New York State Education Department

Renewal Site Visit Report
2017-2018

Charter School for Educational Excellence

Yonkers, NY

Visit Date: October 24, 2017
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SCHOOL DESCRIPTION

Charter School Summary[1]

Name of Charter School	Charter School of Educational Excellence
Board Chair	Eduardo LaGuerre
School Leader	Cindy Lopez
District of Location	Yonkers City School District
Opening Date	September 2005
Charter Terms	• Initial Charter Term: 01/12/2004 to 01/11/2009 • First Renewal: Short Term 01/12/2009 to 06/30/2013 • Second Renewal: Full Term 07/01/2013 to 06/30/2018
Authorized Grades/Maximum Authorized Enrollment	Kindergarten - Grade 8 / 669 students
Management Company	None
Educational Partners	None
Facilities	260 Warburton Ave, Yonkers, NY 10701
Mission Statement	*"The Charter School of Educational Excellence's mission is to develop students who are critical thinkers, motivated leaders, and lifelong learners. We are committed to a strong partnership with our teachers, parents, and community."*
Key Design Elements	• *Extended Day of Eight Hours* • *Extended Blocks of Time for Basic Subjects* • *Using Teaching Assistants Throughout the Building* • *Standards-driven Curriculum and Instruction* • *Fostering Learning Experiences Through Meaningful Interactions with the Arts*
Requested Revisions	**None**

Renewal Outcomes

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.

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

- **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

Approved Enrollment for the Current Charter Term

	Year 1 2013 to 2014	Year 2 2014 to 2015	Year 3 2015 to 2016	Year 4 2016 to 2017	Year 5 2017 to 2018
Grade Configuration	K - Grade 8	K - Grades8	K - Grade 8	K – Grade 8	K - Grade 8
Total Approved Enrollment	642	642	690	690	690

***Proposed Enrollment for the Renewal Charter Term**

	Year 1 2018 to 2019	Year 2 2019 to 2020	Year 3 2020 to 2021	Year 4 2021 to 2022	Year 5 2022 to 2023
Grade Configuration	K - Grade 8	K - Grade 8	K - Grade 8	K - Grade 8	K - Grade 8
Total Approved/ Proposed Enrollment	729*	729*	729*	729*	729*

*Subject to approval by the Board of Regents in a separate Charter Revision Item being presented to the Board of Regents at their January 2018 meeting. The revision item recommends an enrollment increase from 669 students to 729 students effective January 23, 2018.

METHODOLOGY

The NYSED Charter School Office (CSO) team conducted a one-day renewal site visit at the Charter School of Educational Excellence on October 24, 2017. The CSO team conducted interviews with the board of trustees, school leadership team, and parents. In cooperation with school leadership, the CSO team also administered an anonymous online survey to teachers to gauge their levels of satisfaction on a number of topics related to teaching and learning at the school.

The team conducted 19 classroom observations in kindergarten through Grade 8. The observations were approximately 20 minutes in length and were conducted jointly with the school's principal and two assistant principals.

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

- **Renewal Application**
- **Academic data**
- **Renewal Site Visit Workbook**
- **Current organizational chart**
- **A master school schedule**
- **Map of school with room numbers and teacher names**
- **Board materials (roster, minutes, and strategic plan, if applicable)**
- **Board self-evaluation processes and documents**
- **Student/family handbook**
- **Staff handbook and personnel policies**
- **A list of major assessments**
- **Teacher and administrator evaluation processes**
- **Interventions offered at the school**
- **School-conducted surveys of teachers, parents, and/or students, and/or NYC DOE surveys**
- **Professional development plans and schedules**
- **Efforts towards achieving enrollment and retention targets**
- **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
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 renewal site visit conducted on October 24, 2017 at the Charter School of Educational Excellence, please see the following Performance Framework benchmark ratings and discussion.

