New York State Education Department

Renewal Site Visit Report
2019-2020

Charter School of Inquiry

Visit Date: October 24, 2019 – October 25, 2019
Date of Report: February 11, 2020

Charter School Office
89 Washington Avenue
Albany, New York 12234
charterschools@nysed.gov
518-474-1762

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SCHOOL DESCRIPTION **2**

METHODOLOGY **4**

BENCHMARK ANALYSIS **6**

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS 8
BENCHMARK 1: STUDENT PERFORMANCE 9
BENCHMARK 2: TEACHING AND LEARNING 11
BENCHMARK 3: CULTURE, CLIMATE AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT 15
BENCHMARK 4: FINANCIAL CONDITION 19
BENCHMARK 5: FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT 20
BENCHMARK 6: BOARD OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNANCE 21
BENCHMARK 7: ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY 23
BENCHMARK 8: MISSION AND KEY DESIGN ELEMENTS 26
BENCHMARK 9: ENROLLMENT, RECRUITMENT, AND RETENTION 28
BENCHMARK 10: LEGAL COMPLIANCE 30

ATTACHMENT 1: BENCHMARKS 1 AND 9 DATA 31

ATTACHMENT 2: CHARTER SCHOOLS FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY SUMMARY DASHBOARD 35

SCHOOL DESCRIPTION

Charter School Summary[1]

Name of Charter School	Charter School of Inquiry
Board Chair	Helene Kramer
District of location	Buffalo Public Schools
Opening Date	Fall 2015
Charter Terms	August 24, 2015 – June 30, 2020
Current Term Authorized Grades/ Approved Enrollment	K – Grade 6/ 350 students
Proposed Renewal Term Authorized Grades/ Proposed Approved Enrollment	K – Grade 6/ 350 students
Comprehensive Management Service Provider	None
Facilities	404 Edison Avenue, Buffalo, New York 14215 - Private Space
Mission Statement	*The Charter School of Inquiry is an innovative school where children achieve breakthrough outcomes by pursuing questions, thinking creatively and learning together as a culturally empowered community.*
Key Design Elements	• Rigorous, Inquiry-based Curriculum • Academic Focus on Literacy • Responsive Classroom • Collaborative Team-teaching • Data-driven Instruction • African/African American History and Culture • Integrated Visual Arts/Music in extended-day enrichment program
Requested Revisions	None

Noteworthy: Charter School of Inquiry (CSI) proposes to help students "gain a better understanding of African and African American people and their contributions to the world." The school has created a list of lesson plan topics through which African and African American people, history and events can be infused into lessons.

Renewal Outcomes

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

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

[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

Current Grade Levels and Approved Enrollment

	Year 1 2015 to 2016	**Year 2 2016 to 2017**	**Year 3 2017 to 2018**	**Year 4 2018 to 2019**	**Year 5 2019 to 2020**
Grade Configuration	K-Grade 2	K-Grade 3	K-Grade 4	K-Grade 5	K-Grade 6
Total Approved Enrollment	98	200	250	300	350

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

	Year 1 2020 to 2021	Year 2 2021 to 2022	Year 3 2022 to 2023	Year 4 2023 to 2024	Year 5 2024 to 2025
Grade Configuration	K-Grade 6	K-Grade 6	K-Grade 6	K-Grade 6	K-Grade 6
Total Proposed Enrollment	332	344	350	350	350

METHODOLOGY

A two-day renewal site visit was conducted at Charter School of Inquiry on October 24, 2019 - October 25, 2019. The New York State Education Department's Charter School Office (CSO) team conducted interviews with the board of trustees, school leadership team, and teachers. In cooperation with school leadership, the CSO administered an anonymous online survey to teachers.

The team conducted sixteen classroom observations in K- Grade 6. The observations were approximately 20 minutes in length and conducted jointly with the inquiry coach; the literacy coach, and the mathematics teacher mentor.

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

a. **Current organizational chart** showing all key staff positions, names of staff in those positions, and the school's reporting structure;
b. **A master school schedule** showing each class, grade or course, and teacher(s). Note what days are A, B, C days and which classrooms include ELLs/MLLs andSWDs;
c. **A map of the school** showing a basic floor plan, including classroom numbers, teacher names, and offices;
d. **Board materials**, strategic plan (if applicable), and a narrative describing the board's self-evaluation process;
e. Narrative describing the process used to evaluate school leadership;
f. Narrative describing the process school leadership uses to evaluateteachers;
g. A summary of the school administered teacher, parent/student surveys;
h. NYSED CSO Parent Survey and NYSED CSO TeacherSurvey;
i. Narrative describing the school's progress and efforts made toward reaching its enrollment and retention targets *(including ELLs/MLLs, SWDs, EDs; if the school is not meeting its targets, describe the efforts made to do so, the evaluation of those efforts, and the results of the evaluation.)***;**
j. **Admissions and Waitlist**;
k. **Faculty/Staff Roster**;

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

l. **Professional development calendar for 2018-2019, summer 2019, and planned for 2019-2020;**
m. **Board minutes for the preceding year;**
n. **Minutes of the academic committee of the board for October 18,2019;**
o. **Minutes of the CSI hearing at the Buffalo Public School Committee October 2,2019;**
p. **Job descriptions for coaches and mentors;**
q. **List of African and African American topics covered in lesson plans during 2018-2019 and list of library books featuring African and African American authors, topics and events;** and
r. **Follow up memo from the CSO classroom observation visit in September 2019.**

BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

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

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

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

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

For the site visit conducted from October 24, 2019 to October 25, 2019 at Charter School of Inquiry see the following Performance Framework benchmark ratings and narrative.

New York State Education Department
Charter School Performance Framework Rating

	Performance Benchmark	Level
Educational Success	**Benchmark 1: Student Performance:** The school has met or exceeded achievement indicators for academic trends toward proficiency, proficiency, and high school graduation. At all grade levels and all assessments, scoring proficiently means achieving a performance level of 3 or higher (high school Regents and Common Core Regents exam score of 65 or higher).	Falls Far 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.	Approaches
	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.	Approaches
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.	Approaches
	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.	Approaches
Faithfulness to Charter	**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.	Falls Far Below
	Benchmark 9: Enrollment, Recruitment, and Retention: The school is meeting or making annual progress toward meeting the enrollment plan outlined in its charter and its enrollment and retention targets for students with disabilities, English language learners, and students who are eligible applicants for the free and reduced priced lunch program; or has demonstrated that it has made extensive good faith efforts to attract, recruit, and retain such students.	Approaches
	Benchmark 10: Legal Compliance: The school complies with applicable laws, regulations, and the provisions of its charter.	Meets

Summary of Findings

- The Charter School of Inquiry (CSI) is in year 5 of operation and serves students in K- Grade 6. During its current charter term, the school is rated in the following manner: exceeding 0 benchmarks, meeting 3 benchmarks, approaching 5 benchmarks, and falling far below 2 benchmarks. Additional details regarding those ratings are provided below.

- **Areas of Strengths**:

  CSI has effectively managed its finances and has received a composite score of 2.41 and 2.93 for the past two years. The school promptly responded to findings from the NYS Comptroller's Office 2019 audit and initiated procedures to correct residency and billing concerns. While the school remains below its chartered enrollment, for 2019-2020 it is fully enrolled in kindergarten and Grades 1 and 3; and for the first time has a waiting list for those grades. For the past two years the school has enrolled a higher percentage of economically disadvantaged students than the Buffalo Public Schools (BPS).

