





TO: P-12 Education Committee

FROM: James N. Baldwin 

SUBJECT: Renewal Recommendations for Charter Schools Authorized by the Board of Regents

DATE: February 3, 2022

AUTHORIZATION(S): 

SUMMARY

Issue for Decision

Should the Board of Regents approve the proposed renewal charters for the following charter schools authorized by the Board of Regents pursuant to Article 56 of the Education Law (the New York Charter Schools Act):

- **Exploration Elementary Charter School for Science and Technology** (Short-term, two-year renewal and a revision to amend the charter school's organizational chart to reflect organizational and leadership changes).
- **Launch Expeditionary Learning Charter School** (Full-term, five-year renewal and revisions to: increase the charter school's grade span to include Grades 9 through 12 from its current Grade 6 through Grade 8 configuration, at a different site within the same borough, commencing in the 2023-2024 school year; make a corresponding increase to its authorized enrollment from 310 students to 505 students by year five of the renewal charter term, commencing in the 2023-2024 school year; and amend the school's organizational chart to reflect roles and responsibilities associated with the grade level expansion).

Reason(s) for Consideration

Required by State statute.

Proposed Handling

This issue will come before the P-12 Education Committee and the Full Board for action at its February 2022 meeting.

Procedural History

The New York State Education Department (the Department) made the renewal recommendations being presented to the Board of Regents for approval and issuance as required by Article 56 of the Education Law and 8 NYCRR §119.7.

Background Information

The Board of Regents and the Department are bound by law, regulation, and Regents-endorsed policies regarding the criteria that can be considered in decision making pertaining to the authorization of new charter schools, charter school renewals, and charter school revisions. Detailed information on these laws, regulations, and Regents-endorsed policies can be found in the Appendix.

Related Regents Items

November 2012: [Board of Regents Charter School Renewal Policy](https://www.regents.nysed.gov/common/regents/files/documents/meetings/2012Meetings/November2012/1112p12a1.pdf)
(<https://www.regents.nysed.gov/common/regents/files/documents/meetings/2012Meetings/November2012/1112p12a1.pdf>)

Exploration Elementary Charter School for Science and Technology

November 2015 [Initial Charter](https://www.regents.nysed.gov/common/regents/files/1115p12a2.pdf)
(<https://www.regents.nysed.gov/common/regents/files/1115p12a2.pdf>)

Launch Expeditionary Learning Charter School

December 2010 [Initial Charter](https://www.regents.nysed.gov/common/regents/files/documents/meetings/2010Meetings/December2010/1210p12a2.pdf)
(<https://www.regents.nysed.gov/common/regents/files/documents/meetings/2010Meetings/December2010/1210p12a2.pdf>)

February 2016 [Enrollment and Grade-Level Reduction Revision](http://www.regents.nysed.gov/common/regents/files/216p12a4.pdf)
(<http://www.regents.nysed.gov/common/regents/files/216p12a4.pdf>)

January 2017 [First Renewal](http://www.regents.nysed.gov/common/regents/files/117p12a2.pdf)
(<http://www.regents.nysed.gov/common/regents/files/117p12a2.pdf>)

November 2017 [Enrollment Expansion Revision](http://www.regents.nysed.gov/common/regents/files/1117p12a1.pdf)
(<http://www.regents.nysed.gov/common/regents/files/1117p12a1.pdf>)

March 2019 [Second Renewal](https://www.regents.nysed.gov/common/regents/files/319p12a1.pdf)
(<https://www.regents.nysed.gov/common/regents/files/319p12a1.pdf>)

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Board of Regents take the following action(s):

VOTED: That the Board of Regents finds that the **Exploration Elementary Charter School for Science and Technology**: (1) meets the requirements set out in Article 56 of the Education Law, and all other applicable laws, rules and regulations; (2) the applicant can demonstrate the ability to operate the school in an educationally and fiscally sound manner; (3) granting the application is likely to improve student learning and achievement and materially further the purposes set out in subdivision two of Section twenty-eight hundred fifty of this article; and (4) granting the application would have a significant educational benefit to the students expected to attend the charter school, and the Board of Regents therefore approves the renewal application of the **Exploration Elementary Charter School for Science and Technology** and that a renewal charter be issued, and that its provisional charter be extended for a term up through and including **June 30, 2024**.

VOTED: That the Board of Regents finds that **Launch Expeditionary Learning Charter School** (1) meets the requirements set out in Article 56 of the Education Law, and all other applicable laws, rules and regulations; (2) the applicant can demonstrate the ability to operate the school in an educationally and fiscally sound manner; (3) granting the application is likely to improve student learning and achievement and materially further the purposes set out in subdivision two of Section twenty-eight hundred fifty of this article; and (4) granting the application would have a significant educational benefit to the students expected to attend the charter school, and the Board of Regents therefore approves the renewal application of **Launch Expeditionary Learning Charter School** and that a renewal charter be issued, and that its provisional charter be extended for a term up through and including **June 30, 2027**.

Timetable for Implementation

The Regents action for the above-named charter schools will become effective immediately.

