# New York State Education Department

***Renewal Site Visit Report***
***2019-2020***

**West Buffalo Charter School**

**Visit Date: October 22, 2019 – October 23, 2019**
**Date of Report: January 24, 2020**

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# SCHOOL DESCRIPTION

**Charter School Summary**[1]

| | |
|---|---|
| **Name of Charter School** | West Buffalo Charter School |
| **Board Chair** | Michelle Stevens |
| **District of location** | Buffalo Public Schools |
| **Opening Date** | Fall 2012 |
| **Charter Terms** | • Initial Term: March 9, 2010-March 8, 2015<br>• First Renewal Term: March 9, 2015-June 30, 2015<br>• Second Renewal Term: July 1, 2015-June 30, 2020 |
| **Current Term Authorized Grades/ Approved Enrollment** | K-Grade 8/ 500 students |
| **Proposed Renewal Term Authorized Grades/ Proposed Approved Enrollment** | K-Grade 8/ 500 students |
| **Comprehensive Management Service Provider** | None |
| **Facilities** | 113 Lafayette Avenue, Buffalo, New York 14213 - Private Space |
| **Mission Statement** | *Tomorrow's future leaders are sitting in our classrooms today. With small class sizes, a rigorous curriculum aligned with the New York State Common Core Learning Standards, and high expectations, West Buffalo Charter School develops an exceptional foundation of literacy skills for all students in grades K-8. West Buffalo Charter School is a place where diversity is celebrated, individual differences are accepted, and student success is maximized.* |
| **Key Design Elements** | • A small-school learning environment, with small class sizes and a high teacher to student ratio to provide more nurturing, individualized and differentiated student instruction and programming.<br>• A school program built around a systematic approach to student language acquisition that leads to literacy.<br>• Academic enrichment opportunities to enhance and extend student learning.<br>• Comprehensive and consistent monitoring of student learning progress and quick remediation/intervention supports to raise student achievement and to demonstrate academic growth over time. |

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

| | |
|---|---|
| | • Canisius College and Buffalo State faculty share their expertise in diverse cultures, community connections, and social services; and provide opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students to experience an urban charter school environment.<br>• The Buffalo Hearing and Speech Center provides a proprietary research-based literacy intervention program designed to provide literacy intervention for students struggling in language acquisition and basic literacy skills.<br>• Building positive, respectful relationships between staff, students, parents. and the community.<br>• Ongoing professional development focused on innovative teaching techniques and technology integration.<br>• Creating a school committed to excellence in education. |
| **Requested Revisions** | None |

**Noteworthy:** West Buffalo Charter School (WBCS) enjoys strong adult support and community collaboration with ten City Year AmeriCorps personnel and the Buffalo Hearing and Speech Center. Students who are education majors from local institutions of higher education earn credit and serve the school by enabling WBCS to offer small group and individual student-targeted instruction throughout the academic day.

**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.

## SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS

**Current Grade Levels and Approved Enrollment**

| | **Year 1 2015 to 2016** | **Year 2 2016 to 2017** | **Year 3 2017 to 2018** | **Year 4 2018 to 2019** | **Year 5 2019 to 2020** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Grade Configuration** | K-Grade 8 | K-Grade 8 | K-Grade 8 | K-Grade 8 | K-Grade 8 |
| **Total Approved Enrollment** | 500 | 500 | 500 | 500 | 500 |

**Proposed Renewal Term Grade Levels and Projected Enrollment Requested by the School[2]**

| | **Year 1 2020 to 2021** | **Year 2 2021 to 2022** | **Year 3 2022 to 2023** | **Year 4 2023 to 2024** | **Year 5 2024 to 2025** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Grade Configuration** | K-Grade 8 | K-Grade 8 | K-Grade 8 | K-Grade 8 | K-Grade 8 |
| **Total Proposed Enrollment** | 500 | 500 | 500 | 500 | 500 |

[2] This proposed chart was submitted by the West Buffalo Charter School in its renewal application. and approval by the Board of Regents.

# METHODOLOGY

A two-day renewal site visit was conducted at West Buffalo Charter School on October 22-23, 2019. The New York State Education Department's Charter School Office (CSO) team conducted focus groups with the school leadership team, the members of the board of trustees, and the special education and English as a new language departments. In cooperation with school leadership, the CSO administered an anonymous online survey to teachers. A regional associate from the NYS SEQA Western Regional Office also participated in the site visit.

The team conducted 30 classroom observations in K-Grade 8. The observations were approximately 20 minutes in length and conducted jointly by the CSO with the elementary school house principal, the middle school house principal, and the assistant house principal. Included in this number of classroom observations are those conducted by the regional associate from the SEQA Western Regional Office.

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

a. **Current organizational chart** showing all key staff positions, names of staff in those positions, and the school's reporting structure;
b. **A master school schedule** showing each class, grade or course, and teacher(s). Note what days are A, B, C days and which classrooms include ELLs/MLLs and SWDs;
c. **A map of the school** showing a basic floor plan, including classroom numbers, teacher names, and offices;
d. **Board materials**, strategic plan (if applicable), and a narrative describing the board's self-evaluation process;
e. **Narrative describing the process used to evaluate school leadership;**
f. **Narrative describing the process school leadership uses to evaluate teachers;**
g. **Optional: (1) School administered teacher, parent/student surveys (2) NYCDOE School Quality Report results (***Note: We have the required NYSED CSO parent and teacher survey results.);*
h. **Narrative describing the school's progress and efforts made toward reaching its enrollment and retention targets** *(including ELLs/MLLs, SWDs, EDs; if the school is not meeting its targets, describe the efforts made to do so, the evaluation of those efforts, and the results of the evaluation.)***;**
i. **Admissions and Waitlist**: Provide the (1) number of new students who submitted an application for enrollment for the 2019-2020 SY, (2) number of new students admitted for the 2019-2020 SY, (3) number of students currently on the wait list for the 2019-2020 SY, (4) Does the school have a backfill policy? If yes, please upload it to the portal. (5) Does the school have an enrollment preference, weighted lottery, and/or set aside? If yes, please upload it to the portal;
j. **Faculty/Staff Roster**: A template will be provided; please upload to the portal;
k. **Job descriptions for school leaders and staff;**
l. **Principal's 2018-2019 Staff Opinion Poll;**
m. **Professional development schedule for summer 2019; and**
n. **Minutes of the regular meetings of the board of trustees for the past twelve months**

# BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

The 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 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 October 22- 23, 2019 at West Buffalo Charter School see the following Performance Framework benchmark ratings and narrative.

## New York State Education Department
## Charter School Performance Framework Rating

| | 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. | Approaches |
| | **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. | Exceeds |
| 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 |

## *Summary of Findings*

- The West Buffalo Charter School is in year 8 of operation and serves students in K- Grade 8. During the current charter term, the school is rated in the following manner: exceeding 1 benchmark, meeting 7 benchmarks, approaching 2 benchmark, and falling far below 0 benchmarks. Additional details regarding those ratings are provided below.

- **Areas of Strengths**:
  WBCS continues to perform at a higher proficiency level than the district in ELA and math for all students and all subgroups, widening the gap with the district for all students and for the subgroups in ELA except for English language learners (ELLs)/multilingual learners (MLLs), and for all students and educationally disadvantaged (EDs) in math. Scores are close to the state for ELA and surpass the state in math.

  According to the NYSED CSO Teacher Survey, 90.05% of staff indicate that WBCS has a strong leadership team that is well organized and supportive and 94% of teachers believe the school's mission is clear and is shared by all stakeholders. Ninety-eight per cent of parents responding to the NYSED CSO Parent Survey report that they are familiar with the school's mission with 96% responding that they feel the school is fulfilling its mission. The board of trustees (BoT) focus group acknowledged the leadership team's organization, clear systems, and reflection on the school's academic programs as a success of the school.

- **Areas in Need of Improvement**:
  Over the course of the charter term, the school has not met Benchmark 9, failing to enroll a percentage of students with disabilities (SWDs) comparable to the district of location, continuing to fall below the district percentages by 11 percentage points for 2018-2019. A corrective action plan (CAP) was submitted to NYSED CSO that included targeting retention of SWDs by creating self-contained programs at the elementary and middle school levels that would allow students with more significant needs to remain with WBCS and limit the number of SWDs returning to Buffalo Public Schools (BPS).

**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**

**Academic Program for Elementary School/Middle School:**

- During the site visit it was observed that WBCS has a certified teacher and a resident teacher or classroom aide in each classroom. This provides flexibility for adults working with small groups or individual students, further enhanced by the presence of AmeriCorps members and student teachers. According to the renewal application, the school subscribes to research-based curricula and aligns with Next Generation ELA standards. The school leaders combine the EngageNY and Expeditionary Learning (EL) Education Modules to support ELA at all grade levels. All students receive 120 minutes of core content instruction in literacy with K- Grade 5 receiving an additional 60 minutes daily focused on the Skills Block from the EL Education Modules. WBCS uses its own teacher-created *Math Counts* curriculum which is aligned with the New York State Learning Standards (NYSLS). WBCS uses a *Language to Literacy* program developed by the Buffalo Hearing and Speech Center to further support young learners. Additional strategies include Response to Intervention (RtI) cycles which assess student growth and address specific student needs on a fluid basis.

