

Essential Question 1: Is the School an Academic Success?

In 2017, St. HOPE Leadership Academy Charter School (SHLACS) was approved for a short term three-year renewal. As we prepared for this renewal application, we expected to have had two years of New York State (NYS) assessment data to analyze and discuss that would demonstrate the strong academic growth and achievement of our students thus far in the current charter term. We expected that the data would provide evidence of the continued student academic growth and achievement that began at the end of the previous charter term as a result of the SHLACS Leadership Team's work to turnaround SHLACS' instructional program and school culture. However, due to the New York State Education Department's decision to cancel the administration of the 2020 NYS Grade 3-8 Assessments and the NYS Regents exams due to the COVID-19 crisis, we have only one year of NYS assessment data—that of 2019—to report on for the current charter term. Given this situation, our analysis of the academic progress and achievement of our students looks at 2019 NYS assessment data on the continuum that includes their performance on NYS assessments in 2017 and 2018—the last two years of the previous charter term. In the absence of 2020 data, this more longitudinal view of our students' academic performance gives greater context to accomplishments of this charter term, particularly illustrating the positive academic trajectory our students continue to follow as a result of the comprehensive school turnaround that we documented in our renewal application submitted on October 1, 2017.

In addition, we rely on an analysis of our student performance as measured by the NWEA MAP Reading and Math tests and Achieve 3000 (A3K), two of our internal standardized assessments. Both assessments are aligned with New York State Learning Standards (NYSLs); therefore, this data provides additional insight into our students' academic progress. In the absence of 2020 NYS assessment data, we use our baseline and mid-year 2019-2020 NWEA MAP and Fall to June A3K results to demonstrate student growth during 2019-20.

During our previous charter term, the SHLACS leadership team focused on establishing an instructional foundation at the school that would promote academic excellence while simultaneously building a supportive learning environment where every member of the community strived to realize our core values of HARLEM (Honor, Absolute Determination, Responsibility, Leadership, Excellence and Mission) in all their actions and interactions both inside and outside of the school. By the time of our previous renewal application in 2017, we were able to demonstrate we had profoundly changed our school culture and stabilized and strengthened our instructional program. The results of this important work began to be reflected in stronger student academic achievement by the 2016-17 school year—the year that would become an inflection point for our school.

In 2017, we wrote in our renewal application, “By 2016-17, SHLACS' proficiency on the NYS assessments exceeded that of CSD 5 at every grade level and in the aggregate in both ELA and math; further, our proficiency rates experienced significant increases from 2016 to 2017 compared with CSD 5 where they remained stagnant. Based on our students' performance on the 2017 NYS assessments, our school quality metrics have us *Meeting Target* and *Exceeding Target* in almost all of the Student Achievement Metrics as well as the Closing the Achievement Gap Metrics. SHLACS student growth on the NWEA MAP ELA and math tests show our students achieving greater than expected annual growth.” As a result of the totality of the performance metrics discussed in our 2017 renewal application, we wrote at the time that, “the positive impact of our strengthened instructional program on student achievement and growth is real.”

As the following discussion on our students' academic progress since 2017 will demonstrate, the positive impact was indeed *real*. We have remained focused on building on the solid instructional foundation we established in the previous charter term, and as a result we continue to realize the gains associated with this work reflected in our students' performance on NYS assessments and other performance measures used to measure academic success, including our mandated NYCDOE Performance Goals for the renewal term. The question that begins this section asks, “Is the School an Academic Success?” Given the totality of the growth and achievement of our students as will be made unequivocally clear in the following analysis and discussion, the only answer we can give to this question is **Yes**.

Mandated NYCDOE Performance Goals

Absolute Performance Goals

- ✓ For each year of the school's renewal term, the percentage of the school's students who score at or above Level 3 on the NYS Math exam must exceed such percentage for CSD 5.
- ✓ For each year of the school's renewal term, the percentage of the school's students who score at or above Level 3 on the NYS ELA exam must exceed such percentage for CSD 5.

Since 2017, as Table 1 below illustrates, SHLACS students in the Grades 6-8 aggregate have consistently outperformed their CSD 5 peers on the NYS Math exam with a greater percentage of SHLACS scoring at least a Level 3 on the NYS Math exam from 2017 to 2019. Further, since 2017 SHLACS' Grades 6-8 students have significantly increased the margin by which their proficiency rates exceeded that of CSD 5 peers: in 2017 the differential between SHLACS and CSD 5 Grade 6-8 student proficiency was +1.8 percentage points. By 2019, the differential increased to +10.9 points. With the exception of Grade 6 in 2017 and 2019, SHLACS students have also outperformed their CSD 5 at each individual grade level on the NYS Math exam. Notably, as SHLACS student cohorts progress to higher grades, they outperform their CSD 5 peers by wider margins. After underperforming CSD 5 by 2.0 percentage points on the 2017 Grade 6 exam, SHLACS 7th grade students outperform CSD 5 7th graders by 8.0 points on the 2018 Grade 7 exam and the next year, SHLACS 8th grade students outperform CSD 5 8th graders by 26.2 percentage points on the 2019 Grade 8 exam. With one exception, this pattern is evident as other grade-level cohorts progress through SHLACS as the color coded data in the NYS Math data section of Table 1 reveal.

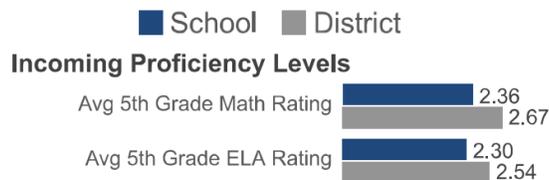
Table 1: Comparison of SHLACS and CSD 5 Proficiency on NYS Math and NYS ELA Exam: 2017-2019

		NYS Math			NYS ELA		
		SHLACS	CSD 5	Differential to CSD 5	SHLACS	CSD 5	Differential to CSD 5
Previous Charter Term	2017						
	Grade 6	15.2%	17.2%	-2.0	16.2%	17.9%	-1.7
	Grade 7	17.9%	15.4%	+2.5	32.0%	26.4%	+5.6
	Grade 8	9.5%	3.8%	+5.7	26.7%	32.0%	-5.3
	Grades 6-8	14.6%	12.8%	+1.8	24.5%	25.4%	-0.9
	2018						
	Grade 6	28.6%	21.2%	+7.4	26.8%	31.6%	-4.8
	Grade 7	27.0%	19.0%	+8.0	32.0%	25.1%	+6.9
	Grade 8	27.8%	11.4%	+16.4	50.6%	33.8%	+16.8
Grades 6-8	27.8%	17.4%	+10.4	35.1%	30.1%	+5.0	
Current Charter Term	2019						
	Grade 6	27.7%	31.0%	-3.3	26.2%	37.7%	-11.5
	Grade 7	32.3%	19.9%	+12.4	23.2%	25.4%	-2.2
	Grade 8	38.4%	12.2%	+26.2	55.8%	32.8%	+23.0
	Grades 6-8	32.5%	21.6%	+10.9	34.0%	31.8%	+2.2

SHLACS's student performance on the NYS ELA exam during this period also compares favorably to student performance in CSD 5 for the same aggregate grades 6-8 as illustrated in Table 1 above. While slightly underperforming CSD 5 in 2017, SHLACS proficiency exceeds that of CSD 5 in 2018 and 2019 by 5.0 and 2.2 percentage points, respectively. Unlike their performance on the NYS Math exam, SHLACS students have not consistently outperformed CSD 5 at individual grade levels on the NYS ELA exam. However, as SHLACS cohorts advance from grade to grade through the school they close the gap between their proficiency and CSD 5 proficiency on the NYS ELA exam, and mostly begin to exceed CSD 5 proficiency and ultimately widen the margin by which their proficiency rates exceed that of CSD 5. This is evident in the color coded data on the NYS ELA section of Table 1.

