



Renewal Site Visit Report

Responses & Comments

Submitted to NYSED on January 13, 2020

The Board of Trustees, faculty and community at the South Bronx Early College Academy Charter School (SBECA) remain committed to creating a high-performing educational experience for our student body. While it is worth noting that we have improved in all Benchmarks since our Mid-term Site Visit (except for Benchmark 5, which remains at “Meets” expectations), as displayed below, we are not completely satisfied with our improvement to date, and will continue to grow and improve in our efforts. In the same way that SBECA utilized feedback from NYSED’s Mid-Term Site Visit Report to guide our efforts between then and now, we intend to use the feedback included in the Renewal Site Visit Report to further address school needs and inform strategies that allow all students to learn and succeed. With continued partnership and guidance from our authorizing team, we look forward to continuing our work to offer an effective and supportive middle school experience for children and families in the South Bronx.

SBECA is grateful to NYSED and the Board of Regents for their consideration of our renewal request and for their shared commitment to children in the South Bronx.

	2017-18 Site Visit	2019-20 Site Visit
Benchmark 1: Student Performance:	Falls Far Below	Approaches
Benchmark 2: Teaching and Learning:	Falls Far Below	Approaches
Benchmark 3: Culture, Climate, and Family Engagement:	Approaches	Meets
Benchmark 4: Financial Condition:	Approaches	Meets
Benchmark 5: Financial Management:	Meets	Meets
Benchmark 6: Board Oversight and Governance:	Falls Far Below	Meets
Benchmark 7: Organizational Capacity:	Falls Far Below	Approaches
Benchmark 8: Mission and Key Design Elements:	Falls Far Below	Approaches
Benchmark 9: Enrollment, Recruitment, and Retention:	Approaches	Meets
Benchmark 10: Legal Compliance:	Falls Far Below	Approaches

Page 9, in reference to the line, “the school’s special education program is not fully meeting all mandated services...”

Response:

It is our feeling and understanding that the school is in compliance with the Committee for Special Education (CSE) in regards to mandated services. Currently, SBECA is providing the following services to meet the mandated needs of our students:

- SBECA currently has 37 students enrolled with mandates for Speech Therapy included in their Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). These students receive the services described in their IEPs on-site, in partnership with the CSE, which assigns a speech provider to visit SBECA four days per week.
- SBECA currently has 36 students mandated to receive counseling services. This caseload is handled by our in-house social work and counseling staff.
- SBECA currently has six (6) students with Occupational Therapy (OT) mandates in their IEPs. The CSE was unable to provide SBECA with a dedicated service provider for a caseload of this size. As a result, the CSE provides Related Services Agreements (RSAs) for these students, who then receive OT services outside of school, which is standard policy.
- SBECA has two (2) students who receive hearing technology in accordance with their IEPs. Also, the CSE assigns a teacher of the deaf to SBECA twice per week, who provides additional services.
- SBECA has one (1) student who requires a paraprofessional with her in the classroom; this service is provided.
- SBECA currently has 74 students with Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) as a mandate and eight (8) students mandated to receive Special Education Teacher Support Services (SETSS) in addition to ICT programming. These services are provided as required in the IEPs. At the time of the NYSED Renewal Site Visit in early October, SETSS had begun, but had not been fully rolled out, as assessments were still taking place to determine appropriate services. However, shortly thereafter, one of the Directors of Student Support Services and the SpEd Specialist/Data Coordinator began providing SETSS to all students with that mandate in their IEPs, and continue to do so.
- SBECA has two (2) students requiring SETSS instruction only; these students receive these services during their Individualized Learning Time (ILT) block.
- SBECA currently has four (4) students mandated for a 12:1 setting, which is considered a misalignment with SBECA’s programming. Each of the families impacted by this discrepancy received information about SBECA’s programming upon enrolling at the school and was made aware that SBECA is unable to provide a 12:1 setting. In each of these instances, the families have decided to keep their child enrolled at SBECA, opting for an ICT setting. The school has followed the guidelines provided by the CSE and is working to amend or update these students’ IEPs accordingly.

In addition, SBECA provides all testing accommodations required and follows all mandates to the best of our abilities, in active partnership with our CSE representative. For this reason we believe we are in compliance.

Pg. 26, in reference to the line: “SBECA currently has 12 co-teachers who are “designated special education teachers”; however, according to information provided by the school on site, only three teachers have acquired formal special education expertise.”

Response:

The school would like to note that, in addition to SBECA’s three (3) certified SpEd co-teachers referenced above, there are five administrators who hold SpEd certification, including the principal, who is a certified, former special education teacher, coordinator and director. Both of the Directors of Student Support Services have years of experience in these roles and provide direct SpEd services to students, including SETSS, daily. SBECA’s Special Education Specialist and Data Coordinator, Mr. Kazanjian, is also a certified SpEd teacher with 19 years of experience, who provides direct services to students throughout the week, as well. Additionally our VP of STEM holds a SpEd certification and co-teaches one section of 8th Grade Algebra daily, to support students with IEPs in that subject area.

Despite this additional expertise at the school, SBECA’s Board and leadership agree that it would benefit the school to have more certified teachers on staff, including those certified in SpEd, and is supporting several teachers in their professional development efforts to achieve this goal. Two teachers are currently SpEd certified in other states and are pursuing reciprocity in New York State, and five teachers are currently pursuing SpEd certification for the first time. It is the expectation that four of the five currently enrolled in certification programs will receive their certification in advance of the 2020-2021 school year.

Pg. 31, in reference to the lines: “WHEDco staff provides counseling (IEP-mandated) and other services to students, which is documented in a WHEDco database. The school's partnership agreement with WHEDco does not include terms that would prevent the dissemination of student data, in violation of FERPA and Education Law 2-d.”

Response:

SBECA and WHEDco will amend its current partnership agreement to make clear that WHEDco is prohibited from disseminating student data. The amendment will be submitted to NYSED for review upon drafting. This clause will also be stated clearly in any future partnership agreements with WHEDco.