**Academic Program for Students with Disabilities and English language learners (ELLs)/Multilingual Learners (MLLs):**

- Consultant teacher services (CT) are in place to support teachers and SWDs in all classrooms. There are currently five special education teachers who serve 63 SWDs. Because all teachers share a common lesson plan format in which accommodations and differentiation methods are specified to support all students, all teachers working with specific students have access to the plans. In all the classrooms visited students were observed working in small groups, and student work was clearly differentiated so that all students were able to access the learning standards. The school employs five certified English as a New Language (ENL) teachers who push into classrooms and use small group pull out sessions to support ELL/MLL students. ELLs/MLLs have access to tiered supports targeting specific needs identified through data analysis. SWDs and ELLs/MLLs are held to the same NYSLS as all other students and are expected to make significant growth to close academic achievement gaps.
- SWDs and students who need a more restrictive program have access to a self-contained 8:1+1 model that was initiated in the 2019-2020 school year. WBCS offers two multi-age 8:1+1 classrooms, one for elementary and one for middle level grades. The classroom teachers are certified special educators and work closely with grade level teachers to align the instruction and support needed to close learning gaps.

**Summative Evidence for Benchmark 1:**

- Data from the spring 2019 testing cycle indicate that WBCS demonstrated an overall increase in student proficiency levels from 33% in 2018 to 38% in 2019. SWDs have made progress toward proficiency from 14% in 2018 to 27% in 2019 resulting in a proficiency rate of 12 percentage points

above the state. The charter school has consistently outscored the district in ELA and math for all students and the subgroups over the current term of the charter. Scores are close to the state for ELA and surpass the state in math.

***See Attachment 1 for data tables and additional academic information.***

**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.*

**Finding: Meets**

| *Element* | *Indicators* |
|---|---|
| *1. Curriculum* | a. The school has a documented curriculum that is aligned to the NYSLS.<br>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.<br>c. The curriculum is aligned horizontally across classrooms at the same grade level and vertically between grades.<br>d. The curriculum is differentiated to provide opportunities for all students to master grade-level skills and concepts.<br>e. The curriculum is systematically reviewed and revised. |
| *2. Instruction* | a. The school staff has a common understanding of high-quality instruction, and observed instructional practices align to this understanding.<br>b. Instructional delivery fosters engagement with all students. |
| *3. Assessment and Program Evaluation* | a. The school uses a balanced system of formative, diagnostic and summative assessments.<br>b. The school uses qualitative and quantitative data to inform instruction and improve student outcomes.<br>c. The school uses qualitative and quantitative data to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of the academic program and modifies the program accordingly. |
| *4. Supports for Diverse Learners* | 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.<br>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. |

**Summative Evidence for Benchmark 2:**

1. **Element: *Curriculum***:
   - **Indicator a:** According to the renewal application, the school subscribes to research-based curricula and aligns with Next Generation ELA standards. The school leaders combine the EngageNY and Expeditionary Learning (EL) Education Modules to support ELA in all grades. Math instruction is carried out using *Math Counts* which is a WBCS created curriculum that blends the EngageNY modules and *EnVisions 2.O*. WBCS teachers use *Next Generation Science Learning Standards* and the *NYS K-12 Social Studies Framework*, NYSLS, modules and resources. Curriculum is continuously reviewed by teachers, and data is gathered to identify gaps and address supports as needed. According to teachers and the leadership focus groups the school implements FastBridge tests at intervals during the year and RtI groups are formed to address specific student needs in meeting the NYSLS.
   - **Indicator b:** During the focus group, special populations teachers indicated that they meet as grade-level teams with coaches and administrators to review data and make appropriate changes to unit and lesson plans. Lesson plans and unit plans are uploaded to an accessible drive so that all teachers, coaches, and administrators can easily view them. As observed in classrooms during the site visit, teachers use gradual release, differentiation, collaboration, and make use of small-group instruction to allow access to a rigorous curriculum for all students. Teachers receive professional development to ensure rigor and scaffolding during lessons. During classroom visits, teachers were observed using rigorous questioning techniques and student to student discourse to support a deeper understanding of topics presented.
   - **Indicator c:** In the renewal application, WBCS described school-aligned instructional practices which include cross-grade common planning time and the leadership team described horizontally and vertically aligning plans. Survey results and focus groups indicate teachers use cross grade-level meetings to review content taught and to plan for upcoming instruction. Teachers indicated that after reviewing data they noted trends in Grades 3-5 and subsequently expanded the use of EL Modules in 2018 to additional grade levels. Common planning time is provided to plan, review, and discuss lessons, and update curriculum maps. It was noted by the leadership team that cross grade-level meetings are held to ensure gaps and overlaps in curriculum are shared, discussed, and addressed. In its focus group, the special education staff described joint meetings between grade-level teams and coaches as opportunities to monitor progress and address gaps that may have been identified by other grade-level teams. The renewal application indicates that time is also provided during faculty meetings to review and discuss changes needed to address gap or overlaps, gain feedback, and provide guidance.
   - **Indicator d:** WBCS uses a gradual release model across grades and this was observed in the classrooms visited. All lesson plans reviewed during the site visit included differentiated strategies, reflective of the makeup of the student population – higher than average percentages of economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities and English language learners/multilingual learners. The renewal application describes "I can statements" as being used to open these discussions and “unpack” the learning. A shared practice model was observed in some classrooms as an interim step to independent practice where teachers were using appropriate differentiation, and small groups were formed to ensure a low teacher to student ratio. The content, product, or process was differentiated in some classrooms to meet the needs of the SWDs and ELLs/MLLs so that all students had access to the curriculum presented and the opportunity to meet standards expected of them. Teachers have experienced professional development on these strategies. Performance reviews use the Pearson Framework for the

Observation of Effective Teaching, which allows administrators to support specific domains relating to differentiation and the needs of all learners.

- **Indicator e:** The curriculum is systematically reviewed and revised on an ongoing basis; weekly meetings of grade level teams with coaches provide a forum for review of upcoming lessons and identification of learning targets. The mandated use of certain curricular documents in planning adds standardization to the instructional program.

2. **Element:** ***Instruction***:
   - **Indicator a:** WBCS staff experiences professional training to support the planning of differentiated opportunities in the classrooms, and a variety of instructional practices are encouraged to maximize learning, including gradual release, and the use of "I can" statements which are explicitly "unpacked" or explained prior to instruction. Teachers use peer-to-peer conversations and small, flexible groups to target misconceptions and to support closing student academic gaps. Teacher autonomy in identifying strategies for delivering instruction was observed within the standardized structure of lesson planning. A common understanding of what high-quality instruction looks like was seen across multiple classrooms. In this setting, higher-order questions are used to promote critical thinking skills. In some classrooms, teacher questioning expected students to apply, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information instead of simply recalling facts.
   - **Indicator b:** The leadership team indicated that lesson plans are reviewed, and specific feedback is given to teachers to ensure instruction is rigorous and meets students' needs. In some cases, teachers engaged students in learning by using small groups, turn and talk, and/or stations to foster active participation, and students were observed posing questions and using accountable talk. During the site visit small groups of students receiving interventions were observed. The low student-to-teacher ratio allowed teachers to engage students while meeting their individual needs.

3. **Element:** ***Assessment and Program Evaluation***:
   - **Indicator a:** WBCS uses a variety of assessments including formative, diagnostic, and summative. Many of the tests are ELA focused and support teachers using data driven instruction (DDI) to enhance RtI instruction in order to close academic gaps. Teachers use observations of small groups, exit tickets, and curriculum-based measures (CBM) along with Fountas and Pinnell (F&P) reading tests, and FastBridge tests to measure and track student learning and growth. The school administers benchmark tests quarterly to monitor student progress. RtI groups are based on both formative and summative test results. Small homogeneous groups are adjusted as needed during the school year. Both EngageNY and EL Modules have CBM to help guide teachers in developing and understanding student performance and address misconceptions.
   - **Indicator b:** WBCS uses internal assessments to group students for ELA and language support, providing information for small support and enrichment groups. A balance of qualitative and quantitative data is described in the renewal application and used to align interventions for small groups. These data come from F&P, student portfolios and running records, NYS ELA, NYS Math, and FastBridge, which combines Computer Adaptive Tests (CAT) and CBM for universal screening and progress monitoring. Students are assessed four times each year and adjustments are subsequently made to interventions. The school describes various sub-tests that are used to monitor individual student growth. Data-driven instruction (DDI) is discussed with school faculty in terms of strengths and weaknesses at each grade level, classroom level, and individual student level. DDI and frequent assessments were described by teachers in the focus group, as they are used to evaluate student progress toward achieving proficiency on the NYSLS. Grade level teams meet regularly with administrators to discuss data and collaborate on action plans.