SHLACS's student performance compared with CSD 5 should also be viewed in the context of the achievement levels of SHLACS's incoming 6th grade class compared with the achievement levels of students entering 6th grade across CSD 5. Consistently, SHLACS's incoming 6th graders had greater academic deficits than incoming 6th grade students in CSD 5 based on their previous year's Grade 5 NYS ELA and math scores. Specifically, in this renewal term, according to the NYCDOE 2018-19 School Performance Dashboard¹, the average Grade 5 ELA and math scores for SHLACS's incoming 6th graders in 2018-19 were 2.30 and 2.36, respectively versus 2.54 and 2.67 of incoming CSD 5 6th graders as the following graph illustrates.

¹ https://tools.nycenet.edu/dashboard/#dbn=84M388&report_type=EMS&view=District



SHLACS's comparative scores with CSD 5 are also impacted by the inclusion of one school in CSD 5 that has an inordinate influence on the CSD 5 Grade 6 through 8 proficiency rates on the NYS ELA and math exams. Columbia Secondary School (CSS), a Grade 6-12 public school in partnership with Columbia University, is a highly selective school. Furthermore, although it is physically located in CSD 5, its students are selected from CSDs 3, 4 5 and 6. In 2019, CSS's Grade 6-8 students made up only 10.7% of all tested students in CSD 5 on the Grades 6-8 NYS ELA exam, yet they represented **66.5%** of the students in CSD 5 who scored at least a Level 3 on the exams. In math, CSS's Grade 6 -7 students (all CSS Grade 8 students took a NYS Math Regents exam in lieu of the NYS Grade 8 Math exam) comprised 10.9% of all Grade 6-7 tested students in CSD 5 on the Grade 6 and 7 NYS Math exams, yet they represented **40.0%** of all the students in CSD 5 who scored at least a Level 3 on the exams. The inclusion of CSS student assessment results in CSD 5 NYS ELA and math proficiency significantly skews CSD 5 statistics much higher than they otherwise would be. Clearly CSS, with highly selective admissions criteria, is not a comparable school to SHLACS or other CSD 5 public schools which must take all comers regardless of their academic abilities. Comparing SHLACS student performance on the NYS ELA and math test with CSD 5 **excluding** CSS provides a more accurate picture of SHLACS student performance against their district peers. Table 2 shows this comparison:

Table 2: Comparison of SHLACS and CSD 5 (excluding CSS) Proficiency on NYS Math and ELA Exam:

			NYS Math			NYS ELA		
			SHLACS	CSD 5 w/o CSS	Differential to CSD 5 w/o CSS	SHLACS	CSD 5 w/o CSS	Differential to CSD 5 w/o CSS
Previous Charter Term	2017	Grade 6	15.2%	9.1%	+6.1	16.2%	10.4%	+5.8
		Grade 7	17.9%	7.4%	+10.5	32.0%	18.7%	+13.3
		Grade 8	9.5%	3.8%	+5.7	26.7%	23.5%	+3.2
		Grades 6-8	14.6%	6.9%	+7.7	24.5%	17.5%	+7.0
	2018	Grade 6	28.6%	12.0%	+16.6	26.8%	23.5%	+3.3
		Grade 7	27.0%	11.2%	+15.8	32.0%	18.1%	+13.9
		Grade 8	27.8%	11.4%	+16.4	50.6%	27.7%	+22.9
		Grades 6-8	27.8%	11.5%	+16.3	35.1%	23.1%	+12.0
Current Charter Term	2019	Grade 6	27.7%	23.0%	+4.7	26.2%	30.5%	-4.3
		Grade 7	32.3%	11.5%	+20.8	23.2%	17.0%	+6.2
		Grade 8	38.4%	12.2%	+26.2	55.8%	27.0%	+28.8
		Grades 6-8	32.5%	15.5%	+17.0	34.0%	24.7%	+9.3

Demographically, CSS is an outlier in CSD 5. According to data from the 2018-19 NYS Reports Card, CSS' Grade 6-8 population was 34% White or Asian in a district where only 7% of middle school students are White or Asian. Further in 2018-19, compared with CSD 5 which had 30% Students with Disabilities (SWD), 11% English Language Learners (ELLs) and 84% FRL students, CSS had 21% SWD, no ELLs and 8% FRL. In excluding CSS from CSD 5 performance, CSD 5 is now comprised of schools that are a more representative comparison peer group for SHLACS. It is clear from Table 2 above, from 2017 to 2019 SHLACS students in the aggregate and in almost every single grade are *significantly* outperforming their peers in CSD 5. Taken together with the fact that as discussed previously, SHLACS students are also coming into our school performing *below* their peers in CSD 5, the growth and achievement they experience is evidence of the strength of the SHLACS instructional program.

* For each year of the school's renewal term, the percentage of the school's students who score at or above Level 3 on the NYS ELA exam must exceed such percentage for New York City.

✘ For each year of the school's renewal term, the percentage of the school's students who score at or above Level 3 on the NYS Math exam must exceed such percentage for New York City.

Table 3: Comparison of SHLACS and NYC Proficiency on NYS Math and NYS ELA Exam: 2017-2019

		NYS Math			NYS ELA		
		SHLACS	NYC	Differential to NYC	SHLACS	NYC	Differential to NYC
Previous Charter Term	2017						
	Grade 6	15.2%	36.1%	-20.9	16.2%	34.7%	-18.5
	Grade 7	17.9%	35.9%	-18.0	32.0%	43.3%	-11.3
	Grade 8	9.5%	24.2%	-14.7	26.7%	47.5%	-20.8
	Grades 6-8	14.6%	32.6%	-18.0	24.5%	41.0%	-16.5
	2018						
	Grade 6	28.6%	39.9%	-11.3	26.8%	49.0%	-22.2
	Grade 7	27.0%	39.8%	-12.8	32.0%	42.7%	-10.7
	Grade 8	27.8%	33.2%	-5.4	50.6%	50.8%	-0.2
Grades 6-8	27.8%	38.0%	-10.2	35.1%	47.4%	-12.3	
Current Charter Term	2019						
	Grade 6	27.7%	43.9%	-16.2	26.2%	48.4%	-22.2
	Grade 7	32.3%	42.1%	-9.8	23.2%	42.7%	-19.5
	Grade 8	38.4%	36.0%	2.4	55.8%	50.6%	5.2
	Grades 6-8	32.5%	41.1%	-8.6	34.0%	47.2%	-13.2

SHLACS aggregate Grades 6-8 proficiency on the NYS ELA and Math tests have not yet exceeded that of NYC. However, over these three years, the improvement in SHLACS proficiency on these assessments (SHLACS proficiency has increased by 17.9 and 9.5 percentage points in math and ELA, respectively from 2017 to 2019), demonstrates that SHLACS is making progress in closing the gap between its proficiency and that of NYC. The differential between SHLACS and NYC proficiency rates has decreased slightly in ELA (we have closed the gap by 3.3 points) while more significantly in math (we have closed the gap by 9.4 points). Notably, however, SHLACS 8th graders have improved dramatically compared with their NYC 8th grade peers on both the NYS ELA and tests. In 2017, the percent of SHLACS 8th graders who scored at least a Level 3 on the ELA test was 20.8 percentage points less than the percent of NYC 8th graders at proficiency. However, two years later in 2019, SHLACS 8th graders outperformed their NYC peers by 5.2 percentage points. In fact, from 2017 to 2019, the percentage of SHLACS 8th graders at proficiency more than doubled—from 26.7% to 55.8%. Likewise, in math, after falling 14.7 points behind the NYC Grade 8 proficiency rate on the 2017 Grade 8 Math assessment, SHLACS 8th grade proficiency on the 2019 Grade 9 Math test was 2.4 points higher than that of NYC 8th graders. SHLACS 8th grade proficiency more than quadrupled during this three year period.

