

**WCCS**  
**2020-2021**  
**VISITATION/**  
**FINAL**  
**REPORTS**



# New York State Education Department

## *Renewal Site Visit Report* *2020-2021*

### **Westminster Community Charter School**

**Visit Date: January 5, 2021**  
**Date of Report: February 18, 2021**

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## SCHOOL DESCRIPTION

### Charter School Summary<sup>1</sup>

<b>Name of Charter School</b>	Westminster Community Charter School
<b>Board Chair</b>	Rita Eisenbeis
<b>District of location</b>	Buffalo City School District
<b>Opening Date</b>	Fall 2004
<b>Charter Terms</b>	Initial Charter: July 2004-June 2009 First renewal term: July 2009 - June 2014 Second renewal term: July 2014-June 2016 Third renewal term: July 1, 2016 – June 30, 2019 Fourth renewal term: July 1, 2019-June 30, 2021 Fifth renewal term: TBD
<b>Current Term Authorized Grades/ Approved Enrollment</b>	K – Grade 8/ 550 students
<b>Proposed Renewal Term Authorized Grades/ Proposed Approved Enrollment</b>	N/A
<b>Comprehensive Management Service Provider</b>	M & T Bank and Buffalo Promise Neighborhood
<b>Educational Partners</b>	Buffalo Public Schools
<b>Facilities</b>	24 Westminster Avenue Buffalo, New York 14215
<b>Mission Statement</b>	To challenge the status quo—to encourage people to think differently about their situation in life. We do this through assuring that there are high levels of learning, by creating a safe and caring environment, and promoting community involvement in order to prepare students for a successful secondary experience.
<b>Key Design Elements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Balanced Literacy</li> <li>• Mathematics instruction and balanced numeracy</li> <li>• Extended Day Opportunity</li> <li>• Healthy Living</li> <li>• Technology</li> <li>• Special (area) Classes</li> <li>• Academic &amp; Instructional Support (AIS)</li> <li>• Staff Development</li> <li>• Community Partnerships</li> </ul>
<b>Requested Revisions</b>	None

**Noteworthy:** The school maintains a strong commitment to serving the students and families residing in the 14215-zip code staying true to its community school ideology. It is also important to note that the school was able to transition staff and students quickly and efficiently to full remote instruction due to COVID-19 pandemic and created a 2020-2021SY plan for hybrid instruction.

### Renewal Outcomes

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

The following renewal outcomes are possible:

- **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**

	<b>Year 1 2016 to 2017</b>	<b>Year 2 2017 to 2018</b>	<b>Year 3 2018 to 2019</b>	<b>Year 4 2019 to 2020</b>	<b>Year 5 2020 to 2021</b>
<b>Grade Configuration</b>	Grades K - 8	Grades K - 8	Grades K - 8	Grades K - 8	Grades K - 8
<b>Total Approved Enrollment</b>	550	550	550	550	550

**Proposed Renewal Term Grade Levels and Approved Enrollment**

	<b>Year 1 2020 to 2021</b>	<b>Year 2 2021 to 2022</b>	<b>Year 3 2022 to 2023</b>	<b>Year 4 2023 to 2024</b>	<b>Year 5 2024 to 2025</b>
<b>Grade Configuration</b>	Grades K - 8	Grades K - 8	Grades K - 8	Grades K - 8	Grades K - 8
<b>Total Approved Enrollment</b>	550	550	550	550	550

## METHODOLOGY

A **one-day** virtual renewal site visit was conducted at **Westminster Community Charter School (WCCS)** on January 5, 2021. The Buffalo City School District- Office of Shared Accountability (BPS-OSA) team conducted interviews with the school leadership team, students, and parents.

The team conducted ten virtual classroom observations in Grades K-8. The observations were approximately 20 minutes in length and conducted jointly with BPS Content Area Directors: C. W. Brandy (Social Studies), Dr. Julie Romain (English Language Arts), Tatiana Merrick (Science), and JaDawn Wagstaff (Mathematics); BPS Multilingual Department: Elizabeth Zuch and Dan Murtha; BPS Special Education Department: Robyn Tate; along with the WCCS leadership team Robert Ross, Principal; LaMonica Harris, Assistant Principal; and Angela Conway Assistant Principal.

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

- **Charter Renewal Application (Master Schedule, Organizational Chart, Parent Handbook, Code of Conduct, Fiscal Table, Learning Plans, et. al.)**
- **School Curriculum**
- **Board materials (roster, minutes, and strategic plan, if applicable)**
- **School self-reflection and inventories (a. curriculum and instruction, b. professional development, c. social-emotional learning, d. family and community engagement)**
- **School submitted Annual Reports**

## 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, although not all indicators will necessarily be assessed on every site visit. A brief summary of the school's strengths will precede the benchmark analysis. Each benchmark will be rated; however, the report narrative will highlight those indicators not fully met by the school.

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

For the site visit conducted from on January 5, 2021 at Westminster Community Charter School, see the following Performance Framework benchmark scores and discussion.



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

	<b>Performance Benchmark</b>	<b>Level</b>
<b>Educational Success</b>	<b>Benchmark 1: Student Performance:</b> 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).	Approaches
	<b>Benchmark 2: Teaching and Learning:</b> 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.	Approaches
	<b>Benchmark 3: Culture, Climate, and Family Engagement:</b> 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
<b>Organizational Soundness</b>	<b>Benchmark 4: Financial Condition:</b> The school is in sound and stable financial condition as evidenced by performance on key financial indicators.	Meets
	<b>Benchmark 5: Financial Management:</b> 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
	<b>Benchmark 6: Board Oversight and Governance:</b> 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
	<b>Benchmark 7: Organizational Capacity:</b> 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
<b>Faithfulness to Charter &amp; Law</b>	<b>Benchmark 8: Mission and Key Design Elements:</b> The school is faithful to its mission and has implemented the key design elements included in its charter.	Meets
	<b>Benchmark 9: Enrollment, Recruitment, and Retention:</b> 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
	<b>Benchmark 10: Legal Compliance:</b> The school complies with applicable laws, regulations, and the provisions of its charter.	Meets

## Summary of Findings

### Consultant (one page maximum):

- *The Westminster Community Charter School is in year 16 of operation and serves students in Grades K through 8. During its current charter term, the school is rated in the following manner: exceeding 0 benchmarks, meeting 7 benchmarks, approaching 3 benchmarks, and falling far below 0 benchmark. Additional details regarding those ratings are provided below.*
- **Areas of Strengths:** As a majority of students and families live in the community, the school continues to employ systems of internal and external support, to ensure a safe school environment and provide wrap around/SEL services for students and their families. This continues to have positive impacts on the school community at-large.
- **Areas in Need of Improvement:** The school leaders must continue to have a strong focus on instruction and ensuring that instruction is both rigorous and aligned to the curriculum and authentic assessments so that data can be utilized to make instructional decisions that are best for all learners. Additionally, teachers must continue to be supported in ways that provide them with the skills to differentiate lessons for multiple modalities of learners and student groups, as well as create and deliver lessons that engage students in higher order thinking skills.