- **Indicator c:** WBCS has been operating for 8 years and during that time adjustments have been made to programs. Based on data from school wide assessments, including F&P and running records, the school leadership team determined that students struggled with oral vocabulary. To address this a "FAB Vocab" program was instituted K- Grade 8 to replace standard spelling lists with teacher created weekly vocabulary lists. The Language to Literacy program provided by Buffalo Hearing and Speech Center has been adjusted to reflect the needs of students with the most significant challenges. All students in K-Grade 4 are given a screening test and data is reviewed to determine which students would benefit from more intensive instruction. Student data is used to evaluate student progress through RtI cycles as well as address overall program effectiveness. As a result of ongoing reflection on ELA results, the school addressed gaps in ELA proficiency by adding EL Modules to the ELA curriculum for all grades.

4. **Element:** ***Supports for Diverse Learners***:
   - **Indicator a:** The New York State Education Department's (NYSED) Office of Special Education has completed its Charter School Review at WBCS. As a result of this review, it has been determined that WBCS's policies, procedures, and practices comply with New York State regulatory requirements. A separate letter will be issued from the Special Education Quality Assurance Western Regional Office. No further action is required by the school at this time. During this review, information was gathered through classroom visits, interviews and a review of program records. A total of 11 classroom observations were completed and 17 interviews were conducted with charter administration, special education teachers, related service providers and general education teachers. A review of student records and staff interviews demonstrates the school has established procedures to ensure that individualized education programs (IEPs) are accessible to staff members. Additionally, teachers and providers responsible for IEP implementation are informed of their responsibilities for implementing the IEP. Lastly, after completing 11 classroom visits, WBCS ensures that students with disabilities are provided the special education programs and services specified on the students' IEPs. **I**n response to parents' expressions of concern for special education students whose needs could no longer be met by the current resources of the charter school, WBCS put into place this school year two 8:1+1 classrooms, one for elementary-level students and one for middle-level students.
   - **Indicator b:** WBCS administers school-wide assessments and collects data regarding student performance which is regularly shared with all constituents. Teachers reported they meet and disaggregate data to determine trends and needs of students and create support plans to help close any gaps. ENL teachers share common planning time with classroom teachers to review lesson plans and address potential misconceptions. According to the NYSED CSO Teacher Survey, 91.95% of teachers describe frequent collaboration among faculty members on matters of curriculum and instruction. During the special populations focus group, teachers referred to student support teams (SST), staff meetings, and common classroom planning time as examples of ways they collaborate. They also described ENL common planning times; but consultant teachers and special educators shared concerns that they do not have common planning time and had to find other times to plan and give and receive feedback regarding individual students.

**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**

| *Element* | *Indicators* |
|---|---|
| 1. *Behavior Management and Safety* | a. The school has a clear approach to behavioral management, including a written discipline policy.<br>b. The school appears safe and all school constituents are able to articulate how the school community maintains a safe environment.<br>c. The school has systems in place to ensure that the environment is free from harassment and discrimination.<br>d. Classroom environments are conducive to learning and generally free from disruption. |
| 2. *Family Engagement and Communication* | a. The school communicates with and engages families with the school community.<br>b. Teachers communicate with parents to discuss students' strengths and needs.<br>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.<br>d. The school has a systematic process for responding to family or community concerns.<br>e. The school shares school-level academic data with the broader school community to promote transparency and accountability among parents, students and school constituents. |
| 3. *Social-Emotional Supports* | a. The school has systems or programs in place to support the social-emotional needs of students.<br>b. School leaders collect and use data to track the socio-emotional needs of students.<br>c. School leaders collect and use data regarding the impact of programs designed to support students' social and emotional health. |

**Summative Evidence for Benchmark 3:**

1. **Element:** ***Behavior Management and Safety:***
   - **Indicator a:** The premise behind the social-emotional component at WBCS is the development of strong, positive relationships with students and their families. WBCS administration and BoT cited an open-door policy to welcome students and families. Families are provided the discipline policy once their child registers. WBCS counsel reviewed the Dignity for All Students Act (DASA) Policy and the Disciplinary Code for compliance with the law and has assured that both written policies are consistent with law. According to the NYSED CSO Teacher and Parent Survey results, 96.47% of parents strongly agree or agree that the disciplinary consequences are fair and consistently enforced and 90.47% of teachers feel that the school-wide discipline policy is consistently applied.

- **Indicator b:** Teachers report that students feel safe in the school environment and are responsive to the discipline system in place at the school. According to the NYSED CSO Teacher Survey most staff report that students and staff feel supported. Teachers indicated most of their peers employ consistent classroom practices to support an environment conducive to learning with. positive and proactive approaches. Most students in the classrooms observed were attentive and respectful. When students present challenges, the SST meets to address the concerns and problem solve in support of the student. The BoT members indicated the school leadership team is very responsive to family concerns, conducting timely outreach as needed.
- **Indicator c:** The DASA coordinator provides student-friendly presentations for students in health classes. WBCS focuses on educating the students and providing them with proactive approaches to prevent harassment and discrimination. Teachers report that support staff are caring, positive, and student centered. Administrators will push into middle school health classes when topics of bullying, intimidation, or harassment are covered. Families are provided with a copy of the Student-Parent Handbook, which contains the DASA Policy. It is reviewed at the middle school orientation that is mandatory for entering families.
- **Indicator d:** During the October 22-23, 2019 renewal site visit, a high level of student engagement was observed in most classrooms, and there were few student disruptions to learning. A consistent school-wide behavior support system was not evident in all classrooms. However, teachers employed a variety of instructional practices to keep students focused and on task. Teachers have autonomy in classroom management strategies that include a clap signal, chimes, and other routines used to support student positive behavior and compliance. The administration reported very few instances of in-school suspension (ISS) or out-of-school suspensions (OSS) from classroom learning environments.

2. **Element:** ***Family Engagement and Communication:***
   - **Indicator a:** According to the NYSED CSO Teacher Survey teachers feel the school engages families, often as part of a student support system. The BoT indicated that communication with families is key to student success and families are informed of academic and behavior performance on a regular basis. Web-based programs can also be accessed by parents from home to keep families informed. WBCS offers over 20 after-school clubs, family events, and partnerships with outside organizations during the school year. School leaders report strong attendance at school activities and noted school leader and teacher support for the Family Group. This gathering of family members and friends of students fosters an environment of family involvement in education. It is led by an independent board which connects families and the community with school personnel through events, fundraising, and other activities. Families responded on the NYSED CSO Parent Survey that WBCS elicits feedback from families and responds to family concerns. The renewal application and the leadership team indicate the school's written discipline policy is provided to families and students annually. School-wide behavior expectations and strategies are reinforced daily in classrooms.
   - **Indicator b:** During the leadership focus group the administrators shared the school belief that communication with families is key to success. The school leadership indicated that it understands student academic success has a direct correlation with family engagement. Teachers described indicators of communication and reported the school supports an open-door policy under which the administration encourages families' direct contact with staff. Staff confirmed that leadership builds solid relationships with staff, students, and families.
   - **Indicator c:** The administration acknowledged that the school tries to meet parents where they are and build trusting relationships, encouraged by the open-door policy. The school uses a variety of methods to ensure communication with families such as the website, fliers, and technology

applications that are easily accessible to families. Ninety-four percent of families strongly agreed or agreed that the school has a clear complaint policy and 99% of parents strongly agreed or agreed that WBCS seeks feedback from parents through surveys, meetings, or some other forum.

- **Indicator d:** According to school leaders, Family Group members, staff, and administration attend after school activities and appear at community events. Bi-monthly newsletters, emails, notes from the school leader, and use of a universal calling system inform parents and community constituents of school activities. WBCS has a website that makes use of media tools to reach families. Administrators stated that if a family presents a concern the protocol calls for an immediate response from administration. If a family concern is brought directly to administration, the faculty and staff are notified immediately, and an investigation is initiated if needed. A specific plan will be developed to resolve the concern. The school leadership team indicated that they have begun a series of informational meetings for parents of students who will be transitioning to high school in the next school year, in an attempt to smooth the transition for these students and their families.
- **Indicator e:** Data is shared continuously with the school community including the Family Group, faculty, and all community partners. Data on performance on NYS ELA and NYS math tests are shared multiple times with all constituents as reported by the principals. Clear comparisons to district and state data are made for constituents to understand what the data demonstrate. Eighty-five percent of the staff indicated that the school informs parents about how it performs compared to other schools in the district and in New York State. Information is readily shared with visitors by administration when appropriate.