Exploration Elementary Charter School for Science and Technology

Table 1: Charter School Summary

Name of Charter School	Exploration Elementary Charter School for Science and Technology
Board Chair	Carlos Cong
District of Location	Rochester City School District ¹
Initial Commencement of Instruction	Fall 2017
Charter Terms	Initial Charter: August 21, 2017 - June 30, 2022
Facilities	1001 Lake Avenue, Rochester, New York 14613 - Private Space
Innovative and Noteworthy Programs	Exploration Elementary Charter School for Science and Technology (Exploration) makes significant efforts to support students' social and emotional learning (SEL) needs. The school offers an SEL curriculum, employs a wellness team to support students, and connects families to external organizations providing wraparound services.
Recommended Material Revisions	A proposed revision to amend the charter school's organizational chart to reflect significant changes. This revision is proposed to commence in the 2022-2023 school year.
Link to Charter School Renewal Report	http://www.nysed.gov/common/nysed/files/programs/charter-schools/final-exploration-ren-rpt-to-school-1-20-22.pdf

Table 2: Current Grade Levels and Approved Enrollment

	Year 1 2017 to 2018	Year 2 2018 to 2019	Year 3 2019 to 2020	Year 4 2020 to 2021	Year 5 2021-2022
Grade Configuration	K - Grade 1	K - Grade 2	K - Grade 3	K - Grade 4	K - Grade 5
Total Approved Enrollment	175	246	325	400	475

¹ Twenty percent of all students residing in this district attend charter schools.

Table 3: Recommended Renewal Term Grade Levels and Recommended Enrollment

	Year 1 2022 to 2023	Year 2 2023 to 2024
Grade Configuration	K - Grade 5	K - Grade 5
Total Recommended Enrollment	475	475

Rationale for Renewal and Revision Recommendation

Based on the Board of Regents Renewal Policy, NYSED recommends that the Board of Regents grant the renewal term and revision described above in the **Issue for Decision** section.

If the short-term renewal recommendation is granted by the Board of Regents, then pursuant to the Monitoring Plan for New York State Charter Schools Authorized by the Board of Regents, the NYSED Charter School Office will require the school to develop an action plan, a tool implemented by the CSO to highlight deficiencies in the Performance Framework for the school and help them identify strategies and set measurable time-bound goals towards improvement through a structured tool. The action plan also facilitates communication and transparency of expectations between the school and the CSO framed within the standards of the NYSED Charter School Performance Framework and renewal expectations. The school will also be placed on a corrective action plan and provided with technical assistance and support through the NYSED Charter School Office. **If Exploration is not meeting standards and expectations at the time of the midterm visit, NYSED will strongly consider placing the school on probation in contemplation of charter revocation and school closure.**

The current renewal recommendation is being made for the following reasons:

Renewal:

During the current charter term, the school compiled an overall record of approaching Benchmark 1, but at the time of the renewal analysis falls far below meeting performance framework Benchmark 9. The school is meeting the benchmark for Culture, Climate, and Family Engagement and the benchmark for Financial Management, and is approaching all other benchmarks. Throughout its charter term, Exploration Charter School has shown improvement in multiple domains. In response to the pandemic, the school has prioritized and strengthened the school culture and student and family engagement. Although there continue to be concerns across multiple benchmark domains, as shown below, including Benchmark 1, the school seeks to build upon the social-emotional work they have undertaken to also support improve student academic outcomes, something the NYSED Charter School Office will be monitoring closely for during the next proposed charter term. Therefore, NYSED is recommending a short-term renewal.

Due to the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the State assessment data used to formulate the Benchmark 1 rating has not been updated since the administration of the State 3-8 math and ELA Assessments in SY 2018-2019. However, a variety of indicators have been used to inform NYSED's

assessment regarding the efficacy of the school's academic program in SY 2019-2020 through the current academic year.

However:

- Pursuant to NYSED Charter School Office Guidance², the school implemented its Local Assessment Plan during the 2020-2021 school year. Participation rates for these internal assessments were at 87% for ELA and 83% for math, compared with the average participation rates of 93% and 92% respectively for other Board of Regents-authorized charter schools. The proficiency rates on these interim assessments as reported by the school were 30% for ELA and 6% for math, as compared with the Board of Regents-authorized charter schools' averages of 52% and 49%, respectively.
- Comparison with the school's mid-term internal assessments showed 43% of students meeting expectations in ELA and 31% in math in the spring of 2020. In response to these results, the school has changed curricula for ELA and math several times during the initial charter term in order to "build student foundational literacy skills and raise students' math levels."
- The school's 2020-2021 Annual Report goals were dependent upon the state assessments and the school was unable to evaluate its growth.
- For the 2019-2020 school year, Exploration was designated as a school in Good Standing under current New York State criteria as defined by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.
- The school's Benchmark 2 and 3 ratings further reflect the efficacy of its academic programs in SY 2019-2020 through the current academic year.

The NYSED Charter School Office will conduct a mid-term site visit as set forth in the NYSED Charter School Monitoring Plan.³

Material Revisions:

The requested revision will have no bearing on the number of students being served by this charter school, which will not change, nor will it impact the number of charters available for issuance in New York City or the State.