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.	Meets
	Benchmark 5: Financial Management: The school operates in a fiscally sound manner with realistic budgets pursuant to a long-range financial plan, appropriate internal controls and procedures, and in accordance with state law and generally accepted accounting practices.	Meets
	Benchmark 6: Board Oversight and Governance: The board of trustees provides competent stewardship and oversight of the school while maintaining policies, establishing performance goals, and implementing systems to ensure academic success, organizational viability, board effectiveness and faithfulness to the terms of its charter.	Meets
	Benchmark 7: Organizational Capacity: The school has established a well-functioning organizational structure, clearly delineated roles for staff, management, and board members. The school has systems and protocols that allow for the successful implementation, evaluation, and improvement of its academic program and operations.	Meets
Faithfulness to Charter & Law	**Benchmark 8: Mission and Key Design Elements:** The school is faithful to its mission and has implemented the key design elements included in its charter.	Meets
	Benchmark 9: Enrollment, Recruitment, and Retention: The school is meeting or making annual progress toward meeting the enrollment plan outlined in its charter and its enrollment and retention targets for students with disabilities, English language learners, and students who are eligible applicants for the free and reduced priced lunch program; or has demonstrated that it has made extensive good faith efforts to attract, recruit, and retain such students.	Meets
	Benchmark 10: Legal Compliance: The school complies with applicable laws, regulations, and the provisions of its charter.	Approaches

Summary of Findings

The CSO renewal site visit team confirmed that the Charter School of Educational Excellence (CSEE) has met the vast majority of the performance benchmarks in the Performance Framework. CSEE has consistently produced high levels of student achievement in each year of the charter term, exceeding both the community school district (CSD) of location and the state average across both elementary and middle school grade levels. The school's performance has earned it recognition as a High Performing Reward School four times during this accountability period; an honor awarded to only 185 schools statewide this year for ranking in the top 20 percent of all schools in English Language Arts (ELA) and math proficiency as well as reducing performance gaps between student subgroups.

According to school leaders, teachers, and parents, comprehensive systems are in place to nurture and maintain a strong school culture based on high expectations, on-going academic and socio-emotional development, and shared values across the CSEE community. School leadership and staff report that curriculum content is strategic and aligned to the New York State Learning Standards. The CSO renewal site visit team observed teachers engaging in strong instructional practices through numerous classroom observations and confirmed teacher survey results which note a school-wide focus on using data to drive instructional choices. The school maintains a safe and welcoming educational environment for all students and provides multiple channels to facilitate frequent communication and close relationships between leadership, teachers and families. As reported in the parent focus group and teacher survey, families and staff are highly satisfied with the school's academic and cultural programs.

Overall, the board of trustees, comprised of the original school founders and longstanding community residents, provides active oversight and financial stewardship for the school. CSEE demonstrates stability in leadership and an organizational structure with sufficient capacity to effectively manage the school's academic program and operations functions. CSEE recruits teachers through established pipelines with local colleges, provides regular professional development opportunities, uses clear criteria to evaluate all staff, and promotes from within whenever possible to fill vacancies.

The school is making progress towards meeting the enrollment plan in its charter and is exhibiting good faith efforts to attract, recruit, and retain all students. In particular, CSEE is accelerating its work with community organizations to increase the percentage of students with disabilities (SWD) enrolled at the school and more closely resemble the demographics of its district of location. While the school appears to be generally compliant with applicable laws, regulations, and the provisions of its charter, the CSEE board of trustees did not follow the appropriate procedures to gain CSO approval prior to purchasing a facility to house its proposed high school program.

Please see additional summative evidence for each of the performance framework benchmarks below.

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

Summative Evidence for Benchmark 1:

Indicator 1: All Schools

1.a.i. Accountability - ESEA Accountability Designation: CSEE is designated as 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: In its Renewal Application, CSEE compares itself to 74 schools of similar grade configuration and student characteristics.

As in previous charter terms, the school continues to outperform the vast majority of similar schools, as well as city and statewide average proficiency rates in both ELA and math. CSEE reports in its Renewal Application that its students perpetually outperform the school's district of location in every subject and in every grade level. In the aggregate, CSEE students outperform those attending Yonkers schools by an average of 23 percentage points in ELA and 39 percentage points in math.