3. **Element: *Social-Emotional Supports***:
   - **Indicator a:** Teachers and students participate in trainings on social-emotional learning during the year. Results from the NYSED CSO Teacher Survey indicate there is open communication between leadership and staff, and most staff feel comfortable in communicating concerns directly to leadership. Teachers reported on the NYSED CSO survey that students learn about character education traits each month. Special education and ENL teachers indicate that social-emotional learning needs of students are often addressed in small groups facilitated by AmeriCorps volunteers, student teacher volunteers, and teachers. EL curricular resources also support these efforts, through its character development component. This includes a focus on becoming effective learners, contributing to a better world, and being an ethical person. The renewal application describes an SST that is available to support students and teachers and, when necessary, refer students with social-emotional concerns for outside support.
   - **Indicator b:** The school embraces student social-emotional learning through a three-tiered intervention system similar to RtI. Student progress is tracked at least bi-weekly and periodic surveys of students' perceptions of school safety and culture are administered. Additional supports include the SST, which addresses root causes of concerning behaviors and proposes supports and strategies to minimize or change those behaviors. The renewal application indicates the Win-Win philosophy is used schoolwide providing a positive reward system. Teachers and administrators are offered opportunities for professional development around these strategies. Teachers collect data on students' SEL as well as make use of EL Modules that are responsive to students' cultural understanding. If students are struggling, teachers may refer to the SST for more support in the form of benchmark testing to determine progress, which is monitored. The DASA coordinator further assists teachers, students, and families in addressing issues.
   - **Indicator c:** School-wide, it is understood that students with unmet social-emotional needs do not function successfully in an academic setting, as these needs interfere and can block learning. School leaders review data from incident reports to identify trends. This allows them to make

programmatic changes such as creating targeted lessons and identifying peer mentors. Students in need of Tier 2 or Tier 3 supports have access to mental health professionals on staff and, ultimately, outside agencies targeted to specific needs.

**Benchmark 4: Financial Condition**

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

**Finding: Approaches**

**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.

**Financial Condition**

West Buffalo Charter School appears to be in an adequate financial condition as evidenced by performance on key indicators derived from the school's independently audited financial statements.

**Overall Financial Outlook**

A *composite score* is an overall measure of financial health. This score is based on a weighting of primary reserves, equity, and net income. A charter school with a score between 1.5 and 3.0 is considered to be in good financial health. West Buffalo Charter School's 2018-2019 composite score is 0.64.

**Composite Scores**
**2014-2015 to 2018-2019**

| *Year* | *Composite Score* |
|---|---|
| 2014-2015 | 0.99 |
| 2015-2016 | 1.10 |
| 2016-2017 | 0.79 |
| 2017-2018 | 0.72 |
| 2018-2019 | 0.64 |

It must be noted that the school completed a major building project in 2018 which it financed through a bank construction loan. The resulting long-term debt, a portion of which must be paid annually, is causing the composite score, working capital and cash position indicators on the fiscal dashboard to fall below the NYSED CSO's standard.

**Benchmark 5: Financial Management**

*The school operates in a fiscally sound manner with realistic budgets pursuant to a long-range financial plan, including appropriate internal controls and procedures 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 absences of a going concern disclosure.

**Summative Evidence for Benchmark 5:**

The Charter School Office reviewed West Buffalo Charter School's 2018-2019 audited financial statements to determine whether the independent auditor observed sufficient internal controls over financial reporting. The auditor did not identify any deficiencies in internal controls that could be considered material weaknesses.

NYSED CSO has no evidence that the school has come into compliance with the requirement that the dissolution escrow account be increased to no less than $100,000.

In 2018, the Office of the NYS Comptroller (OSC) conducted an audit (https://www.osc.state.ny.us/localgov/audits/schools/2018/west-buffalo-charter.htm) of the school with the objective to determine whether school officials accurately compensated employees. The findings were that, with the exception of minor discrepancies, employees were accurately paid. However, school officials did not update employee salaries included in offer of employment letters when salary changes were made, and the Board of Trustees did not formally approve the health insurance opt-out program and the leave benefits for maintenance employees. The auditors recommended adoption of a policy to ensure any changes in salary or pay rate are properly authorized, approved, and documented and that the Board formally approve benefits provided or paid to school employees.

The school's corrective action plan included development and implementation of procedures for school officials to follow in the event of any change of an employee's salary or pay rate as well as adoption of a formal policy regarding health insurance and leave benefits.

**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**

| *Element* | *Indicators* |
|---|---|
| *1. Board Oversight and Governance* | a. The board recruits and selects board members with skills and expertise that meet the needs of the school.<br>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.<br>c. The board demonstrates active oversight of the charter school management, fiscal operations, and progress toward meeting academic and other school goals.<br>d. The board regularly updates school policies.<br>e. The board utilizes a performance-based evaluation process for evaluating school leadership, itself, and providers.<br>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:** At the time of this renewal the BoT had seven members. Each individual member brings to the board an area of expertise as identified on its roster. The BoT has considered the strengths and needs of its current membership and is actively considering recruitment to increase its breadth. The BoT reported that it identified needed areas of expertise and is in the process of recruiting members from the community to provide those skills, such as marketing/public relations. The BoT feels confident it can recruit appropriate members and is seeking to diversify as it recruits. The BoT meets 12 times each year and has formed several committees to address the needs of the school.
- **Indicator b**: The BoT indicated that it is engaging in long-term planning over the next few months, a continuation of prior years' work. At this point, the school is fully expanded, facilities have been constructed and attention may be diverted to specific academic improvements. The new special education program is one area on which the board wishes to focus, as is further concentration on continuing academic improvement.
- **Indicator c:** The BoT has committees to address the needs of the school and they meet regularly. The academic committee meets three to four times each year to discuss and analyze in detail specific grade level data. The BoT demonstrated support for the summer program used by WBCS as a way to prevent "summer slide" and to allow teachers summer employment opportunities, as well as provide a strategy to increase teacher retention. The board has recently added a compensation committee made up exclusively of employees to examine the potential of increasing benefits, both hard and soft.

- **Indicator d:** All required school policies were created prior to the opening of the school. During this renewal visit the board did not have any updates on its school policy documents and indicated this work will be undertaken during the 2019-2020 school year. The BoT was unclear as to the structure of this task.
- **Indicator e:** WBCS BoT actively monitors school progress during its monthly meetings. Board members describe discussions at meetings, and reviewing reports from school leaders on school operations, academic outcomes, school climate, and financial status. The BoT completed a self-evaluation during the current charter term. The results enabled the BoT to plot its upcoming development needs and begin the planning process relevant to them. A board handbook was created, including all board policies. The school uses a NYSED-approved evaluation tool for reviewing performance of school leaders, but members indicated it is inadequate for their purposes. The BoT is in the process of creating new tools to support the evaluation procedures.
- **Indicator f:** The BoT understands its responsibility for monitoring adherence to the conditions of the school's charter and for maintaining awareness of changes in state and federal laws and regulations. An attorney familiar with the school and its history is on call to clarify any questions regarding protocols, including compliance with the Open Meetings Law.

**Benchmark 7: Organizational Capacity**

*The school has established a well-functioning organizational structure and 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: Exceeds**

| *Element* | *Indicators* |
|---|---|
| *1. School Leadership* | 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.<br>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.<br>c. The school has clear and well-established communication systems and decision-making processes in place which ensure effective communication across the school.<br>d. The school successfully recruits, hires, and retains key personnel, and makes decisions – when warranted – to remove ineffective staff members. |
| *2. Professional Climate* | a. The school is fully staffed with high quality personnel to meet all educational and operational needs, including finance, human resources, and communication.<br>b. The school has established structures for frequent collaboration among teachers.<br>c. The school ensures that staff has requisite skills, expertise, and professional development necessary to meet students' needs.<br>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.<br>e. The school has mechanisms to solicit teacher feedback and gauge teacher satisfaction. |
| *3. Contractual Relationships* ☐*N/A* | a. The board of trustees and school leadership establish effective working relationships with the management company or comprehensive service provider.<br>b. Changes in the school's charter management or comprehensive service provider contract comply with required charter amendment procedures.<br>c. The school monitors the efficacy of contracted service providers or partners. |

**Summative Evidence for Benchmark 7:**

1. **Element:** ***School Leadership***
   - **Indicator a:** The school leadership team at WBCS is responsible for ensuring adherence to the school mission and generating commitment to the school goals. The leadership team includes the school leader, the finance and operations officer, elementary and middle school house principals, an assistant principal who supports both middle and elementary schools, and curriculum coaches. Ninety-three percent of teachers responding to the NYSED CSO Teacher Survey report the school's mission is clear and shared by all stakeholder and 88% consider WBCS a long term, sustainable

work place for themselves. WBCS has had a consistent leadership team over time which develops teachers within the organization, increasing teacher retention as well as student performance. There are opportunities for leadership roles for teachers, for example, the role of grade level leader has been instituted.