We view 2019 as an important milestone as we not only closed the gap with NYC but *exceeded* its performance on the Grade 8 ELA and math test. Furthermore, the percent of our 8th graders who were proficient on these exams also exceed that of 8th graders statewide. Our proficiency rate on the NYS Grade 8 ELA and math exams exceeded that of NYS by 8.2 and 5.2 percentage points, respectively.

While SHLACS has generally underperformed NYC, it is important to note that each incoming SHLACS 6th grade class in 2017, 2018 and 2019 was academically behind their NYC peers to a significant degree based on their performance on Grade 5 NYS exams. Specifically, in this renewal term according to the NYCDOE 2018-19 School Performance Dashboard², the average Grade 5 ELA and math scores for SHLACS's incoming 6th graders were 2.30 and 2.36, respectively versus 2.66 and 2.87 of incoming 6th graders across the city as the following graph illustrates.

² https://tools.nycenet.edu/dashboard/#dbn=84M388&report_type=EMS&view=City

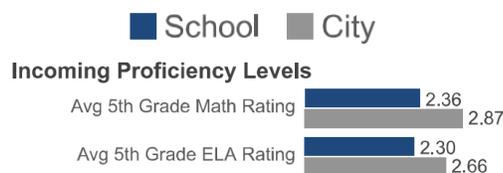


Table 4 below provides the percentage point differential between entering proficiency rates of SHLACS 6th graders compared with their 6th grade peers in NYC based on their previous year’s proficiency rates on the NYS Grade 5 Math and ELA exams. Students enter SHLACS in 6th grade performing *significantly* below their NYC peers based on their previous year’s test scores.

Table 4: Proficiency Differential between Incoming Grade 6 SHLACS and CSD 5 Students and Incoming Grade 6 SHLACS and NYC Students based on Previous Years’ Grade 5 NYS ELA and Math Assessments

	NYS Grade 5 Math	NYS Grade 5 ELA
	SHLACS Proficiency Differential to NYC	SHLACS Proficiency Differential to NYC
2017	-20.9	-25.2
2018	-23.7	-20.2
2019	-25.0	-14.9

Given the significant difference between the achievement levels of SHLACS students when they enter our school and their citywide peers, a metric that simply compares SHLACS proficiency with that of the city, without controlling for students starting with the same baseline Grade 5 NYS exam scores as SHLACS makes this an unreliable measure by which to assess the quality and effectiveness of SHLACS’s instructional program.

Further, this citywide comparison metric does not control for any demographic factor that research has demonstrated impacts academic performance (for instance economic disadvantage). Therefore, this is another reason that a simple straight comparison of SHLACS proficiency rates against that of students citywide (or districtwide for that matter) is not an accurate measure by which to assess the quality or effectiveness of SHLACS’s instructional program.

- ✓ NYS ELA proficiency rates meet or exceed DOE-defined comparison group
- ✓ NYS Math proficiency rates meet or exceed DOE-defined comparison group

Given these facts, viewing SHLACS’ performance in the context of a comparison group that analyzes SHLACS student performance against the performance of similar students is a more accurate comparative measure. In fact, the NYCDOE agrees. The *NYCDOE School Quality Reports Educator Guide Elementary/Middle/K-8 Schools 2018-19* states, “To understand how effectively a school helps its students, it is important to take into account students’ starting points and challenges that they face. Without that context, schools can be mischaracterized as ineffective simply because they serve higher-need students.” Thus, the *New York City School Quality Guide* provides this important context through an analysis of SHLACS’ student achievement outcomes compared to the results of a comparison group of similar students.

Based on data from its 2016-17 through 2018-19 *School Quality Snapshots*, SHLACS student achievement against its published targets based on the performance of its Comparison Group, SHLACS’s proficiency rates on the NYS ELA and math tests have exceeded that of similar students as Table 5 below shows.

Table 5: SHLACS Comparative Performance on State Tests with its Comparison Group

	NYS Math			NYS ELA		
	SHLACS	Comparison Group	Differential to Comparison Group	SHLACS	Comparison Group	Differential to Comparison Group
2017 Grades 6-8	14%	11%	+3	25%	18%	+7
2018 Grades 6-8	28%	20%	+8	35%	28%	+7
2019 Grades 6-8	32%	27%	+5	34%	31%	+3

Academic Growth

- ✗ *Based on the proficiency rates on the NYS ELA exam, the school will demonstrate positive academic growth in each year of the charter term.*
- ✓ *Based on the proficiency rates on the NYS Math exam, the school will demonstrate positive academic growth in each year of the charter term.*

As the data in Table 6 illustrates, SHLACS met this goal for math in this renewal term. SHLACS has consistently seen year over year improvement in the math proficiency rates of the aggregate Grades 6-8, as well as at each grade level, with the exception of Grade 6 which saw a nominal decrease in proficiency of 0.9 percentage points from 2018 to 2019. On the NYS ELA test, SHLACS fell short of the benchmark during the renewal term. From 2017 to 2018, SHLACS demonstrated positive academic growth for the aggregate Grades 6-8 as well as for each grade, 6th and 8th, while grade 7 proficiency remained constant. From 2018 to 2019, proficiency for the aggregate grades, 6th-8th, declined by 1.1 points from 2018 to 2019. However, of note for Grade 8 in ELA during this same period, proficiency increased by 5.2 percentage points for Grade 8th.

Table 6: Increase in SHLACS Academic Proficiency on NYS ELA and Math Exams: 2017 to 2020

	2017	2018	+/-	2018	2019	+/-
Math (6th-8th)	14.6%	27.8%	+13.2	27.8%	32.5%	+4.7
Math 6	15.2%	28.6%	+13.4	28.6%	27.7%	-0.9
Math 7	17.9%	27.0%	+9.1	27.0%	32.3%	+5.3
Math 8	9.5%	27.8%	+18.3	27.8%	38.4%	+10.6
ELA (6th-8th)	24.5%	35.1%	+10.6	35.1%	34.0%	-1.1
ELA 6	16.2%	26.8%	+10.6	26.8%	26.2%	-0.6
ELA 7	32.0%	32.0%	0	32.0%	23.2%	-8.8
ELA 8	26.7%	50.6%	+23.9	50.6%	55.8%	+5.2

An arguably more realistic picture of growth, however, should look at that of *matched cohorts* where we are comparing the *same students'* performance year-over-year. As former New York State Education Commissioner John King wrote in 2014 at the time he was Commissioner, *"This year, for the first time, assessment results were presented based on the performance of all students who took an exam last year compared with those same students in the following year at the next grade level. This 'matched students' approach focuses on growth in student learning and provides more useful data than an approach that compares the performance of one year's students at a particular grade level against the next year's cohort of students at that same grade level."*