- **Areas in Need of Improvement**:

  - On the New York State assessments, the percentage of proficient students in the "all students" category at CSI is below the that of the district and the state and has declined over the charter term in both English language arts (ELA) and mathematics.
  - As observed during the renewal site visit, classroom instruction focused on basic recall skills and did not provide opportunities for students to build deep conceptual understanding of complex concepts.
  - Lesson plans did not reflect the inquiry model defined by the school in its charter. The school recently established a student support team but continues to address student social-emotional needs on a one-to-one basis.
  - Few parents responded to the NYSED CSO Parent Survey and school administered surveys yielding insufficient evidence to draw reliable conclusions about familysatisfaction.
  - In addition to board and school leader turnover, CSI has experienced high levels of teacher turnover across its charter term.
  - While the new leaders are putting new practices and procedures in place, the impact of these practices on student success is not yet evident.
  - CSI has not established the central components of its mission and key design elements, rigorous inquiry-based curriculum and culturally empowered community.
  - The school enrolls far fewer students with disabilities (SWDs) and English language learners (ELLs) /Multilingual learners (MLLs) than BPS and retains fewer students than BPS.

Benchmark 1: Student Performance

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

Finding: Falls Far Below

Academic Program for Elementary School/Middle School:

CSI assigns two adults to each classroom, a lead teacher and a teaching assistant. To provide additional learning time and small group instruction, students are scheduled for two periods of ELA and two periods of math a day, one of which is designated "workshop." Students needing academic support meet with interventionists and special educators during workshop time.

In 2019-2020, the school changed its English language arts (ELA) curriculum from the Engage NY modules to *Open Court*. The math curriculum changed in 2019-2020 and currently consists of *Math Expressions* and *Do the Math*. Teachers use the *Full Option Science System* (FOSS) program for science instruction, and teachers are expected to infuse African and African American history and culture topics into the Engage NY social studies modules. In addition to ELA, math, science and social studies, CSI students have music, art, and physical education on an alternating schedule.

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

The school employs a consultant teacher (CT) model to support its SWDs. An English as a New Language (ENL) teacher pushes into classrooms to work with the ELL/MLL students enrolled at CSI.

Summative Evidence for Benchmark 1:

In light of its academic performance, CSI is designated a school in need of Comprehensive Support and Improvement under New York State criteria as defined by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. In 2017-2018, CSI was required by the Charter School Office (CSO) to develop a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) to address the poor academic performance of its students. On the latest state assessments (spring 2019), CSI scored below BPS by three percentage points in ELA and five percentage points in math and below the state average by 17 percentage points in ELA and 24 percentage points in math. Over the charter term, outcomes for CSI students have declined in both ELA and math, dropping from 19% proficient in ELA for the first year (2016-2017) to 17% in 2018-2019. Math outcomes also dropped, from 32% proficient in 2016-2017 to 14% meeting the standard in 2018-2019.

Only 27% of CSI students demonstrated progress toward proficiency in ELA in 2018-2019, fewer than the 31% who were showing progress in the preceding year. In math, 16% demonstrated progress, down from 27% in the previous year. None of the school's SWD showed progress in 2018-2019 and the school enrolled too few ELL/MLL students to report. These results are below the 75% minimum expectation set in the Charter School Performance Framework.

For the first cohort of CSI students to take the New York State assessments, performance declined between third and fourth and fourth and fifth grades. Nineteen percent of third graders who were tested

in 2016-2017 demonstrated proficiency, dropping to 18% in their fourth-grade year and dropping to 15% proficient in fifth grade. In mathematics, 32% of third graders in 2016-2017 were proficient, dropping to 26% in fourth grade and to 3% proficient as fifth graders. In Attachment 1, Table 3 shows the corresponding changes in the gap between CSI outcomes and BPS compared to state averages. Whereas CSI third graders were 10 percentage points above the BPS average in 2016-2017, as fifth graders they are 17 percentage points below their BPS grade level peers.

In contrast, third graders tested in 2017-2018 scored 13% proficient in ELA and as fourth graders in 2018-2019 scored at 25% proficient. In mathematics, the 2017-2018 third graders were 7% proficient, rising to 18% as fourth graders when tested in 2018-2019. Both groups of students remain below the district and State average, but the differential has been reduced.

See Attachment 1 for data tables and additional academic information.

Benchmark 2: Teaching and Learning

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

Finding: Approaches

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. e. The curriculum is systematically reviewed and revised.
2. Instruction	a. The school staff has a common understanding of high-quality instruction, and observed instructional practices align to this understanding. 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:

1. **Element: *Curriculum***:
   - **Indicator a:** According to the renewal application, CSI adopted the Engage NY modules as its core curriculum in ELA, mathematics and social studies at the start of its charter term. The renewal application states that the school uses the FOSS science kits to support the science curriculum developed by its partner, Firsthand Learning. In interviews and the renewal documents, leaders reported that the school determined the modules were not addressing student needsand the

board adopted *Open Court* as an ELA resource starting this year (2019-2020). In board and school leader focus groups , it was explained that *Open Court* was chosen because it provides supports for teachers and strategies to differentiate instruction. School leaders reported that the school has contracted with BOCES to work with teachers to align *Open Court* with the New York Learning Standards (NYSLS). School leaders confirmed that the school purchased *Math Expressions* and *Do the Math* for the mathematics curriculum.

- **Indicator b:** Teachers provided lesson plans for the 16 classes observed by the renewal site visit team. While the plans described strategies to engage students in "math talk" and similar activities delving into complex concepts, the team observed few instances where the lessons were executed as described. For example, in one ELA class, students were scheduled to engage in a debate; however, teacher instruction and feedback to students focused on following the rules of the debate rather than on the content of the discussion. Plans for a math class mentioned "math talk" among students, but the lesson consisted of the teacher reiterating the steps to solve the practice problem with few opportunities for students to speak. Lesson plans for some of the primary grade ELA classes listed foundational skills – decoding, listening, vocabulary development – as the primary objective with little time allocated to activities requiring complex thinking or responding.
- **Indicator c:** School leaders mentioned in interviews that CSI contracts with BOCES to work with teachers to align the curriculum with the NYSLS. On the NYSED CSO survey, teachers report they are scheduled to meet with their grade-level colleagues daily and also report they meet informally before or after school to share lesson plans. The format of lesson plans provided to the renewal team varied from teacher to teacher but addressed similar topics within a grade level, reflecting some alignment. On the NYSED CSO survey, teachers commented that they have few opportunities to meet across grade levels to align curriculum between grades beyond the monthly professional development days and staff meetings.
- **Indicator d:** According to board and school leader focus groups and the renewal application, the CSI curriculum materials were chosen because they include resources for new or beginning teachers such as strategies to differentiate learning activities so that all students can master grade level skills and concepts. Many of the lesson plans reviewed by the renewal visit team list strategies such as small group work and support from the teaching assistant or CT to differentiate the learning experience for students. Renewal site visit team members observed some instances of students working in groups, but in the majority of classes all students were engaged in the same task and were expected to complete the same assignments at the samepace.
- **Indicator e:** In focus groups conducted during the site visit, CSI school leaders and board members described establishing a curriculum committee in 2018-2019 to determine if the existing curriculum was the best option for CSI students. As described in the renewal application and focus group interviews, the committee analyzed student outcomes on state assessments and on internal measures and identified gaps in the coverage of foundational skills in the Engage NY modules. The committee presented recommendations to the academic committee of the board for the purchase of additional resources which were accepted. In addition, the committee recommended more collaboration among the Response to Intervention (RTI) teachers, special education teachers, and classroom teachers with the aim of strengthening Tier 1 and classroom level instruction, and to reduce reliance on Tier 2 and 3 interventions. The new resources in ELA and math have been put in place for the current school year but their impact on student outcomes is unclear at this time.