- **Indicator b:** Although requested as part of the submission of materials prior to the visit, job descriptions for school leaders were not available at the time of the visit. However, the roles of the leadership team were clear to the staff as indicated in the NYSED CSO Teacher Survey responses. Teachers responding indicated they understood who to go to for support. BoT members have identified clear roles and areas of expertise for themselves. The BoT job descriptions provided in the renewal application indicated clear objectives for the success of the organization and academic responsibility for students served. BoT members actively communicate with the leadership team and participate on specific committees to address the needs of the school.
- **Indicator c:** As indicated in the NYSED CSO Teacher Survey**,** over 85% of teachers believe the school has systems in place to solicit staff feedback as school leadership provides regular check-ins with individual teachers and teams. School-developed surveys are used for teachers to communicate a variety of input regarding the climate of the school to the leadership. Committees comprised of teachers address areas of need and concern including teacher salary and benefits.
- **Indicator d**: The school uses the Framework for the Observation of Effective Teachers by Pearson as part of its teacher evaluation process. Eighty-six percent of teachers reported feeling supported by the leadership team during formal observations and during the Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR). The observations allow leadership to identify staff who are struggling and provide support. The staff shares the view that WBCS encourages teacher development. Both principals and the assistant principal were encouraged to return to higher education to qualify for school building leader certification. The NYSED CSO Teacher Survey indicated that teachers respond positively to the investment that WBCS leaders demonstrate in developing staff. Teachers cited that the school leadership team is strong and well-organized, and the school offers competitive pay.

2. **Element:** ***Professional Climate***
    - **Indicator a:** WBCS has a "grow your own" philosophy. A middle school house principal and an elementary school house principal were recruited from the staff and encouraged to obtain their school building leader certification. The assistant house principal was also promoted from staff at the school. Teachers reported on the NYSED CSO Teacher Survey that the school encourages their personal professional development. Eighty-nine percent of staff indicated WBCS is a long-term sustainable option for them as a place to work. The survey indicates that 62% of the teachers have been instructing for longer than four years. The 2020-2021 organizational chart indicates sufficient personnel to meet the educational and operational needs of the school, including human resources, communication, and medical staff.
    - **Indicator b:** According to school leaders and teachers, collaboration among teachers occurs at both scheduled and unscheduled times. Teachers have regularly occurring grade-level team meetings. ENL teachers have time in their schedules to plan with teachers to support ELLs/MLLs students. The CT model is used to support SWDs and RtI supports are in place to form small groups of Tier 2 interventions with some common planning time. In the focus group, special education teachers reported that there was no team or collaborative planning time built into their schedules; general education and special education teachers find planning times as they can before, during, or after the school day.

- **Indicator c:** Most teachers hold Initial or Permanent NYS Teaching Certificates in their instructional domain. At the time of review of the renewal application three teachers were not yet fully certified, although they could be covered under the allowable exceptions. To ensure staff have the requite skills and expertise needed the school leaders indicated that professional development is offered to teachers through lesson plan feedback and classroom observations. Monthly staff meetings are also provided for ongoing professional development and also serve to enhance a sense of community among teachers. Staff are encouraged to attend outside professional development when opportunities present themselves. Leadership can offer outside opportunities to faculty and who can then "turn-key" information learned to other members of the staff. With few exceptions, each elementary level classroom is staffed with a “resident teacher” as well as a certified teacher. The expectation is that the resident teacher, most likely a teacher assistant, is in the process of becoming certified. Ten City Year Americorps members provide additional support in classrooms for individual students in core content areas. WBCS offers three professional development days—one in August, one in September, and a half day in November as indicated on the 2019-2020 school calendar.
- **Indicator d:** To ensure staff have the expertise to implement the academic program, WBCS offers feedback to teachers and ongoing data is used to monitor services and programs for effectiveness. The school uses four key elements of DDI including a variety of tests, analyzing the data, creating action plans based on the data, and fostering a culture where data is used to drive daily instruction in both small and larger groups of students. Leadership uses two formal observation findings and an APPR meeting with teachers to highlight their strengths and needs for further professional development. The renewal application states that feedback from principals to resident teachers and aides support pairings for teaching assignments for the coming school year.
- **Indicator e:** Over the charter renewal term teacher turnover has been relatively low. WBCS promotes teacher leaders from within the teaching staff of the organization, offers opportunities to engage in summer programs, and solicits teacher feedback. Opportunities to join other teachers in school-level focus groups are available to staff members, also supporting retention and fostering collaboration and culture. A dedicated staff member was added to support all staff in their professional growth. The cycle of observation, feedback, and coaching also proves beneficial to teachers as 85% reported leadership has systems in place to solicit staff feedback.

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

N/A

**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**

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

**Summative Evidence for Benchmark 8:**

1. **Element:** ***Mission and Key Design Elements***
   - **Indicator a:** School leaders, as well as BoT members, articulate a clear understanding of the WBCS mission with special emphasis on providing small and supportive learning environments for students with a focus on language and literacy. A majority of teachers surveyed agreed that the school's mission is clear and shared by stakeholders with 94% of teachers responding positively on the NYSED CSO Survey. According to responses from parents on the NYSED CSO Survey, 96% agree the school is fulfilling its mission.
   - **Indicator b:** During the most recent mid-term site visit (March 21-22, 2018) and check-in site visit (April 11, 2019) the school received positive feedback regarding the implementation of the mission and vision. The priority of language and literacy was observed during classroom observations and from focus group discussions. During this renewal visit small class sizes of 21 students or less were observed in kindergarten - Grade 4 with 25 students or fewer per classroom in Grades 5 - 8. The CSO team observed small-group settings where multiple teachers were working with groups of students, as well as the use of stations or peer-to-peer interactions. RtI groups were also small. Assessment results and progress monitoring were used to group students to target areas of need. Excelling students were given enrichment opportunities in small groups as observed in some classrooms. Opportunities and collaborations with community partners such as Buffalo State students, City Year volunteers, and the Buffalo Hearing and Speech Center provided more intensive learning opportunities for identified students.

**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**

| *Element* | *Indicators* |
|---|---|
| 1. *Targets are met* | 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. *Targets are not met* | a. The school is making regular and significant annual progress toward meeting the targets.<br>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.<br>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. |

**Summative Evidence for Benchmark 9:**

1. **Element:** ***Targets are met***
   - **Indicator a:** WBCS has experienced consistent enrollment of ELLs/MLLs and ED students, enrolling a higher percentage than the district.

2. **Element:** ***Targets are not met***
   - **Indicator a:** Over the period of the current charter the school has enrolled a lower percent of SWDs than the district. WBCS has not been able to meet and maintain the target population enrollment or retention for SWDs. In the past, the school had a historical decline in enrollment of SWDs, with the exception of a slight upward trend for the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 school years. The school acknowledges that it often loses SWDs when the students' needs are significant and the student returns to the BPS to learn in more restrictive program options. In order to address the need for corrective action, the school has created two new multi-age self-contained classrooms to serve these students' needs and allow the school to retain the number of special education students that it enrolls. The leadership team indicated that the referral process with the BPS CSE is lengthy and some students who may need services are not yet identified and are not receiving appropriate services. WBCS collaborates with the BPS CSE to make initial referrals but school leaders claim the CSE has not been in compliance with initial testing timelines. The school cites this as a reason for lower student identification under IDEA. In part to address the

lower enrollment of SWDs, WBCS has created two multi-age 8:1+1 classrooms, one elementary and one middle school, to support students who may need more restrictive programs. It is the intent of the BoT and administration that this specially designed program will support students with more significant academic and social emotional learning needs and enable them to remain enrolled in the charter school.

- **Indicator b**: The school will continue efforts to attract students with disabilities, although it is believed that enrollment is not at issue; rather, it is retention of SWDs when their needs exceed the scope of the charter school's ability to meet those needs. Information is widely shared through local refugee resettlement agencies, adult ESL classes, local churches and monasteries, as well as through community partnerships.
- **Indicator c:** The school is successful in recruiting EDs and ELLs/MLLs but has had consistent low numbers of enrollment for SWDs. The school has reviewed its retention and enrollment protocols and created 8:1+1 elementary and middle school classes to meet the needs of the students with more significant challenges. The school intent is to retain its SWDs as it encourages enrollment of new SWDs to the school.

***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**

| *Element* | *Indicators* |
|---|---|
| *1. Legal Compliance* | 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.<br>b. The school has undertaken appropriate corrective action when needed and has implemented necessary safeguards to maintain compliance with all legal requirements.<br>c. The school has sought Board of Regents and/or Charter School Office approval for significant revisions. |

**Summative Evidence for Benchmark 10:**

WBCS has a record of substantial compliance with applicable state and federal laws and the provisions of its charter. The school has submitted policy revisions and requests to the Charter School Office as appropriate.

