanding leading to effective feedback and social-emotional development. In order to

further develop their own skills, school leaders described how they attend PD sessions and visit other schools. For example, some members of the leadership team have attended presentations in order to build on the school's RtI model, improving how the school analyzes data and how to be more responsive to students' needs. Members also visited a charter school in New York City to see how they incorporate CGI into their math curriculum.

- **Indicator b:** The school's renewal application states, "In the most recent charter term BCCS experienced a reorganization that occurred when the director of school quality (DSQ) departed BCCS. The board of trustees voted to create a new position of operations manager. The operations manager reports to both building leaders and has a line of communication with the Board of Trustees." During focus groups, school leaders, teachers, and support staff indicated clearly defined roles and responsibilities that aligned with the job descriptions outlined in the school's renewal application.
- **Indicator c:** In their respective focus groups, school leaders, teachers, and staff reported that the school has a clear leadership team structure and utilizes a number of regular meetings to facilitate communication, including staff and grade-team meetings with a focus on data analysis and planning. During COVID-19 the school has made use of a variety of tools to facilitate communication, such as the Zoom platform.
- **Indicator d:** In the focus group, school leaders stated that they prioritize hiring dual-certified teachers with a literacy background and teachers with urban and/or charter school experience. They reported working closely with new teachers and providing them with targeted coaching. In addition, they leverage teacher leaders for peer support. Teachers who do not meet expectations are placed on a performance improvement plan; the school's process for ensuring high quality teaching includes issuing warnings, setting goals, offering support, and providing clear rubrics. The school's self-evaluation acknowledges that "Leadership and Teacher retention has been a challenge for BCCS-G as it slows down the progression of BCCS-G going from good to great. The instructional team does well accelerating the learning of instructional practices and curriculum for new teachers; however mastery is developed over years."

2. Element: **Professional Climate:**

- **Indicator a:** The school's self-evaluation notes that "The competitive salary and benefits packages offered by district schools coupled with a decline of overall teacher candidates in the state makes teacher retention challenging." However, school leaders reported that all positions were filled at the time of the renewal visit except for one intervention teacher which they were in the process of hiring.
- **Indicator b:** During the site visit, school leaders reported that half-days on Fridays are used as opportunities for staff collaboration, including collaboration between general education and SPED teachers. They also indicated that teachers touch base daily while students are in morning meetings. In August, staff received PD on planning and implementing co-teaching methods. Teachers indicated that they have regular staff and grade-team meetings, including weekly data analysis meetings that involve a collaborative process. In addition, lesson plans are submitted two weeks in advance so support teachers can design modifications and accommodations for at-risk students.
- **Indicator c:** The school's renewal application describes a program of ongoing teacher development, including training in the summer and throughout the school year provided by school leadership and external experts. The school's self-evaluation notes that "experts from outside the school have also come in and provided professional development sessions. They include: *Teach Like a Champion*, the Regional Bilingual Education Resource Network, Northern

Rivers, and Kagan Publishing.” The renewal application states that the school uses a rubric based on the Danielson framework and that “Teachers are observed on a consistent basis by the principal, assistant principal, and the instructional coach.” In addition, the renewal application indicates that teachers receive feedback on lesson plans and lesson delivery with a focus on rigor and engagement, which inform action plans and subsequent observations. School leaders have divided grades for supervision and support. During the focus group, teachers explained how they get feedback on their scope and sequences, lesson plans and packets, and instruction with a focus on behavior standards, differentiation and habits of discussion. They indicated that the training they receive during the summer and at the beginning of year was especially beneficial this year in preparing for remote learning. They also noted that they would like to see more PD focused on cultural competency.

- **Indicator d:** The renewal application states that “Teachers are formally evaluated twice a year; mid-year reflections takes place in February/March and End of Year Evaluations takes place in June.” During the focus group, teachers said they are observed frequently and receive detailed “glows and grows” from their coaches. They noted that all the school leaders “have their own style and are authentic and truthful” and that the feedback they provide to teachers make them feel appreciated.
- **Indicator e:** The school uses teacher surveys to solicit input. The school’s renewal application indicates “Staff feedback is obtained through surveys, focus groups, whole group discussions, teacher leaders, and individual meetings.” Participants in the teacher focus group described leadership as “transparent” and “communicative.” Teachers also stated that they have a voice in curriculum development and PD.