### 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: Approaches

Math	Illustrative Math	6-8
Math	Engage NY	K-5
ELA	Reading & Writing Workshop	K-2
ELA	Wit & Wisdom	3-5
ELA	Cadence Learning	6-8
ELA	Foundations	K-3
Science	Amplify	6-8
Science	Mystery Science	K-5
Social Studies	NYS Standards and DBQs	K-8

#### 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 metric is being updated.

##### 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%

		2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019
ELA	All Students	35%	29%	30%	35%
	SWD	16%	15%	24%	0%
	ED	33%	25%	30%	26%
Math	All Students	27%	12%	15%	31%
	SWD	15%	0%	7%	10%
	ED	23%	12%	14%	31%

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

###### 2.a.i. Trending Toward Proficiency – Aggregate Standards-Based Trend Toward Proficiency:

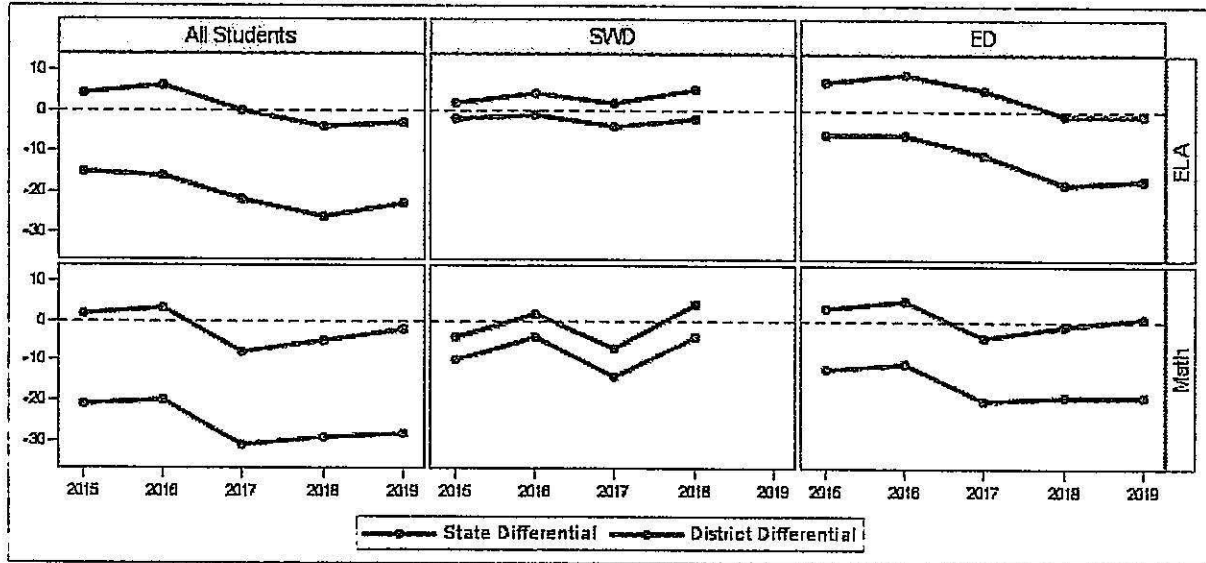
All students trend toward proficiency has remained steady for the last four years in ELA. In mathematics, there has been an upward trajectory since 2016-2017 for all students, with results doubling since 2017-2018 for all students. **No assessment data has been collected for SY2019-20 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the cancellation of NYS Assessments.**

**2.a.ii. Trending Toward Proficiency - Subgroup Standards-Based Trend Toward Proficiency:**

While the ED student maintaining proficiency has remained steady for ELA for the last four years, there was a 100% decline among SWDs (from 24% in 2017=2018 to 0% proficiency in 2018-2019). In mathematics, results for SWDs was the same, with a decrease from 7% in 2017-2018 to 0% proficiency in 2018-2019. However, results among ED students showed a steady increase since 2016 doubling from the 2017-2018 to 2018-2019 school year. *No assessment data has been collected for SY2019-20 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the cancellation of NYS Assessments.*

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 Comparison to Buffalo Public Schools**



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

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

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

		ELA					Math				
		Westminster Community CS	Buffalo City SD	Differential to District	NYS	Differential to NYS	Westminster Community CS	Buffalo City SD	Differential to District	NYS	Differential to NYS
All Students	2014-2015	16%	12%	+4	31%	-15	17%	15%	+2	38%	-21
	2015-2016	22%	16%	+6	38%	-16	19%	16%	+3	39%	-20
	2016-2017	18%	18%	0	40%	-22	9%	17%	-8	40%	-31
	2017-2018	19%	23%	-4	45%	-26	16%	21%	-5	45%	-29
	2018-2019	22%	25%	-3	45%	-23	19%	21%	-2	47%	-28
SWD	2014-2015	5%	3%	+2	7%	-2	2%	6%	-4	12%	-10
	2015-2016	8%	4%	+4	9%	-1	8%	6%	+2	12%	-4
	2016-2017	7%	5%	+2	11%	-4	0%	7%	-7	14%	-14
	2017-2018	14%	9%	+5	16%	-2	13%	9%	+4	17%	-4
ED	2014-2015	15%	8%	+7	21%	-6	15%	12%	+3	27%	-12
	2015-2016	21%	12%	+9	27%	-6	17%	12%	+5	28%	-11
	2016-2017	18%	13%	+5	29%	-11	9%	13%	-4	29%	-20
	2017-2018	18%	19%	-1	36%	-18	15%	16%	-1	34%	-19
	2018-2019	19%	20%	-1	36%	-17	18%	17%	+1	37%	-19

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

Table 3: Aggregate Grade Level Proficiency

		ELA					Math				
		Westminster Community CS	Buffalo Public Schools	Differential to District	NYS	Differential to NYS	Westminster Community CS	Buffalo Public Schools	Differential to District	NYS	Differential to NYS
Grade 3	2014-2015	22%	12%	+10	31%	-9	41%	18%	+23	42%	-4
	2015-2016	25%	20%	+5	42%	-17	22%	20%	+2	44%	-22
	2016-2017	19%	18%	+1	43%	-24	12%	22%	-10	48%	-36
	2017-2018	28%	32%	-4	51%	-23	39%	31%	8	54%	-15
	2018-2019	19%	32%	-13	52%	-33	25%	28%	-3	55%	-30
Grade 4	2014-2015	7%	14%	-7	33%	-26	12%	18%	-6	43%	-31
	2015-2016	22%	16%	+6	41%	-19	23%	18%	+5	45%	-22
	2016-2017	11%	18%	-7	41%	-30	3%	18%	-15	43%	-40
	2017-2018	8%	23%	-15	47%	-39	3%	20%	-17	48%	-45
	2018-2019	26%	28%	-2	48%	-22	33%	21%	+12	50%	-17
Grade 5	2014-2015	22%	11%	+11	30%	-8	20%	18%	+2	43%	-23
	2015-2016	27%	15%	+12	33%	-6	24%	18%	+6	40%	-16
	2016-2017	20%	15%	+5	35%	-15	8%	19%	-11	43%	-35
	2017-2018	20%	16%	+4	37%	-17	6%	18%	-12	44%	-38
	2018-2019	12%	18%	-6	38%	-26	10%	20%	-10	46%	-36
Grade 6	2014-2015	16%	11%	+5	31%	-15	12%	15%	-3	39%	-27
	2015-2016	14%	15%	-1	34%	-20	14%	17%	-3	40%	-26
	2016-2017	19%	15%	+4	32%	-13	24%	20%	+4	40%	-16
	2017-2018	19%	25%	-6	49%	-30	7%	22%	-15	44%	-37
	2018-2019	18%	25%	-7	47%	-29	6%	22%	-16	47%	-41
Grade 7	2014-2015	18%	10%	+8	29%	-11	11%	12%	-1	35%	-24
	2015-2016	20%	14%	+6	35%	-15	14%	12%	+2	36%	-22
	2016-2017	17%	20%	-3	42%	-25	6%	15%	-9	38%	-32
	2017-2018	24%	18%	+6	40%	-16	35%	19%	+16	41%	-6
	2018-2019	17%	18%	-1	40%	-23	13%	16%	-3	43%	-30
Grade 8	2014-2015	15%	14%	+1	35%	-20	5%	9%	-4	22%	-17
	2015-2016	26%	18%	+8	41%	-15	9%	10%	-1	24%	-15
	2016-2017	24%	20%	+4	45%	-21	3%	7%	-4	22%	-19
	2017-2018	15%	25%	-10	48%	-33	4%	14%	-10	30%	-26
	2018-2019	42%	27%	+15	48%	-6	27%	17%	+10	33%	-6

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

**Indicator 3: High School Outcomes**

3.a.i. and 3.a.ii. Regents Testing Outcomes – Aggregate and Subgroup Annual Regents Outcomes: See Table 4 below.