# Attachment 1: 2019-2020 Renewal Site Visit

# West Buffalo Charter School

## 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*:

West Buffalo Charter School students did tend to outperform students in schools with similar grade spans and demographics in math, but not in ELA.

**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.

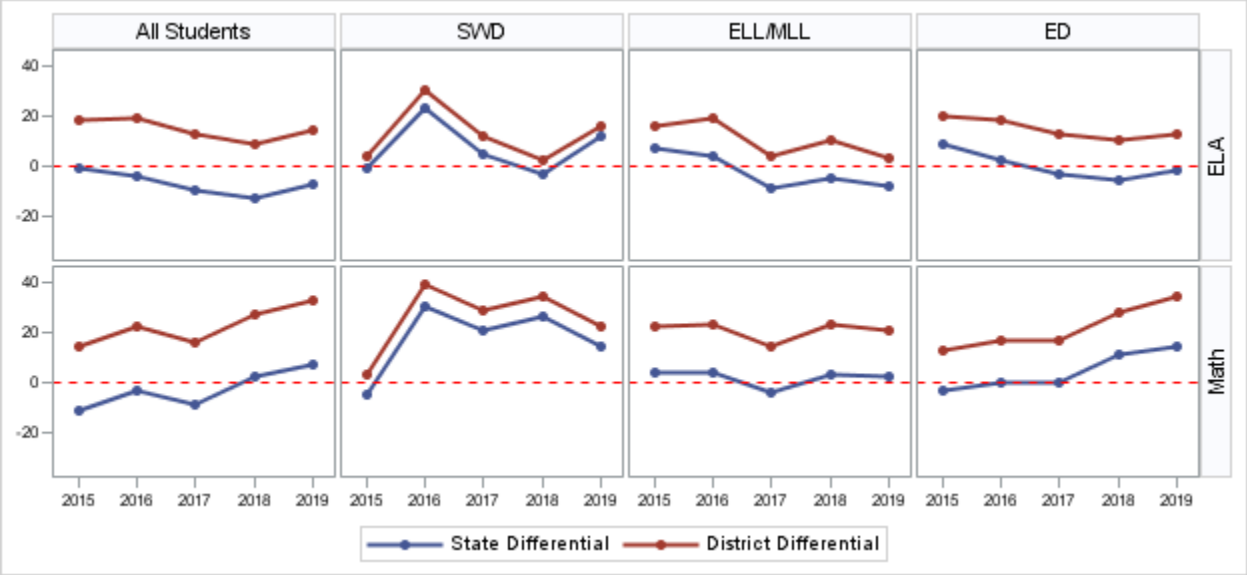
**Table 1: Elementary/Middle School Trending Toward Proficiency – Minimum Expectation = 75%**

| | | 2015-2016 | 2016-2017 | 2017-2018 | 2018-2019 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ELA | All Students | 38% | 32% | 43% | 42% |
| | SWD | 33% | 31% | 43% | 32% |
| | ELL/MLL | 45% | 16% | 48% | 21% |
| | ED | 37% | 30% | 41% | 39% |
| Math | All Students | 24% | 32% | 54% | 61% |
| | SWD | 33% | 31% | 52% | 40% |
| | ELL/MLL | 9% | 26% | 48% | 31% |
| | ED | 15% | 29% | 51% | 58% |

**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 | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | West Buffalo CS | Buffalo Public Schools | Differential to District | NYS | Differential to NYS | West Buffalo CS | Buffalo Public Schools | Differential to District | NYS | Differential to NYS |
| All Students | 2014-2015 | 31% | 13% | +18 | 32% | -1 | 32% | 18% | +14 | 43% | -11 |
| | 2015-2016 | 37% | 18% | +19 | 41% | -4 | 41% | 19% | +22 | 44% | -3 |
| | 2016-2017 | 30% | 17% | +13 | 40% | -10 | 36% | 20% | +16 | 45% | -9 |
| | 2017-2018 | 33% | 24% | +9 | 46% | -13 | 50% | 23% | +27 | 48% | +2 |
| | 2018-2019 | 38% | 24% | +14 | 45% | -7 | 55% | 22% | +33 | 48% | +7 |
| SWD | 2014-2015 | 8% | 4% | +4 | 9% | -1 | 12% | 9% | +3 | 17% | -5 |
| | 2015-2016 | 35% | 5% | +30 | 12% | +23 | 47% | 8% | +39 | 17% | +30 |
| | 2016-2017 | 17% | 5% | +12 | 12% | +5 | 39% | 10% | +29 | 18% | +21 |
| | 2017-2018 | 14% | 12% | +2 | 17% | -3 | 46% | 12% | +34 | 20% | +26 |
| | 2018-2019 | 27% | 11% | +16 | 15% | +12 | 33% | 11% | +22 | 19% | +14 |
| ELL/MLL | 2014-2015 | 21% | 5% | +16 | 14% | +7 | 29% | 7% | +22 | 25% | +4 |
| | 2015-2016 | 23% | 4% | +19 | 19% | +4 | 30% | 7% | +23 | 26% | +4 |
| | 2016-2017 | 6% | 2% | +4 | 15% | -9 | 19% | 5% | +14 | 23% | -4 |
| | 2017-2018 | 22% | 12% | +10 | 27% | -5 | 35% | 12% | +23 | 32% | +3 |
| | 2018-2019 | 18% | 15% | +3 | 26% | -8 | 34% | 13% | +21 | 32% | +2 |
| ED | 2014-2015 | 30% | 10% | +20 | 21% | +9 | 28% | 15% | +13 | 31% | -3 |
| | 2015-2016 | 32% | 14% | +18 | 30% | +2 | 33% | 16% | +17 | 33% | 0 |
| | 2016-2017 | 26% | 13% | +13 | 29% | -3 | 33% | 16% | +17 | 33% | 0 |
| | 2017-2018 | 30% | 20% | +10 | 36% | -6 | 47% | 19% | +28 | 36% | +11 |
| | 2018-2019 | 33% | 20% | +13 | 35% | -2 | 52% | 18% | +34 | 38% | +14 |

**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 | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | West Buffalo CS | Buffalo Public Schools | Differential to District | NYS | Differential to NYS | West Buffalo CS | Buffalo Public Schools | Differential to District | NYS | Differential to NYS |
| Grade 3 | 2014-2015 | 33% | 12% | +21 | 31% | +2 | 36% | 18% | +18 | 42% | -6 |
| | 2015-2016 | 50% | 20% | +30 | 42% | +8 | 58% | 20% | +38 | 44% | +14 |
| | 2016-2017 | 36% | 18% | +18 | 43% | -7 | 51% | 22% | +29 | 48% | +3 |
| | 2017-2018 | 39% | 32% | +7 | 51% | -12 | 63% | 31% | +32 | 54% | +9 |
| | 2018-2019 | 53% | 32% | +21 | 52% | +1 | 62% | 28% | +34 | 55% | +7 |
| Grade 4 | 2014-2015 | 29% | 14% | +15 | 33% | -4 | 27% | 18% | +9 | 43% | -16 |
| | 2015-2016 | 23% | 16% | +7 | 41% | -18 | 22% | 18% | +4 | 45% | -23 |
| | 2016-2017 | 47% | 18% | +29 | 41% | +6 | 38% | 18% | +20 | 43% | -5 |
| | 2017-2018 | 43% | 23% | +20 | 47% | -4 | 63% | 20% | +43 | 48% | +15 |
| | 2018-2019 | 41% | 28% | +13 | 48% | -7 | 64% | 21% | +43 | 50% | +14 |
| Grade 5 | 2016-2017 | 2% | 15% | -13 | 35% | -33 | 15% | 19% | -4 | 43% | -28 |
| | 2017-2018 | 23% | 16% | +7 | 37% | -14 | 40% | 18% | +22 | 44% | -4 |
| | 2018-2019 | 24% | 18% | +6 | 38% | -14 | 54% | 20% | +34 | 46% | +8 |
| Grade 6 | 2017-2018 | 24% | 25% | -1 | 49% | -25 | 27% | 22% | +5 | 44% | -17 |
| | 2018-2019 | 51% | 25% | +26 | 47% | +4 | 54% | 22% | +32 | 47% | +7 |
| Grade 7 | 2018-2019 | 19% | 18% | +1 | 40% | -21 | 33% | 16% | +17 | 43% | -10 |