For our matched cohort analysis, we looked at the growth of our students who remained in SHLACS for all three years of middle school. Given we are a middle school and serve our students for just three years of their entire 13-year K-12 academic career, it is important to evaluate the impact of our entire three year instructional program—particularly since our data bears out the time it takes to remediate the severe deficits our students arrive with and once learning gaps are filled, the significant growth they ultimately experience in their final year with us—8th grade data bears this out across multiple metrics. This matched cohort analysis provides evidence that our middle school instructional program has supported tremendous student growth. We tracked the same students as they advanced through our school from Grade 6 to Grade 8. Table 7 demonstrates the striking academic growth of SHLACS graduating 8th grade students in 2017, 2018 and 2019 who were at SHLACS for all three years of middle school. The table compares these students' Grade 8 NYS ELA and math proficiency levels with their proficiency levels upon entrance to SHLACS 6th grade based on their Grade 5 NYS ELA and math scores. With the exception of the Class of 2017 where math growth was stagnant, students at SHLACS demonstrated significant academic growth in math and in ELA (where the growth was particularly significant). Of note is that with each successive graduating class, the growth each achieved in math and ELA increases providing evidence of our continued strengthening of our instructional program. Our results for our first graduating class of the current charter term are impressive. **Six times** as many 8th graders in our Class of 2019 were proficient in ELA than they were when they arrived at SHLACS as 6th graders and **2.5 times** as many of them were proficient in math by 8th grade than they were in 5th grade.

Table 7: Matched Cohort Growth for Each SHLACS Graduating Class, 2017 to 2019

SHLACS Class of	NYS Math				NYS ELA			
	Grade 5	Grade 8	Increase	# of Students in Cohort	Grade 5	Grade 8	Increase	# of Students in Cohort
2019	16.7%	39.7%	+23.0	78	9.1%	54.5%	+45.4	77
2018	11.4%	24.3%	+12.9	70	8.7%	44.9%	+36.2	69
2017	10.3%	10.3%	-	68	7.5%	28.4%	+20.9	67

Importantly, for each of these graduating classes, the number of students who were in SHLACS for all three years represents the great majority of the initial 100 students who enrolled in the school as 6th graders (see # of Students in Cohort column in Table 7 above). This academic data, therefore, is truly representative of the positive impact our instructional program has on our students. Notably, more than three-quarters of the Class of 2019 were students who were with us all three years. As such, the meaning of this data is incontrovertible: our instructional program leads to demonstrable student academic growth in just three years' time.

Of note, on SHLACS's *School Quality Snapshots*, the NYCDOE rated SHLACS highly on its *Growth on State Tests* metrics for all students at the school and the school's lowest performing students. SHLACS was rated "Excellent" in how well the school helped all students improve on their State English test in 2016-17 and 2017-18 and "Good" in 2018-19 while in math it was rated "Excellent" in 2017-18 and 2018-19 and "Good" in 2016-17. In 2016-17, 2017-18 and 2018-19, NYCDOE rated the school "Excellent" in helping the school's lowest performing students improve on their State ELA test and in 2017-18 and 2018-19 SHLACS received this "Excellent" rating for helping these students improve on their State math test. By comparison, in 2016-17, SHLACS was deemed as only "Fair" in helping the lowest performing students improve on the State math test. The growth of these students over the following two years is an indicator of improvement in the school's math intervention program.

✖ *Where the school has an eligible subgroup population (deemed as 6 or more students) of ELLs, the school will demonstrate positive academic growth on NYS ELA and the NYS math examination proficiency rates in each year of the charter term.*

Since 2017, across the aggregate grades 6-8, SHLACS did not demonstrate a year over year increase in the percent of ELLs deemed proficient (Table 8).

Table 8: Academic Growth of SHLACS ELLs Based on Year-over-Year Proficiency on NYS Assessments

English Language Learners						
ELA	2017	2018	+/-	2018	2019	+/-
Grade 6-8	7.1%	4.3%	-2.8	4.3%	0%	-4.3
Math	2017	2018	+/-	2018	2019	+/-
Grade 6-8	4.3%	4.3%	0	4.3%	4.0%	-0.3

As we discussed previously as it related to the shortcoming of using year-over-year increased proficiency to measure academic growth without focusing on matched cohorts, we do not believe simply looking at NYS ELA and math proficiency rates for ELLs is an accurate measure of the progress and achievement of our ELLs. A more appropriate assessment to measure the growth of ELLs is the NYSESLAT exam, the exam specifically designed to assess an ELL's progress towards English proficiency in each of the four language domains and ultimately used to determine when a child has reached the Commanding level and removed from ELL status.

The NYCDOE *School Quality Guide's English Language Learner Progress* metric measures the percentage of ELLs demonstrating movement towards ELL proficiency. Based on this metric, SHLACS has demonstrated strong and improved ELL performance from 2017 to 2019. In 2018-19, 75% of SHLACS' ELLs met one of the three criteria (based on the NYSESLAT or NYS ELA assessment) for demonstrating movement towards proficiency. This result placed SHLACS in the *Exceeding Target* range for ELL progress against the performance of its Comparison Group. In 2016-17 and 2017-18, SHLACS ELL progress of 60.7% and 50.0% both were in the *Meeting Target* range for each year.

Of further note 64.0% of our ELLs scored at the Commanding level on the 2019 NYSESLAT, which was a significant improvement over the previous two years where 17.4% and 16.3% scored at Commanding in 2018 and 2017, respectively.

Another important indicator of the strength of the instructional strategies SHLACS utilizes to support ELLs attainment of English proficiency is the performance of our *former ELLs* on the NYS ELA and math assessments. In 2019, the percent of our former ELLs who scored at least a Level 3 on the NYS ELA assessment and NYS Math assessment was 36.8% and 42.1%, respectively. By comparison, 34.0% and 32.5% of all students scored at least a Level 3 on the NYS ELA and NYS Math exam, respectively. Our former ELLs outperformed our population as a whole by 2.8 points on the ELA test and 9.6 points on the math test.

✓ *Where the school has an eligible subgroup population (deemed as 6 or more students) of SWD, the school will demonstrate positive academic growth on NYS ELA and math examination proficiency rates in each year of the charter term.*

Table 9: Academic Growth of SHLACS SWD Based on Year-over-Year Proficiency on NYS Assessments

Students with Disabilities						
ELA	2017	2018	+/-	2018	2019	+/-
Grade 6	12.5%	15.8%	+3.3	15.8%	18.5%	+2.7
Grade 7	9.5%	36.4%	+26.9	36.4%	6.3%	-30.1
Grade 8	9.5%	20.0%	+10.5	20.0%	48.1%	+28.1
Grade 6-8	10.8%	26.9%	+16.1	26.9%	27.1%	+0.2
Math	2017	2018	+/-	2018	2019	+/-
Grade 6	3.1%	5.3%	+2.1	5.3%	11.1%	+5.8
Grade 7	0%	21.2%	+21.2	21.2%	11.8%	-9.4
Grade 8	0%	0.0%	-	0.0%	25.9%	+25.9
Grade 6-8	1.4%	11.9%	+10.5	11.9%	16.9%	+5.0

Since 2017, across the aggregate grades, 6th-8th, SHLACS has experienced a year over year increase in the percent of SWD who meet proficiency standards on the NYS ELA and math exams as is evident from Table 9 above. Further, with the exception of Grade 7 from 2018 to 2019, SWD in each disaggregated grade also saw a year over year increase in proficiency rates. Notably SHLACS 8th graders saw a significant 28.1 and 25.9 percentage increase in their proficiency rates on the NYS ELA and math exam, respectively, from 2018 to 2019.