Table 4: Annual Regents Outcomes: Pre-High School

		All Students				ED			
		Charter Total Tested	Westminster Community Charter School	NYS	Differential to State	Charter Total Tested	Westminster Community Charter School	NYS	Differential to State
Algebra I (Common Core)	2018-2019	21	100%	89%	+11	.	.	.	.
Living Environment	2017-2018	21	76%	86%	-10	20	75%	77%	-2
	2018-2019	21	100%	85%	+15	.	.	.	.

\*See NOTES (2), (3), (4), and (7) below.

## 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: Approaches

<u>Element</u>	<u>Indicators</u>
1. Curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The school has a documented curriculum that is aligned to the NYSLS.</li> <li>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.</li> <li>c. The curriculum is aligned horizontally across classrooms at the same grade level and vertically between grades.</li> <li>d. The curriculum is differentiated to provide opportunities for all students to master grade-level skills and concepts.</li> </ul>
2. Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The school staff has a common understanding of high-quality instruction, and observed instructional practices align to this understanding.</li> <li>b. Instructional delivery fosters engagement with all students.</li> </ul>
3. Assessment and Program Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The school uses a balanced system of formative, diagnostic and summative assessments.</li> <li>b. The school uses qualitative and quantitative data to inform instruction and improve student outcomes.</li> <li>c. The school uses qualitative and quantitative data to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of the academic program and modifies the program accordingly.</li> </ul>
4. Supports for Diverse Learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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.</li> <li>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.</li> </ul>

### Summative Evidence for Benchmark 2:

School leaders shared that teachers initially struggle with non-negotiable instructional shifts, particularly in a virtual setting. Using a “fishbone technique”, the leadership team shared that lesson plans are written to look at skills and how teachers will teach those skills. According to school leaders, teachers have used virtual planning time more collaboratively. While identified as ‘effective’ in the school’s Curriculum and Instruction Inventory, fine tuning lesson plans was an area of growth identified by the school leaders.



1. Element: ***Curriculum (ELA):***

- Indicator a: (K-2, 3-5, 6-8): Curriculum documents are overviews of units of study. Standards were not included. The school shared that they are piloting a new ELA curriculum designed to engage students in higher levels of learning.
- Indicator b: One scope and sequence was provided for both grades 7 and 8. Given that the standards in ELA spiral, it is difficult to determine how the curriculum will be different for 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students.
- Indicator c: Assessments are outlined but rubrics are not included. Some units have both a creative and academic culminating project while some only have an academic culminating project. Only the summative assessment is outlined in the curriculum documents. It is difficult to determine what students will be doing for the entirety of the unit.
- Indicator d: Based on the documents received, differentiation was not detailed on curriculum documents provided.
- The Curriculum Audited yielded that the English Language Arts curriculum documents submitted 'Falls far Below' for alignment, horizontal and vertical alignment, and differentiation.

Element: ***Curriculum (Math)***

- Indicator a: The school has a documented curriculum aligned to the current New York State standards. However, it was not evident based on documents submitted for review that the curriculum and corresponding materials are differentiated for all student populations (ELL/MLL, SWD, etc.), nor was it evident that this curriculum is systematically reviewed and revised.
- Indicator b/c: Based on the Eureka and Illustrative math curriculum submitted, curriculum is both horizontally and vertically aligned. In addition, unit plans submitted introduced complex materials and was designed to build deep conceptual understanding and knowledge around specific content.
- Indicator d: There was no evidence submitted that curriculum is systematically reviewed and revised.

Element: ***Curriculum (Science) – Additional Notes***

- Mystery Science aligns to the New York State Science Learning Standards. While the Amplify curriculum aligns to the Next Generation Science Standards, we did not receive any evidence that the Amplify Curriculum aligns to The New York State Science Learning Standards (which are more specific and focused on NYS).
- The curricular evidence received did not include information about differentiation opportunities in the Mystery Science (Grades K-5) curriculum. During classroom observations (1/8/21) of the science classrooms (K-5) observed, teachers at these grade levels consistently scaffold and differentiate instruction. One example of this is the use of google docs to complete work. This allowed the Grade 5 teacher content teacher and the SPED/ ICT teacher to give immediate feedback and monitor students' work that needed these supports. Teachers broke down vocabulary terms, asked students to draw visuals of models, at one point, students were pulled out with the SPED teacher for break outs to further support needs. Due to my observation of differentiation opportunities in the classrooms at WCC (Grades K-5) my thought is that differentiation techniques and strategies aligned to the Mystery science curriculum are available to the teachers, but leadership did not provide the review team these evidences.

- During observations of Science 6-8<sup>th</sup> grade classes (1/8/21) differentiation or supports in the lessons for SPED, ELL learners or struggling students was not observed. The curricular evidence received did not include information about differentiation of the Amplify (Grades 6-8) curriculum, therefore, we must assume that this curriculum does not provide methods of differentiation for teachers to use or ways to for teachers to make content accessible for SPED, LEP or other subgroups.
- While the Mystery Science curriculum is aligned vertically (across grade levels) and horizontally (across classrooms), The Amplify Curriculum (Grade 6-8) doesn't have a grade level guide/pacing which describes which topics should be taught throughout the year. The Scope and Sequence file listed the topics included in the curriculum for Middle School (grades 6-8). The Amplify Curriculum Website states that all lessons can be taught at any time during the year. There was no evidence of horizontal or vertical alignment in grades 6-8. It is recommended that, if WCCS continues to use Amplify for grades 6-8, school leadership must facilitate the creation of grade level pacing guides which describes which topics should be instructed and a timeline of when they should be instructed for each grade level. These curricular documents should be aligned to the New York State Learning standards. These documents should include strategies for scaffolding, differentiation, and enrichment activities.
- The Curriculum Audited yielded that while the Mystery Science (K-5) 'Approaches' the performance benchmark for differentiation and 'Meets' for horizontal and vertical alignment, the Amplify curriculum it continues to 'Fall far Below'. It should be noted that the Amplify received the same rating in last year's report.

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

- Indicator a: N/A
- Indicator b: Based on virtual classroom visits conducted by members of the visitation team, differentiation and delivery of instruction designed to increase student engagement was minimal, if observed at all.

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

Indicator a/b/c: Leadership shared a schoolwide goal of 5-10 percentage points increase in ELA and mathematics using STAR Reading and Math. The school is using STAR to administer virtual assessments to students in the event State assessments are administered for the 20-21SY. The school uses STAR as an adaptive measure for both math and ELA. The STAR assessment is able to identify individual student skill levels. Teachers and leaders shared this data is then used to determine which skills need to be retaught and what interventions, if any, are necessary to close any gaps.

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

- Indicator a/b: WCCS has reviewed and changed curriculum to meet the needs of their students based on data in the areas of math, ELA and science. With this thought they have aligned the curriculum horizontally across classrooms and grade levels. However, there was little evidence of how materials provide opportunities for all students to master concepts and skills including students with disabilities and Multilingual Learners.
- The remote instruction that was observed did not provide evidence of engaging all students or differentiation for students. The instruction that was observed was whole group and not all students were asked to participate, which did not foster a learning environment where all students were engaged. Which leads to the need for the school to provide all teachers training on how to work with students with disabilities and Multilingual Learners. We were told when

meeting with the school that general education teachers have not worked with ENL students before and they are in a learning stage.

