New York State Education Department

Renewal Site Visit Report
2016-2017

Riverhead Charter School

Visit Date: 11/9/2016
Date of Report: 1/23/2017

CONTENTS

SCHOOL DESCRIPTION

Charter School Summary[1]

Name of Charter School	Riverhead Charter School
Board Chair	Zenobia Hartfield
School Leader	Raymond Ankrum
District of location	Riverhead Central School District
Opening Date	September 1, 2001
Charter Terms	Initial charter term: January 10, 2001 – January 9, 2006 1st Renewal Term: January 10, 2006 – July 10, 2008 2nd Renewal Term: May 20, 2008 – June 30, 2009 3rd Renewal Term: April 21, 2009 – June 30, 2014 4th Renewal Term: July 1, 2014 – June 30, 2017
Management Company	None
Educational Partners	None
Facilities	3685 Middle Country Road Calverton, NY 11933
Mission Statement	*The mission of RCS is to create a school environment that fosters the development of academic skills, intellectual habits, and character traits necessary for students to maximize their potential in high school, college, and the world beyond.*
Key Design Elements	• A uniquely affirming and supportive school culture • Deep linkages to the surrounding community and project-based learning • A focus on quality of instruction based on individual student needs • Technology integration in classrooms • Continuous development of staff • Departmentalized instruction beginning in grade 4
Requested Revisions	• Material: enrollment increase from 414 students to 700 students • Non material: mission statement, organizational chart, key design elements, staff attendance and tardiness policy

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

School Characteristics

Enrollment

School Year	Grades Served	Maximum Authorized Enrollment	Actual Enrollment
2016-2017	K-8	414	409
2015-2016	K-8	414	417
2014-2015	K-8	414	366

METHODOLOGY

A 1-day renewal site visit was conducted at Riverhead Charter School (RCS) on November 9, 2016. The CSO team conducted interviews with the board of trustees, the school leadership team, and instructional leaders, as well as with two members of the board of trustees. In cooperation with school leadership, the CSO administered an anonymous online survey to teachers in the beginning of the current school year.

The team conducted seven classroom observations in Grades K-8. The observations were approximately 20 minutes in length and conducted jointly with the assistant principal and the director of curriculum and instruction for the lower school.

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

- **Teacher roster**
- **Current organization chart**
- **A master school schedule**
- **Board materials**
- **Board self-evaluation documents**
- **Blank teacher and administrator evaluation forms**
- **Student/family handbook**
- **Staff handbook and personnel policies**
- **A list of curricular documents**
- **A list of major assessments**
- **Enrollment data including subgroups**
- **Professional development plans and schedules**
- **Academic data**
- **Teacher survey**

BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

The Performance Framework, which is part of the oversight plan included in the Charter Agreement for each school that was chartered or renewed in 2012 or beyond, outlines 10 Performance Benchmarks in three key areas of charter school performance:

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

Observational findings from 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 overall performance 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 site visit conducted on 11/9/2016 at Riverhead Charter School, see the following Performance Benchmark Scores 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.	Meets

Performance Benchmark	Level
Summary of Findings	

RCS is meeting Board of Regents academic, organizational, board oversight, and legal compliance performance standards.

RCS's overall academic outcomes exceed the Riverhead Central School District (RCSD) and are approaching the state averages for ELA and math. Although aggregate English and math scores still measured below the state average in 2016, the difference has rapidly decreased during the charter term in ELA but is stagnant in math. The performance of students with disabilities and English language learners at RCS significantly exceeds both district and state averages in both ELA and in math.

Organizationally, the school has a stable board and leadership team. However, the school does experience faculty turnover, which school leadership attributes to the competitive salary for teachers in local school districts. The board describes efforts to monitor student outcomes and is planning strategically for the school's future.

The school is currently coming close to, or meeting, comparable enrollment percentages to the district for special student populations. RCS reports a significant increase in English language learners (39% of the student population) in the current school year.

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: The site visit team has determined that Riverhead Charter School Meets Performance Benchmark 1.

Summative Evidence for Benchmark 1: See Appendix A for further information.

Over the three-year charter term, RCS administered the NYS English language arts and mathematics assessments to students in Grades 3-8. The outcomes from these assessments serve as the basis for determination of academic success in absolute proficiency outcomes and comparisons to the state and district of location for all students and subgroups.

1.a. ESEA designation.
Riverhead Charter School was designated *In Good Standing* for the 2014-2015, 2015-2016, and 2016-2017 school years.