While SHLACS SWD performed strongly against this metric, as discussed previously there are limitations to using year over year improvement as an indication of growth without looking at matched cohorts. We believe there are other metrics that more accurately reflect how well SHLACS helps its high needs students succeed. The NYCDOE School Quality Guide uses *Closing the Achievement Gap* metrics to demonstrate the impact of the school specifically on high-need student populations. SHLACS performed strongly against these Closing the Achievement Gap metrics. For SWD, the metrics look at average student proficiency in ELA and math for students in self-contained placements, ICT placements and SETSS placements against targets based on its Comparison Group performance. In 2019, SHLACS's ELA and Math average proficiency for all three SWD placements were *Exceeding Target* and in particular at the *Top of the Target Range* for out Self-Contained and SETSS settings. In 2018, SHLACS average proficiency for ELA and math were also *Exceeding Target* for SWD in self-contained, ICT and SETSS settings³. In 2017, SHLACS average ELA proficiency rates were *Exceeding Target* for all three settings while the average math proficiency rates were in the *Approaching Target* range for Self-Contained settings, *Meeting Target* for ICT setting and *Exceeding Target* for SETSS. Additionally, SHLACS has been successful in moving SWD to less restrictive environments. According to metrics on our School Quality Guide, SHLACS exceeding its target in 2018-19 for this metric and met its targets in 2017-18 and 2016-17.

³ In 2018, the subgroup of SWD in SETSS was below the minimum to determine a metric.

- ✗ Where the school has an eligible subgroup population (deemed as 6 or more students) of students eligible for free- and reduced-priced lunch (FRL), the school will demonstrate positive academic growth on NYS ELA and math examination proficiency rates in each year of the charter term.

Table 10: Academic Growth of FRLs Based on Year-over-Year Proficiency on NYS Assessments

Students Eligible for Free and Reduced-Priced Lunch						
ELA	2017	2018	+/-	2018	2019	+/-
Grade 6	17.2%	27.8%	+10.6	27.8%	23.5%	-4.3
Grade 7	31.8%	30.5%	-1.3	30.5%	23.5%	-7.0
Grade 8	26.5%	51.3%	+24.8	51.3%	55.6%	+4.3
Grade 6-8	24.6%	35.1%	+10.5	35.1%	32.9%	-2.2

Math	2017	2018	+/-	2018	2019	+/-
Grade 6	15.2%	25.9%	+10.7	25.9%	25.0%	-0.9
Grade 7	16.5%	25.3%	+8.8	25.3%	32.7%	+7.4
Grade 8	9.0%	26.3%	+17.3	26.3%	37.0%	+10.7
Grade 6-8	13.9%	27.0%	+13.1	27.0%	31.3%	+4.3

From 2017 to 2018, the last two years of the previous charter term, SHLACS students eligible for free- and reduced-priced (FRL) lunch demonstrated positive academic growth as evidenced by an increase in the percent of students proficient on the NYS ELA and math assessments across the aggregate 6th-8th grades as well as at each disaggregated grade level, with the exception of Grade 7 on the NYS ELA assessment where proficiency fell by a nominal amount. The growth from 2018, the last year of the previous charter term, to 2019, the first year of the current charter term, as measured by the aggregate Grade 6-8 proficiency rates on the NYS assessments was mixed, with positive academic growth in math (a 4.3 percentage point increase) and a slight decline in ELA (a 2.2 point decrease). Based on the disaggregated grade-level data, SHLACS's FRL students in Grades 7 and particularly Grade 8 saw significant growth over this two year period with Grade 6 essentially remaining the same. In ELA, however, Grade 8 saw year-over-year improvement while Grade 6 and Grade 7 proficiency rates fell 4.3 and 7 points, respectively, from 2018 to 2019.

While SHLACS had mixed year over year results from 2018 to 2019 after performing strongly from 2017 to 2018 against this metric, we again look to the NYCDOE School Quality Guide's *Closing the Achievement Gap* metrics to better demonstrate the impact of the school on high-need student populations given the shortcomings of not looking at matched cohorts when looking at year over year growth. Using the ELA and Math Average Proficiency Ratings for the Lowest Third Citywide and Black and Hispanic Males in the Lowest Third Citywide as a proxy for FRL students, SHLACS performed strongly against these Closing the Achievement Gap metrics in 2017, 2018 and 2019. In 2019 and 2018, SHLACS's ELA and Math average proficiency for these two subgroups had a Metric Rating of *Exceeding Target* and in 2019 SHLACS Black and Hispanic Males in the Lowest Third Citywide were specifically performing at the *Top of the Target Range* in math. Likewise, in 2017 SHLACS achieved this *Exceeding Target* Metric Rating for the two subgroups in ELA while *Meeting Targets* in math.

- ✗ NYS ELA and Math exam proficiency rates for ELLs meet or exceed CSD and Citywide rates.
- ✓ NYS ELA and Math exam proficiency rates for SWD meet or exceed CSD and Citywide rates.

The data in Tables 11 and 12 below summarize the performance of our SWD and ELLs against their CSD 5 and citywide peers. In the current charter term, 2019 NYS ELA and math assessment data indicates that SHLACS' aggregated 6th through 8th grade SWD outperformed their SWD peers in both CSD 5 and NYC. Further, across the last three academic years for which we have NYS assessment data, with the exception of the performance on the NYS Math exam in 2017, SHLACS's aggregate Grade 6-8 SWD have demonstrated higher proficiency rates than their counterparts not only in CSD 5 and NYC but across NYS as well⁴. Additionally, on a disaggregated basis, with the exception of Grades 6, 7 and 8 on the 2017 NYS Math test and the 2019 Grade 6 NYS ELA test, every grade level at

⁴The NYS Grade 6-8 SWD proficiency rates on the NYS ELA exam was 8.3%, 12.4% and 12.2% in 2017, 2018 and 2019, respectively. In math, the NYS Grade 6-8 SWD proficiency rates were 7.1%, 10.1% and 11.6% in 2017, 2018 and 2019, respectively.

SHLACS in 2017, 2018 and 2019 have outperformed their respective grade level SWD peers in CSD 5 and NYC on both state assessments. Our ELL proficiency rates in the current charter term, however, have not met or exceeded their CSD 5 or citywide peers.

Table 11: Comparison of SHLACS' ELL Proficiency Rates with CSD 5 and NYC

English Language Learners									
ELA	2017			2018			2019		
Grade	SHLACS	CSD 5	NYC	SHLACS	CSD 5	NYC	SHLACS	NYC	CSD5
6	7.1%	1.2%	1.7%	7.7%	3.9%	7.0%	0.0%	5.3%	6.6%
7	NA	1.3%	2.6%	0.0%	4.9%	3.0%	0.0%	4.3%	2.2%
8	NA	0.0%	3.6%	NA	6.0%	4.9%	NA	1.6%	4.1%
6-8	4.5%	0.8%	2.6%	4.3%	5.0%	5.0%	0.0%	3.8%	4.4%
Math	2017			2018			2019		
Grade	SHLACS	CSD 5	NYC	SHLACS	CSD 5	NYC	SHLACS	CSD 5	NYC
6	6.7%	3.0%	11.3%	7.7%	1.2%	13.1%	10.0%	8.9%	13.8%
7	NA	2.2%	10.7%	0.0%	1.1%	11.5%	0.0%	4.9%	12.5%
8	NA	1.1%	8.7%	NA	2.2%	12.7%	NA	0.0%	14.1%
6-8	4.3%	2.1%	10.3%	4.3%	1.5%	12.5%	4.0%	4.8%	13.4%