It is anticipated that approving the following revision request will result in a significant educational benefit to the students expected to attend the charter school because it will clarify roles and responsibilities of the administrative team members, who specifically focus on academics or social-emotional needs of students.

The school plans to add a human resources generalist, a student support services coordinator, and a family liaison. The school reports that this revision will allow school leaders to be more responsive to student-specific needs, and that tracking of student progress will be facilitated by having a dedicated individual for data management, a family liaison, and wellness deans on staff. The deans of wellness, classroom teachers, and student support staff will be organized by grade bands: K - Grade 2 and Grades 3 - 5.

² See the memo at http://www.nysed.gov/common/nysed/files/programs/charter-schools/borauthorizedcharterschoollocalassessmentreportingmemoapril2020_final_1.pdf

³ <http://www.nysed.gov/charter-schools/oversight-plan-board-regents-authorized-charter-schools>

Performance Framework Ratings:

At the time of renewal, the charter school was rated on each of the 10 NYSED Charter School Performance Framework Benchmarks as follows. These ratings reflect performance over the entire charter term (except as noted) and are considered when making a renewal recommendation, pursuant to the Board of Regents Renewal Policy.

**2015 Charter School Performance Framework Benchmark Ratings
EXPLORATION ELEMENTARY CHARTER SCHOOL FOR SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

2015 Performance Benchmark		Level
Educational Success	<p>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).</p> <p>Note: Due to the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the State assessment data used to formulate this rating has not been updated since the administration of the State 3-8 math and ELA Assessments in SY 2018-2019. Therefore, this rating does not reflect the efficacy of the school’s academic program in SY 2019-2020 through the current academic year.</p>	Approaches
	<p>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.</p>	Approaches
	<p>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.</p>	Meets
Organizational Soundness	<p>Benchmark 4: Financial Condition: The school is in sound and stable financial condition as evidenced by performance on key financial indicators.</p>	Approaches
	<p>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.</p>	Meets
	<p>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.</p>	Approaches
	<p>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.</p>	Approaches
Faithfulness to Charter & Law	<p>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.</p>	Approaches
	<p>Benchmark 9: Enrollment, Recruitment, and Retention: The school is meeting or making annual progress toward meeting the enrollment plan outlined in its charter and its enrollment and retention targets for students with disabilities, English language learners, and students who are eligible applicants for the free and reduced priced lunch program; or has demonstrated that it has made extensive good faith efforts to attract, recruit, and retain such students.</p>	Falls Far Below
	<p>Benchmark 10: Legal Compliance: The school complies with applicable laws, regulations, and the provisions of its charter.</p>	Approaches

Monitoring and Oversight:

- During the school's current charter term, the NYSED Charter School Office (CSO) conducted the following site visits:
 - Year 1: Baseline Check-In
 - Year 2: Check-in
 - Year 3: Mid-Term
 - Year 4: Check-In
 - Year 5: Renewal

- NYSED CSO took the following actions during the school's charter term. For each Notice of Deficiency that the school receives, it is required to develop a corrective action plan (CAP) establishing strategies and measurable outcomes to address the identified deficiencies, receive CSO approval, and participate in ongoing conversations with its liaison until those deficiencies have been addressed and the CAP has been terminated.
 - Year 1: In April 2018, NYSED issued a Notice of Deficiency based on total enrollment being below the 85% threshold. The school was required to complete a CAP to implement strategies to address this deficiency and to report regularly to the Charter School Office on its progress.
 - Year 2: The school continued to implement its CAP, expanding on its strategies to recruit new students.
 - Year 3: The school continued to implement and expand its CAP strategies to recruit new students.
 - Year 4: In August 2020, NYSED issued a Notice of Deficiency based on low enrollment of subgroups compared to the district of location in 2018-2019, specifically a -8 percentage-point differential for SWDs, and a -12 percentage-point differential for ELLs. The school also developed a CAP for these deficiencies.
 - Year 5: According to the school's 2020-2021 data, it is at 85% of its maximum authorized enrollment, having 11% SWDs, 2% ELLs, and 86% ED students. This means that, respectively, there is a -9, -16, and -4 percentage point differential when compared to the district of location. The school continues to implement its CAP strategies and discuss its challenges and progress with the CSO.

Summary of Evidence for Renewal Based on NYSED Performance Framework Standards

Key Performance Area: Educational Success

BM 1: See Attachment 1 (found in the Charter School Renewal Report linked to in Table 1 above): 2021 NYSED Charter School Information Dashboard. As the trajectory of this school’s academic achievement on State assessments is unknown due to the pandemic, an Approaches rating was made using internal assessment data. Details of internal assessment results are provided in the “Rationale for Renewal and Revisions” section, above.

BM 2: Over this charter term, the trajectory for this benchmark has been consistent with an Approaches rating. Exploration implements practices to align the curriculum across grades but does not yet differentiate it to provide opportunities for all students to master grade-level skills and concepts. Because the school changed its ELA and math curricula in the middle of its charter term, teachers have not yet implemented the new curricula with fidelity for a complete school year.