1.b. Similar Schools Comparison
RCS analyzed their student performance in comparison with schools with similar characteristics, by looking at the Yonkers School District. According to their analysis, RCS has consistently outperformed Yonkers CSD in both ELA and mathematics, with the exception of the 2013-2014 school year.

2.a. (i-ii) Growth
RCS's state testing outcomes in grades 3-8 have increased significantly in ELA from 2013 to 2016 and have remained static in math over the past two years. Compared to the NYS average, RCS's schoolwide outcomes in ELA are showing a clear trend line toward the state average, but not showing similar gains in math.

2.b. (i-iii) Proficiency 3-8 Assessments
RCS outperformed RCSD in both ELA and mathematics in 2015 and 2016. The school improved in 2016 to outperform the RCSD average in ELA by 13 percentage points and the RCSD average in mathematics by 9 percentage points. Subgroup outcomes for students with disabilities, English language learners (ELLs), and students who are economically disadvantaged (ED) show a similar trend of performing increasingly above the district average in 2015 and 2016 in both ELA and mathematics. While most of the subgroup outcomes increased year over year, the school's ELL subgroup outcomes in both ELA and mathematics decreased in 2015, but still outperformed RCSD in that school year.

Outcomes for students who are economically disadvantaged paralleled the state average in both ELA and math in 2016. Students with disabilities and English language learners at RCS are significantly outperforming NYS averages in both ELA and math.

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 Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) 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: The site visit team has determined that Riverhead Charter School Meets Performance Benchmark 2.

Element	*Indicators*
1. Curriculum	a. The school has a documented curriculum that is aligned to the CCLS. 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:

According to the leadership team, the school's instructional approach fosters engagement with all students. During classroom observations conducted on site, CSO team members saw evidence of student engagement in a majority of observed classrooms. In a majority of classrooms observed, team members noted either partial or consistent evidence of high-quality instruction. Teachers used multiple

groupings and students were given the opportunity to engage in sustained verbal interaction to complete academic tasks. In some of the classrooms, there were low levels of teacher talk and high levels of student talk observed. Team members also noted teachers pulling previously determined groups for small group instruction, as an instructional strategy in order to meet individual student learning needs. Across grade levels, teachers were seen using an array of informal assessments including polling and entrance tickets to check for understanding.

Team members observed varying levels of rigor across grade levels. Student assignments and activities appeared to consistently contain rigorous, embedded learning objectives that reflected high expectations. In the majority of classes, the team observed posted agendas and objectives, and teachers had lesson plans readily available and accessible.

Teachers create the RCS curriculum, with support from the leadership team. Both the ELA and math curricula are reported to be aligned with New York State Learning Standards (NYSLS). The school uses *Envisions* for math, the Teachers' College *Readers and Writer's Workshop* curricula and *Reading Street* for English language arts (ELA), although some teachers use supplemental materials like Fundations and Wilson Reading. RCS reported that teachers are creating scope and sequence to ensure the alignment to NYSLS, using NYLearns, an online, standards-based system. The school reported that they revise curricula based on the results of student performance data analysis.

The school's curriculum appears to be aligned horizontally across classrooms at the same grade level, through teachers' grade-level collaboration on weekly lesson plans. The school reported that vertical alignment occurs through teachers from the lower and upper grades having conversations. However, they did not describe any formal structures, processes, or systems in place to facilitate vertical alignment or subject matter specific cohesion.

During the site visit, school leaders discussed consistent progress monitoring through student results on the NWEA assessment. The school appears to have improved the systems to collect data, however, school leadership seems to still be building out the school-wide systems for data analysis and using the data to inform instruction. They reported that they administer the test to students three to four times a year, and use NYLearns and Mastery Connect to track results and analyze the data. The school reported that student groupings are adjusted throughout the year based on the assessment data. The school also utilizes Fountas & Pinnell for tracking the student progress in ELA. The school reported that teachers create quarterly summative assessments in all core subject areas to determine students' mastery of NYSLS. However, during the leadership focus group, the school leadership team did not articulate specific academic progress goals, other than to improve ELA results for all special student subgroups.

During the CSO site visit, the special populations focus group discussed the school's implementation of Response to Intervention (RtI). In addition to using the three-tier structure of RtI to provide appropriate interventions for students who are struggling, the focus group also mentioned that they use NWEA data to determine groupings for small group instruction in the classroom. The school has on staff five English as New Language (ENL) teachers, who either are co-teaching or pulling groups in classrooms in Grades 1 to 5.