3. Element: ***Contractual Relationships:***

- **Indicator a:** Not applicable
- **Indicator b:** Not applicable
- **Indicator c:** The renewal application indicates that school leadership monitors the activities and performance of the vendors and partners contracted by the school. The leadership team, which includes operations, finance, and academic personnel, evaluates vendor performance annually. The board is involved in engaging the contracts and is kept informed by school leadership throughout the year of vendor performance.

Benchmark 8: Mission and Key Design Elements

The school is faithful to its mission and has implemented the key design elements included in its charter.

Finding: Meets

<i>Element</i>	<i>Indicators</i>
1. <i>Mission and Key Design Elements</i>	<p>a. School stakeholders share a common and consistent understanding of the school’s mission and key design elements outlined in the charter.</p> <p>b. The school has fully implemented the key design elements in the approved charter and in any subsequently approved revisions.</p>

Summative Evidence for Benchmark 8:

1. Element: **Missions and Key Design Elements:**

- **Indicator a:** During the focus group, board members described the school’s mission as more than just achievement; they said the school’s programs are deliberately designed to address gender-specific needs. For example, BCCS-G focuses on increasing role models for girls. When asked why they enrolled their daughters in BCCS-G, parents noted that the school has a track record of sending kids to college. They also explained that the school community makes them feel welcome and treats everyone with respect. Participants in the teacher focus group described the school’s focus on rigorous education with a goal to outperform district schools. They stated that they aspire to “mold strong, autonomous, and divergent thinkers.” They also explained that the school’s college prep environment was reflected in the practice of naming classrooms after colleges.
- **Indicator b:** During the site visit, school leaders described the school’s model as data-driven, with a focus on academic achievement and character education. They emphasized the focus on single-gender education, including the notion of sisterhood and the incorporation of curriculum that engages girls while building their confidence. The renewal application describes curriculum and instruction aligned to state standards, as well as a character education curriculum and high expectations for student conduct. Teachers explained how the school seeks to build an education that takes students beyond the basics as well as “beyond the classroom and school.” Some examples they gave were the school’s dance and music programs and an art program that incorporates art history and African-American female artists. Focus group discussions with school leaders, teachers, support staff, and parents all revealed active communication with families and opportunities for parent engagement. As described in Benchmarks 2 and 3, the school is using a variety of academic and behavioral assessments and school leaders and staff use results for instructional planning as well as program evaluation and improvement. Finally, the school offers an extended school day and year.

Benchmark 9: Enrollment, Recruitment, and Retention

The school is meeting or making annual progress toward meeting the enrollment plan outlined in its charter and its enrollment and retention targets for students with disabilities, English language learners, and students who are eligible applicants for the free and reduced priced lunch program; or has demonstrated that it has made extensive good faith efforts to attract, recruit, and retain such students.

Finding: Approaches

<u>Element</u>	<u>Indicators</u>
1. <i>Targets are met</i>	a. The school maintains sufficient enrollment demand for the school to meet or come close to meeting the enrollment plan outlined in the charter.
2. <i>Targets are not met</i>	<p>a. The school is making regular and significant annual progress toward meeting the targets.</p> <p>b. The school has implemented extensive recruitment strategies and program services to attract and retain students with disabilities, English language learners, and students who are eligible for free and reduced priced lunch. Strategies include, but are not limited to: outreach to parents and families in the surrounding communities, widely publicizing the lottery for such school, efforts to academically support these students, and enrollment policy revisions, such as employing a weighted lottery or enrollment preference, to increase the proportion of enrolled students from the three priority populations.</p> <p>c. The school has implemented a systematic process for evaluating recruitment and outreach strategies and program services for each of the three categories of students, and makes strategic improvements as needed.</p>

Summative Evidence for Benchmark 9:

1. Element: **Target are met:**
 - **Indicator a:** N/A
2. Element: **Targets are not met:**
 - **Indicator a:** Over the course of the charter term, BCCS-G has reached at least 99% of its contracted enrollment each year. School leaders reported strong enrollment at the time of the renewal visit, but said they were down by about 40 students due to the pandemic. BCCS-G has consistently enrolled a larger percentage of ED students than the district. In 2019-2020, the school’s enrollment of ED students was 22 percentage points above the district’s. However, it has enrolled a smaller percentage of SWD and ELL students. While the enrollment of ELLs has increased, from 2% in 2016-2017 to 11% in 2019-2020 (making it within 1 percentage point of the district’s enrollment of ELLs), SWD percentages have remained low. Retention rates range from 5 percentage points below the district for all students and those who are ED to 4 and 10 percentage points above, respectively, for SWDs and ELLs. During the focus group, school leaders described the school’s attendance team that calls parents if students are absent on virtual days and supports families of chronically absent students. According to the school’s self-evaluation, this team was initiated in the 2019-2020 school year to work toward increasing student attendance. The self-evaluation states that 27% of the school’s student population is considered to be chronically absent, meaning they have missed two or more days of instruction per month.

- **Indicator b:** School leaders acknowledged that they have taken SED feedback “to heart” in relationship to subgroup enrollment. They described their increased media outreach and communication with the district committees on special education (CSEs) as well as the school’s efforts to make strides so that their procedures match those of the districts. They mentioned, however, that girls are less likely to be identified for SPED services, complicating the comparison to the district which takes all students into account. To attract more SWDs, school leaders said that they have enhanced their relationships with service providers and pre-kindergarten programs. The school has remained flexible about its special population support services depending on the students’ needs in a particular year; for instance, this charter term it revised its program to offer ICT classes. The school’s SPED coordinator attends open houses and back-to-school nights. The school has also disseminated brochures via district CSEs in order to ensure that parents are aware of the full extent of BCCS-G’s support services. According to the renewal application and discussions with school leadership, the school’s ELL population may benefit from the increasing Muslim population in the area, as the families of ELL students “may be the best marketing tool of all.”
- **Indicator c:** During the focus group, school leaders described how the school monitors student enrollment and retention; moreover, the renewal application indicates a focus on enrollment throughout this year as school choices in the local community vis a vis remote versus live instruction may shift enrollment patterns. The renewal application also notes “Evaluating the recruitment and retention of ELL students has been carefully considered in each of the last two short-term renewal cycles, resulting in efforts that have largely closed the gap with the district by a meaningful degree.” Finally, the renewal application describes ongoing monitoring of SWD enrollment and classification as the school implements new special education settings. It states that the school will monitor its “space availability and explore actually building special education classrooms and other program features in time for the next charter term. These will include the possibility of behavior modification settings, 12:1:1 classrooms and other classrooms in order to significantly approach this disparity.”

See Attachment 1 for data tables and additional information.

Benchmark 10: Legal Compliance

The school complies with applicable laws, regulations, and the provisions of its charter.

Finding: Meets

<i>Element</i>	<i>Indicators</i>
1. <i>Legal Compliance</i>	<p>a. The school has compiled a record of substantial compliance with applicable state and federal laws and the provisions of its charter including, but not limited to: those related to student admissions and enrollment; FOIL and Open Meetings Law; protecting the rights of students and employees; financial management and oversight; governance and reporting; and health and safety requirements.</p> <p>b. The school has undertaken appropriate corrective action when needed and has implemented necessary safeguards to maintain compliance with all legal requirements.</p> <p>c. The school has sought Board of Regents and/or Charter School Office approval for significant revisions.</p>

Summative Evidence for Benchmark 10:

1. Element: **Legal Compliance:**
 - **Indicator a:** The school generally complies with the law and provisions of its charter. Throughout the charter term, the board and school leadership have responded promptly to CSO requests for additional information and revisions. For example, some of the CSO policies that were submitted with the renewal application this fall required revisions to be legally compliant; the school has since worked with NYSED to revise these. However, the school has had uncategorized uncertified teachers during the charter term. In addition, information that came after the CSO site visit renewal shows that school officials have not been complying with fingerprinting and clearance requirements for staff, a serious safety violation. The CSO will be in communication with the school to discuss this. The school must adopt a multi-step, comprehensive process to ensure that all school employees have fingerprint clearance prior to their start date at the school.
 - **Indicator b:** BCCS-G implemented a corrective action plan to address a lower percentage of students with disabilities than the district. As described in Benchmark 9, the school has implemented strategies to address this concern. The renewal application states, “BCCCS-G works with legal counsel to ensure that policies are up-to-date with recent laws and requirements. All BCCCS-G staff are trained in the applicable procedures and systems necessary to ensure that legal and charter requirements are met.” Following the last charter renewal, the school has taken steps to ensure compliance with Open Meeting Laws and its implementation of the DASA Act.
 - **Indicator c:** The school’s calendar lists 185 instructional days, which is fewer than the 190 days indicated in the school’s charter. In September 2018, the Board of Regents approved a revision to amend the school’s organizational chart (as described in Benchmark 7). In October 2018, NYSED approved the school’s admissions policy, which was revised to add a weight for SWDs.

Attachment 1: 2020-2021 Renewal Site Visit

Brighter Choice Charter School for Girls

Benchmark 1:

Indicator 1: All Schools

1.a.i. Accountability - ESEA Accountability Designation:

This school is designated as a school in Good Standing under current New York State criteria as defined by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

1.b.i. Similar Schools Comparison – Comparative Proficiency:

This school outperforms schools with similar grades and subgroup demographics in ELA and science, but does not outperform similar schools in math.

Indicator 2: Elementary/Middle School Outcomes

2.a.i. and 2.a.ii. Trending Toward Proficiency – Aggregate and Subgroup Standards-Based Trend Toward Proficiency: See Table 1 below.

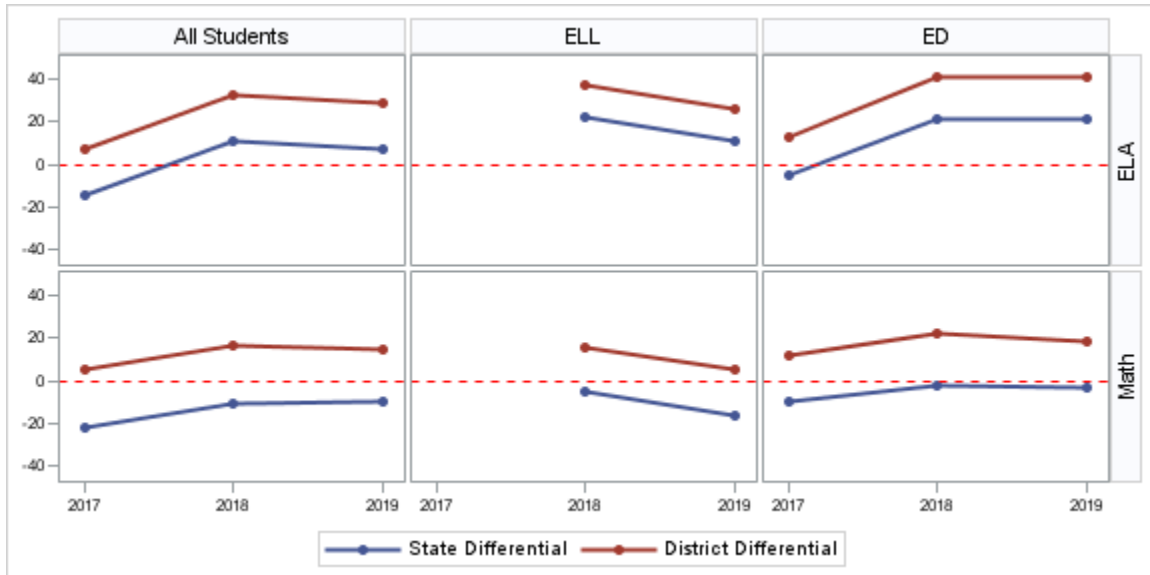
Table 1: Elementary/Middle School Trending Toward Proficiency – Target = 75%

		All Students	ELL	ED
ELA	2016-2017	39%	.	39%
	2017-2018	68%	80%	68%
	2018-2019	60%	.	75%
Math	2016-2017	22%	.	24%
	2017-2018	39%	.	37%
	2018-2019	53%	.	49%

**See NOTES (2), (3), (7), and (8) below.*

2.b.i. and 2.b.ii Proficiency - Aggregate and Subgroup School Level Proficiency: See Figure 1 and Table 2 below.