Indicator 2: Elementary/Middle School Outcomes

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

Student achievement in both ELA and math trended positively from 2014-15 to 2015-16, with a subtle dip or plateau in overall performance in the 2016-17 school year. CSEE produced a more marked increase in ELA proficiency than math, advancing from 42% in 2015 to 55% in 2016, although the school's overall proficiency rates in math continue to be stronger, with averages ranging from 62-70% of all students achieving grade level expectations.

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

School leadership reports an increased focus on CSEE's most at-risk students, including economically disadvantaged students, English language learners (ELL) and those with disabilities, to maintain strong levels of achievement and increase overall growth. Even with performance variance from year to year, each of these subgroups consistently exceeds city and statewide averages by significant margins. In the school's Renewal Application, leaders state "…at-risk students are arguably one of the most successful groups of students enrolled in CSEE. Measuring solely average gains compared to the district of location, students in poverty tend to outperform their Yonkers peers by 29 points in ELA and 44 points in mathematics; students with disabilities experienced similar success with a 27-point lead over Yonkers in ELA and 32 points ahead of the district of location in mathematics."

2.b.i. Proficiency - Aggregate School Level Proficiency for All Students: See Table 1 below.

Table 1: Elementary/Middle School Assessment Proficiency Outcomes for All Students: School, District & NYS Level Aggregates

	ELA					Math				
All Students	Charter School of Educational Excellence	Yonkers School District	Variance to Yonkers City School District	NYS	Variance to NYS	Charter School of Educational Excellence	Yonkers School District	Variance to Yonkers City School District	NYS	Variance to NYS
2014-2015	42%	20%	+22	31%	+11	62%	24%	+38	38%	+24
2015-2016	55%	26%	+29	38%	+17	70%	25%	+45	39%	+31
2016-2017	53%	30%	+23	40%	+13	67%	28%	+39	40%	+27

2.b.ii. Proficiency – Subgroup School Level Proficiency: See Tables 2-4 below.

Table 2: Elementary/Middle School Assessment Proficiency Outcomes by Subgroup – Students with Disabilities: *School, District & NYS Level Aggregates*

	ELA					Math				
Students with Disabilities	Charter School of Educational Excellence	Yonkers School District	Variance to Yonkers City School District	NYS	Variance to NYS	Charter School of Educational Excellence	Yonkers School District	Variance to Yonkers City School District	NYS	Variance to NYS
2014-2015	23%	4%	+19	6%	**+17**	39%	7%	+32	11%	+28
2015-2016	38%	5%	+33	8%	+30	45%	6%	+39	11%	+34
2016-2017	26%	8%	+18	9%	+17	44%	9%	+35	11%	+33

Table 3: Elementary/Middle School Assessment Proficiency Outcomes by Subgroup – English Language Learners: *School, District & NYS Level Aggregates*

	ELA					Math				
English Language Learners	Charter School of Educational Excellence	Yonkers City School District	Variance to Yonkers City School District	NYS	Variance to NYS	Charter School of Educational Excellence	Yonkers City School District	Variance to Yonkers City School District	NYS	Variance to NYS
2014-2015	24%	1%	+23	4%	+20	46%	4%	+42	13%	+33
2015-2016	30%	2%	+28	4%	+26	38%	4%	+34	12%	+26
2016-2017	5%	4%	+1	5%	0	22%	7%	+15	13%	+9

Table 4: Elementary/Middle School Assessment Proficiency Outcomes by Subgroup – Economically Disadvantaged Students: *School, District & NYS Level Aggregates*

	ELA					Math				
Economically Disadvantaged	Charter School of Educational Excellence	Yonkers City School District	Variance to Yonkers City School District	NYS	Variance to NYS	Charter School of Educational Excellence	Yonkers City School District	Variance to Yonkers City School District	NYS	Variance to NYS
2014-2015	42%	16%	+26	21%	+21	61%	19%	+42	27%	+34
2015-2016	56%	21%	+35	27%	+29	71%	19%	+52	28%	+43
2016-2017	54%	24%	+30	29%	+25	67%	23%	+44	29%	+38

2.b.iii. Proficiency – Grade Level Proficiency: See Table 5 and 6 below.