- Within our meeting with the school it was discussed that the ENL teachers meet weekly to review data to ensure that students are working on goals based on individual student's academic needs. However, it was not communicated if the data is then shared to the other teachers who worked with ELL students. Distribution of information is essential for students to be academically successful as well as to be given supports and differentiated materials to meet their individual needs.
- Within the school conversation we were told the primary classroom teacher has the ENL teacher to support the student's academic achievement, but it is not clear how that transfers to instruction or the overall planning process of lessons. During the administrative team meeting, it was shared that the "ENL and special education teachers are interwoven into the planning by the same prep times and everyone has access to the curriculum, so they are able to follow with the teacher". However, the ENL and Special Education teacher should not be following the teacher, rather they should be co-teaching the class together. Thus, supporting the need for specific professional development for all teachers in order support diverse learner's academic needs.

**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: Approaches**

<u>Element</u>	<u>Indicators</u>
1. <i>Behavior Management and Safety</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The school has a clear approach to behavioral management, including a written discipline policy.</li> <li>b. The school appears safe and all school constituents are able to articulate how the school community maintains a safe environment.</li> <li>c. The school has systems in place to ensure that the environment is free from harassment and discrimination.</li> <li>d. Classroom environments are conducive to learning and generally free from disruption.</li> </ul>
2. <i>Family Engagement and Communication</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Teachers communicate with parents to discuss students' strengths and needs.</li> <li>b. 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.</li> <li>c. The school has a systematic process for responding to parent or community concerns.</li> <li>d. The school shares school-level academic data with the broader school community to promote transparency and accountability among parents, students and school constituents.</li> </ul>
3. <i>Social-Emotional Supports</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. School leaders collect and use data to track the socio-emotional needs of students.</li> <li>b. School leaders collect and use data regarding the impact of programs designed to support students' social and emotional health.</li> </ul>

**Summative Evidence for Benchmark 3:**

1. Students reported feeling safe to ask for help or join with teachers after their scheduled class for 'office hours' for additional help. While virtual, in school behavior management is not of concern. The school is currently addressing student attendance concerns through a Rise and Shine Program established to touch base with students who need to log on and connect with families. However, only some students are virtual and approximately 40% are hybrid. According to the school, any in-school behavior is supported through restorative practices, PBIS, and the three-tiered intervention system.

2. There is currently no active parent teacher organization. In addition to reports cards, progress notes and parent-teacher conferences, members of the parent focused group shared that information about students' academics is also communicated via online technology such as Remind. Parents noted that there has been greater communication and support services from teachers and school leaders during

school closures citing this has been very helpful in them helping their child(ren) academically and personally. Parents shared that while teachers are very responsive by email and text, as well as via school-parent communication platforms, they have access to STAR and MyOn but access could be more accessible or known.

3. The school currently uses a tiered support system to address socio-emotional needs. Biweekly meetings take place between SEL team and Kaleida Health, as well as biweekly conversations with teachers to address student needs/concerns and progress monitor interventions. The school utilizes an online request for assistance (RFA) and bullying referral that goes to counselors and administration. The school feels the strength is their response to student and family needs to more tied to the Devereux Student Strengths Assessment (DESSA) survey to assess both academic and behavioral interventions and Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) competencies. The school has found ways to engage students in SEL and Restorative work within their class schedules. School leaders identified the need to make sure this work is strong with special areas teachers (next phase of work).

### Benchmark 4: Financial Condition

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

**Finding: Meets**

Important Notes:

- The key financial indicators used to evaluate this benchmark will be presented within a separate fiscal dashboard instrument that will provide context for the school's performance on each of the metrics, outline the specific targets for each metric, and also provide additional subsidiary detail on each calculation.
- Unless otherwise indicated, financial data is derived from the school's annual independently audited financial statements.

<b>1. Near-Term Indicators:</b>	
1a.	Current Ratio
1b.	Unrestricted Days Cash
1c.	Enrollment Variance
1d.	Composite Score
<b>2. Sustainability Indicators:</b>	
2a.	Total Margin
2b.	Debt to Asset Ratio
2c.	Debt Service Coverage Ratio

**Summative Evidence for Benchmark 4:**

#### Financial Condition

Westminster Community Charter School appears to be in good financial condition as evidenced by performance on key indicators derived from the school's independently audited financial statements.

The Charter School Office reviews the financial performance and management of charter schools using quantitative and qualitative methods. Near-term indicators, such as the current ratio and unrestricted days cash, are measures of liquidity and of the charter school's capacity to maintain operations. Long-term indicators, such as total margin and debt-to-asset ratio, are measures of the charter school's capacity to remain viable and to meet financial obligations.

#### Overall Financial Outlook

A *composite score* is an overall measure of financial health calculated by a formula developed by the United State Department of Education. 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 strong financial health. Westminster Community Charter School's 2019-20 composite score is 2.40

### Westminster Community Charter School's Composite Scores

<i>Year</i>	<i>Composite Score</i>
2018-2019	2.40
2019-2020	2.40

#### Near-Term Indicators

Near-term indicators of financial health are used to understand the current financial performance and viability of the school. The Charter School Office uses three measures:

The *current ratio* is a financial ratio that measures whether or not a charter school has enough resources to pay its debts over the next 12 months. The ratio is mainly used to give an idea of the school's ability to pay back its short-term liabilities (debt and payables) with its short-term assets (cash, inventory, receivables). The higher the current ratio, the more capable the school is of paying its obligations, with a ratio under 1.0 indicating concern. For 2019-2020, Westminster Community Charter School had a current ratio of 4.6.

*Unrestricted cash* measures, in days, whether the charter school can meet operating expenses without receiving new income. Charter schools typically strive to maintain at least 60 days of cash on hand. For fiscal year 2019-2020, Westminster Community Charter School operated with 411 days of unrestricted cash.

#### Long-Term Indicators

A charter school's *debt to asset ratio* measures the extent to which the school relies on borrowed funds to finance its operations. It is calculated as total liabilities divided by total assets. A ratio of 1.0 or less meets a standard of low risk. For 2019-2020, Westminster Community Charter School's debt to asset ratio was 0.5.

*Total margin* measures the deficit or surplus a charter school yields out of its total revenues; in other words, whether or not the school is living within its available resources. Total margin is calculated as net income divided by total revenue. A total margin that is positive indicates low risk. For 2019-2020, Westminster Community Charter School's total margin was -1 percent.

### **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:** Exceeds

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:**

WCCS operates in a fiscally sound manner and maintain appropriate internal controls and procedures in accordance to the state law and acceptable accounting procedures.

*\*Please refer to pages 24-25 of the signed Charter Renewal Application.*



**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**

<u>Element</u>	<u>Indicators</u>
1. <i>Board Oversight and Governance</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. The board recruits and selects board members with skills and expertise that meet the needs of the school.</li><li>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.</li><li>c. The board demonstrates active oversight of the charter school management, fiscal operations and progress toward meeting academic and other school goals.</li><li>d. The board regularly updates school policies.</li><li>e. The board utilizes a performance-based evaluation process for evaluating school leadership, itself and providers.</li><li>f. The board demonstrates full awareness of its legal obligations to the school and stakeholders.</li></ul>

**Summative Evidence for Benchmark 6:**

The Board of Trustees recruit and select board members with the skills and expertise that meet and support the school needs. The Board of Trustees work in collaboration with school administrators, parents, and community members to seek input and make necessary changes, as needed. The Board of Trustees provide oversight into curricular, logistical, legal, and fiscal matters as it pertains to the school. According to the school's Self Reflection document, the Westminster Board continues to meet monthly as do its committees. The school leadership team meets with the Academic Committee monthly.