Figure 1: Elementary/Middle School Assessment Proficiency State and District Differentials Over Time



*See NOTES (1), (2), (3), and (6) below.

Table 2: Elementary/Middle School Assessment Proficiency Outcomes: Charter School, District, and NYS

		ELA					Math				
		Brighter Choice CS for Girls	Albany CSD	Differential to District	NYS	Differential to NYS	Brighter Choice CS for Girls	Albany CSD	Differential to District	NYS	Differential to NYS
All Students	2016-2017	26%	19%	+7	40%	-14	23%	18%	+5	45%	-22
	2017-2018	56%	23%	+33	45%	+11	38%	21%	+17	49%	-11
	2018-2019	53%	24%	+29	46%	+7	40%	25%	+15	50%	-10
ELL	2017-2018	50%	13%	+37	28%	+22	29%	13%	+16	34%	-5
	2018-2019	40%	14%	+26	29%	+11	20%	15%	+5	36%	-16
ED	2016-2017	24%	11%	+13	29%	-5	23%	11%	+12	33%	-10
	2017-2018	56%	15%	+41	35%	+21	36%	14%	+22	38%	-2
	2018-2019	57%	16%	+41	36%	+21	37%	18%	+19	40%	-3

*See NOTES (1), (2), (3), (6), and (7) below.

2.b.iii. Aggregate Grade Level Proficiency: See Table 3 below.

Table 3: Aggregate Grade Level Proficiency

		ELA					Math				
		Brighter Choice CS for Girls	Albany CSD	Differential to District	NYS	Differential to NYS	Brighter Choice CS for Girls	Albany CSD	Differential to District	NYS	Differential to NYS
Grade 3	2016-2017	32%	20%	+12	43%	-11	30%	24%	+6	48%	-18
	2017-2018	60%	26%	+34	51%	+9	40%	25%	+15	54%	-14
	2018-2019	51%	31%	+20	52%	-1	35%	31%	+4	55%	-20
Grade 4	2016-2017	21%	20%	+1	41%	-20	17%	14%	+3	43%	-26
	2017-2018	64%	25%	+39	47%	+17	40%	20%	+20	48%	-8
	2018-2019	73%	25%	+48	48%	+25	36%	24%	+12	50%	-14
Grade 5	2016-2017	20%	17%	+3	35%	-15	17%	15%	+2	43%	-26
	2017-2018	38%	18%	+20	37%	+1	29%	16%	+13	44%	-15
	2018-2019	30%	16%	+14	38%	-8	53%	21%	+32	46%	+7

*See NOTES (1), (6), and (7) below.

Indicator 3: High School Outcomes

Not applicable to this charter school.

Benchmark 9:

Table 4: Student Demographics

	SWD			ELL			ED		
	Brighter Choice CS for Girls	Albany CSD	Differential to District	Brighter Choice CS for Girls	Albany CSD	Differential to District	Brighter Choice CS for Girls	Albany CSD	Differential to District
2016-2017	3%	13%	-10	2%	12%	-10	87%	57%	+30
2017-2018	1%	13%	-12	7%	13%	-6	89%	71%	+18
2018-2019	3%	16%	-13	8%	14%	-6	83%	72%	+11
2019-2020	3%	17%	-14	12%	13%	-1	87%	65%	+22

*See NOTES (2) and (6) below.