Table 5: Grade Level Proficiency for All Students: 2014-2015

	ELA					Math				
2014-2015	Charter School of Educational Excellence	Yonkers City School District	Variance to Yonkers City School District	NYS	Variance to NYS	Charter School of Educational Excellence	Yonkers City School District	Variance to Yonkers City School District	NYS	Variance to NYS
Grade 3	53%	25%	+28	31%	+22	74%	31%	+43	42	+32
Grade 4	48%	22%	+26	33%	+15	70%	29%	+41	43	+27
Grade 5	32%	17%	+15	30%	+2	49%	24%	+25	43	+6
Grade 6	37%	19%	+18	31%	+6	48%	26%	+22	39	+9
Grade 7	31%	15%	+16	29%	+2	58%	16%	+42	35	+23
Grade 8	55%	22%	+33	35%	+20	75%	16%	+59	22	+53

Table 6: Grade Level Proficiency for All Students: 2015-2016

	ELA					Math				
2015-2016	Charter School of Educational Excellence	Yonkers City School District	Variance to Yonkers City School District	NYS	Variance to NYS	Charter School of Educational Excellence	Yonkers City School District	Variance to Yonkers City School District	NYS	Variance to NYS
Grade 3	74%	33%	+41	42%	+32	79%	31%	+48	44%	+35
Grade 4	65%	28%	+37	41%	+24	65%	29%	+36	45%	+20
Grade 5	43%	24%	+19	34%	+9	65%	25%	+40	40%	+25
Grade 6	53%	21%	+32	34%	+19	67%	24%	+43	40%	+27
Grade 7	50%	22%	+28	36%	+15	74%	19%	+55	36%	+38
Grade 8	40%	27%	+13	41%	-1	-[2]	17%	-	24%	-

[2] Beginning in the 2015-16 school year, students in the 8th grade at CSEE took the Algebra 1 exam rather than the 8th grade level mathematics exam.

Table 7: Grade Level Proficiency for All Students: 2016-2017

	ELA					Math				
2016-2017	Charter School of Educational Excellence	Yonkers City School District	Variance to Yonkers City School District	NYS	Variance to NYS	Charter School of Educational Excellence	Yonkers City School District	Variance to Yonkers City School District	NYS	Variance to NYS
Grade 3	65%	36%	+29	43%	+22	75%	40%	+35	48%	+27
Grade 4	45%	31%	+14	41%	+4	66%	32%	+34	43%	+23
Grade 5	48%	23%	+25	35%	+13	56%	29%	+27	43%	+13
Grade 6	48%	25%	+23	32%	+16	74%	30%	+44	40%	+34
Grade 7	51%	27%	+24	42%	+9	65%	20%	+45	38%	+27
Grade 8	67%	35%	+32	46%	+21	-	16%	-	22%	-

Indicator 3: High School Outcomes

3.a.i. Regents Testing Outcomes – Aggregate Annual Regents Outcomes: See Table 8.

CSEE has administered two Regents exams during the current charter term – Algebra 1 (Common Core) and Living Environment. Aggregate outcomes for both exams demonstrate performance 20-32 percentage points above state average proficiency rates.

Table 8: Annual Regents Outcomes – Aggregate

	2014-2015		2015-2016		2016-2017	
	CS	NYS	CS	NYS	CS	NYS
Algebra I (Common Core) (levels 3, 4 & 5)	95%	63%	92%	72%	94%	74
Living Environment (>65)	-		-		100%	74

3.a.ii. Regents Testing Outcomes – Subgroup Annual Regents Outcomes: See Tables 9-11.