2. **Element: *Instruction***:
   - **Indicator a:** In the focus group, school leaders indicated they are working toward a common understanding of what inquiry-based instruction looks like, explaining they are in the process of developing rubrics to track the practices used in classes to establish common expectations of rigorous instruction. On the May 2019 NYSED CSO survey, teachers described academically rigorous lessons to include engaging students in problem solving and answering their own questions. Teachers noted that students would be working collaboratively and responding to higher order questions. However, most lesson activities across the sixteen classes observed by the renewal site visit team were whole class, teacher-led instruction with simple questions and answers requiring short student responses. In their focus group, board members stated that each class should have a "question wall" where questions generated by students are posted. The renewal site visit team did not observe any examples of question walls in the classrooms they observed.
   - **Indicator b:** In five of the 16 classes observed by the renewal site visit team, students were obedient to teachers' instructions and participated in the task assigned. In nine other classes, some students were inattentive, distracted or off task. While students were mostly obedient, there were few student-initiated questions or extended responses to teacher questions that would provide evidence that students were cognitively engaged in the subject. The findings of the renewal site visit team parallel the findings of the CSO visit conducted in September 2019 at the request of the school. Instruction and classroom activities did not reflect the inquiry-based approach listed as a key design element of the school.

3. Element: *Assessment and Program Evaluation*:
   - **Indicator a:** According to the renewal documents and the leadership focus group, CSI uses a variety of formative, diagnostic and summative assessments although their use is inconsistent. Focus groups for school leaders and the board confirmed information provided in the renewal documents that the school upgraded its benchmark assessment tool to AIMSWeb Plus because it is more closely aligned with the NYS assessments. The renewal application reported that teachers use exit tickets from the Engage NY modules as formative assessments of student learning and the unit assessments from the modules as the summative measure of student mastery. On the NYSED CSO survey, teachers reported they use exit ticket assessments to determine whether to reteach or move on with the curriculum. However, the most common assessment of student learning mentioned in lesson plans provided to the renewal site visit team were teacher observation, student responses to questions, and assessment of group participation rather than exit tickets.
   - **Indicator b:** In their focus group, CSI leaders explained that the BOCES consultant contracted by the school guides teachers in analyzing student data and in adjusting instruction to improve student outcomes. On the NYSED CSO survey, teachers confirmed they use data to group students and to track progress, particularly for those students receiving additional support from the RTI/ intervention teachers.
   - **Indicator c:** In their focus groups both board members and school leaders explained that the CSI curriculum committee used state assessment results, item analyses, and regional comparisons to determined that the Engage NY modules, the curriculum used in the first years of the school's operation, were not adequate to serve the needs of CSI students. The decision to implement *Open Court* for ELA and *Math Expressions* in 2019-2020 were based on thoseanalyses.

4. **Element:** ***Supports for Diverse Learners***:
   - **Indicator a:** According to the school's renewal documents, the school leadership focus group, and the NYSED CSO teacher survey, CSI provides support for the diverse academic needs of students through the deployment of CTs and RTI interventionists. The ENL teacher works with the ELL/MLL students in their regular classrooms so that students are exposed to the full range of grade level content.

     The New York State Education Department's (NYSED) Office of Special Education has completed its Charter School Review at CSI. As a result of this Review, it has been determined that the school's policies, procedures, and practices are in compliance with New York State regulatory requirements. A separate letter will be issued from the Special Education Quality Assurance (SEQA) Western Regional Office. No further action is required of the school at this time.
     During this review, information was gathered through classroom visits, interviews and an examination of program records. A total of six classroom observations were completed and eight interviews were conducted with charter administration, special education teachers, and general education teachers. A review of program records and staff interviews demonstrates the school has established procedures to ensure that individualized education programs (IEPs) are accessible to staff members. Additionally, teachers and providers responsible for IEP implementation are informed of their responsibilities. Lastly, after completing six classroom visits, the school ensures that students with disabilities are provided the special education programs and services specified on the students' IEPs.
   - **Indicator b:** In its focus group, staff supporting special populations of students described their use of AIMSWeb Plus as a benchmark and progress tracking tool to determine if students are succeeding in the regular classroom (RTI Tier 1) or whether they need additional support at either Tier 2 or Tier 3. RTI interventionists and CTs reported they meet with the grade level teams before or after school and at other times as needed to confer on curriculum content and skills. RTI teachers noted that they primarily focus on remediation of foundational skills so their instruction may differ from classroom content. They confirmed that students are exposed to their grade-level content during their core ELA class and receive remedial instruction in basic skills during the ELA workshop class.

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

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. The school communicates with and engages families with the school community. b. Teachers communicate with parents to discuss students' strengths andneeds. c. The school assesses family and student satisfaction using strategies such as surveys, feedback sessions, community forums, or participation logs, and considers results when making schoolwide decisions. d. The school has a systematic process for responding to family or community concerns. e. The school shares school-level academic data with the broader school community to promote transparency and accountability among parents, students and school constituents.
3. Social-Emotional Supports	a. The school has systems or programs in place to support the social-emotional needs of students. b. School leaders collect and use data to track the socio-emotional needs of students. c. School leaders collect and use data regarding the impact of programs designed to support students' social and emotional health.

Summative Evidence for Benchmark 3:

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

- **Indicator a:** School documents and school leaders reported that CSI adopted the responsive classroom model to establish and maintain a positive school climate. The CSI website includes a code of conduct and discipline policy which outlines expectations and consequences. School leaders confirmed the responsibilities of the newly created position of student support coordinator include ensuring that responsive classroom principles are in place. In the renewal application, the school acknowledged lapses in the effective implementation of responsive classroom in prior years which led to disruptive behavior and student suspensions. The school contracts with a responsive classroom consultant four weeks a year to train or retrain staff. On

the NYSED CSO survey, 15 of the 21 responding teachers agreed that the school's discipline policy is consistently applied, while six disagreed. In the focus group, the student support team described revisions to their reporting and feedback practices to respond to teachers' concerns about follow-up on discipline referrals.

- **Indicator b:** Twenty-two of the 23 parents responding to the NYSED CSO survey agreed that the school provides a safe environment and 19 of the 21 teachers agreed that teacher-student interactions are supportive and respectful. The members of the student support team described practices being put into place to ensure a safe environment and detailed the personnel responsible for overseeing implementation of the new practices. The board posts its safety plan on the school website.
- **Indicator c:** The CSI renewal application refers to the responsive classroom as the core set of practices that ensure the school is free from harassment and bullying. In the student support team interview, school staff reported that the student code of conduct is distributed to all students and includes definitions and consequences for bullying behavior. On the NYSED CSO survey, teachers agreed that the discipline policy is clearly explained and updated when necessary. Student support staff also cited the daily morning meeting as an opportunity for teachers to reinforce expected behavior with students at a level appropriate to their age. Twenty-two of the 23 parents responding to the NYSED CSO survey agreed that the school has an effective process for dealing with bullying and harassment, and 17 of the 21 teachers responding to the survey said that the school is generally free of bullying, discrimination and harassment ofstudents.
- **Indicator d:** Each of the 16 classes visited by the renewal site visit team were orderly and well-managed. While some students were distracted or inattentive during the lesson, there were no instances of disruptive behavior observed by the team. All 23 parents surveyed agreed that classroom environments support learning and are generally free from disruption. In the focus groups school leaders and staff reported fewer discipline referrals this year compared with previous years. The report to the board in September 2019 lists three suspensions that month but does not provide comparisons to prior years or details on the infraction leading to the suspension.

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

- **Indicator a:** The renewal application describes communication with families via newsletters and correspondence packets to share class work. In the focus group, school leaders reported using the website and Facebook page to communicate with families and the community. However, at the time of the site visit, the school's website contained inaccurate and incomplete information. The "Learn more" link on the home page takes the viewer to a different version of the school's mission with no additional details about the school. The "CSI News" block on the homepage lists events that occurred the prior year. The "Students and Parents" tab presents a form to ask a question or contact the parent association but offers no helpful details about the school. The admissions application on the web page is available in English and Spanish, although school leaders reported that the newest ELL/ MLL students at the school are Bengali. School leaders described revisions to their reporting and feedback practices to respond to teachers' concerns about follow-up on discipline referrals.
- **Indicator b:** On the NYSED CSO survey, all 21 of the teachers responding agreed that teachers regularly communicate with families on issues related to academics. Similarly, 22 of the 23 responding parents agreed that teachers and other staff communicate regularly with families. In the renewal application, the school states that teachers prepare classroom newsletters about class activities to go home to families. In the focus group, the student support team said they confer with parents often regarding discipline, behavior, attendance, academics and the interventions proposed to help the child succeed.