Table 5: Retention – Aggregate and Subgroups

	All Students			SWD			ELL			ED		
	Brighter Choice CS for Girls	Albany CSD	Differential to District	Brighter Choice CS for Girls	Albany CSD	Differential to District	Brighter Choice CS for Girls	Albany CSD	Differential to District	Brighter Choice CS for Girls	Albany CSD	Differential to District
2016-2017	79%	87%	-8	70%	90%	-20	75%	86%	-11	80%	88%	-8
2017-2018	82%	85%	-3	14%	86%	-72	100%	82%	+18	83%	87%	-4
2018-2019	76%	85%	-9	67%	86%	-19	89%	84%	+5	76%	87%	-11
2019-2020	79%	84%	-5	90%	86%	+4	92%	82%	+10	79%	84%	-5

*See NOTES (2) and (6) below.

***NOTES:**

(1) Data in the table above represents tested students who scored proficiently (level 3 or above) on the NYS ELA and/or math assessment.

(2) For the students with disabilities and the ELL/MLL subgroups, both current and former members of the subgroups have been combined.

(3) Pursuant to NYSED business rules, the data was suppressed for subgroups containing <5 students and the subgroup category may not be included for the metric.

(4) Data in the table above represents students who passed the Annual Regents or equivalents (score of 65 or better).

(5) The 4- and 5-year graduation rates reported are as of August. The 6-year graduation rates are as of June.

(6) Data in the table above represents a comparison between those grades served in the charter school to only those same grades in the district.

(7) A "." in any table indicates that the data was suppressed, no student sat for the exam, or the exam was not given.

(8) Data in the table above represents tested students who either maintained a proficient score from one year to the next or students whose proficiency level increased from one year to the next (a proficient score is level 3 or 4).

(9) Data in the table above represents students within their respective subgroups who have passed three out of the five Annual Regents and Regents Common Core Examinations (score of 65 or better) or equivalents.

(10) Data in the table above represents the percentage of students from the original 9th grade cohort who persisted within the same school to a 4-year graduation (includes August graduates).

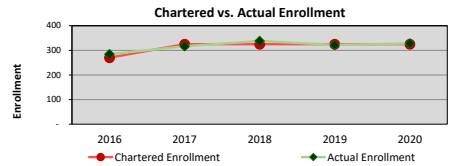


Charter School Fiscal Accountability Summary

BRIGHTER CHOICE CHARTER SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

Grades Served
 Maximum Chartered Grades Served
 Chartered Enrollment
 Maximum Chartered Enrollment
 Actual Enrollment

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Grades Served	K-4	K-5	K-5	K-5	K-5
Maximum Chartered Grades Served	K-4	K-5	K-5	K-5	K-5
Chartered Enrollment	270	325	325	325	325
Maximum Chartered Enrollment	270	270	270	270	270
Actual Enrollment	284	317	338	322	328



ASSETS

Current Assets

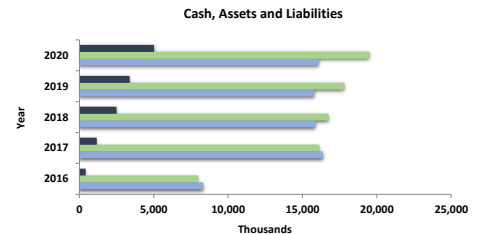
Cash and Cash Equivalents
 Grants and Contracts Receivable
 Prepaid Expenses
 Other Current Assets

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Cash and Cash Equivalents	418,821	1,167,933	2,491,745	3,377,605	5,019,493
Grants and Contracts Receivable	169,203	967,258	359,561	653,000	826,352
Prepaid Expenses	8,146	16,706	-	-	-
Other Current Assets	1,471,655	680	539	-	-
Total Current Assets	2,067,825	2,152,577	2,851,845	4,030,605	5,845,845

Non-Current Assets

Property, Building and Equipment, net
 Restricted Cash
 Security Deposits
 Other Non-Current Assets

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Property, Building and Equipment, net	5,927,913	11,540,172	11,251,016	10,860,648	10,508,906
Restricted Cash	-	2,448,407	2,655,180	2,937,925	3,144,965
Security Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Other Non-Current Assets	-	-	-	-	-
Total Non - Current Assets	5,927,913	13,988,579	13,906,196	13,798,573	13,653,871
Total Assets	7,995,738	16,141,156	16,758,041	17,829,178	19,499,716