In the school's Renewal Application, leaders report that CSEE students in the SWD, EL and ED subgroups show consistent performance well above state average proficiency rates, with variance margins up to 76% in some years on the Algebra I exam. While SWD experienced a significant decrease in performance on the Algebra assessment in 2016, 100% of students in that subgroup achieved proficiency in the following year.

Table 9: Annual Regents Outcomes – Students with Disabilities

	2014-2015		2015-2016		2016-2017	
	CS	NYS	CS	NYS	CS	NYS
Algebra I (Common Core) (levels 3, 4 & 5)	100%	26%	25%	41%	100%	46%
Living Environment (>65)	-		-		-	

Table 10: Annual Regents Outcomes – English Language Learners

	2014-2015		2015-2016		2016-2017	
	CS	NYS	CS	NYS	CS	NYS
Algebra I (Common Core) (levels 3, 4 & 5)	50%	27%	100%	44%	67%	46%
Living Environment (>65)	-		-		-	

Table 11: Annual Regents Outcomes – Economically Disadvantaged

	2014-2015		2015-2016		2016-2017	
	CS	NYS	CS	NYS	CS	NYS
Algebra I (Common Core) (levels 3, 4 & 5)	94%	48%	94%	62%	95%	67%
Living Environment (>65)	-		-		100%	64%

3.a.iii. High School Outcomes – Aggregate Total Cohort Regents Testing Outcomes: CSEE does not yet serve students beyond the eighth grade, so does not have high school outcomes to report.

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. 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. c. The curriculum is aligned horizontally across classrooms at the same grade level and vertically between grades. d. The curriculum is differentiated to provide opportunities for all students to master grade-level skills and concepts.
2. Instruction	a. The school staff has a common understanding of high-quality instruction, and observed instructional practices align to this understanding. 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. b. The school uses qualitative and quantitative data to inform instruction and improve student outcomes. 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. 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:

CSEE reports in its Renewal Application that it continues to utilize the same Common Core- and NYSLS-aligned curricular materials as in its previous charter term as the foundation of the school's academic program. The school uses Journeys and Go Math! texts and practice books for English language arts and math instruction, respectively, for students in kindergarten through fifth grade. Teachers utilize Literature Common Core and Big Ideas Math in sixth grade and beyond. Since investing in laptops for all students, CSEE staff have been steadily incorporating more blended learning and digital components across the school, such as i-Ready online instructional modules and assessments.

Instructional leaders, including assistant principals and content area directors assigned to specific grade spans, assume primary responsibility for developing and annually revising comprehensive scope and sequence documents for each subject area. With the support and oversight of instructional leaders, teachers work collaboratively and use schoolwide templates to plan units, daily lesson plans and center activities. School leadership reports that maintaining consistency in its curriculum from year to year helps teachers to develop a deep familiarity with the school's array of commercial materials, allowing them to focus on adapting and fine-tuning materials regularly to meet students' specific needs.

The school reports using a variety of teaching strategies across all grade levels that maintain high levels of student engagement while also leveraging frequent opportunities to customize learning. These strategies include, but are not limited to, flexible small groupings in each classroom, differentiated online learning periods, and frequent hands-on activities. The CSO team observed these elements in a majority of the classroom observations conducted during the site renewal visit, and found that classrooms are consistently orderly and well-managed, with teachers leveraging established transitional routines and effective behavior management systems to maximize instructional time. Through active participation in lesson activities, volunteering to answer questions, and collaborating with classmates during peer review time, students demonstrate high levels of engagement during each classroom observation.

CSEE employs an array of formative and summative assessments to measure student mastery of academic material; these include diagnostics, progress monitoring, benchmark and state exams. The school's fulltime student information and data director collects, analyzes, and reports assessment data to teachers, families and the general school community to inform classroom instruction and programmatic decisions at both micro and macro levels. For example, on-going data analysis informs which "do now" problems that students work on at the beginning of each lesson, and also identifies the need for supplementary curriculum tools based on trends in student performance over time. In the Renewal Application, CSEE provides the following example of how data drives program modifications at the school: "In 2013, for example, Journeys was utilized as the school's exclusive writing program. The data, however, indicated a need for additional writing supports. Journeys is now supplemented with Heinemann's The Explorations in Non-Fiction writing series to ensure students can read and write in response to both fiction and non-fiction texts."