- **Indicator c:** According to the renewal application, CSI contracts with Daemen College to conduct annual student, parent and staff surveys to assess school climate, the academic program, and overall satisfaction. A report provided with the renewal documents shows higher positive ratings among students and staff on the 2018-2019 survey than for the preceding year, while parent responses were consistently positive both years. Teacher and student ratings were generally lower than those of parents; however, only 16 parents responded to this survey, a sample too small to draw reliable conclusions about family satisfaction. Participation logs for family events were not available for review by the site visit team to gauge the level of family involvement in school life.
- **Indicator d:** In the focus group interview, board members pointed out that the school's complaint policy is posted on the website. The renewal application did not report the school's process for responding to family or community concerns. Board members claimed in their focus group that students are safe and that families are happy because they see their children growing and making progress. They cited that the parent representative on the board provides insight into family concerns that are brought directly to board attention.
- **Indicator e:** In contrast to statements in the CSI renewal application, a link to the school's New York State Report Card could not be found on the school's website. The renewal application states that the school provides state and school-administered test results to families for their individual child but neither school leaders nor the board reported that the school shares school-level academic data with the broader school community. Despite these reports from school staff, eighteen of the 23 parents responding to the NYSED CSO survey said that the school informs parents how it performs compared to other schools in the district and New York State, while five parents disagreed.

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

- **Indicator a:** According to the student support team focus group, CSI uses a collection of strategies to support the social-emotional needs of students. The foundation of the school's culture and climate practices are the responsive classroom principles. Morning meeting provides an opportunity for teachers and the support team staff to observe student demeanor and behavior to anticipate issues needing intervention. The social worker and student support coordinator work with the special education coordinator and coaches to monitor student attendance and discipline referrals and share responsibility for responding to concerns. The student support team explained it has begun systematizing its work this year, beginning with documenting student interactions, staff responses, and sharing information with staff. The student support team engages with families and external providers as needs warrant. The school's plan detailed in its renewal documents to contract for additional mental health services had not been finalized at the time of the renewal visit.
- **Indicator b:** As noted previously, staff on the student support team are beginning to collect data on interventions designed to address students' social-emotional needs for each individual child with whom the team interacts. The school does not have a system in place to collect school-wide data to assess student's social-emotional well-being. Staff on the student support team reported in the focus group that many of their students experience trauma of varying types and display evidence of the negative impact of family and community dysfunction. The school social worker and school support coordinator address trauma-induced issues as identified for individual children. Teachers experience professional development related to restorative justice practices, the effects of poverty and trauma, and trauma sensitive classrooms, provided by experts in these fields.

- **Indicator c:** According to school documents and focus group discussions, the responsive classroom model is intended to address student social and emotional well-being through classroom activities including morning meeting and closing circles. According to student support staff, the school contracts with a consultant to visit the school four times a year to monitor implementation of responsive classroom practices. However, feedback from the consultant is focused on teacher implementation of responsive classroom as a management tool to maintain a positive learning climate. The school does not have measures to assess the impact of its practices on student social-emotional health beyond the individual services the team provides. In the focus group, school leaders shared tools they are in the process of developing to collect additional data on responsive classroom practices.

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 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

See the school's fiscal dashboard attached to the end of this report (Charter School Fiscal Accountability Summary). The fiscal dashboard provides detailed information regarding the school's compliance with Benchmark 4 of the Charter School Performance Framework.

Financial Condition

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

Overall Financial Outlook

A *composite score* is an overall measure of financial health. This score is based on a weighting of primary reserves, equity, and net income. A charter school with a score between 1.5 and 3.0 is considered to be in good financial health. Charter School of Inquiry's 2018-2019 composite score is 3.00.

Composite Scores
2015-2016 to 2018-2019

Year	*Composite Score*
2015-2016	.95
2016-2017	2.41
2017-2018	2.93
2018-2019	3.00

Benchmark 5: Financial Management

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

Finding: Meets

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

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

The Charter School Office reviewed Charter School of Inquiry's 2017-2018 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.

In 2017, OSC (http://www.osc.state.ny.us/localgov/audits/schools/2017/charter-inquiry.htm) conducted an audit of the school with the purpose to examine student enrollment and billings processes for the period July 1, 2015 thru February 2, 2017. The findings were:

- The school must follow its policies and procedures properly;
- The school must follow its internal controls systems properly;
- Arrange for access to 2015-2016 student attendance records from the previous student data management software vendor; and
- Ensure the school complies with SED regulations for records retention and disposition.

The school agreed with the audited financial findings and submitted a corrective action plan to OSC to address these findings.

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: Approaches

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:

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

- **Indicator a:** In the renewal application and their focus group, the CSI board of trustees detailed the regular and ongoing recruitment of new members needed to govern the school. The board has experienced turnover during its history; renewal documents show that nine members have left the board over the five-year term and 18 have joined. According to school documents, the board began the charter term with five members and, at the time of the renewal application, was led by nine members, with September 2019 board minutes indicating a tenth member accepted and documents submitted to CSO for approval. The renewal application mentions consultations with non-profit organizations and community and personal relationships as the primary means for identifying prospective members.
- **Indicator b**: The board has reviewed a strategic plan developed in the spring of 2017, concluding it had been completed. At a retreat held in summer 2019, with the support of Education Board Partners, developed new goals for the 2019-2020 school year. Going forward, the next steps include employing the services of an experienced consultant to conduct a school quality review for the purposes of creating goals for a strategic plan for the next three years.

- **Indicator c**: The board oversees the organizational and fiscal operations of the school and monitors the school's progress toward its academic goals through committee meetings and monthly reports from school leaders. A "dashboard" report lists enrollment by grade level and by classification, disciplinary actions, and attendance. Staff resignations, new hires and open positions are included on the dashboard. The board receives academic performance data from school leaders. However, board minutes and the school's Benchmark 1 narrative indicate that the board may be drawing conclusions about school performance from its internal data that are inconsistent with student performance on state assessments. For example, CSI students who scored at Level 2 on the state assessments are described as "on track to proficiency," a description that contrasts with the NYS performance level definition of Level 2 as "partial proficiency" insufficient to meet state standards.
- **Indicator d**: In the renewal application, the board included an extensive list of policies that have been revised and updated across the charter term. Board minutes confirm that revised policies are presented by committees for approval and adoption by the full board. The board committees take primary responsibility for keeping policies up to date. The board attorney attends most monthly meetings and advises the board on the legal requirements related to the policychanges.
- **Indicator e:** A formal board self-evaluation was completed in 2016 and a detailed case study was completed in 2017 according to the school's renewal documents. A diagnostic review conducted by Education Board Partners took place in December 2018. Implementation continues, and the board participates in additional training sessions, some focused on NYSED CSO requirements and others related to honing their board governance skills.
- **Indicator f:** Board minutes include monthly reminders to the board about conflicts of interest declarations. The board's attorney attends most monthly meetings and advises the board on legal issues related to its work.

Benchmark 7: Organizational Capacity

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

Finding: Approaches

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:

1. **Element:** ***School Leadership***

- **Indicator a:** Over the charter term, CSI has undergone several leadership transitions. The current leadership team has been in place since 2018 and consists of the head of school, the director of operations, student support coordinator, social worker, special education coordinator, the inquiry coach and the literacy coach. In their focus group, board members stated that the current school leader has hired staff and put systems in place that they believe will lead to student success. The leadership team described a number of programs, practices and procedures that are in theearly

stages of implementation or are still under development, including the newly adopted curriculum materials, instructional practice rubrics, and classroom climate monitoring tools. Because these strategies are in the early stages of implementation, their impact on student outcomes is uncertain at this time.