LIABILITIES and NET ASSETS

Current Liabilities

Accounts Payable and Accrued Expenses
 Accrued Payroll and Payroll Taxes
 Due to Related Parties
 Refundable Advances
 Other Current Liabilities

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Accounts Payable and Accrued Expenses	240,381	411,188	417,192	745,264	578,188
Accrued Payroll and Payroll Taxes	226,523	640,886	575,985	614,333	712,823
Due to Related Parties	-	-	-	-	-
Refundable Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Other Current Liabilities	227,500	478,777	505,173	566,959	580,219
Total Current Liabilities	694,404	1,530,851	1,498,350	1,926,556	1,871,230

Long-Term Liabilities

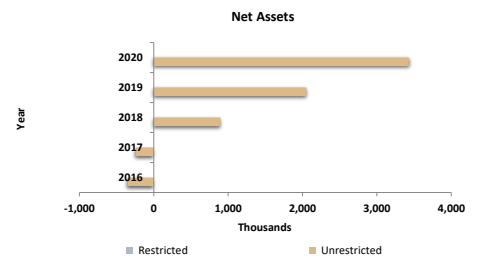
Deferred Rent
 Other Long-Term Liabilities

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Deferred Rent	-	-	-	-	-
Other Long-Term Liabilities	7,653,513	14,852,030	14,361,762	13,852,317	14,198,818
Total Long-Term Liabilities	7,653,513	14,852,030	14,361,762	13,852,317	14,198,818
Total Liabilities	8,347,917	16,382,881	15,860,112	15,778,873	16,070,048

NET ASSETS

Unrestricted
 Restricted

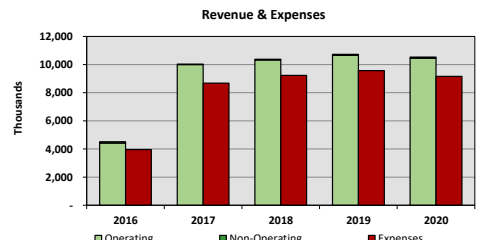
	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Unrestricted	(352,179)	(241,725)	897,929	2,050,305	3,429,668
Restricted	-	-	-	-	-
Total Net Assets	(352,179)	(241,725)	897,929	2,050,305	3,429,668
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	7,995,738	16,141,156	16,758,041	17,829,178	19,499,716



OPERATING REVENUE

State and Local Per Pupil Revenue - Reg. Ed
 State and Local Per Pupil Revenue - SPED
 State and Local Per Pupil Facilities Revenue
 Federal Grants
 State and City Grants
 Other Operating Income

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
State and Local Per Pupil Revenue - Reg. Ed	3,975,478	8,901,881	9,377,862	9,417,410	9,410,269
State and Local Per Pupil Revenue - SPED	-	-	-	-	203,706
State and Local Per Pupil Facilities Revenue	-	-	-	-	-
Federal Grants	135,198	254,250	322,975	341,777	319,363
State and City Grants	61,096	267,829	30,675	175,536	-
Other Operating Income	250,105	579,002	592,344	725,298	522,242
Total Operating Revenue	4,421,877	10,002,962	10,323,856	10,660,021	10,455,580



EXPENSES

Program Services

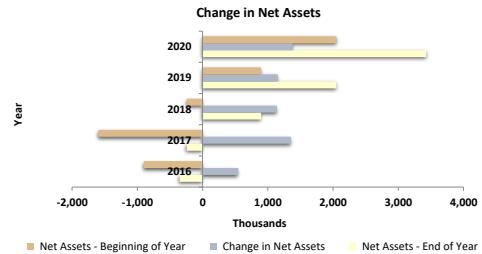
Regular Education
 Special Education
 Other Expenses

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Regular Education	2,253,529	5,242,114	5,587,675	5,796,962	5,672,027
Special Education	137,406	295,788	255,849	399,790	436,961
Other Expenses	767,315	1,649,226	1,832,727	1,699,192	1,276,991
Total Program Services	3,158,250	7,187,128	7,676,251	7,895,944	7,385,979