BM 3: Over this charter term, the trajectory for this benchmark has improved its rating from Approaches to Meets. Exploration has made significant efforts to establish a program that supports the social-emotional and mental health needs of its students, employing a variety of restorative practices to address both behavior and student social-emotional well-being. In the school year 2018-2019 the school was designated as “potentially persistently dangerous” by NYSED, but that designation was discontinued the following year.

Table 4: 2021 3-8 Assessments (FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY)

EXPLORATION ELE CS - SCIENCE-TECHNOL		Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Percent Proficient	Receiving entirely remote instruction	Refusal	Other Reason for not Testing	Percent Tested
2020:21	ELA	13	13	7	4	30%	71	1	5	32%
	Mathematics	48	3	2	1	6%	53	4	3	47%
	Science	2	2	1	.	20%	31	.	2	13%

Note: The category of 'Other Reason for not Testing' includes: No Assessment; Absent/No Valid Score; Not tested; Medically Excused; and Administrative Error.

Key Performance Area: Organizational Soundness

BM 4: See Attachment 2 (found in the Charter School Renewal Report linked to in Table 1 above): Charter School Fiscal Accountability Summary. Over this charter term, the trajectory for this benchmark has improved from Falls Far Below to Approaches, based on the improvement of its financial condition. Unless otherwise indicated, financial data is derived from the school’s annual independently audited financial statements, which are publicly available on [NYSED’s website](http://www.p12.nysed.gov/psc/csdirectory/CSLaunchPage.html) at (<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/psc/csdirectory/CSLaunchPage.html>).

BM 5: See Attachment 2: Charter School Fiscal Accountability Summary. Over this charter term, the trajectory for this benchmark has improved from Approaches to Meets.

BM 6: Over this charter term, the trajectory for this benchmark has been consistent with an Approaches rating. The board has not acted with sufficient urgency to address its issues over the charter term. For example, while the mid-term site visit report states that the board had a strategic plan in place, the board was still only in the early stages of implementation at the time of the remote renewal site visit.

BM 7: Over the charter term, the trajectory for this benchmark has been consistent with an Approaches rating. Exploration continues to struggle with recruiting and retaining high quality teachers, preventing the school from having two adults in each classroom in K - Grade 2, as outlined in the organizational chart.

Key Performance Area: Faithfulness to the Charter and Law

BM 8: The mission of Exploration Elementary Charter School for Science and Technology is to engage students, their families, and the community in the processes of scientific inquiry and the use of innovative technology to develop the social, emotional, and academic tools necessary to thrive in school and in today's interconnected world.

The key design elements are: Cross-Cutting Curricular, Scientific Inquiry, and Lab-Based Learning Opportunities; Balanced and Differentiated Instruction & Rigorous Standards; Ongoing Professional Development and Learning; Data-Driven Instruction and Accountability Aligned to Rigorous Academic Standards; Community Connections and Partnerships; and Serving the Diverse Needs of All Students.

Over this charter term, the trajectory for this benchmark has been consistent with an Approaches rating. Exploration has put structures in place to address key design elements but has not yet demonstrated effective implementation. School leaders expect teachers to plan modification strategies in lessons, but the school visit team did not observe differentiated instruction. The school has an assessment system that would allow for continual data collection, but Exploration had not yet begun implementing school-wide interventions based on the current year's assessment data at the time of the visit.

BM 9: See Attachment 1: 2021 NYSED Charter School Information Dashboard. Over this charter term, the trajectory for this benchmark has been consistent with a Falls Far Below rating. Exploration continues to struggle to recruit a student body that is representative of the Rochester CSD. The differentials between the school and district's percent of ELLs and SWDs have steadily worsened. Further, Exploration has been unable to retain its students at a rate comparable to the district.

Efforts to recruit and retain students in the ED, ELL, and SWD populations include:

- The use of a weighted lottery for all three subgroups;
- an analysis of city demographics;
- highlighting services to subgroups in media;
- hiring Spanish-speaking staff;
- dedicating personnel to the recruitment efforts (Family Liaison); and
- partnering with community organizations to provide access to targeted families.

BM 10: Over this charter term, the trajectory for this benchmark has been consistent with its Approaches rating. Exploration is in compliance with state and federal laws, but must make corrections to its policies, including its discipline, complaint, and enrollment policies. The BoT members do not

always complete accurate financial disclosure forms. In addition, the school has implemented changes to the charter without receiving CSO and/or BoR approval.

Summary of Public Comment

The required public hearing was held by the Rochester City School District on October 12, 2021. Six people attended, and none spoke.

The school provided evidence of community support for this renewal and revision recommendation through the following:

- A list of neighborhood/community groups that have partnered with the school to provide services, materials, volunteers, and financial donations that are directly aligned with the school's mission. Partners include Foodlink, Catholic Family Center, Children's Institute, YMCA, Rochester Museum and Science Center, Greater Rochester After-School Alliance, Goodwill of the Finger Lakes, Max and Marian Farash Charitable Foundation, Wilson Foundation, Ibero American Action League, among other, similar, entities. Contracts with partners are renewed annually and include a pledge to continue and expand services throughout the renewal term.
- A virtual focus group representing 25 families held by the school in spring 2021 unanimously supported renewal for the school, as well as an ultimate expansion to Grade 12;
- Support for the school's proposed organizational structure was voiced at a virtual meeting in May of 2021, with parents expressing their belief that the change would strengthen the school's capacity to support students' social, emotional, and academic needs; and
- An end-of-year staff survey and intent-to-stay interviews resulted in feedback from staff regarding the revision that reflected that it would positively contribute to the students' improved behavioral, social, and academic skills.