**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/MLL | | | ED | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | West Buffalo CS | Buffalo Public Schools | Differential to District | West Buffalo CS | Buffalo Public Schools | Differential to District | West Buffalo CS | Buffalo Public Schools | Differential to District |
| **2015-2016** | 14% | 24% | **-10** | 26% | 17% | **+9** | 82% | 86% | **-4** |
| **2016-2017** | 13% | 25% | **-12** | 25% | 18% | **+7** | 85% | 83% | **+2** |
| **2017-2018** | 14% | 25% | **-11** | 28% | 22% | **+6** | 87% | 85% | **+2** |
| **2018-2019** | 14% | 25% | **-11** | 25% | 23% | **+2** | 88% | 86% | **+2** |

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

**Table 5: Retention – Aggregate and Subgroups**

| | All Students | | | SWD | | | ELL/MLL | | | ED | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | West Buffalo Charter School | Buffalo Public Schools | Differential to District | West Buffalo Charter School | Buffalo Public Schools | Differential to District | West Buffalo Charter School | Buffalo Public Schools | Differential to District | West Buffalo Charter School | Buffalo Public Schools | Differential to District |
| 2016-2017 | 87% | 88% | **-1** | 83% | 88% | **-5** | 85% | 88% | **-3** | 88% | 89% | **-1** |
| 2017-2018 | 90% | 87% | **+3** | 84% | 88% | **-4** | 93% | 89% | **+4** | 91% | 88% | **+3** |
| 2018-2019 | 91% | 88% | **+3** | 93% | 89% | **+4** | 93% | 88% | **+5** | 92% | 88% | **+4** |

**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).*

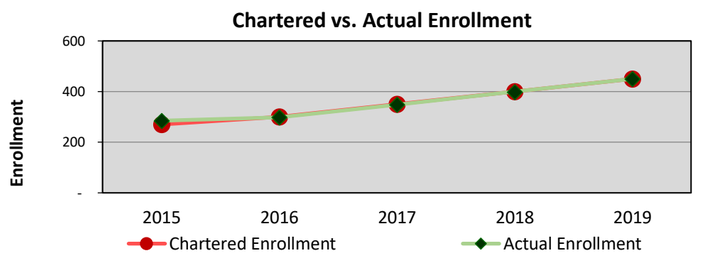
*(9) Data in the table above represents students within their respective subgroups who have passed three out of the five Annual Regents and Regents Common Core Examinations (score of 65 or better) or equivalents.*

*(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

## WEST BUFFALO CHARTER SCHOOL

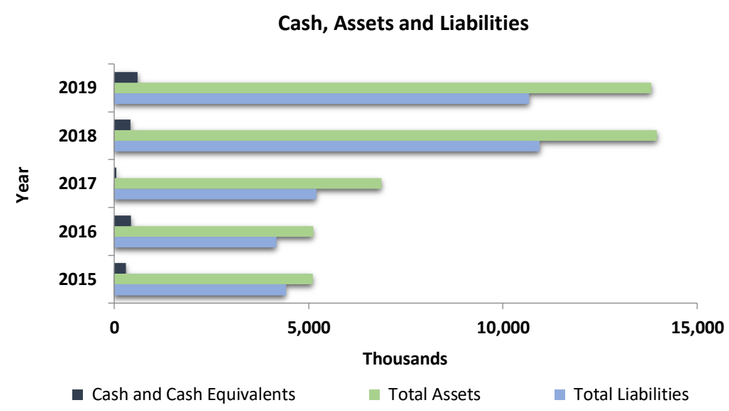
| | 2014-15 | 2015-16 | 2016-17 | 2017-18 | 2018-19 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Grades Served** | K-4 | K-4 | K-5 | K-6 | K-7 |
| **Maximum Chartered Grades Served** | K-4 | K-4 | K-4 | K-4 | K-8 |
| **Chartered Enrollment** | 270 | 300 | 350 | 400 | 450 |
| **Maximum Chartered Enrollment** | 270 | 270 | 270 | 270 | 500 |
| **Actual Enrollment** | 285 | 298 | 349 | 399 | 450 |

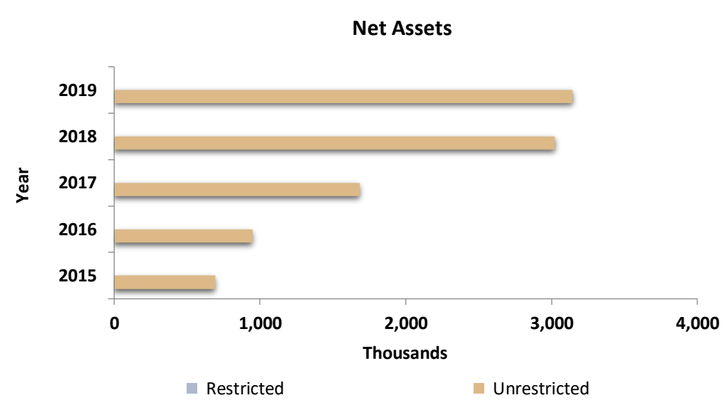



## AUDITED FINANCIALS

### STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

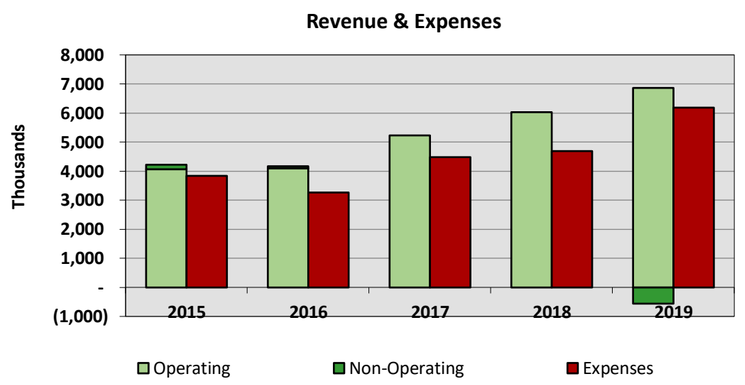
| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **ASSETS** | | | | | |
| **Current Assets** | | | | | |
| Cash and Cash Equivalents | 306,262 | 429,778 | 54,922 | 414,120 | 603,117 |
| Grants and Contracts Receivable | - | - | - | 213,767 | 126,679 |
| Prepaid Expenses | - | - | - | - | 36,730 |
| Other Current Assets | 328,056 | 226,351 | 194,603 | 80,610 | 67,114 |
| **Total Current Assets** | 634,318 | 656,129 | 249,525 | 708,497 | 833,640 |
| **Non-Current Assets** | | | | | |
| Property, Building and Equipment, net | 4,476,386 | 4,463,292 | 6,627,583 | 13,116,061 | 12,979,181 |
| Restricted Cash | - | - | - | - | - |
| Security Deposits | 4,745 | 4,745 | 4,745 | 4,745 | 4,745 |
| Other Non-Current Assets | - | - | - | 134,269 | - |
| **Total Non - Current Assets** | 4,481,131 | 4,468,037 | 6,632,328 | 13,255,075 | 12,983,926 |
| **Total Assets** | 5,115,449 | 5,124,166 | 6,881,853 | 13,963,572 | 13,817,566 |
| **LIABILITIES and NET ASSETS** | | | | | |
| **Current Liabilities** | | | | | |
| Accounts Payable and Accrued Expenses | 582,063 | 609,235 | 1,288,088 | 1,791,213 | 1,188,248 |
| Accrued Payroll and Payroll Taxes | - | - | - | 503,688 | - |
| Due to Related Parties | - | - | - | - | - |
| Refundable Advances | - | - | - | 41,500 | 104,467 |
| Other Current Liabilities | 273,261 | 69,465 | 511,639 | 500,000 | 351,273 |
| **Total Current Liabilities** | 855,324 | 678,700 | 1,799,727 | 2,836,401 | 1,643,988 |
| **Long-Term Liabilities** | | | | | |
| Deferred Rent | - | - | - | - | - |
| Other Long-Term Liabilities | 3,566,114 | 3,496,642 | 3,396,990 | 8,104,571 | 9,030,706 |
| **Total Long-Term Liabilities** | 3,566,114 | 3,496,642 | 3,396,990 | 8,104,571 | 9,030,706 |
| **Total Liabilities** | 4,421,438 | 4,175,342 | 5,196,717 | 10,940,972 | 10,674,694 |
| **NET ASSETS** | | | | | |
| Unrestricted | 694,011 | 948,824 | 1,685,136 | 3,022,600 | 3,142,872 |
| Restricted | - | - | - | - | - |
| **Total Net Assets** | 694,011 | 948,824 | 1,685,136 | 3,022,600 | 3,142,872 |
| **Total Liabilities and Net Assets** | 5,115,449 | 5,124,166 | 6,881,853 | 13,963,572 | 13,817,566 |