- **Indicator b:** Focus groups conducted with board members and school staff indicated an understanding of the scope of responsibility for each of the leaders, directors and managers at CSI. The school provided written job descriptions for the coaches and mentor teachers detailing their responsibilities to monitor classroom activities in order to ensure instructional quality and curriculum fidelity. The student support team members described their individual roles in ensuring a safe school climate. In the special populations focus group, staff members explained the different roles of special educators and RTI teachers in supporting student learning. In the renewal documents, board members reported the findings of their 2018 evaluation which included clarification of the role of the board in governing rather than managing the school. In renewal documents and the board focus group, the school acknowledged that clarity around roles and responsibilities is a recent change and they assert it is a promising step toward improving school performance.
- **Indicator c:** According to the renewal application, formal communication between staff and leaders takes place at monthly staff meetings, during common planning time, and in professional development sessions as well as informally by email and face to face. On the NYSED CSO survey, teachers mention that school leaders visit classes often and confer with staff regularly. During the renewal site visit, school leaders were observed stopping in at morning meeting and regular classroom sessions. Teachers reported they have input on school decisions and on the topics for professional development under the new leader. Teachers also have input into school decisions through their collective bargaining unit.
- **Indicator d:** In the focus groups and the renewal application, the school acknowledged high rates of teacher turnover. The school's renewal documents indicate that 17 of 28 (60%) instructional staff left the school in 2017-2018. The renewal application and focus groups with board and school leaders assert that turnover has been reduced, and the data provided by the school shows nine instructional staff leaving during or at the end of 2018-2019, including four resignations and two terminations. Board minutes and dashboard reports for 2019-2020 note several resignations in September. Four instructional positions remain vacant, including fifth grade, special education, a music teacher and a librarian. None of these openings were posted on the school's website at the time of the renewal site visit. In the renewal application, the school described its hiring process and reported that the BOCES job board has been a helpful tool for identifying prospective teachers.

2. **Element:** ***Professional Climate***

- **Indicator a:** A staff roster provided by the school lists job titles, responsibilities, and certifications for the instructional staff. While most teaching assistants are in the process of qualifying for certification, all the lead teachers, special educators and intervention teachers hold appropriate certification for their roles. The school coaches responsible for supporting effective instruction and curriculum implementation each have special education teaching experience and academic credentials related to their scope of work. The renewal application notes that the school contracts with outside consultants to assist the director of operations oversee human resources needs and financial management. As noted above, on the most recent dashboard presented to the board at the September 2019 meeting, three instructional and one support staff position remain unfilled.

- **Indicator b:** Collaboration among teachers at each grade level takes place during daily common planning time, according to the renewal application. During some common planning sessions, teachers meet with the BOCES consultant or with the coaches to examine student data and create instructional plans targeted to student needs. On the NYSED CSO survey, teachers noted they meet with RTI and special education staff for their grade level to review student progress. Monthly staff meetings and professional development days provide additional opportunities for teacher collaboration around school programs and practices.
- **Indicator c:** In the focus groups, school leaders and instructional staff reported regular professional development opportunities including eight days in the summer prior to the start of the school year and half days throughout the school year. According to the schedule provided by the school, the August 2019 professional development included sessions on responsive classroom differentiated for new staff and returning staff, as well as introductory sessions for the new ELA and math curriculum materials, *Open Court* and *Math Expressions*. The BOCES consultant led a two-hour session on effective assessment and the school leader provided FERPA, DASA and emergency procedures updates. The school is in the process of developing rubrics to monitor whether instructional practices defined in the professional development training sessions are being implemented in the classroom. The school did not provide a description of its process for orienting new staff hired after the summer training.
- **Indicator d:** The formal process for evaluating teachers is based on the Danielson Rubric according to the renewal application and the NYSED CSO teacher survey. Teachers mentioned feedback on lesson plans as a way of monitoring instructional practices. According to the renewal application and focus groups, the school is in the process of developing rubrics to ensure that feedback is consistent among the coaches, mentors and consultants who observe classrooms. As a core part of the school's instructional model, each classroom is staffed by a lead teacher and a teaching assistant. The renewal site visit team noted variations in the work of the teaching assistants. The process for evaluating the teaching assistants is not defined in the school's renewal application or other documents available for review. In the focus group, the student support staff said they were not aware of their evaluation criteria and indicated they have not yet been formally evaluated.
- **Indicator e:** According to the renewal application, the school contracts with an outside consultant to conduct an annual staff survey. Results of the survey provided as part of the renewal application show higher positive ratings for 2018-2019 than for the preceding year. On the NYSED survey, 18 of the 21 respondents agreed that the school solicits staff feedback both formally and informally, and teachers noted the opportunity to participate in committees as a way to provide input into school decisions. Seventeen of the 21 teachers responding to the NYSED CSO survey said the school is a long-term option for them, and the four who disagreed or weren't sure cited salary and lack of participation in the NYS teacher retirement system as challenges to their continuing. In documents submitted with the renewal application, the board indicated that staff retention has been listed as a topic for training at a future date with the help of Charter Board Partners.

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

Not Applicable.

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: Falls Far Below

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:

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

- **Indicator a:** On the NYSED CSO surveys conducted in May 2019, teachers and most parents agreed that the school's mission is clear. Teachers frequently mentioned inquiry teaching, responsive classroom, and the infusion of African and African American culture and history as central elements to the CSI educational program. Two parents indicated they were not familiar with the mission and one responded that the school was not fulfilling its mission. When asked during the focus group, school leaders mentioned outcomes, inquiry, community and high expectations as elements that define the school. Board members cited inquiry-based instruction and African and African American culture and history, along with social justice, educational excellence and achievement as attributes that define the CSI mission.
- **Indicator b:** The school has not fully implemented the key design elements in the approved charter. In its renewal application, CSI chose not to provide evidence of implementation of the key design elements, instead stating that the renewal visit team would observe the seven elements and the school's mission in operation when they are on site. Below is a summary of the team's findings.
  - Rigorous inquiry-based curriculum—As defined in the CSI 2018-2019 Annual Report (Annual Report), students will be "raising questions, conducting investigations, interpreting and communicating" as evidence of rigorous inquiry-based curriculum. In the 16 classes visited by the renewal site visit team, no examples of students generating questions or conducting investigations were observed. These findings corroborate the findings of the CSO team which visited classes in September at the request of theschool.
  - Academic focus on literacy – In its Annual Report description of its literacy focus, CSI proposed that every student will read "proficiently, fluently, and with good comprehension" by the end of third grade. The school schedules two periods per day for literacy instruction to highlight its literacy aims. However, state assessment results demonstrate that CSI students are not meeting literacy proficiency standards and are actually declining in their progress toward proficiency.
  - Responsive classroom – In its Annual Report, CSI proposes that the responsive classroom approach will "build a culture of community and mutual respect." Team members noted evidence of orderly, respectful interactions among students and between students and teachers. The school is in the process of developing tools to evaluate the degree of

implementation of responsive classroom strategies to better assess the role of these strategies in creating a respectful culture.