CSEE invests significant resources to meet the needs of its at-risk students, particularly through its staffing structure and robust three-tiered Response to Intervention system. The school employs a special education director, a special education teacher, a Title 1 director, six academic intervention teachers, an ELL services director, a school psychologist and a guidance counselor to meet the needs of diverse learners. The school's Renewal Application describes the ways in which these staff members support the needs of students across the school through a combination of small group and pull out instruction, as well as frequent collaboration with classroom teachers to ensure lesson plans and instructional strategies are optimally differentiated. CSEE provides regular professional development activities for all teachers, regardless of experience level, to strengthen their abilities to use data to proactively identify struggling students and enable them to reach their academic potential. Instructional staff participate in regularly scheduled meetings, often weekly, to discuss progress-monitoring data and adjust supports as needed.

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. b. The school appears safe and all school constituents are able to articulate how the school community maintains a safe environment. c. The school has systems in place to ensure that the environment is free from harassment and discrimination. d. Classroom environments are conducive to learning and generally free from disruption.
2. *Family Engagement and Communication*	a. Teachers communicate with parents to discuss students' strengths and needs. 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. c. The school has a systematic process for responding to parent or community concerns. d. 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. School leaders collect and use data to track the socio-emotional needs of students. b. School leaders collect and use data regarding the impact of programs designed to support students' social and emotional health.

Summative Evidence for Benchmark 3:

CSEE continues to nurture and maintain the school's systems to support students' social and emotional health and maintain a safe and respectful environment conducive to learning. In the Renewal Application, the school reports that 99% of CSEE families agreed with the statement, "my child is safe at school" in its most recent family survey.

The school implements techniques from Franklin Covey's "The Leader in Me" to strengthen the school's behavior management methodology. The school reports and the CSO team observed on-site, a school culture that emphasizes a positive and proactive approach to student discipline according to the seven guiding principles of "The Leader in Me." Students participate in weekly instructional periods that utilize Covey's curriculum and CSEE leaders post visual reminders of the program's principles, including "Be Proactive," "Synergize," and "First Things First," around the school facility to further reinforce expectations. When disciplinary infractions do occur, teachers input the data into a schoolwide online

platform, which the school's guidance counselor monitors and uses to develop socio-emotional and/or behavior intervention strategies when necessary.
To ensure full compliance with the Dignity for All Students Act (DASA), the school reports in its Renewal Application that leadership provides all CSEE staff members with professional development around anti-bullying and harassment. DASA is also integrated into the school's Code of Conduct and consequence ladder. All classrooms observed during the visit appeared safe and free from bullying and harassment.

CSEE provides multiple ways to facilitate frequent communication and close relationships between leadership, teachers and families. These include regular emails, texts, school, and classroom newsletters. Teachers also update assessment and classwork grades to an accessible online platform in a timely manner. Interviewed parents unanimously expressed feeling grateful for the frequent communication. In addition, CSEE also employs a director of government, parents and external relations who liaises with families, school leadership, and the larger school community.

Four parents participated in the parent focus group with the CSO renewal site visit team. The attending parents were overwhelmingly positive in their comments about the school and the impact it has had on their children. Several recalled the lengths CSEE staff went to in order to remediate their children's academic deficiencies when they entered the school below grade level. Parents also found significant value in the school's athletic and other extra-curricular programs which effectively "develop role models."

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.

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

Summative Evidence for Benchmark 4:
Charter School of Educational Excellence 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 the Department's Office of Audit Services. 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. Charter School of Educational Excellence's composite score for 2015-2016 is 2.0. The table below shows the school's composite scores from 2013-2014 to 2015-2016.