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: The site visit team has determined that Riverhead Charter School Meets Performance Benchmark 3.

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:

RCS has a clear approach to behavioral management. The code of conduct, parent/student handbook and discipline policy are provided to families at the beginning of the school year, and are all available on the school website for continued access. The discipline policy includes a range of consequences as well positive strategies and interventions for individual behavior management. School leadership discussed preparing teachers to handle dealing with students' personal circumstances and taking a holistic approach to discipline. They mentioned their in-school suspension model and emphasized keeping students in the classroom. They also reported that the social worker and assistant principal work with students to de-escalate any issues and to come up with coping strategies. The school has systems in place to ensure that the environment is free from harassment and discrimination, adhering strictly to the Dignity for All Students Act, requiring any reported instances of bullying or harassment to be

investigated within 24 hours.

Classroom environments appeared to be conducive to learning and generally free from disruption. In the observed classrooms, students demonstrated awareness of classroom rules, procedures, and expectations. In most classrooms, team members observed consistent evidence that student-teacher and teacher-student interactions were respectful, and the overall school climate was positive. Team members observed high levels of student engagement across grade levels.

School leadership discussed their continuing family engagement strategies, such as having a food pantry program for families and holding a Family Iron Chef Food Day Cook Off. The school reported their ongoing partnership with the Cornell Cooperative Extension, which collaborates with RCS on the Iron Chef program and a program with RCS students called "Healthy Gardens, Healthy Youth" People's Garden project. RCS ensures staff communication with parents, and along with quarterly report cards, parents can access their child's progress reports through an online Parent Portal. The school reported that they hold parent conferences for parents to discuss any concerns they may have.

The school reported that they address the socio-emotional needs of students experiencing difficulties through ongoing monitoring by the social worker, classroom teachers, and school leaders. The school provides regularly scheduled meeting times for those students to offer appropriate and relevant outlets for any emotional and/or social needs. However, the school did not articulate a system by which they track and monitor the individual socio-emotional progress of the students. The school did create a student survey to give students a space to express themselves anonymously, which provides school-wide data on socio-emotional needs. The school also reported that they disseminate surveys to determine the impact of programs that support student social and emotional health. For example, the school reported that they recently adopted a program for kindergarten through fifth grade that promotes positive relationships between students called the Sanford Harmony Project, with the goal to improve student cooperation, empathy, and mutual respect.

Benchmark 4: Financial Condition
The school is in sound and stable financial condition as evidenced by performance on key financial indicators.

Finding: Meets

Summative Evidence for Benchmark 4:

Financial Condition
RCS appears to be in strong 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. RCS's composite score for 2014-2015 is 2.30. The table below shows the school's most recently available composite scores from 2012-2013 through 2014-2015.

Riverhead Charter School's Composite Scores
2012-2013 to 2014-2015

Year	Composite Score
2014-2015	2.30
2013-2014	2.20
2012-2013	3.00

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 charter 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, RCS had a current ratio of 4.6.

Unrestricted cash measures, in days, whether the charter school can meet operating expenses without receiving new income. Schools typically strive to maintain at least 90 days of cash on hand. For fiscal year 2015-2016, RCS operated with 471 days of unrestricted cash.

Enrollment stability measures whether or not a charter school is meeting its enrollment projections, thereby generating sufficient revenue to fund ongoing operations. Actual enrollment that is over 85 percent is considered reasonable. RCS's enrollment stability for 2015-2016 was at 100 percent.

Long-Term Indicators

A charter school's *debt to asset ratio* measures the extent to which the school relies on borrowed funds to finance its operations. It is calculated as total liabilities divided by total assets. A ratio of 0.9 or less meets a standard of low risk. For 2015-2016, RCS's debt to asset ratio was 0.8.

Total margin measures the deficit or surplus a charter school yields out of its total revenues; in other words, whether or not the school is living within its available resources. Total margin is calculated as net income divided by total revenue. A total margin that is positive indicates low risk. For 2015-2016 RCS's total margin was 17 percent.

Benchmark 5: Financial Management

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

Finding: Meets

Summative Evidence for Benchmark 5:

The CSO team reviewed RCS'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. However, the auditor did identify opportunities for improvement:

- Depositing cash into the bank once per week instead of holding it on-site for lengthy periods.
- Maintaining disenrollment forms in all students' files to ensure that district tuition bills are correct.
- Maintaining signed pay rate verification forms in all employees' files and obtaining supervisor approvals of all employee time sheets.
- Obtaining receipts for each use of the school's debit card and ensuring that all purchases are not charged sales tax.