Launch Expeditionary Learning Charter School

Table 1: Charter School Summary

Name of Charter School	Launch Expeditionary Learning Charter School
Board Chair	Jonathan Harber
District of Location	NYC CSD 16
Initial Commencement of Instruction	Fall 2012
Charter Terms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial Charter: August 22, 2012 - June 30, 2017 • First Renewal: July 1, 2017 - June 30, 2019 • Second Renewal: July 1, 2019 - June 30, 2022
Facilities	1580 Dean Street, Brooklyn – Public Space
Innovative and Noteworthy Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over the charter term, the Launch Expeditionary Learning Charter School (Launch) board and school leadership have worked to create opportunities for their students, and to support their social-emotional learning. • Partnership with New York City Outward Bound supports the Expeditionary Learning (EL) model key design element. For example, the Crew structure supports the EL Education model by creating a school culture that is planned for, developed, and sustained through community building, promoting shared understandings, and encouraging all students to participate and become leaders. This structure provides opportunities for relationship building, academic progress monitoring, and character development. • The proposed high school would provide opportunities for students to learn real-life skills through their work with various community partners. Students and teachers would co-create personalized education and career pathways, with the bulk of learning happening through authentic problem solving with experts in the field, focusing on the careers of the future. Two key areas of problem solving will be environmental sustainability and equity. Partnerships include New York City Outward Bound Schools, SolarOne, The Billion Oyster Project, The Campaign Against Hunger, NY Sun Works, and the CUNY Science and Resilience Institute.
Recommended Material Revisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the charter school’s grade span to add Grades 9 through 12 to its currently approved Grade 6 through Grade 8 configuration, to commence in the 2023-2024 school year at a different site within the same borough (NYC CSD 22).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the charter school’s authorized enrollment from 310 students to 505 students, to commence in the 2023-2024 school year. • Revised organizational chart to reflect staff roles and responsibilities, commencing in the 2022-2023 school year.
Link to Charter School Renewal Report	http://www.nysed.gov/common/nysed/files/programs/charter-schools/final-launch-ren-rpt-to-school-1-20-2022.pdf

Table 2: Current Grade Levels and Approved Enrollment

	Year 1 2019 to 2020	Year 2 2020 to 2021	Year 3 2021 to 2022
Grade Configuration	Grades 6 - 8	Grades 6 - 8	Grades 6 - 8
Total Approved Enrollment	310	310	310

Table 3: Recommended Renewal Term Grade Levels and Recommended Enrollment

	Year 1 2022 to 2023	Year 2 2023 to 2024	Year 3 2024 to 2025	Year 4 2025 to 2026	Year 5 2026 to 2027
Grade Configuration	Grades 6 - 8	Grades 6 - 9	Grades 6 - 10	Grades 6 - 11	Grades 6 - 12
Total Recommended Enrollment	310	340	400	455	505

Rationale for Renewal and Revisions Recommendation

Based on the Board of Regents Renewal Policy, NYSED recommends that the Board of Regents grant the renewal term and revisions described above in the **Issue for Decision** section, for the following reasons.

Renewal:

During the current charter term, the school has compiled a record of Approaching Benchmark 1, and at the time of the renewal analysis is Approaching BM 9 and has met the other eight performance benchmarks in the Framework.

Due to the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the State assessment data used to formulate the Benchmark 1 rating has not been updated since the administration of the State 3-8 math and ELA Assessments in the 2018-2019 school year. However, a variety of indicators have been used to inform

NYSED's assessment regarding the efficacy of the school's academic program in SY 2019-2020 through the current academic year.

- For 2019-2020, launch is designated as a school in Good Standing under current New York State criteria as defined by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.
- In its 2020-2021 Annual Report, the school states that it has met two of its three academic goals, with the third one not being able to be assessed during the pandemic.
- Pursuant to the NYSED Charter School Office Local Assessment Policy,⁴ the school's renewal application submitted in August 2021 provides internal assessment data:
 - With a key design element of the school being EL Education, the school is annually scored on a nationally-normed implementation review. In that review, the school was noted as having these areas of significant growth: delivering effective lessons, differentiating instruction, and supporting all students and creating a community of learning. The school is now just two points shy of being nationally credentialed, the gold standard for implementing EL Education.
 - Starting in the 2020-2021 school year, the school began implementing the MAP Growth Assessment. Data provided by the school demonstrates that all students are making growth between the fall 2020 baseline and the fall 2021 administration. In ELA, 73% of current 7th graders demonstrated growth, with 75% showing growth in math. In ELA, 62% of current 8th graders demonstrated growth, with 78% showing growth in math. Among students with Individual Education Plans (IEPs), 70% demonstrated growth in ELA and 84% demonstrated growth in math for both cohorts. Similarly, 75% of English language learners showed growth in ELA and 92% demonstrated growth in math, for students in both cohorts.
- The school's Benchmark 2 and 3 ratings further reflect the efficacy of its academic programs in SY 2019-2020 through the current academic year.