Table 12: Comparison of SHLACS' SWD Proficiency Rates with CSD 5 and NYC

Students with Disabilities									
ELA	2017			2018			2019		
Grade	SHLACS	CSD 5	NYC	SHLACS	CSD 5	NYC	SHLACS	NYC	CSD5
6	12.5%	5.5%	5.7%	15.8%	8.5%	15.8%	18.5%	14.5%	15.9%
7	9.5%	7.5%	11.0%	36.4%	12.1%	12.0%	6.3%	7.8%	11.3%
8	9.5%	8.6%	13.4%	20.0%	9.6%	16.7%	48.1%	17.4%	17.3%
6-8	10.8%	7.1%	9.9%	26.9%	10.2%	14.8%	27.1%	13.3%	14.8%
Math	2017			2018			2019		
Grade	SHLACS	CSD 5	NYC	SHLACS	CSD 5	NYC	SHLACS	CSD 5	NYC
6	3.1%	7.0%	8.8%	5.3%	4.2%	11.5%	11.1%	9.7%	13.6%
7	0.0%	3.1%	7.9%	21.2%	9.1%	10.4%	11.8%	4.8%	12.0%
8	0.0%	0.5%	4.2%	0.0%	4.8%	8.4%	25.9%	7.8%	10.7%
6-8	1.4%	3.8%	7.1%	11.9%	6.2%	10.2%	16.9%	7.4%	12.2%

✓ NYS ELA and Math exam proficiency rates for FRL students meet or exceed CSD rates.

✗ NYS ELA and Math exam proficiency rates for FRL students meet or exceed Citywide rates.

As Table 13 below clearly shows, in each year, 2017, 2018 and 2019 SHLACS' FRL students' aggregate Grade 6-8 proficiency rates on the NYS ELA and math assessments have been consistently higher than that in CSD 5. By 2019, SHLACS Grade 6-8 FRL students had outperformed their CSD 5 peers in ELA and math by 5.3 percentage points and 13.3 percentage points, respectively. In addition, with only a few exceptions, SHLACS grade-level proficiency rates have also exceeded that of CSD 5 in each of these years.

While SHLACS FRL students have underperformed their NYC counterparts, it is important to note that over the three year period, SHLACS FRL students have been closing the gap between their proficiency and that of the city in both ELA and math. In 2017, SHLACS FRL Grade 6-8 students underperformed the City by 10.1 points and 13.1 points in ELA and math, respectively. Two years later, the gap closed to 7.8 points in ELA and 4.1 points in math.

Table 13: Proficiency Rates of SHLACS FRL Students vs CSD 5 and NYC on the NYS ELA & Math Assessments

Students Eligible for Free- and Reduced-Priced Lunch									
ELA	2017			2018			2019		
	SHLACS	CSD 5	NYC	SHLACS	CSD 5	NYC	SHLACS	CSD 5	NYC
Grade 6	17.2%	14.8%	25.8%	27.8%	27.1%	45.0%	23.5%	32.8%	41.2%
Grade 7	31.8%	22.7%	36.4%	30.5%	20.7%	36.1%	23.5%	21.1%	35.9%
Grade 8	26.5%	27.4%	42.3%	51.3%	30.6%	45.2%	55.6%	29.1%	45.0%
Grades 6-8	24.6%	21.4%	34.7%	35.1%	26.2%	42.0%	32.9%	27.6%	40.7%
Math	2017			2018			2019		
	SHLACS	CSD 5	NYC	SHLACS	CSD 5	NYC	SHLACS	CSD 5	NYC
Grade 6	15.2%	13.6%	29.5%	25.9%	17.1%	33.5%	25.0%	25.8%	37.2%
Grade 7	16.5%	12.1%	29.2%	25.3%	14.5%	33.3%	32.7%	15.9%	35.6%
Grade 8	9.0%	3.7%	21.2%	26.3%	11.3%	29.7%	37.0%	11.6%	32.7%
Grades 6-8	13.9%	10.2%	27.0%	25.8%	14.4%	32.4%	31.3%	18.0%	35.4%

× NYS Science exam proficiency rates meet or exceed CSD 5 and NYC.

At SHLACS, in lieu of the NYS Grade 8 Science assessment, all 8th graders take the NYS Earth Science Regents. The following table compares the proficiency rates of SHLACS 8th graders on the Earth Science Regents with the proficiency rates of CSD 5 8th graders on a Regents Science test⁵.

Table 14: Percent of Grade 8 Students Who Passed a Science Regents with a College-Ready Score⁶

	SHLACS	CSD 5	Differential
2019	29.1%	51.3%	(22.2)
2018	17.7%	67.6%	(49.9)
2017	2.6%	86.7%	(84.1)

While SHLACS college-ready passing rates on the NYS Earth Science Regents exam is well below that of 8th graders in CSD 5, it is important to note that all students at SHLACS take the Regents level Earth Science course in 8th grade unlike many middle schools in CSD 5 which have an 8th grade Regents science track for advanced students culminating in the corresponding Science Regents exam and a regular 8th grade science course culminating in the NYS Grade 8 Science exam. Over the last three years when Regents exams were administered, however, the SHLACS college-ready passing rate is steadily increasing and we are narrowing the difference between our students' passing rate and that of CSD 5.

High School Readiness and College and Career Readiness

SHLACS has consistently posted high scores on *Next Level Readiness*. During the 2016-17, 2017-18 and 2018-19 school year, 93%, 91% and 84%, respectively, of our former 8th graders earned enough high school credit in 9th grade to be on track for graduation.

Our middle school curriculum gives our students a head start earning high school credit. In 2018 and 2019, 28.8% and 48.8% of SHLACS 8th graders, respectively, earned high school credit well exceeding our target for this metric on our annual School Quality Guides. As discussed previously, SHLACS science curriculum culminates with a Regents level Earth Science course in Grade 8. In addition, the School also implements a 7th and 8th grade US History curriculum to prepare students to take the US History Regents at the end of 8th grade. While taking the US History Regents is optional, approximately two-thirds of our 8th graders opt to take the test. Our students' performance on the US History Regents exceeds their performance on the Earth Science Regents. Similar to our students' performance on the Regents Earth Science exam, our college-ready pass rate on the US History Regents has steadily and significantly increased from 2017 to 2019, narrowing the gap between our proficiency and that of students in CSD 5 as Table 15 illustrates. By 2019, our college ready pass exceeds that of CSD 5 by 8.3 points. Given our Regents results reflects

⁵ For CSD 5, the proficiency rates are on any science Regents test that was taken in 8th grade.

⁶ For 2018 and 2019, a college-ready score is at least a Level 3, for 2017, a college-ready score is passing with a 65.

the first and only time our 8th graders take this exam, our students comparative performance is noteworthy given that the CSD 5 Regents proficiency rate includes high school students who are repeat US History Regents test takers.

Table 15: Percent of Grade 8 Students Who Passed US History Regents with a College-Ready Score⁷

	SHLACS	CSD 5	Differential to CSD 5
2019	63.3%	55.0%	+8.3
2018	44.0%	66.0%	-22.0
2017	38.0%	64.8%	-26.8

SHLACS is in its seventh year of implementing the online non-fiction reading program A3K in all of our grades. According to the June 2020 College and Career Ready Data (the A3K measure of state test readiness), the percent of SHLACS students who were deemed College and Career Ready increased from Fall 2018 to June 2019 and Fall 2019 to June 2020, as delineated in Table 16 below.