In response, school officials agreed with each recommendation and described its efforts to improve internal controls.

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: The site visit team has determined that Riverhead Charter School Meets Performance Benchmark 6.

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 board recruits and selects board members with skills and expertise that meet the needs of the school. The board recently experienced board turnover, with two members resigning; one departed in 2015-2016 school year and one in the 2016-2017, and a new member joined in July 2016. During the renewal site visit, the vice chair and the new board member represented the board in a focus group. The board discussed that the areas of need for members are with skill sets in academics and information technology. Since the board is down to its minimum number of five members, the board continues to recruit for new members. The board approval process includes an application, an interview with the board and school leader, and final approval by CSO.

The board discussed using a dashboard that includes enrollment data and financial snapshots at the monthly board meetings for operational oversight. They reported that the active committees include finance, fundraising, and policy, but that the board would need to re-group because of the current number of board members. The board is beginning to look at academic data as part of the monthly updates, through the use of Mastery Connect. Board members discussed having academic representation at board meetings aside from the school leader to present and share instructional needs. Although the board has begun to collect and review the school's academic data, the board members did not articulate any school-wide or grade-level performance targets for either interim or end of year assessments. While the board members discussed the progress that the school has made over the last year, the assessment was focused on anecdotes regarding school culture.

The school leader has a two-year contract. Around the time of contract renewal, the school leader presents his proposed goals to the board, which then determines if they are appropriate and makes any revisions or approves. The board reported that it uses "the Kim Marshall tool" to yearly evaluate school leaders' performance. School stakeholders, including the school leadership team, reported that student performance data is not part of their performance evaluations. Review of the rubrics confirms that this true. This does not reflect best practice in charter school performance-based evaluation. The board reported that they give the school leader recommendations for improvement based on the annual evaluation. At the renewal visit, the board stated the school's leader goals are focused on curriculum for ESL students and retention of staff through on-going teacher-focused professional development.

Board members reported that they met with an outside board development expert and have begun self-assessment through the Board on Track tool. Although they have begun administering the tool, they have not yet generated the results to determine areas of improvement and approaches to address those areas. They also reported sitting in on webinars and holding monthly work sessions focused on building their governance capacity. The board has sought resources and support from the Northeast Charter School Network and intends to participate in the national charter conference in 2017.

The board reported that it reviews and updates the school's policies, such as code of conduct, student handbook, and discipline policy, on an annual basis. The board members at the renewal visit expressed that they are considering reviewing the board's policies quarterly instead of annually.

The board reported that they had not received any recent complaints from parents, former staff members, or current staff members. The board members stated that the last complaint that escalated to the board was by a former staff member and that an investigation was completed to address it. The school reported that it retains legal counsel to ensure that the board meets its legal obligations to key stakeholders.

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: The site visit team has determined that Riverhead Charter School Meets Performance Benchmark 7.

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:

The school's leadership team does have a defined mission and set of goals, though they were not consistently communicated during the CSO visit. While each set of stakeholders could articulate academic progress aligned to the school's mission, they were inconsistent in their articulation of the

schools' mission, proficiency levels, and desired educational outcomes. The school has begun to develop systems and protocols to monitor school quality, however, the impact of these efforts on the educational program is not yet evident. The school leaders discussed the use of the RtI system to identify struggling students and determine interventions, but they did not specify a clear set of goals for the school.

RCS has a designated school leadership team comprised of the executive director/principal, assistant principal, director of finance, directors of curriculum and instruction, and school house leaders. RCS's organizational chart is clear and represents the current staffing at the school, and while some staff roles are clearly defined, some personnel serve multiple roles. For example, the current staff member who is a director of curriculum and instruction for the upper school, also is the house leader for Grades 6-8, as well as is the special education coordinator. In the leadership focus group during the site visit, staff was able to describe their own specific roles and responsibilities. The executive director/principal serves as the bridge between the financial, operational, and instructional needs and goals for the school. The school reported that the executive director/principal and director of finance ensure that the financial resources of the school are aligned with the school's mission and key design elements.