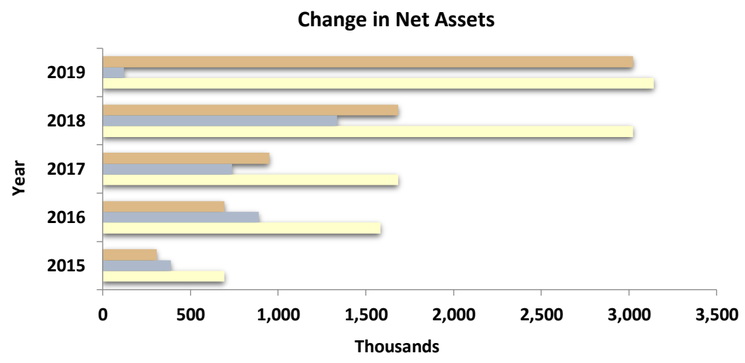


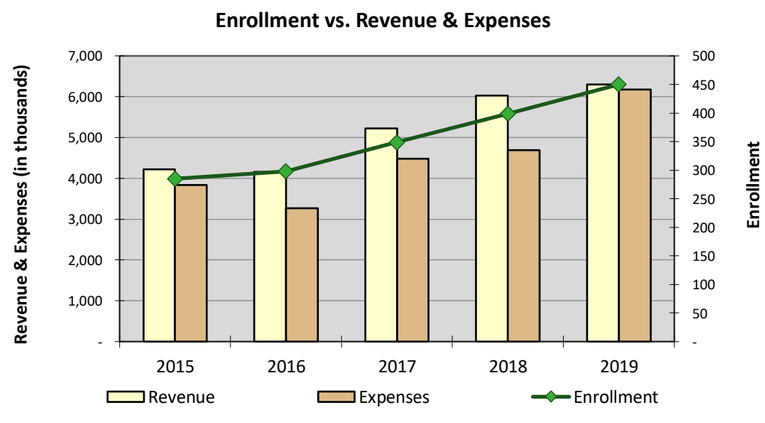
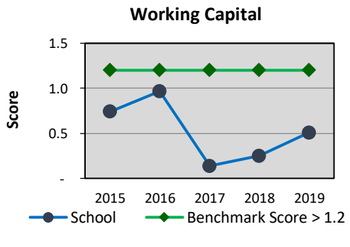
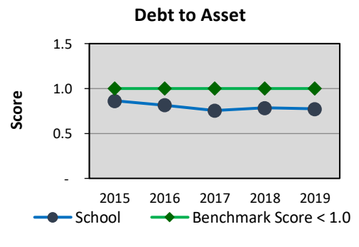
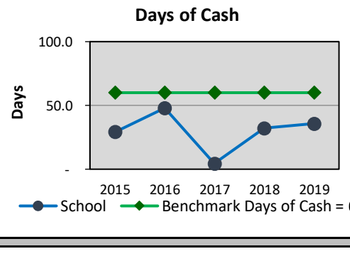
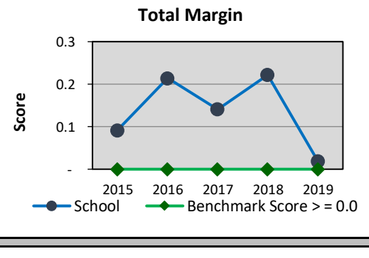

### STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **OPERATING REVENUE** | | | | | |
| State and Local Per Pupil Revenue - Reg. Ed | 3,483,718 | 3,661,210 | 4,361,410 | 5,168,932 | 5,949,327 |
| State and Local Per Pupil Revenue - SPED | 241,376 | 212,736 | 188,058 | 280,433 | 277,363 |
| State and Local Per Pupil Facilities Revenue | - | - | 148,178 | - | 122,278 |
| Federal Grants | 130,893 | 156,080 | 161,256 | 308,807 | 260,727 |
| State and City Grants | 210,394 | 4,950 | 272,650 | 71,500 | 159,056 |
| Other Operating Income | - | 64,107 | 90,416 | 203,302 | 91,516 |
| **Total Operating Revenue** | 4,066,381 | 4,099,083 | 5,221,968 | 6,032,974 | 6,860,267 |
| **EXPENSES** | | | | | |
| **Program Services** | | | | | |
| Regular Education | 1,292,960 | 1,403,948 | 2,066,997 | 2,197,369 | 2,453,843 |
| Special Education | 912,701 | 878,245 | 679,268 | 718,879 | 1,018,268 |
| Other Expenses | 1,029,534 | 989,523 | 785,042 | 835,237 | 1,458,591 |
| **Total Program Services** | 3,235,195 | 3,271,716 | 3,531,307 | 3,751,485 | 4,930,702 |
| **Supporting Services** | | | | | |
| Management and General | 599,478 | S | 954,349 | 944,025 | 1,249,632 |
| Fundraising | - | - | - | - | - |
| **Total Support Services** | 599,478 | - | 954,349 | 944,025 | 1,249,632 |
| **Total Expenses** | 3,834,673 | 3,271,716 | 4,485,656 | 4,695,510 | 6,180,334 |
| **Surplus/Deficit from Operations** | 231,708 | 827,367 | 736,312 | 1,337,464 | 679,933 |
| **SUPPORT AND OTHER REVENUE** | | | | | |
| Interest and Other Income | 155,530 | 62,137 | - | - | (559,661) |
| Contributions and Grants | - | - | - | - | - |
| Fundraising Support | - | - | - | - | - |
| Other Support and Revenue | - | - | - | - | - |
| **Total Support and Other Revenue** | 155,530 | 62,137 | - | - | (559,661) |
| **Change in Net Assets** | 387,238 | 889,504 | 736,312 | 1,337,464 | 120,272 |
| **Net Assets - Beginning of Year** | 306,773 | 694,011 | 948,824 | 1,685,136 | 3,022,600 |
| **Net Assets - End of Year** | 694,011 | 1,583,515 | 1,685,136 | 3,022,600 | 3,142,872 |




### FISCAL ANALYSIS

#### RATIOS, BENCHMARKS and FINDINGS

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **REVENUE & EXPENSE BREAKDOWN** | | | | | |
| **Revenue - Per Pupil** | | | | | |
| Operating | 14,268 | 13,755 | 14,963 | 15,120 | 15,245 |
| Support and Other Revenue | 546 | 209 | - | - | (1,244) |
| **Total Revenue** | 14,814 | 13,964 | 14,963 | 15,120 | 14,001 |
| **Expenses - Per Pupil** | | | | | |
| Program Services | 11,352 | 10,979 | 10,118 | 9,402 | 10,957 |
| Mangement and General, Fundraising | 2,103 | - | 2,735 | 2,366 | 2,777 |
| **Total Expenses** | 13,455 | 10,979 | 12,853 | 11,768 | 13,734 |
| % of Program Services | 84.4% | 100.0% | 78.7% | 79.9% | 79.8% |
| % of Management and Other | 15.6% | 0.0% | 21.3% | 20.1% | 20.2% |
| **% of Revenue Exceeding Expenses** | 10.1% | 27.2% | 16.4% | 28.5% | 1.9% |
| **FINANCIAL COMPOSITE SCORE** | | | | | |
| Composite Score | 0.99 | 1.10 | 0.79 | 0.72 | 0.64 |
| **BENCHMARK and FINDING:** Strong; 1.5 - 3.0 / Adequate; 1.0 - 1.4 / Needs Monitoring; -1.0 - 0.9 | Adequate | Adequate | Needs Monitoring | Needs Monitoring | Needs Monitoring |
| **WORKING CAPITAL** | | | | | |
| Net Working Capital | (221,006) | (22,571) | (1,550,202) | (2,127,904) | (810,348) |
| Working Capital (Current) Ratio | 0.7 | 1.0 | 0.1 | 0.2 | 0.5 |
| **BENCHMARK and FINDING:** Ratio should be equal to or greater than 1.2 | Does Not Meet Standard | Does Not Meet Standard | Does Not Meet Standard | Does Not Meet Standard | Does Not Meet Standard |
| **DEBT TO ASSET** | | | | | |
| Debt to Asset Ratio | 0.9 | 0.8 | 0.8 | 0.8 | 0.8 |
| **BENCHMARK and FINDING:** Ratio should be equal to or less than 1.0 | Meets Standard | Meets Standard | Meets Standard | Meets Standard | Meets Standard |
| **CASH POSITION** | | | | | |
| Days of Cash | 29.2 | 47.9 | 4.5 | 32.2 | 35.6 |
| **BENCHMARK and FINDING:** Ratio should be equal to or greater than 60 days | Does Not Meet Standard | Does Not Meet Standard | Does Not Meet Standard | Does Not Meet Standard | Does Not Meet Standard |
| **TOTAL MARGIN** | | | | | |
| Total Margin Ratio | 0.1 | 0.2 | 0.1 | 0.2 | 0.0 |
| **BENCHMARK and FINDING:** Ratio should be equal to or greater than 0.0 | Meets Standard | Meets Standard | Meets Standard | Meets Standard | Meets Standard |