As the total enrollment of resident students attending charter schools in the district is greater than 5 percent of the total public-school enrollment, pursuant to Education Law §2852(2)(d), NYSED notes that granting this renewal application provides a significant educational benefit to the students attending and expected to attend this charter school. (Thirty-two percent of all students residing in the NYC CSD 16 attend charter schools.)

Material Revisions:

Approving the following revision requests will result in a significant educational benefit to the students expected to attend the charter school because it will provide a high-quality option to families and students seeking a high school in Brooklyn.

Approving the following revision requests is likely to improve student learning and achievement because of the unique learning opportunities planned by the school and its partners—namely, to provide students with authentic project-based learning experiences where they can employ problem solving skills, while using the resources of Floyd Bennett Field in NYC CSD 22, commencing in the 2023-2024 school year. In close collaboration with NYC Outward Bound Schools and the National Park Service, and

⁴ See http://www.nysed.gov/common/nysed/files/programs/charter-schools/borauthorizedcharterschoollocalassessmentreportingmemoapril2020_final_1.pdf.

under the monitoring and oversight of the NYSED Charter School Office, the school will use the 2022-2023 academic year as a planning year to allow for the construction of the Floyd Bennett Field site, onboard high school leaders and staff, and further engage with the school's internal and external community.

The school plans to keep the middle school grades at its current location in NYC CSD 16. Commencing in the 2023-2024 school year, the school plans to locate the high school grades in private space on the Floyd Bennett Field Campus, in partnership with the National Park Service. The Floyd Bennett Field Campus will also be utilized for project-based learning opportunities for the school's middle school students as well as other district and charter schools.

Partnerships:

- Through the work that Launch and the National Park Service have undertaken at the Floyd Bennett Field Campus, NYC Outward Bound Schools is now pursuing Floyd Bennett Field as a center to serve the 100-200 district schools and 30,000 students they work with.
- Launch's other partners, such as The Campaign Against Hunger, The Billion Oyster Project, SolarOne and Asase Yaa Cultural Arts Foundation, also anticipate serving students at this campus.

Transportation:

Launch plans to provide transportation for students to the Floyd Bennett Field Campus.

- They are in the process of conducting due diligence with a number of private transportation options that Launch will pay for, including electric buses, in conjunction with the National Park Service.
- Because the Floyd Bennett Field program has the potential to serve approximately 30,000 public school students annually through NYC Outward Bound Schools and Launch's other partners, Launch is working with the MTA to explore increasing MTA public transportation to the Floyd Bennett Field Campus.
- Launch has collaborated with a number of independent schools, including Berkeley Carroll and Riverdale, to learn about their transportation systems
- Launch has communicated with a standard bus company to get initial pricing packages
- The school is also in talks with an electric bus company called Circuit, which aligns with the school's environmental sustainability goals and the goals of the National Park Service
- Launch is also collaborating with NPS and the Jamaica Bay-Rockaway Parks Conservancy to combine its transportation system with an NPS system on Floyd Bennett Field to share and reduce costs.
- Launch has also met with members of its local state legislative delegation on the Transportation Committee to discuss alignment with transportation initiatives that could benefit students.

Performance Framework Ratings:

At the time of renewal, the charter school was rated on each of the 10 NYSED Charter School Performance Framework Benchmarks as follows. These ratings reflect performance over the entire charter term and are considered when making a renewal recommendation, pursuant to the Board of Regents Renewal Policy:

2019 Charter School Performance Framework Benchmark Ratings
Launch Expeditionary Learning Charter School

2019 Performance Benchmark		Level
Educational Success	<p>Benchmark 1: Student Performance: The school has met or exceeded achievement indicators for academic proficiency, trends toward proficiency, similar schools, college and career readiness, and high school graduation, if applicable. Proficiency at the elementary/middle school level shall be defined as achieving a performance level of 3 or higher on Grade 3-8 state assessments in ELA, math, and science. At the high school level, passing shall be defined as obtaining a Regents exam score of 65 or higher.</p> <p>Note: Due to the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the State assessment data used to formulate this rating has not been updated since the administration of the State 3-8 math and ELA Assessments in SY 2018-2019. Therefore, this rating does not reflect the efficacy of the school’s academic program in SY 2019-2020 through the current academic year.</p>	Approaches
	<p>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 implements research-based practices and has rigorous and coherent curriculum and assessments that are aligned to New York State Learning Standards 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.</p>	Meets
	<p>Benchmark 3: Culture, Climate, and Student and Family Engagement: The school has systems in place to support students’ social and emotional health and to provide for a positive, safe, and respectful learning environment that prepares all students for college and career. 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.</p>	Meets
Organizational Soundness	<p>Benchmark 4: Financial Condition: The school is in sound and stable financial condition as evidenced by performance on key financial indicators.</p>	Meets
	<p>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.</p>	Meets
	<p>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.</p>	Meets
	<p>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.</p>	Meets
Faithfulness to Charter & Law	<p>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.</p>	Meets
	<p>Benchmark 9: Enrollment, Recruitment, and Retention: The school is meeting or making annual progress toward meeting the enrollment plan outlined in its charter and its enrollment and retention targets for students with disabilities, English language learners, and students who are eligible applicants for the free and reduced priced lunch program; or has demonstrated that it has made extensive good faith efforts to attract, recruit, and retain such students. . High schools are meeting persistence rates commensurate with the NYSED target.</p>	Approaches
	<p>Benchmark 10: Legal Compliance: The school complies with applicable laws, regulations, and the provisions of its charter.</p>	Meets