Supporting Services

Management and General
 Fundraising

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Management and General	804,249	1,491,957	1,561,023	1,675,843	1,770,989
Fundraising	-	-	-	-	-
Total Support Services	804,249	1,491,957	1,561,023	1,675,843	1,770,989
Total Expenses	3,962,499	8,679,085	9,237,274	9,571,787	9,156,968
Surplus/Deficit from Operations	459,378	1,323,877	1,086,582	1,088,234	1,298,612



SUPPORT AND OTHER REVENUE

Interest and Other Income
 Contributions and Grants
 Fundraising Support
 Other Support and Revenue

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Interest and Other Income	113	635	22,353	44,072	71,862
Contributions and Grants	-	-	-	-	-
Fundraising Support	6,850	28,071	30,719	20,070	8,888
Other Support and Revenue	81,752	450	-	-	-
Total Support and Other Revenue	88,715	29,156	53,072	64,142	80,750
Change in Net Assets	548,093	1,353,033	1,139,654	1,152,376	1,379,362
Net Assets - Beginning of Year	(900,272)	(1,594,758)	(241,725)	897,929	2,050,305
Net Assets - End of Year	(352,179)	(241,725)	897,929	2,050,305	3,429,668

REVENUE & EXPENSE BREAKDOWN

Revenue - Per Pupil

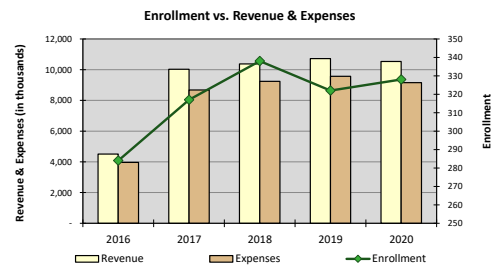
Operating
 Support and Other Revenue

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Operating	15,570	31,555	30,544	33,106	31,877
Support and Other Revenue	312	92	157	199	246
Total Revenue	15,882	31,647	30,701	33,305	32,123

Expenses - Per Pupil

Program Services
 Management and General, Fundraising
Total Expenses
 % of Program Services
 % of Management and Other
 % of Revenue Exceeding Expenses

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Program Services	11,121	22,672	22,711	24,522	22,518
Management and General, Fundraising	2,832	4,706	4,618	5,204	5,399
Total Expenses	13,953	27,378	27,329	29,726	27,917
% of Program Services	79.7%	82.8%	83.1%	82.5%	80.7%
% of Management and Other	20.3%	17.2%	16.9%	17.5%	19.3%
% of Revenue Exceeding Expenses	13.8%	15.6%	12.3%	12.0%	15.1%



FINANCIAL COMPOSITE SCORE

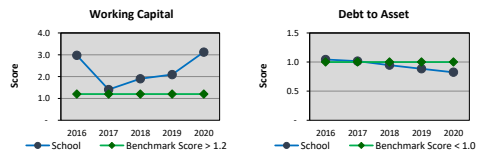
Composite Score
BENCHMARK and FINDING:
 Strong: 1.5 - 3.0 / Adequate: 1.0 - 1.4 /
 Needs Monitoring: -1.0 - 0.9

2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
0.14	0.45	1.12	1.73	2.22
Needs Monitoring	Needs Monitoring	Adequate	Strong	Strong

WORKING CAPITAL

Net Working Capital
 Working Capital (Current) Ratio
BENCHMARK and FINDING:
 Ratio should be equal to or greater than 1.2

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Net Working Capital	1,373,421	621,726	1,353,495	2,104,049	3,974,615
Working Capital (Current) Ratio	3.0	1.4	1.9	2.1	3.1
BENCHMARK and FINDING:	Meets Standard	Meets Standard	Meets Standard	Meets Standard	Meets Standard



DEBT TO ASSET

Debt to Asset Ratio
BENCHMARK and FINDING:
 Ratio should be equal to or less than 1.0

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Debt to Asset Ratio	1.0	1.0	0.9	0.9	0.8
BENCHMARK and FINDING:	Does Not Meet Standard	Does Not Meet Standard	Meets Standard	Meets Standard	Meets Standard