RCS recently hired a human resources staff member, who has helped to build processes and systems to effectively recruit and retain key personnel. In an interview with the executive director/principal, he reported that the addition of a human resources professional has provided cohesion and clear expectations for all staff. The human resources staff member develops and refines job descriptions, keeps all personnel records, and conducts preliminary interviews with candidates to determine culture fit as an initial screen. School leadership and the board recognize that an ongoing obstacle to recruitment and retention is teachers' salaries, which are lower than the district of location. The board recently increased teacher salaries, but are still not competitive to the district. The board discussed that they are looking at different models for possible implementation in the next couple of years. The school leadership discussed the need to make the salaries competitive to New York City to appeal to teachers who have experience and may leave Long Island for New York City charter schools. The school continues to experience staff turnover, which school leadership attributes to teachers leaving for district school positions.

RCS has established structures for common planning time and collaboration among teachers. Review of documents revealed that the school provides teachers with common planning time and teachers use this time to plan horizontally with the aid of the house (grade level) leaders and directors of curriculum and instruction, although this collaboration is not a mandatory practice. Aside from weekly house meetings, monthly staff meetings, and monthly staff development meetings, the school has begun to establish professional learning communities that meet weekly before school. The school leaders discussed that they encourage collaboration and cohesion across grade levels.

RCS has designated professional development time weekly and monthly. House leaders, Response to Intervention specialists, directors of curriculum and instruction, or the executive director/principal leads professional development. School leadership reported that they differentiate professional development to reflect the needs of the instructional staff, while focusing on the goals of the charter. The school reported that they use the analysis of student data to plan professional development. The house leaders also serve as mentors to teachers within their grade levels and disseminate communication from school leadership. The school employs new teacher training and provides coaching to those new staff that are either new to the profession of teaching and/or are new to RCS, which includes topics like RCS's approach to differentiation and classroom management.

School leadership reported frequent informal observations as another form of ongoing progress monitoring and feedback mechanism for instructional staff. The executive director/principal, assistant principal, directors of curriculum and instruction are all responsible for conducting walkthrough observations. The school reported that the teacher observation system is modeled after the Danielson Framework for Teaching Rubric. School leadership uses the rubric to assess staff performance annually, and if applicable, the results can determine merit-based pay increase or as grounds to remove ineffective staff members. In the school leader focus group discussed using the NYS HEDI teaching standards of highly effective teachers as a model for their instructional staff.

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: The site visit team has determined that Riverhead Charter School Meets Performance Benchmark 8.

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:
School leaders believe that stakeholders share a common understanding of the school's mission and key design elements as outlined in the charter, but on the day of the CSO visit, interviewed stakeholders did not articulate a consistent understanding. The school has requested to revise its mission statement and key design elements for the upcoming charter term.

The current mission of RCS is "*to create a school environment that fosters the development of academic skills, intellectual habits, and character traits necessary for students to maximize their potential in high school, college, and the world beyond.*" The school's website shares the mission with external stakeholders.

The proposed mission statement is: *Our mission is to **inspire** today's learners to become **tomorrow's leaders** by setting high academic standards, promoting solution-orientated thinking, and embracing the cultural diversity of our community.*

The current RCS key design elements include:

- a uniquely affirming and supportive school culture;
- deep linkages to the surrounding community and project-based learning;
- a focus on quality of instruction based on individual student needs;
- technology integration in classrooms;
- continuous development of staff;
- departmentalized instruction beginning in grade 4.

The key design elements proposed for the upcoming charter term include:

1. High Expectations
   RCS has clearly defined and measurable high expectations for academic achievement and strong character. Students, parents, teachers, and staff create and reinforce a culture of achievement and support through a range of formal and informal rewards and consequences for academic performance and behavior.

2. Advisory
   Morning meeting for all students every day. Morning meetings provide the students with opportunity to make a smooth transition into the school day. In addition, it builds community, enhances social skills and supports learning that is occurring in the classroom.

3. Choice & Commitment
   Students, their parents, and the teachers of RCS choose to participate in the program. No one is assigned or forced to attend RCS. Everyone must make and uphold a commitment to the school and to each other to put in the time and effort required to achieve success.

4. Professional Development
   Professional development focuses on using assessment data as a catalyst to improve instruction. A heavy emphasis is placed on differentiation, ensuring all students benefit from teaching and learning.

5. Culture of All Staff
   Culture of the staff places high emphasis on staff members as teachers and learners from each other. Staff share best practices, and share a relentless commitment to high expectations for themselves and others.

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: The site visit team has determined that Riverhead Charter School Meets Performance Benchmark 9.

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.