Charter School of Educational Excellence's Composite Scores
2013-2014 to 2015-2016

Year	*Composite Score*
2015-2016	2.0
2014-2015	1.6
2013-2014	1.2

Source: NYSED Office of Audit Services

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 2015-2016, Charter School of Educational Excellence had a current ratio of 1.5.

Benchmark 5: Financial Management

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

Finding: Meets

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

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

Summative Evidence for Benchmark 5:

The Charter School Office reviewed Charter School of Educational Excellence's 2015-16 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.

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. b. The board engages in strategic and continuous improvement planning by setting priorities and goals that are aligned with the school's mission and educational philosophy. c. The board demonstrates active oversight of the charter school management, fiscal operations and progress toward meeting academic and other school goals. d. The board regularly updates school policies. e. The board utilizes a performance-based evaluation process for evaluating school leadership, itself and providers. f. The board demonstrates full awareness of its legal obligations to the school and stakeholders.

Summative Evidence for Benchmark 6:

The CSEE Board of Trustees continues to represent deep and sustained community ties. Comprised of a diverse group of members, including the original school founders and several longstanding Yonkers residents, its members collectively bring relevant skills and experiences to provide active oversight and financial stewardship over the school. Their skillsets and expertise include education, public relations, technology, budgeting and finance, construction and facilities management, community development, and food services. The board is currently soliciting two additional board members, with accounting and legal backgrounds, from within their personal and professional networks in the community. While board membership has remained stable over the course of the charter term, notwithstanding the inclusion of the current year's parent-teacher organization president, the board does maintain a system for adding and onboarding new trustees as necessary. The board currently has eight standing committees: executive, governance, finance, facilities, bylaw, fundraising, academic, and technology.

Through monthly meetings and an annual board retreat, trustees engage in strategic planning and goal-setting with school leadership, monitor a robust array of school and student data, and formally evaluate the school principal as well as themselves according to a defined and comprehensive set of criteria.
The board retains an attorney to annually review the school's policies and makes adjustments as needed to remain in compliance with applicable laws and regulations.

During the current charter term, the CSEE has aggressively monitored expenses to minimize costs wherever possible in order to direct more funds to the school's academic and student-centered programs.

Additionally, the board has continued to grapple with the issue of recruiting and retaining highly qualified staff. To address the salary gaps between the school and surrounding districts, the board recently increased teacher compensation by 7%. To acclimate new teachers to CSEE, the school provides experienced teachers as mentors. Teacher retention rates have increased significantly due to these efforts.

The school entered into a contract to purchase property without prior written approval from NYSED. In consultation with NYSED, they have revised their policies and procedures to ensure this does not happen in the future.

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

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. 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. c. The school has clear and well-established communication systems and decision-making processes in place which ensure effective communication across the school. 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. b. The school has established structures for frequent collaboration among teachers. c. The school ensures that staff has requisite skills, expertise, and professional development necessary to meet students' needs. 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. 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. b. Changes in the school's charter management or comprehensive service provider contract comply with required charter amendment procedures. c. The school monitors the efficacy of contracted service providers or partners.

Summative Evidence for Benchmark 7:

CSEE demonstrates stability in leadership and an organizational structure with sufficient capacity to effectively manage the school's academic program and operations functions. The school principal has fulfilled that role since 2013, and the school has established a robust instructional leadership team by promoting highly effective classroom teachers to oversight roles. Instructional leaders possess an average of 10 years of experience at the school. Interviewed staff reported they have a clear understanding of

their roles and responsibilities, as well as how they interrelate with others at the school, to drive continual improvement in student learning.

CSEE recruits teacher candidates through established pipelines with local colleges. The school provides regular professional development opportunities, uses clear criteria to evaluate all staff, and promotes from within whenever possible to fill vacancies. The school supports its assistant teachers in pursuing certification through tuition reimbursement and including them in all professional development offerings.

Teachers report high levels of professional satisfaction on surveys conducted by the school and NYSED Charter School Office (CSO). On the CSO administered anonymous survey, a large majority of teachers agreed that the school has systems in place to solicit staff feedback, found the teacher evaluation process to be comprehensive and fair, and reported experiencing quality professional development to improve their pedagogical skills on a regular basis. Teachers also report that school leaders underscore the importance of peer collaboration time by scheduling multiple common planning periods per week.