- Collaborative team teaching – The CSI Annual Report defines multiple levels of collaborative team teaching. Collaboration between the lead teacher and teaching assistant was not evident in the classes observed during the renewal site visit, the same as the findings of the CSO team visiting the school in September. As noted under other benchmarks, teaching assistants were most often engaged in monitoring behavior and task completion and they were observed providing instruction in only two instances.
- Data driven instruction and evidence of performance – The school's Annual Report defines "progress monitoring in reading, literacy, math and science to inform responsive instruction" as the method by which this key design element will be implemented. In addition, the school cites "rubrics, student portfolios, performance tasks and projects" as means by which teachers will gather evidence of student work and progress. While the staff involved in supporting special populations and struggling students described their use of data to track progress and revise intervention plans, the renewal site visit team saw no evidence in the general classroom of rubrics, portfolios or performance tasks. In the NYSED CSO teacher survey, teachers mentioned meeting with the BOCES consultant to analyze data and indicated they use that data to group students for instruction. These data use practices have not yet yielded the "breakthrough outcomes" defined in the school'smission.
- African and African American History and Culture – Through this design element, CSI proposes in its Annual Report to help students "gain a better understanding of African and African American peoples and their contributions to the world." In its renewal documents, the school indicates that its partner, Firsthand Learning, was charged with developing the lessons to be infused into the core curriculum. The school provided a list of lesson plan topics in which African and African American people, history and events were highlighted. The school also provide a list of library acquisitions focused on African and African American authors and topics. School leaders indicated that, while there is no curriculum or scope and sequence for this design element, teachers are infusing African and African American topics into their lessons. On the school leader evaluation, the board reports that the head of school has been given responsibility for developing a curriculum but the evaluation notes that a curriculum has not yet been completed.
- Integrated arts – In the Annual Report, CSI describes the key design element of student art work as created during scheduled integrated arts classes as well as extended opportunities after school. Student art was posted around the school, with many displays featuring African and African American authors, activists, lawmakers, and artists.

Benchmark 9: Enrollment, Recruitment, and Retention

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

Finding: Approaches

Element	*Indicators*
1. Targets are met	a. The school maintains sufficient enrollment demand for the school to meet or come close to meeting the enrollment plan outlined in thecharter.
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.

Summative Evidence for Benchmark 9:

1. **Element: *Targets are met***

- **Indicator a:** Targets are not met.

2. **Element: *Targets are notmet***

- **Indicator a:** While the school enrolls economically disadvantaged (ED) students at a higher rate than the BPS, the percentages of the school remain below the proportion of SWDs and ELL/MLL students. Over the charter term, the school has slightly increased the number of SWDs, but the percentage has subsequently decreased slightly as the school has grown in population. On the board dashboard report for September 2019, the school reported 36 students with IEPs (11% of the total population of 314), a decrease from the 13% enrolled in 2017-2018. The September dashboard report lists 12 ELL/MLL students, (4% of the total population), an increase from the three (3) students enrolled at the beginning of 2018-2019. The 2018-2019 Annual Report lists additional strategies to make good faith efforts toward reaching the district proportions of the special populations, a number of which include participation by parents and staff. The data provided by the school in Attachment M of its renewal application shows a high number of student withdrawals over the charter term. According to NYSED data, for the 2017-2018 school year, CSI retained 78% of its students compared with 95% retained by BPS.
- **Indicator b:** The Charter School Office required CSI to complete a Corrective Action plan to remedy the under enrollment of the target populations. According to the renewal report, the school

contracted with a marketing company in 2017-2018 to upgrade its marketing and recruitment

materials. CSI reported it contracts with an area agency to provide translation of its materials for families with limited English skills and reported that the head of school served on a panel to advise immigrant and refugee families on their educational options. While the renewal application offers a list of actions aimed at reaching EDs and ELL/MLL students, it outlines no strategies specifically designed to improve outreach to families of students who are SWD or those who might need special services.

- **Indicator c:** CSI Evaluates the effectiveness of its recruitment and outreach strategies by tracking the enrollment of the target populations, but it does not have intermediate benchmarks or targets to track the impact of its strategies while recruiting activities are underway. In the renewal application, the school affirms its intention to serve SWDs and ELL/MLL students, but they have not yet developed a strategic outreach plan with specific targets, timelines or measurable benchmarks. While the proposed CSI budget includes $22,000 for student recruitment, the school provides no structured plan for the most effective and efficient use of thosefunds.

See Attachment 1 for data tables and additional information.

Benchmark 10: Legal Compliance

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

Finding: Meets

Element	*Indicators*
1. Legal Compliance	a. The school has compiled a record of substantial compliance with applicable state and federal laws and the provisions of its charter including, but not limited to: those related to student admissions and enrollment; FOIL and Open Meetings Law; protecting the rights of students and employees; financial management and oversight; governance and reporting; and health and safetyrequirements. 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:

1. **Element:** ***Legal Compliance:***

- **Indicator a:** CSI has mostly complied with applicable state and federal laws and the provisions of its charter. However, there is no evidence of public notice of committee meetings, as required by Open Meetings Law. While the board's bylaws state that committee minutes will be kept, there is no public posting of those records on the school's website. The CSO is currently conducting a review of CSI's policies and will follow up with the school as needed.
- **Indicator b:** CSI has been required by NYSED to develop corrective action plans to address academic under-performance and under-enrollment of special populations. Those plans are underway, and their progress is periodically reviewed by the Charter SchoolOffice.
- **Indicator c**: The CSI board sought and received approval for reduced enrollment in years 1 and 2 of the charter and advised CSO of the revision of its mission statement to make it moreconcise.

Attachment 1: 2019-2020 Renewal Site Visit

Charter School of Inquiry

Benchmark 1:

Indicator 1: All Schools

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

This school is designated as a school in need of Comprehensive Support and Improvement under current New York State criteria as defined by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

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

In ELA and math, Charter School of Inquiry students did not tend to outperform students in schools with similar grade spans and demographics.

Indicator 2: Elementary/Middle School Outcomes

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

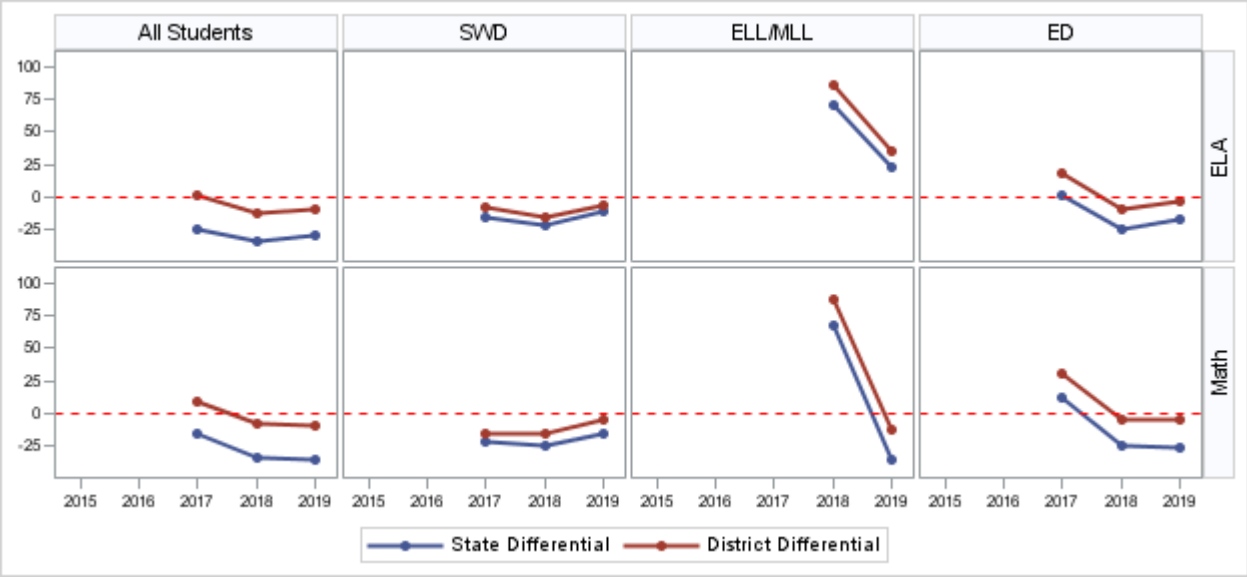
Table 1: Elementary/Middle School Trending Toward Proficiency – Minimum Expectation = 75%