Monitoring and Oversight:

- During the school’s current charter term, the NYSED CSO conducted the following site visits:
 - Year 1: Check-In
 - Year 2: Check-In
 - Year 3: Renewal

Summary of Evidence for Renewal

Key Performance Area: Educational Success

BM 1: See Attachment 1 (found in the Charter School Renewal Report linked to in Table 1 above): 2021 NYSED Charter School Information Dashboard. **Over this charter term, the trajectory for this benchmark cannot be determined because State assessments were not administered in the 2019-2020 school year and were administered under COVID-19 pandemic constraints during the 2020-2021 school year. The basis for the school’s rating of “Approaches” for the 2020-2021 school year is detailed in the “Rationale for Renewal and Revisions” section, above.**

BM 2: Over this charter term, the trajectory for this benchmark has been consistent with a Meets rating.

BM 3: Over this charter term, the trajectory for this benchmark has been consistent with a Meets rating.

Key Performance Area: Organizational Soundness

BM 4: See Attachment 2 (found in the Charter School Renewal Report linked to in Table 1 above): Charter School Fiscal Accountability Summary. Unless otherwise indicated, financial data is derived from the school’s annual independently audited financial statements, which are publicly available on [NYSED’s website](http://www.p12.nysed.gov/psc/csdirectory/CSLaunchPage.html) at (<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/psc/csdirectory/CSLaunchPage.html>). Over this charter term, the trajectory with regard to this benchmark has been consistent with a Meets rating.

BM 5: See Attachment 2: Charter School Fiscal Accountability Summary. Over this charter term, the trajectory for this benchmark has been consistent with a Meets rating.

BM 6: Over this charter term, the trajectory for this benchmark has been consistent with a Meets rating.

BM 7: Over this charter term, the trajectory for this benchmark has been consistent with a Meets rating.

Key Performance Area: Faithfulness to the Charter and Law

BM 8: Launch’s mission is to prepare students in under-resourced communities to thrive in college and careers by providing a public education rooted in active learning experiences and powerful character development.

The Key Design Elements are the five domains of the EL Education Core Practices which include curriculum, instruction, culture and character, student-engaged assessment, and leadership. In addition, there are three dimensions of student achievement which are mastery of knowledge and skills, character, and high-quality work.

Over this charter term, the trajectory for this benchmark has been consistent with a Meets rating.

BM 9: See Attachment 1: 2021 NYSED Charter School Information Dashboard. Over this charter term, the trajectory for this benchmark has been consistent with an Approaches rating. The school continues to recruit, enroll, and retain students with disabilities while closing the gap within a few percentage points in comparison to the district of location.

Efforts to recruit and retain students in the ED, ELL, and SWD populations include:

- Sharing of information about the services for special populations, such as a webinar on the school’s co-teaching, ICT and 12:1:1 models;
- Highlighting the fact that the school offers 12:1:1 setting for SWD students, something not available in most other charter schools;
- According to the school’s renewal application, “Recruitment strategies include several in-person and online recruitment events, organic and paid social media posts, two direct mailings to rising 6th grade families in Brooklyn advertising the success of our programs for special populations, attending middle school fairs (when possible), advertising on bus stops in the area, building relationships with community youth organizations that can promote Launch and our programming for SWD and ELL students, and maintaining welcoming and individualized customer service when families reach out to inquire about Launch;”
- During the pandemic, conducting virtual recruitment events using breakout rooms to address specific questions about special education. Student ambassadors with Individual Education Plans shared their experiences as well; and
- Outreach to various ELL communities, including to a growing population from Yemen. The school’s website can be translated into multiple languages, and school staff have targeted partner schools that serve large numbers of ELL students.

BM 10: Over this charter term, the trajectory for this benchmark has been consistent with a Meets rating.

Summary of Public Comment

The required public hearing was held by the New York City Department of Education on September 28, 2021. Forty-seven people attended, and 16 spoke. Sixteen were in favor of the renewal and revisions. No one was opposed.

The school provided evidence of community support for this renewal and revision recommendation through the following:

- Parent Association at the school—102 letters of support; and
- Elected Officials, Community-Based Organizations, and Charter Schools—46 letters of support.