Table 16: Percent of College and Career Ready Students Based on A3K Data

Grade	Fall 2018	June 2019	Fall 2019	June 2020
8	38%	60%	31%	58%
7	18%	52%	18%	42%
6	2%	28%	3%	23%
All	19%	46%	18%	40%

Our strong performance in 2020 during which time our students were engaged in four months of remote learning is our strongest evidence that meaningful learning continued. Given the historical experience of our A3K performance closely tracking our NYS ELA assessment performance, we believe had the 2020 NYS ELA assessments been administered, our students' proficiency rates would have likely outpaced their previous year's performance. Notably, the percent of all SHLACS students considered "far below" this measure also shrank from 25% in Fall 2018 to 8% in June 2019 and 28% in Fall 2019 to 15% in June 2020.

Other Metrics—NWEA MAP Reading and Math Growth

Our NWEA MAP assessment data confirms that the School's instructional program has promoted ELA and math growth. Table 17 below illustrates this growth in terms of RIT values (Rausch Units) on the assessments and compares it to corresponding Grade Level (GL) RIT values.

Table 17: SHLACS Average Growth on 2018-19 and 2017-18 NWEA MAP Reading and Math Against National Average Growth

2018-19						
NWEA MAP Reading						
	SHLACS MAP September	RIT GL September	SHLACS MAP June	RIT GL June	SHLACS Growth	RIT Expected Growth
Grade 6	202	211	209	216	+7	+5
Grade 7	211	214	217	218	+6	+4
Grade 8	216	217	220	220	+4	+3
NWEA MAP Math						
Grade 6	203	218	213	225	+10	+7
Grade 7	212	223	225	229	+13	+6
Grade 8	220	227	227	231	+7	+4

⁷ For 2018 and 2019, a college-ready score is at least a Level 3, for 2017, a college-ready score is passing with a 65.

2017-18						
NWEA MAP Reading						
	SHLACS MAP September	RIT GL September	SHLACS MAP June	RIT GL June	SHLACS Growth	RIT Expected Growth
Grade 6	203	211	211	216	+8	+5
Grade 7	209	214	216	218	+7	+4
Grade 8	217	217	221	220	+4	+3
NWEA MAP Math						
Grade 6	203	218	215	225	+12	+7
Grade 7	213	223	222	229	+9	+6
Grade 8	222	227	228	231	+6	+4

There are some important trends that emerge from a closer analysis of the NWEA data. Each year, our September average RIT score at each grade level is well below grade level RIT. However, the gap between grade level RIT and our average September RIT narrows from Grade 6 to Grade 8. This is due to the fact that during the course of each year, our instructional program is successful in addressing academic deficits as is evidenced by our students average September to June growth exceeding the RIT expected growth for each grade. The narrowing of our students' performance against grade level standards is particularly evident in Reading where by 8th grade our students are beginning the year with an average RIT score that is just shy of grade level RIT (2018-19) or is on grade level (2017-18) and maintaining grade level proficiency throughout the year, ending the year with an average RIT score at grade level (2018-19) or above grade level (2017-18). In math, our students also move closer to grade level performance by 8th grade; although, average June RIT scores are still short of being on grade level.

Consistent with this closing the gap by 8th grade between our average RIT scores and grade level RIT is the fact that based on their performance on the NWEA MAP tests, the percent of students at grade level at the end of each school year increases from Grade 6 to Grade 8 in both reading and math. Table 18 below puts our RIT value growth in terms of the increasing percent of students at grade level.

Table 18: Grade Level Improvement of Students in Reading and Math Based on NWEA MAP

2018-19						
	Reading			Math		
	% GL September	% GL June	Increase in % at GL	% GL September	% GL June	Increase in % at GL
Grade 6	33%	35%	+2	14%	21%	+7
Grade 7	42%	43%	+1	26%	39%	+13
Grade 8	41%	50%	+9	31%	40%	+9
2017-18						
	Reading			Math		
	% GL September	% GL June	Increase in GL	% GL September	% GL June	Increase in GL
Grade 6	29%	35%	+6	12%	22%	+10
Grade 7	37%	45%	+8	27%	33%	+6
Grade 8	51%	52%	+1	35%	40%	+5

The June GL NWEA data is consistent with our increased proficiency rates on the NYS ELA and math assessment from Grade 6 to Grade 8 in 2018 and 2019 delineated in Table 1. Notably, the strong performance of Grade 8 on the NWEA MAP Reading exam mirrors that of our Grade 8 on the NYS ELA exam with 50.6% of Grade 8 students in 2018 and 55.8% of these students in 2019 achieving proficiency.

The trends of SHLACS NWEA MAP reading and math student performance data is consistent with those of SHLACS NYS ELA and math student performance data. Thus, in the absence of 2020 NYS ELA and math assessment scores, we believe our 2019-20 NWEA MAP results provide insight into the growth and achievement of our students

Table 19: SHLACS Average Growth on 2019-20 NWEA MAP Reading and Math Against National Average Growth

2019-20						
NWEA MAP Reading						
	SHLACS MAP September	RIT GL September	SHLACS MAP January	RIT GL January	SHLACS Growth	RIT Expected Growth
Grade 6	201	211	210	214	+9	+3
Grade 7	211	214	214	217	+3	+3
Grade 8	214	217	218	219	+4	+2
NWEA MAP Math						
Grade 6	201	218	209	222	+8	+4
Grade 7	212	223	218	226	+6	+3
Grade 8	222	226	226	229	+4	+3

Consistent with previous year's data, our September average RIT score at each grade level is well below grade level RIT. However, the gap between grade level RIT and our average September RIT narrows from Grade 6 to Grade 8 on both tests. Our January 2020 data shows that by mid-year, our average Grade 8 RIT in reading has moved within 1 RIT value of grade level performance.

Table 20 below details the percent of students in each grade who were at grade level based on NWEA MAP RIT scores in September and then in January. With the exception of Grade 8 which remained at 40% at grade level, an increasing percentage of students in Grade 6 and 7 moved to grade level by mid-year.

Table 20: Grade Level Improvement of Students in Reading and Math Based on NWEA MAP

2019-20						
	Reading			Math		
	% GL September	% GL January	Increase in GL	% GL September	% GL January	Increase in GL
Grade 6	24%	37%	+13	11%	13%	+2
Grade 7	32%	44%	+12	22%	26%	+4
Grade 8	40%	40%	--	40%	40%	--

Analysis and Discussion of Results

We believe that the totality of SHLACS student achievement data, both in the aggregate and for disaggregated high need populations, provides evidence that our school implements a highly effective instructional program. Since the school leadership initiated its dramatic turnaround towards the end of the school's second charter term, we have continued to strengthen our program based on data leading to improved student achievement. NYCDOE School Quality evaluations support this assertion. NYCDOE has rated SHLACS's *Student Achievement* as "Excellent" in its 2018-19 and 2017-18 School Quality Snapshot (up from "Good" in 2016-17). Further, after having been rated as a "low impact" school by NYCDOE on our 2015-16 School Quality Guide based on our effectiveness in supporting student achievement compared with the results of its Comparison Group of similar students, in each successive year, 2016-17 to 2018-19, NYCDOE rated SHLACS consistently as a "high impact" school.