		2017-2018	2018-2019
ELA	All Students	31%	27%
	SWD	.	0%
	ED	26%	27%
Math	All Students	27%	16%
	SWD	.	0%
	ED	25%	17%

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

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

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



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

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

		ELA					Math				
		CS of Inquiry	Buffalo Public Schools	Differential to District	NYS	Differential to NYS	CS of Inquiry	Buffalo Public Schools	Differential to District	NYS	Differential to NYS
All Students	2016-2017	19%	18%	+1	43%	-24	32%	22%	+10	48%	-16
	2017-2018	16%	28%	-12	49%	-33	17%	25%	-8	51%	-34
	2018-2019	17%	26%	-9	46%	-29	14%	23%	-9	50%	-36
SWD	2017-2018	0%	16%	-16	21%	-21	0%	16%	-16	24%	-24
	2018-2019	7%	13%	-6	17%	-10	7%	12%	-5	22%	-15
ED	2016-2017	33%	14%	+19	32%	+1	50%	19%	+31	37%	+13
	2017-2018	15%	24%	-9	39%	-24	16%	21%	-5	40%	-24
	2018-2019	19%	22%	-3	36%	-17	14%	19%	-5	40%	-26

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

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

Table 3: Aggregate Grade Level Proficiency

		ELA					Math				
		CS of Inquiry	Buffalo Public Schools	Differential to District	NYS	Differential to NYS	CS of Inquiry	Buffalo Public Schools	Differential to District	NYS	Differential to NYS
Grade 3	2016-2017	19%	18%	+1	43%	-24	32%	22%	+10	48%	-16
	2017-2018	13%	32%	-19	51%	-38	7%	31%	-24	54%	-47
	2018-2019	14%	32%	-18	52%	-38	20%	28%	-8	55%	-35
Grade 4	2017-2018	18%	23%	-5	47%	-29	26%	20%	+6	48%	-22
	2018-2019	25%	28%	-3	48%	-23	18%	21%	-3	50%	-32
Grade 5	2018-2019	15%	18%	-3	38%	-23	3%	20%	-17	46%	-43

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

Indicator 3: High School Outcomes

(Not applicable to this charter school.)

Benchmark 9:

Table 4: Student Demographics

	SWD			ELL/MLL			ED		
	CS of Inquiry	Buffalo Public Schools	Differential to District	CS of Inquiry	Buffalo Public Schools	Differential to District	CS of Inquiry	Buffalo Public Schools	Differential to District
2015-2016	11%	25%	-14	1%	17%	-16	88%	86%	+2
2016-2017	9%	24%	-15	.	19%	-19	48%	83%	-35
2017-2018	13%	24%	-11	0%	22%	-22	96%	85%	+11
2018-2019	12%	25%	-13	2%	24%	-22	92%	87%	+5

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

Table 5: Retention – Aggregate and Subgroups

	All Students			SWD			ELL/MLL			ED		
	Charter School of Inquiry	Buffalo Public Schools	Differential to District	Charter School of Inquiry	Buffalo Public Schools	Differential to District	Charter School of Inquiry	Buffalo Public Schools	Differential to District	Charter School of Inquiry	Buffalo Public Schools	Differential to District
2016-2017	68%	87%	**-19**	45%	87%	**-42**	0%	89%	**-89**	68%	88%	**-20**
2017-2018	74%	87%	**-13**	64%	88%	**-24**	.	.	**.**	83%	88%	**-5**
2018-2019	69%	87%	**-18**	61%	88%	**-27**	100%	88%	**+12**	70%	87%	**-17**

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

**NOTES:*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

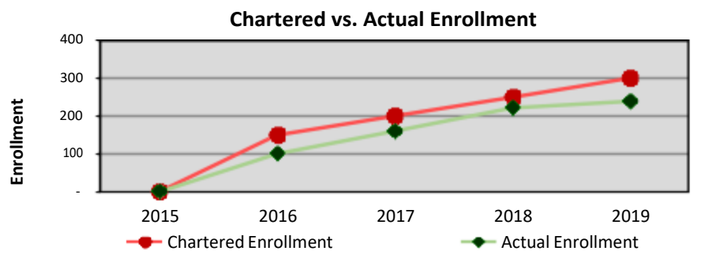
(9) Data in the table above represents students within their respective subgroups who have passed three out of the five Annual Regents and Regents Common Core Examinations (score of 65 or better) orequivalents.

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

Charter School Fiscal Accountability Summary

CHARTER SCHOOL OF INQUIRY

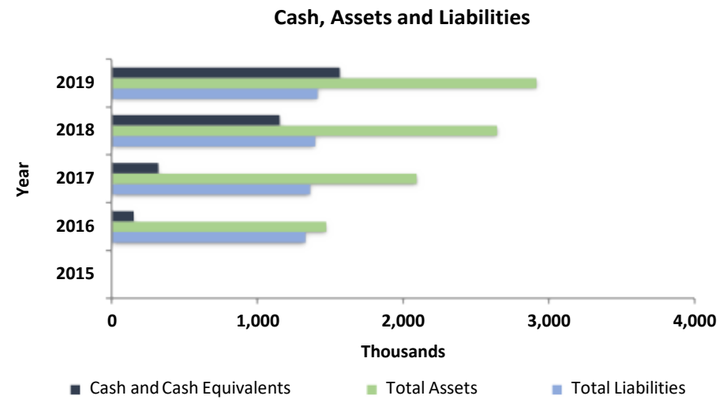
	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Grades Served	-	K-2	K-3	K-4	K-5
Maximum Chartered Grades Served	-	K-6	K-6	K-6	K-6
Chartered Enrollment	-	150	200	250	300
Maximum Chartered Enrollment	-	350	350	350	350
Actual Enrollment	-	100	160	222	239