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. 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:

CSEE's mission and key design elements are fully incorporated into programmatic aspects across the school. School leaders prominently display references to "The Leader in Me" principles in hallways and classrooms to reinforce CSEE's high expectations for students' academic and behavioral performance. Since the school's inception, CSEE has provided students with significantly more instruction that other local schools due to the extended day and extended blocks of instructional time that allow for deeper inquiry into lesson content and hands-on activities. The consistent use of a standards-based and research-proven curriculum, as well as a large leadership team to provide robust oversight and teacher coaching, supports staff in developing lessons and strategies that meet students' diverse learning needs. Strategically placing assistant teachers in the primary grades, with shared assistants at the upper grade levels, allows for effective differentiation and keeps student-teacher ratios low. Lastly, CSEE provides rich opportunities for students to experience the arts through cross-curricular learning activities and projects are evident in the wealth of student artworks displayed around the school facility.

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: Meets

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. 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. 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.

Student Demographics –Charter School of Educational Excellence Compared to District of Location

	2015-2016			2016-2017		
	Charter School of Educational Excellence	Yonkers City School District	Variance	Charter School of Educational Excellence	Yonkers City School District	Variance
Students with Disabilities	8%	18%	-10	8%	18%	-10
English Language Learners	13%	15%	-2	12%	14%	-2
Economically Disadvantaged	84%	76%	+8	83%	76%	+8

In the 2016-2017 school year, 75% of students were retained in CSEE compared with 78% in the district of location.

Summative Evidence for Benchmark 9:

CSEE consistently meets the overall student enrollment projections outlined in the school's charter. As demonstrated in the table above, the school has met and exceeded its enrollment targets for economically disadvantaged students in each year of the charter term, with a steadily increasing margin of variance to its district of location. CSEE's ELL student population was on par with the district in the 2015-16 school year, but was under-enrolled by 4% in 2016-2017, with similar numbers self-reported in the Renewal Application for the 2017-18 school year. The school's SWD population continues to lag significantly behind the district of location- by 12 percentage points in 2016-17.

In the renewal application and during the renewal site visit, the board as well as school leaders described CSEE's good faith efforts to increase ELL and SWD enrollment rates. This year, the school invested in a promotional video to spread the word about CSEE to all community stakeholders, potential students, and their families. In addition, school leaders maintain relationships with community-based organizations, make frequent presentations at churches, distribute informational materials and applications at area supermarkets, the YMCA, and various street fairs. To engage specially with English language learner families, the school publishes advertisements in Spanish language newspapers, distributes materials at Mexican restaurants and makes monthly presentations at the Mexican Chamber of Commerce. To connect with SWD and their families, CSEE maintains a relationship with Greyston Learning Center and Andrus, two local organizations that serve students with disabilities, as well as frequent communication with the Yonkers Public Library's resource teacher. If these strategies do not yield sufficient results, the board intends to consider utilizing a lottery preference to increase enrollment of EL and SWDs.

Benchmark 10: Legal Compliance

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

Finding: Approaches

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. b. The school has undertaken appropriate corrective action when needed, and has implemented necessary safeguards to maintain compliance with all legal requirements. c. The school has sought Board of Regents and/or Charter School Office approval for significant revisions.

Summative Evidence for Benchmark 10:

Over the charter term, CSEE has generally demonstrated substantial compliance with applicable laws and the provisions of its charter. The school abides by the General Municipal Law in any situations in which a conflict of interest may be present and follows the Open Meetings Law to facilitate community stakeholder participation. The school actively protects the rights of students and staff through regularly updated code of conduct and policies. However, the school's board of trustees did not follow the appropriate procedures to gain CSO approval prior to purchasing property to house its proposed high school program. Failure to secure a significant revision for this large expenditure demonstrates patent non-compliance with the terms of the charter agreement.