APPENDIX

Laws, Regulations, and Regents-endorsed internal Policies Applicable to Board of Regents-authorized Charter School Renewals

Statutory requirements pertaining to Board of Regents charter school decision making are enumerated in Article 56 of the Education Law. This section of the law sets forth the purpose of charter schools to:

- (a) Improve student learning and achievement;
- (b) Increase learning opportunities for all students, with special emphasis on expanded learning experiences for students who are at-risk of academic failure;
- (c) Encourage the use of different and innovative teaching methods;
- (d) Create new professional opportunities for teachers, school administrators and other school personnel;
- (e) Provide parents and students with expanded choices in the types of educational opportunities that are available within the public school system; and
- (f) Provide schools with a method to change from rule-based to performance-based accountability systems by holding the schools established under this article accountable for meeting measurable student achievement results.

Criteria regarding the evaluation of charter schools, including for renewal decisions, are set forth in Section 2852(2) of the Education Law:

- (a) Does the charter school described in the application meet the requirements set out in applicable laws, rules and regulations;
- (b) Does the charter school demonstrate the ability to operate the school in an educationally and fiscally sound manner;
- (c) Will approving the charter school action make it likely to improve student learning and achievement and materially further the purposes of the law; and
- (d) In a school district where the total enrollment of resident students attending charter schools in the base year is greater than five percent of the total public school enrollment of the school district in the base year (i) would granting the application have a significant educational benefit to the students expected to attend the proposed charter school or (ii) did the school district in which the charter school will be located consent to such application?

In addition, Renewal Guidelines contained in the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education (8 NYCRR §119.7) were adopted by the Board of Regents and require that the Board further consider the following when evaluating a charter renewal application:

- (a) The information in the charter school's renewal application;
- (b) Any additional material or information submitted by the charter school;
- (c) Any public comments received;
- (d) Any information relating to the site visit and the site visit report;
- (e) The charter school's annual reporting results including, but not limited to, student academic achievement;
- (f) The Department's renewal recommendation and the charter school's written response, if any; and
- (g) Any other information that the board, in its discretion, may deem relevant to its determination whether the charter should be renewed.

- (h) The Regents must also consider the totality of the evidence presented in each case, and may accept or reject, in whole or in part, the department's renewal recommendation, provided however that the Regents are not prohibited from weighing any one factor more heavily than another.

The [Board of Regents Renewal Policy](https://www.regents.nysed.gov/common/regents/files/documents/meetings/2012Meetings/November2012/1112p12a1.pdf) (https://www.regents.nysed.gov/common/regents/files/documents/meetings/2012Meetings/November2012/1112p12a1.pdf) sets forth the following renewal options and standards upon which the Department's recommendation is based:

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

Short-Term Renewal: A school's charter may be renewed for a shorter term, typically of three years. 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.

Nonrenewal: A school's charter will not be renewed if the school does not apply for renewal or the school fails to meet the benchmark standards for either full-term or short-term renewal. In the case of nonrenewal, a school's charter will be terminated upon its expiration, and the school will be required to comply with the [Department's Closing Procedures](http://www.p12.nysed.gov/psc/regentsoversightplan/sectioni-iv/ClosingProceduresChecklist0220.pdf) (http://www.p12.nysed.gov/psc/regentsoversightplan/sectioni-iv/ClosingProceduresChecklist0220.pdf) to ensure an orderly closure by the end of the school year.

To operationalize these statutory and regulatory requirements, the Board of Regents endorsed the Charter School Performance Framework. This document, and the ten academic, organizational, and legal domains contained within it, were created based on the limited criteria that can be considered when making decisions pertaining to the authorization of new charter schools, charter school renewals, and charter school revisions as set forth in Section 2852(2) of the Education Law. Comprehensive data for these benchmark standards is included in the charter school Regents item, summary documents, and Regents meeting presentations.

Performance Framework

The Board of Regents Charter School Performance Framework, which is part of the Board of Regents Charter School Renewal Policy and the Oversight Plan included in the Charter Agreement for each school, outlines three key areas of charter school performance: (1) Educational Success; (2) Organizational Soundness; and (3) Faithfulness to Charter and Law. The Charter School Performance Framework sets forth ten performance benchmarks in these three areas. The Charter School Performance Framework is

designed to focus on performance outcomes, preserve operational autonomy, and facilitate transparent feedback to schools. It aligns with the Department's ongoing accountability and effectiveness work under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and holds charter schools accountable to standards set forth in the Education Law, while providing the Regents with discretion. Generally, charter schools are required to demonstrate performance outcomes that exceed those of traditional public schools.

The Department considers evidence related to all ten performance benchmark areas of the Charter School Performance Framework when making recommendations to the Regents concerning charter renewal applications. However, student academic performance is of paramount importance when evaluating each school (See [8 NYCRR §119.7](#) (<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/psc/aboutcharterschools/Financing/Regulations/csreg119.7.html>)). The recommendations in this document were made after a full due-diligence process over the charter term as set forth in the [NYSED Charter School Monitoring Plan](#) (<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/psc/regentsoversightplan/SectionIIIMonitoringPlan.html>), including review of the information presented by the schools in their Renewal Applications; specific fiscal reviews; a renewal site visit of up to two days conducted by a Department team for each school; comprehensive analysis of achievement data; and consideration of public comment.