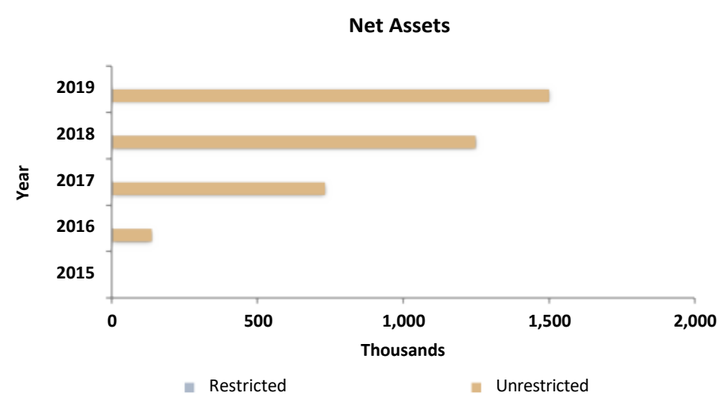


AUDITED FINANCIALS

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

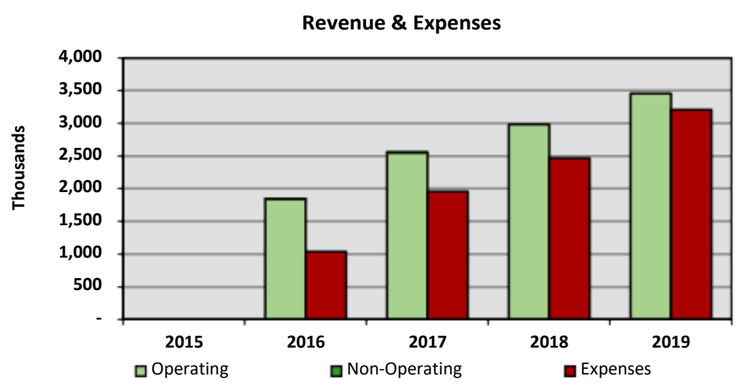
ASSETS					
Current Assets					
Cash and Cash Equivalents	-	152,546	322,605	1,155,566	1,567,758
Grants and Contracts Receivable	-	33,722	372,945	98,995	19,921
Prepaid Expenses	-	24,398	18,078	17,430	2,040
Other Current Assets	-	-	-	-	-
Total Current Assets					
Non-Current Assets					
Property, Building and Equipment, net	-	1,261,293	1,382,047	1,374,152	1,249,025
Restricted Cash	-	-	-	-	75,000
Security Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Other Non-Current Assets	-	-	-	-	-
Total Non - Current Assets					
Total Assets					
LIABILITIES and NET ASSETS					
Current Liabilities					
Accounts Payable and Accrued Expenses	-	130,430	101,800	246,323	276,517
Accrued Payroll and Payroll Taxes	-	-	138,395	-	-
Due to Related Parties	-	-	-	-	-
Refundable Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Other Current Liabilities	-	79,633	2,153	12,977	13,763
Total Current Liabilities					
Long-Term Liabilities					
Deferred Rent	-	-	-	-	-
Other Long-Term Liabilities	-	1,122,329	1,120,177	1,138,068	1,122,804
Total Long-Term Liabilities					
Total Liabilities					
NET ASSETS					
Unrestricted	-	139,567	733,150	1,248,775	1,500,660
Restricted	-	-	-	-	-
Total Net Assets					
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	-	1,471,959	2,095,675	2,646,143	2,913,744

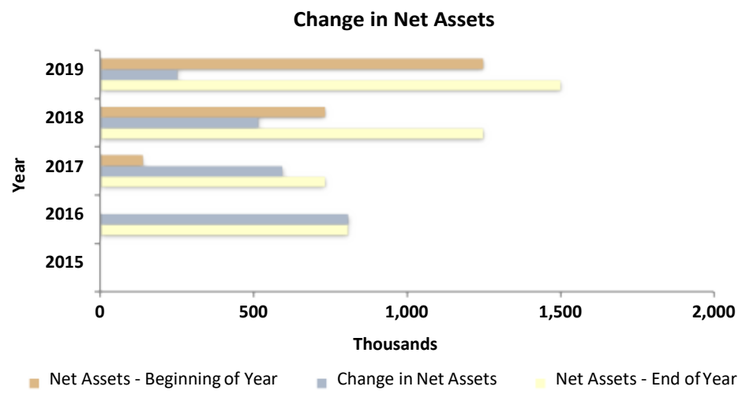




STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

OPERATING REVENUE					
State and Local Per Pupil Revenue - Reg. Ed	-	1,166,386	1,956,445	2,721,157	3,158,220
State and Local Per Pupil Revenue - SPED	-	53,693	40,988	87,385	81,286
State and Local Per Pupil Facilities Revenue	-	21,297	-	-	64,943
Federal Grants	-	603,058	551,610	166,958	147,667
State and City Grants	-	-	-	-	-
Other Operating Income	-	-	-	5,455	7,049
Total Operating Revenue					
EXPENSES					
Program Services					
Regular Education	-	946,665	1,257,451	1,665,632	2,128,150
Special Education	-	75,538	94,281	141,323	213,951
Other Expenses	-	18,228	80,534	88,380	138,367
Total Program Services					
Supporting Services					
Management and General	-	S	523,387	569,995	726,812
Fundraising	-	-	-	-	-
Total Support Services					
Total Expenses					
Surplus/Deficit from Operations					
SUPPORT AND OTHER REVENUE					
Interest and Other Income	-	3,315	193	-	-
Contributions and Grants	-	-	-	-	-
Fundraising Support	-	-	-	-	-
Other Support and Revenue	-	-	-	-	-
Total Support and Other Revenue					
Change in Net Assets					
Net Assets - Beginning of Year	-	-	139,567	733,150	1,248,775
Net Assets - End of Year					

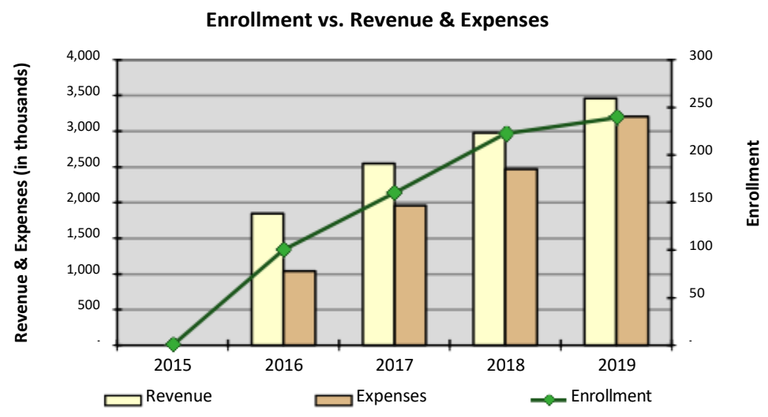
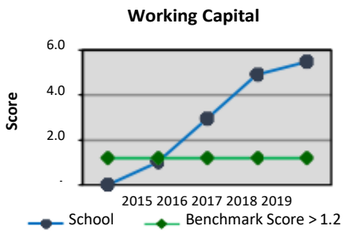
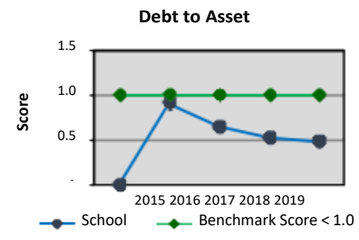
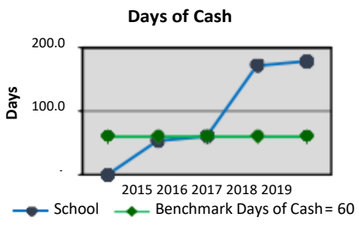
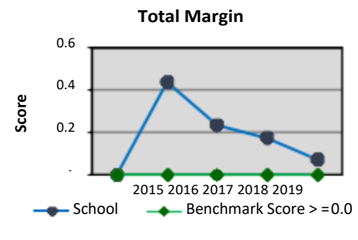




FISCAL ANALYSIS

RATIOS, BENCHMARKS and FINDINGS

REVENUE & EXPENSE BREAKDOWN					
Revenue - Per Pupil					
Operating	-	18,444	15,932	13,428	14,473
Support and Other Revenue	-	33	1	-	-
Total Revenue					
Expenses - Per Pupil					
Program Services	-	10,404	8,952	8,538	10,379
Mangement and General, Fundraising	-	-	3,271	2,568	3,041
Total Expenses	-				
% of Program Services	0.0%	100.0%	73.2%	76.9%	77.3%
% of Management and Other	0.0%	0.0%	26.8%	23.1%	22.7%
% of Revenue Exceeding Expenses	0.0%				



FINANCIAL COMPOSITE SCORE					
Composite Score	-	0.95	2.41	2.93	3.00
BENCHMARK and FINDING: Strong; 1.5 - 3.0 / Adequate; 1.0 - 1.4 / Needs Monitoring; -1.0 - 0.9	-	Adequate			
WORKING CAPITAL					
Net Working Capital	-	603	471,280	1,012,691	1,299,439
Working Capital (Current) Ratio	-	1.0	2.9	4.9	5.5
BENCHMARK and FINDING: Ratio should be equal to or greater than 1.2	-	Does Not Meet Standard			
DEBT TO ASSET					
Debt to Asset Ratio	-	0.9	0.7	0.5	0.5
BENCHMARK and FINDING: Ratio should be equal to or less than 1.0	-				
CASH POSITION					
Days of Cash	-	53.5	60.2	171.1	178.4
BENCHMARK and FINDING: Ratio should be equal to or greater than 60 days	-	Does Not Meet Standard			
TOTAL MARGIN					
Total Margin Ratio	-	0.4	0.2	0.2	0.1
BENCHMARK and FINDING: Ratio should be equal to or greater than 0.0	-