**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>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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.</li> <li>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.</li> <li>c. The school has clear and well-established communication systems and decision-making processes in place which ensure effective communication across the school.</li> <li>d. The school successfully recruits, hires, and retains key personnel, and makes decisions – when warranted – to remove ineffective staff members.</li> </ul>
2. <i>Professional Climate</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The school is fully staffed with high quality personnel to meet all educational and operational needs, including finance, human resources, and communication.</li> <li>b. The school has established structures for frequent collaboration among teachers.</li> <li>c. The school ensures that staff has requisite skills, expertise, and professional development necessary to meet students’ needs.</li> <li>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.</li> <li>e. The school has mechanisms to solicit teacher feedback and gauge teacher satisfaction.</li> </ul>
3. <i>Contractual Relationships</i> ✓N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The board of trustees and school leadership establish effective working relationships with the management company or comprehensive service provider.</li> <li>b. Changes in the school’s charter management or comprehensive service provider contract comply with required charter amendment procedures.</li> <li>c. The school monitors the efficacy of contracted service providers or partners.</li> </ul>

**Summative Evidence for Benchmark 7:**

1. The roles and responsibilities of the members of the school community are clearly defined. The Board of Trustees is divided into committees for clearly defined roles. The school leadership team’s roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and utilizes the strengths of each team member.
2. Westminster has expanded its school and instructional leadership through the addition of two instructional coaches and the Project Administrator of Instruction. In addition, the school hired an additional English New Language teacher to address the increase of MLLs.

**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**

<u>Element</u>	<u>Indicators</u>
1. <i>Mission and Key Design Elements</i>	a. School stakeholders share a common and consistent understanding of the school’s mission and key design elements outlined in the charter. 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:**

During focus groups of school and teacher leaders, members were able to speak to aspects of the instructional program and socio-emotional learning and how both the academic and socio-emotional learning tied back to the school’s mission and key design elements. More specifically, in a virtual setting due to COVID-19, all members of the school community directly linked the school’s ability to provide wrap-around services to students and their families in the midst of a world pandemic by connecting the school community to vital community linkages as deemed necessary and appropriate.

**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>

**Table 5: Student Demographics**

	SWD			ELL/MLL			ED		
	Westminster Community CS	Buffalo Public Schools	Differential to District	Westminster Community CS	Buffalo Public Schools	Differential to District	Westminster Community CS	Buffalo Public Schools	Differential to District
2015-2016	15%	24%	-9	0%	16%	-16	92%	84%	+8
2016-2017	14%	24%	-10	1%	17%	-16	94%	82%	+12
2017-2018	10%	25%	-15	1%	22%	-21	93%	84%	+9
2018-2019	1%	25%	-24	1%	23%	-22	83%	86%	-3

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

Table 6: Retention – Aggregate and Subgroups

	All Students			SWD			ELL/MLL			ED		
	Westminster Community Charter School	Buffalo Public Schools	Differential to District	Westminster Community Charter School	Buffalo Public Schools	Differential to District	Westminster Community Charter School	Buffalo Public Schools	Differential to District	Westminster Community Charter School	Buffalo Public Schools	Differential to District
2016-2017	87%	89%	-2	83%	89%	-6	.	.	.	87%	89%	-2
2017-2018	76%	87%	-11	70%	88%	-18	83%	87%	-4	76%	88%	-12
2018-2019	85%	88%	-3	90%	89%	1	86%	89%	-3	85%	88%	-3

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

Notes:

1. "\*" indicates that too few students (less than 5) are in the subgroup.
2. "-" indicates that there are no students in the subgroup.

Summative Evidence for Benchmark 9:

Although the school enrollment numbers meet the enrollment figures of 550 students, as per the Charter the school continues to trail the Buffalo Public District for enrollment of subgroup populations (MLL/ELL, SWD, and ED). The school reported that Westminster has joined the Enroll Buffalo Charters multi-application for families to apply to the lottery. Westminster has continued to work on recruiting students in special populations, especially English Language Learners. The school's ELL population has increased considerably in response to efforts such as advertising and materials in several languages and meeting with current ELL families to identify new outreach strategies.

**Benchmark 10: Legal Compliance**

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

**Finding: Exceeds**

<u>Element</u>	<u>Indicators</u>
1. <i>Legal Compliance</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>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.</li><li>b. The school has undertaken appropriate corrective action when needed and has implemented necessary safeguards to maintain compliance with all legal requirements.</li><li>c. The school has sought Board of Regents and/or Charter School Office approval for significant revisions.</li></ul>

**Summative Evidence for Benchmark 10:**

The school continues to maintain a record of substantial compliance and has undertaken any corrective action, as needed. This is also addressed in the charter application submitted to the Board of Regents.

**\*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).

# Rebuttal

Westminster Community Charter School respectfully submits the following factual corrections to the *Renewal Site Visit Report 2020-2021*.

## *Cover Page*

- The Visit Date was January 5, 2021.

## *School Description, pg. 2*

- The dates for the third and fourth charter renewal term should be listed as the following:
  - Third renewal term: July 1, 2016 - June 30, 2019
  - Fourth renewal term: July 1, 2019 - June 30, 2021
- The mission of Westminster Community Charter School is:
  - To challenge the status quo—to encourage people to think differently about their situation in life. We do this through assuring that there are high levels of learning, by creating a safe and caring environment, and promoting community involvement in order to prepare students for a successful secondary experience.
- The “Noteworthy” paragraph indicates that the school created a plan for hybrid instruction but does not clarify that hybrid instruction began on September 1, 2020.

## *Methodology, pg. 5*

- In the second paragraph, 5th line: the Assistant Principal’s name is spelled LaMonica Harris.

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

- Benchmark 5: Financial Management should be rated as “Exceeds,” not “Meets,” per pg. 21.
- Benchmark 10: Legal Compliance should be rated as “Exceeds,” not “Meets,” per pg. 27.
- Summary of Findings:
  - “During its current charter term, the school is rated in the following manner: exceeding 1 benchmark, meeting 6 benchmarks, approaching 3 benchmarks, and falling far below 0 benchmarks.” These totals do not match the ones in the table on page 7 or the ones listed on the benchmark sections throughout the document.

## *Benchmark 2*

- Summative Evidence, pg. 14: The school does not train teachers on the fishbone technique for writing lesson plans. This is not referenced in our charter renewal application or our curriculum documents.
- Element: Curriculum (ELA) Indicator a:
  - WCCS curricula are for K-2, 3-5, and 6-8 (not K-5, 6-8)
  - The last sentence of this bullet point is cut off (“This is indicative that the school”)
- Element: Curriculum (Math) Indicator c:
  - This bullet appears to be accidentally copied from the ELA section above. There are not creative culminating projects in the math programs.



- Element: Assessment and Program Evaluation
  - The schoolwide goal is to improve 5-10 percentage points in ELA and Math using **Star Reading and Math**, not Intune.
- Element: Supports for Diverse Learners, pg. 17:
  - The last bullet point includes a quotation but it is unclear where the quotation is from; it was not included in our charter renewal application. It is not a factual representation of WCCS practice. Special education and ENL teachers do not follow the teacher; they co-teach.