Table 1: Student Demographics – Riverhead Charter School Compared to Riverhead Central School District

	2014-15			2015-16			2016-17
	Percent of Enrollment			Percent of Enrollment			Percent of Enrollment
	School	CSD	Variance[2]	School	CSD	Variance	School[3]
Enrollment of Special Populations							
Economically Disadvantaged	73%	51%	+22	74%	57%	+17	74%
English Language Learners	20%	18%	+2	22%	21%	+1	36%
Students with Disabilities	12%	14%	-2	7%	14%	-7	11%

Summative Evidence for Benchmark 9:

The school enrolls a significantly higher percentage of students identified as economically disadvantaged compared to the district of location. RCS's enrollment of English language learners and students with disabilities was on par with the Riverhead School District for the 2014-2015 school year, and also was comparable to the district for enrollment of English language learners in the 2015-2016 school year. While RCS's enrollment of economically disadvantaged students has been consistent over the charter school term, the school reports a significant increase in enrolled English language learners in the 2016-2017 school year. RCS enrolled a smaller percentage of students with disabilities in the 2015-2016 school year than the 2014-2015 school year. However, the school reports that the percentage of students with disabilities has increased again in the 2016-2017 school year.

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[2] Variance is defined as the percent of subgroup enrollment between the charter school and the district of location.
[3] Reported by the school; 2015-16 enrollment data has not been publicly released as of the date of this report.

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

Finding: The site visit team has determined that Riverhead Charter School Meets Performance Benchmark 10.

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:

Overall, RCS has complied with legal obligations, applicable state and federal laws, and the commitment of its charter. The school's new hire of a human resources staff member supports the school's efforts to comply with state and federal labor laws.

Table 2: Elementary/Middle School Assessment Proficiency Outcomes for All Students:
RCS, RCSD, and NYS Level Aggregates

All Students	ELA					Math				
	School	District		NYS		School	District		NYS	
		District	Delta = (Sch–Dct)	NYS	Delta = (Sch–NYS)		District	Delta = (Sch–Dct)	NYS	Delta = (Sch–NYS)
2013-14	19%	23%	-4	31%	-12	32%	29%	+3	36%	-4
2014-15	22%	20%	+2	31%	-9	33%	24%	+9	38%	-5
2015-16	34%	21%	+13	38%	-4	33%	24%	+9	39%	-6

Table 3: Elementary/Middle School Assessment Proficiency Outcomes by Subgroup –
Economically Disadvantaged Students: *RCS, RCSD, and NYS Level Aggregates*

Economically Disadvantaged	ELA					Math				
	School	District		NYS		School	District		NYS	
		District	Delta = (Sch–Dct)	NYS	Delta = (Sch–NYS)		District	Delta = (Sch–Dct)	NYS	Delta = (Sch–NYS)
2013-14	14%	12%	+2	20%	-6	27%	18%	+9	26%	+1
2014-15	18%	10%	+8	21%	-3	27%	14%	+13	27%	0
2015-16	28%	12%	+16	27%	+1	28%	15%	+13	28%	0

Table 4: Elementary/Middle School Assessment Proficiency Outcomes by Subgroup –
Students with Disabilities: *RCS, RCSD, and NYS Level Aggregates*

Students with Disabilities	ELA					Math				
	School	District		NYS		School	District		NYS	
		District	Delta = (Sch–Dct)	NYS	Delta = (Sch–NYS)		District	Delta = (Sch–Dct)	NYS	Delta = (Sch–NYS)
2013-14	8%	2%	+6	5%	+3	17%	4%	+13	10%	+7
2014-15	19%	1%	+18	6%	+13	13%	3%	+10	11%	+2
2015-16	31%	1%	+30	8%	+23	24%	3%	+21	11%	+13

**Table 5: Elementary/Middle School Assessment Proficiency Outcomes by Subgroup –
English Language Learners:** *RCS, RCSD, and NYS Level Aggregates*

English Language Learners	ELA					Math				
	School	District		NYS		School	District		NYS	
		District	Delta = (Sch–Dct)	NYS	Delta = (Sch–NYS)		District	Delta = (Sch–Dct)	NYS	Delta = (Sch–NYS)
2013-14	11%	2%	+9	3%	+8	21%	4%	+17	12%	+9
2014-15	3%	1%	+2	4%	-1	16%	2%	+14	13%	+3
2015-16	21%	1%	+20	4%	+17	24%	2%	+22	12%	+12