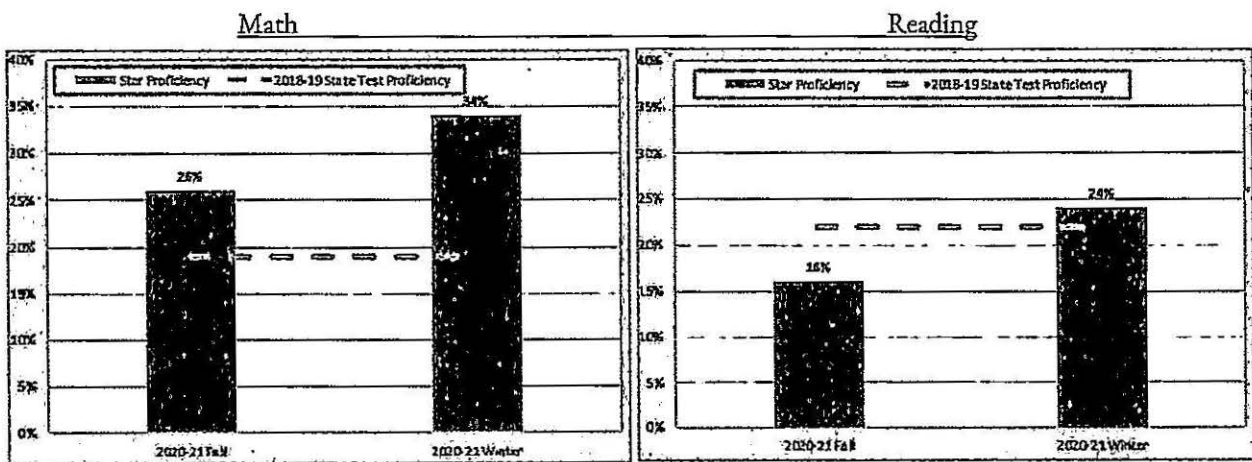
*Benchmark 3*

- Summative Evidence, pg. 18:
  - The first paragraph states “While virtual, in school behavior management is not of concern.” However, only some Westminster students are virtual. Approximately 40% are hybrid. In-school behavior is supported through restorative practices, PBIS, and the three-tiered intervention system.
- Summative Evidence, pg. 19:
  - The competencies referenced in the fourth sentence are CASEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning) competencies (not castle).

### 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).

Figures 1a and 1b: Percent of Westminster Community Charter School students in grades 3-8 proficient on 2020-21 Fall and Winter Star assessments compared to Westminster Community Charter School students in grades 3-8 proficient on 2018-19 state test.



These figures demonstrate that WCCS students are making significant gains this year as measured by the Star assessments. The Star assessment results correlate closely to NYS test outcomes, proven in a study conducted by Renaissance as well as through comparisons of WCCS students' Star and state test scores. Westminster has surpassed its 2018-19 state test performance in both reading and math in the 2020-21 Winter Star Assessments and expects to continue growing.

Students at all levels are showing growth on Star in 2020-21. In reading, 60% of students have improved their percentile rank (comparing them to other students nationally in their grade), with an average of a 13 percentage-point increase per student. In math, 57% of students have improved their percentile rank, with an average of a 15 percentage-point increase per student.

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## 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.

Element	Indicators
Curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. The school has a documented curriculum that is aligned to the NYSLS.</li><li>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.</li><li>c. The curriculum is aligned horizontally across classrooms at the same grade level and vertically between grades.</li><li>d. The curriculum is differentiated to provide opportunities for all students to master grade-level skills and concepts.</li></ul> <p><b>Element: Curriculum (ELA)</b></p> <p><i>BPS Renewal Site Visit Report: "Indicator a: (K-5, 6-8): Curriculum documents are overviews of units of study. Standards were not included. The school shared that they are piloting a new ELA curriculum designed to engage students in higher levels of learning. This is indicative that the school"</i></p> <p><b>WCCS Response:</b> Westminster is piloting Wit &amp; Wisdom in grades 3-5. Wit &amp; Wisdom is designed by Great Minds; they have published a study that demonstrates how the curriculum aligns to the New York State Learning Standards ("New York State Standards Alignment Study"). This was a key consideration in the school's decision to select Wit &amp; Wisdom.</p> <p><i>BPS Renewal Site Visit Report: "Indicator b: One scope and sequence was provided for both grades 7 and 8. Given that the standards in ELA spiral, it is difficult to determine how the curriculum will be different for 7th and 8th grade students. "</i></p> <p><b>WCCS Response:</b> This is referring to the scope &amp; sequence for Cadence Learning, which is a new curriculum designed specifically for the 2020-21 school year to support remote learning. Cadence will design a new scope &amp; sequence for 2021-22. Additionally, though the unit topics are the same for grades 7 and 8, the ELA teachers in those grades use lesson plans and standards-based data to address the standards for their own grade.</p> <p>Wit and Wisdom, the ELA curriculum launching with grades 3-5 in 2020-21, provides high-quality lesson and unit plans. Each unit is designed around a topic to build deep content knowledge. Through close reading, analysis, exposure to complex texts, and protocols such as Socratic Seminars, students engage in higher order thinking daily.</p> <p><i>BPS Renewal Site Visit Report: "Indicator c: Assessments are outlined but rubrics are not included. Some units have both a creative and academic culminating project while some only have an academic culminating project. Only the summative assessment is outlined in the curriculum documents. It is</i></p>

*difficult to determine what students will be doing for the entirety of the unit.”*

**WCCS Response:** The Wit & Wisdom Implementation Guide was submitted in the Curriculum Audit. On page 50, the document explains the various types of assessment in the program, including: checks for understanding, Focusing Question Tasks, New Read Assessments, Socratic Seminars, and End of Module Tasks. This section also shows which standards are addressed on these tasks. Additionally, the Implementation Guide includes all rubrics for all grades, in the sections entitled “Writing Rubrics” (page 120) and “Speaking and Listening Rubrics” (page 147).

Regarding the New York State Performance Benchmark text for indicator c (“the curriculum is aligned horizontally across classrooms at the same grade level and vertically between grades”) the Wit & Wisdom Implementation Guide demonstrates how the program is aligned vertically (see page 59). All teachers on a grade plan lessons together and use shared materials, leading to horizontal alignment.

*BPS Renewal Site Visit Report: “Indicator d: Based on the documents received, differentiation was not detailed on curriculum documents provided.”*

**WCCS Response:** The Wit & Wisdom Implementation Guide was submitted to the evaluators in the Curriculum Audit. On page 24 of that document is a section entitled “Differentiation,” which explains in depth how the curriculum can support all learners, including a subsection beginning on page 26 which describes how it supports English Language Learners.

#### **Element: Curriculum (Math)**

*BPS Renewal Site Visit Report: “Indicator a: The school has a documented curriculum aligned to the current New York State standards. However, it was not evident based on documents submitted for review that the curriculum and corresponding materials are differentiated for all student populations (ELL/MLL, SWD, etc.), nor was it evident that this curriculum is systematically reviewed and revised.”*

**WCCS Response:** WCCS utilizes the New York State math curriculum (EngageNY), in grade K-5, which is aligned to the current New York State standards. The EngageNY Implementation Guide was submitted to the evaluators in the Curriculum Audit. On pages 14-21 of that document is a section entitled, “The Common Core Approach to Differentiating Instruction”, which provides the WCCS teachers with scaffolds for English Language Learners, Students with Disabilities, and students both below and above grade level. Administrators have weekly meetings with all grade level teachers, special education teachers, intervention teachers and ELL teachers to review the math curriculum, pacing, differentiation, and student data.

After extensive review of the 6-8 EngageNY curriculum, it was decided that the WCCS middle school students would benefit from a problem-based, hands-on math curriculum to help foster critical thinking of the abstract math concepts that are introduced in those grade levels. The Illustrative Mathematics curriculum is utilized by teachers in grades 6-8 for their mathematics instruction. The IM curriculum is a rigorous, standard-aligned curriculum.

*BPS Renewal Site Visit Report: “Indicator b: aligned horizontally across classrooms of the same grade level, and vertically among grades.”*

**WCCS Response:** Much of the focus at our weekly grade level math meetings is centered around the developmental progression of math concepts and computations. Teachers take part in unit and lesson internalization protocols that allow them to have horizontal alignment in their instruction. Our vertical math meetings among grade bands (K-2, 3-5, and 6-8) allows the teachers to take part in conversations

that keep math instruction at WCCS vertically aligned.

Starting in 2019-20, Westminster built in a daily 30-minute block for all students in grades K-5 for math fluency. During this block, students worked on number sense, math facts, patterns, and other foundational skills that support grade-level work. Math curriculum is enhanced by practices from Greg Tang; all grade levels use his Six Step Framework for solving word problems.

*BPS Renewal Site Visit Report: "Indicator c: Assessments are outlined but rubrics are not included. Some units have both a creative and academic culminating project while some only have an academic culminating project. Only the summative assessment is outlined in the curriculum documents. It is difficult to determine what students will be doing for the entirety of the unit."*

**WCCS Response:** Westminster utilizes a school-wide assessment system composed of valid and reliable tests as well as curriculum-embedded benchmark tests. The system includes diagnostic, formative, interim, and summative assessments. In K-5 math, assessments include EngageNY daily exit tickets, topic assessments, and mid- and end-of-module assessments, as well as the IXL diagnostic. In 6-8 math, the assessments include Illustrative Mathematics daily cool downs (exit tickets), mid- and end-of-unit assessments, as well as the IXL diagnostic.

*BPS Renewal Site Visit Report: "Indicator d: There was no evidence submitted that curriculum is systematically reviewed and revised."*

**WCCS Response:** WCCS administrators and instructional coaches have weekly math meetings with all grade level teachers, special education teachers, intervention teachers and ELL teachers to review the math curriculum, pacing, differentiation, and student data.

**Element: Curriculum (Science)**

*BPS Renewal Site Visit Report: "Mystery Science aligns to the New York State Science Learning Standards. While the Amplify curriculum aligns to the Next Generation Science Standards, we did not receive any evidence that the Amplify Curriculum aligns to The New York State Science Learning Standards (which are more specific and focused on NYS)."*

**WCCS Response:** The 6-8 Amplify Science curriculum is offered as 27 units that can be custom sequenced for both domain and integrated models of science instruction. The WCCS teachers have chosen to use the domain model. Each unit provides a unit map with standards and a scope and sequence. The unit map provides correlations to NGSS, CCSS in ELA and CCSS in Math. It should be noted that correlations to New York State standards for each of the units Amplify offers was submitted to the New York City Department of Education for review. The New York City school district is currently using Amplify as their science curriculum.

*BPS Renewal Site Visit Report: "During observations of Science 6-8th grade classes (1/8/21) differentiation or supports in the lessons for SPED, ELL learners or struggling students was not observed. The curricular evidence received did not include information about differentiation of the Amplify (Grades 6-8) curriculum, therefore, we must assume that this curriculum does not provide methods of differentiation for teachers to use or ways to for teachers to make content accessible for SPED, LEP or other subgroups."*

**WCCS Response:** To support teachers in providing the best possible instruction, every lesson of Amplify Science includes embedded differentiation strategies so teachers can make any necessary intentional and strategic changes to the lessons to meet the needs of their students. Point-of-use differentiation strategies help show teachers what is built into the lessons to support diverse learning

needs, highlight potential challenges teachers should be aware of, and provide specific strategies for differentiating instruction.

In addition to the Differentiation Briefs that include research-based linguistic supports, (Amplify Science is available in Spanish) there are multilingual glossaries, and the program provides a full collection of reading supports for each student book and science article. These supports focus students on multiple-meaning words, point-of-use cognate suggestions, and opportunities for students to engage in discourse in their native languages.

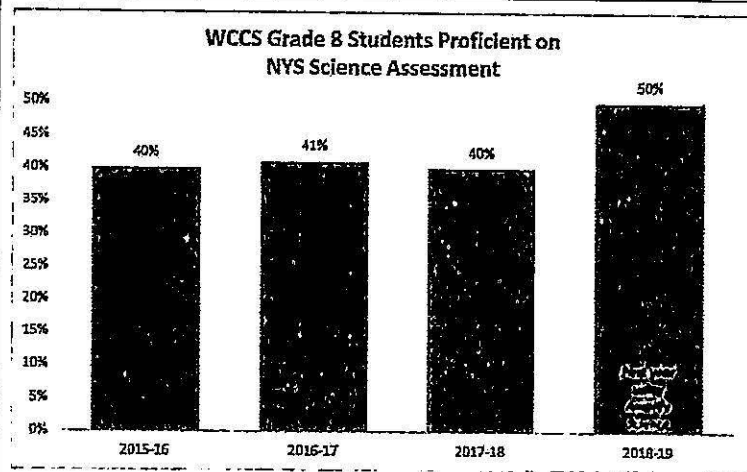
Amplify Science provides guidance to teachers on establishing a positive, affirming, flexible, intellectually stimulating, and collaborative learning environment so that all students are included and adequately supported to learn. Respectful and responsive teacher actions are explicitly encouraged in the differentiation strategies for each lesson, which is especially critical for vulnerable populations of students in order to mitigate the potential psychologically, emotionally, and physically stressful circumstances that students in these circumstances may face.

*BPS Renewal Site Visit Report:* "While the Mystery Science curriculum is aligned vertically (across grade levels) and horizontally (across classrooms), The Amplify Curriculum (Grade 6-8) doesn't have a grade level guide/pacing which describes which topics should be taught throughout the year. The Scope and Sequence file listed the topics included in the curriculum for Middle School (grades 6-8). The Amplify Curriculum Website states that all lessons can be taught at any time during the year. There was no evidence of horizontal or vertical alignment in grades 6-8. It is recommended that, if WCCS continues to use Amplify for grades 6-8, school leadership must facilitate the creation of grade level pacing guides which describes which topics should be instructed and a timeline of when they should be instructed for each grade level. These curricular documents should be aligned to the New York State Learning standards. These documents should include strategies for scaffolding, differentiation, and enrichment activities."

**WCCS Response:** The 6-8 Amplify Science curriculum is offered as 27 units that can be custom sequenced for both domain and integrated models of science instruction. The WCCS teachers have chosen to use the domain model. Each unit provides a unit map with standards and a scope and sequence. The 6-8 science teachers meet weekly to collaborate and review student data to inform their instruction.

*BPS Renewal Site Visit Report:* "The Curriculum Audited yielded that while the Mystery Science (K-5) 'Approaches' the performance benchmark for differentiation and 'Meets' for horizontal and vertical alignment, the Amplify curriculum it continues to 'Fall far Below'. It should be noted that the Amplify received the same rating in last year's report."

**WCCS Response:** In the 2018-2019 school year, WCCS adopted Amplify Science as the 6th-8th grade science curriculum. That year, there was a 10 percentage point increase in the number of WCCS students that passed the 8th grade NYS Science assessment (see chart below). Amplify Science engages students in a relevant, real-world problem where they investigate scientific phenomena, engage in collaboration and discussion, and develop models or explanations in order to arrive at solutions. This level of rigor has increased the level of critical thinking within our science classrooms and we believe it is preparing our students to be lifelong researchers that can make claims, find evidence and interpret results.



**Element: Curriculum (Social Studies)**

*BPS Renewal Site Visit Report: The curriculum auditors did not write about social studies.*

**WCCS Response:** Social studies is taught using the New York State Framework. Curriculum maps are monitored and revised by administrators, the instructional coach, and teachers during feedback at Data Wise meetings. Given findings in Data Wise, grades 6-8 implemented Document-Based Question (DBQ) tasks as the summative assessment in each inquiry-based topic. The instructional coach worked with teams across all grades to develop content-based book studies connected to topics in the New York State Framework. In these book studies, students learn about social studies topics by reading a shared text closely. Book studies also promote practice of ELA standards and peer collaboration.

**Instruction**

- a. The school staff has a common understanding of high-quality instruction, and observed instructional practices align to this understanding.

*BPS Renewal Site Visit Report: "N/A"*

**WCCS Response:** One of WCCS' key design elements is Staff Development. The school offers a wide array of professional learning opportunities to its staff to promote a common understanding of high-quality instruction. During the charter term, staff have received training from curriculum providers (including Wit & Wisdom, Cadence Learning, Foundations, Eureka Math, and Illustrative Math). The school's instructional leadership team has provided training about the Science of Reading, math fluency, and the Star Reading and Math assessments. Teachers and school leaders have attended workshops with Greg Tang. Additionally, staff receive weekly professional development during the Wednesday meetings, including the DataWise Improvement Process and Lesson/Unit Internalization. The school leadership team receives ongoing professional development from Attuned Education Partners.

- b. Instructional delivery fosters engagement with all students.

*BPS Renewal Site Visit Report: "Based on virtual classroom visits conducted by members of the visitation team, differentiation and delivery of instruction designed to increase student engagement was minimal, if observed at all."*

**WCCS Response:** Virtual engagement strategies have been a priority for coaching and professional development at WCCS during the 2020-21 school year. Several of the strategies that teachers use for differentiation are not visible to an observer, such as: sending private chats to students with sentence



	<p>frames or scaffolded questions; breakout rooms with another teacher; and differentiated student materials, such as digital notebooks or prompts for virtual assignments such as FlipGrid video responses. Other strategies that WCCS teachers have used during virtual learning include: use of interactive whiteboard and other platforms that allow for live student work to be viewed (such as whiteboard.fi), digital notebooks, Desmos, Kami, Google Docs, PearDeck, FlipGrid, and NearPod.</p> <p>Additionally, the site visitors were only able to observe virtual instruction, but approximately 40% of Westminster students are attending school in person this year. Differentiation and student engagement strategies are visible during in-person instruction, such as small groups, scaffolded questioning, and Total Participation Techniques.</p>
<p><b>Assessment and Program Evaluation</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The school uses a balanced system of formative, diagnostic, and summative assessments.</li> <li>b. The school uses qualitative and quantitative data to inform instruction and improve student outcomes.</li> <li>c. The school uses qualitative and quantitative data to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of the academic program and modifies the program accordingly.</li> </ol> <p><i>BPS Renewal Site Visit Report: "Indicator a/b/c: Leadership shared a schoolwide goal of 5-10 percentage points increase in ELA and mathematics using Intune. The school is using STAR to administer virtual assessments to students in the event State assessments are administered for the 20-21SY. The school uses STAR as an adaptive measure for both math and ELA. The STAR assessment is able to identify individual student skill levels. Teachers and leaders shared this data is then used to determine which skills need to be retaught and what interventions, if any, are necessary to close any gaps."</i></p> <p><b>WCCS Response:</b> The Star assessment is an essential piece of Westminster's assessment system regardless of the state assessments. It provides results that align closely to state test outcomes, and it provides rich reports about student strengths and learning gaps that inform instruction. Westminster utilizes a school-wide assessment system composed of valid and reliable tests as well as curriculum-embedded benchmark tests. The system includes diagnostic, formative, interim, and summative assessments. In math, assessments include EngageNY daily exit tickets, topic assessments, and mid- and end-of-module assessments, as well as the IXL diagnostic. In ELA, assessments include Wit &amp; Wisdom daily exit tickets, focusing question tasks, Socratic Seminars, new read assessments, and end-of-module task, as well as Foundations unit assessments, Newsela, and MyOn.</p> <p>Staff analyze qualitative and quantitative student data during weekly data meetings to inform instruction and improve student outcomes. In the 2019-20 school year, Westminster implemented the Data Wise Improvement Process. Data Wise is an 8-step cycle of collaborative data inquiry to drive continuous improvement of teaching and learning for all students. Teams meet weekly to work through the steps, including analyzing student work to identify a learner-centered problem, examining their own instruction by watching a video of their teaching and then writing a problem of practice, and then identifying an instructional strategy to address the problem of practice. Teachers also complete student work analysis protocols (SWAP) during weekly data meetings to identify common misunderstandings and then reteach the highest-leverage point from the lesson.</p> <p>Data also informs longer-term decisions at Westminster. Data is used to make decisions about what resources to offer, such as RTI, tutoring, and work with intervention staff. It is also used to make</p>

	<p>decisions about professional development; performance on state tests revealed a need to focus on vocabulary instruction, so the instructional coach offered sessions on vocabulary and a school-wide vocabulary initiative was developed. Data also drives decisions about resources such as technology. For example, during the spring 2020 school closure during the COVID-19 pandemic, a close eye on student engagement data revealed that students in grades 3-8 had Chromebooks and completed more schoolwork at home than students in grades K-2 without Chromebooks, so the school purchased 1:1 devices for students in all grades.</p>
<p><b>Supports for Diverse Learners</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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.</li> <li>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.</li> </ul> <p><i>BPS Renewal Site Visit Report: "Indicator a/b: WCCS has reviewed and changed curriculum to meet the needs of their students based on data in the areas of math, ELA and science. With this thought they have aligned the curriculum horizontally across classrooms and grade levels. However, there was little evidence of how materials provide opportunities for all students to master concepts and skills including students with disabilities and Multilingual Learners. "</i></p> <p><b>WCCS Response:</b> As stated in previous WCCS responses, each curriculum utilized by our teachers provides implementation guides that offer teachers scaffolds for English Language Learners, Students with Disabilities, and students both below and above grade level. School leaders, coaches, and teachers meet on a weekly basis to review the curriculum, pacing, differentiation, and student data. These meetings drive instruction and allow teachers the opportunity to discuss how they can meet the academic needs for all learners, including but not limited to students with disabilities, English language learners, and economically disadvantaged students. Along with vertical and horizontal meetings, the special education team meets weekly to discuss student progress and goal work.</p> <p>School leaders and teachers also analyze both the math and ELA Star assessment data in order to develop focused tier 1, tier 2 and tier 3 intervention goals for grade levels, classrooms, and students. Students receive support based on their individual needs. Classroom teachers, special education teachers, intervention teachers, and teaching assistants all collaborate to work with students in whole-group, small-group, and individual settings. The teachers progress monitor student development and success and then document their observations and bi-weekly assessments on a shared document available to school leaders. The Star data is accessible to all teachers on a grade level and those teachers that support the grade level as well.</p> <p>All of the data is broken down by subgroups and analyzed by school leaders. Then, as needed, school leaders make decisions to continue progress (i.e. hiring another ENL teacher, providing tutoring, offering summer school, and providing a night school option).</p>

**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.

*BPS Renewal Site Visit Report:* Although the school enrollment numbers meet the enrollment figures of 550 students, as per the Charter the school continues to trail the Buffalo Public District for enrollment of subgroup populations (MLL/ELL, SWD, and ED). The school reported that Westminster has joined the Enroll Buffalo Charters multi-application for families to apply to the lottery. Westminster has continued to work on recruiting students in special populations, especially English Language Learners. The school's ELL population has increased considerably in response to efforts such as advertising and materials in several languages and meeting with current ELL families to identify new outreach strategies.

**WCCS Response:** Westminster is a community school without busing. This means that the overwhelming majority of our students are from the 14215 zip code, where the school is located. Our school demographics reflect the demographics of the zip code, and as more families whose native language is not English move into our neighborhood, we have had more English Language Learners enroll in our school. The school continues to make extensive good faith efforts to attract and recruit more English Language Learners and Students with Disabilities.