At SHLACS, school improvement efforts are not comprised of discrete and one-off changes to our instructional program that target individual challenges. Instead, where other schools might, for instance, replace a curriculum or add Saturday test prep in order to improve student performance on NYS assessments, we approach course corrections more fundamentally. Because of the interplay between student performance and school culture, we believe real school improvement can only be achieved through a whole school culture approach. Reflecting on our performance, we may identify data-based adjustments to our instructional program and/or learning environment that are aligned with our school culture or the need for shifts in our school culture that will better support student growth and achievement.

As we wrote in our 2017 renewal, when Dr. Constance Bond was appointed Executive Director (ED)/Principal of SHLACS in 2012, she was tasked with the work to turn around a school that had been experiencing a sharp decline both academically and organizationally. Her turnaround efforts centered upon advancing key cultural shifts in the school, specifically: (1) building a rigorous student-centered and data-driven community where everyone was held

accountable for improving student results and (2) fostering a school environment that supported student success by encouraging and valuing student voice.

At the heart of these cultural shifts was the principle of self-efficacy. It was critical that every adult and student at the school internalized the belief in their own individual capacities to execute behaviors that would produce certain performance expectations, that all their actions reflected those beliefs and that there existed structures and supports within the school to provide students and staff with the assistance they needed to fully execute their roles in the learning and growth of themselves and of each other. The work of the leadership team required a complete change in how things had been done, particularly as it related to staff—altering the status quo to which staff had grown accustomed and making the hard decisions, particularly around staffing, that were needed in order to build and perpetuate an instructional team that embraced these shifts and were collectively committed to the work required to move SHLACS in the direction it needed to go. These shifts were not easy; but only after there was real buy in from the SHLACS community to embrace these cultural changes, could real progress occur.

And progress did occur. As our discussion of student performance that opened this section demonstrated, SHLACS students have remained on a positive academic growth trajectory. We attribute their strong performance to our continued work to strengthen and improve our instructional model aligned with the values of our school culture. In particular, this is our third year of implementing the approaches and strategies promoted by Expeditionary Learning (EL) to increase student engagement and elevate and expand student achievement. Specifically, as a faculty we have studied, unpacked and are implementing a number of the student-engaged assessment practices as articulated in the work of Ron Berger in *Leaders of Their Own Learning (LOTL)*. Our whole school culture embraces a student-centered approach to instruction in order to meaningfully engage students in their own learning and build their metacognitive awareness and skills to take ownership of their own progress, growth and achievement. LOTL's student-engaged assessment practices are aligned with our culture. LOTL's student-engaged assessment is a system of interrelated practices that bring students into the process of assessing their growth and learning, helping them gain a deeper sense of their progress and ultimately become more independent learners supporting college and career readiness goals. Through student-engaged assessment practices, students know precisely what is expected of them and teachers are precisely attuned to support their students in meeting academic standards.

While SHLACS' teachers had already included many of these student-engaged assessment practices in their classrooms, our adoption of LOTL has provided our teachers with an organizing framework to ensure their role in the classroom is at all times the *facilitator* and not the director of student learning. This has resulted in purposeful and intentional student-centered classroom practice. Our faculty's embrace of the LOTL framework and its student-engaged assessment practices in their classrooms has profoundly impacted student engagement and learning. We attribute the improvement in our students' performance as evidenced quantitatively by our NWEA MAP, A3K and NYS assessment data to pushing our instruction in this direction.

LOTL has reframed our teachers' mindsets regarding what happens in the classroom from what *they* will be *teaching* their students to what their *students* will be *learning* and then helping students define and internalize what they are learning, why they are learning it and enabling them to monitor their progress towards the learning goal. This shift has increased the engagement of all students and their motivation to learn and deepened our teachers' practice by heightening their own understanding of the learning standards; helping them prioritize the content and skills needed to meet them; increasing their facility with building checkpoints throughout the lesson; ramping up the rigor in the classroom; and improving their alignment of assessments with the learning target. LOTL student-engaged assessment practices have transformed teacher practice, student engagement and the quality of instruction at our school.

All of our classroom instruction is now framed around the concept of Learning Targets (Long-Term, Supporting and Daily) and our own Levels of Mastery (LOM). Learning Targets are the foundation of the student-engaged assessment system. It requires our teachers to translate learning standards into learning goals for lessons, projects, units and courses in student-friendly language that is both concrete and accessible for our students. Learning Targets are written from the perspective of the student and always begin with "I Can... ." While Learning Targets may seem like a subtle shift from our previous use of the traditional "Students will be able to do....," we have found that Learning Targets expressed from the student's perspective ("I Can...") is a powerful lever for building student engagement, putting them at the center of the learning. SHLACS has adopted this "I Can..." format in almost everything we do, from our Daily Lesson Plans to our online grade book keeping all our language consistent and focused on what students can do.

Learning Targets are used in conjunction with our own internal LOM which help students assess the level to which they have achieved the Learning Target giving students a clear vision of what they need to do and how to demonstrate

levels of mastery. Through our LOM, teachers and students have been able to have deeper conversations about where students are on a daily skill and what they need to improve upon to reach the next mastery level. All the conversations in our school—whether between teacher and student, among faculty, among teachers and leaders, or teachers, students and families—have gone from *how much* a student has done to *what* a student can do. Students really have become the drivers of these conversations with their teachers as they are given the tools to track their own progress which enables them to make informed decisions, *that they own*, with their teachers about how to move to the next level. This includes habits of mind learning targets (for instance: increased organization, planning ahead, seeking help) they might set before themselves to help them progress. Developing these metacognitive processes in our students are so important in helping them to become independent learners readying them for college level expectations.

We believe that our use of LOTL has supported increased rigor in the classroom. LOTL provides our teachers with a roadmap for using Learning Targets to increase rigor by both framing learning targets themselves in terms of rigor (Knowledge, Skill or Reasoning) and then considering appropriate levels of complexity of student tasks and assessments linked to the rigor of the Learning Target. LOTL has tools which help teachers track where their tasks and assessments fall in terms of rigor (based on Bloom's taxonomy), pushing them to consider tasks and assessments that require Strategic Thinking and Reasoning and Extended Thinking, emphasizing real world applications, cross discipline connections problem solving, creative thinking. We have found that our Departments have really run with the concept of Learning Targets and associated tasks and assessments, tailoring them to their specific goals and needs.

Our students' performance has also been strengthened by our teachers' increasing facility with incorporating checks for understanding (CFU) strategies and techniques that are aligned with the Learning Targets throughout the lesson. Improving how and when CFU are strategically and seamlessly interspersed through the lesson have increased not only our teachers' capacity to assess the flow of understanding among their students and make adjustments in real time, but equally importantly build student capacity to monitor their own progress keeping them highly attuned to what they are comprehending and where they need further practice.

As our students become more adept at understanding themselves as learners, it magnifies the power of the existing structures at our school designed to impart them with the knowledge and skills needed to take responsibility for their own education. For instance, the level of conversation between students, advisors, and teachers during their weekly conferences on their progress as reported in their Weekly Grade Report—a unique component of our instructional program—is greatly elevated when students are more self-aware about their learning, can reflect meaningfully on their performance and can articulate where they are based on the data and where they need to go.

Formal and informal data has shown there has been a correlation between aligning our instructional practice with LOTL and academic growth of our students. Data clearly showed that by the time our students graduated from 8th grade, we had significantly increased the number of students who were performing at or above grade level compared with the number that began with us at grade level. However, there were still stubborn patterns we observed including that the most significant growth occurred towards the end of their time with us. This suggested we were needing much of their first two years to address the substantial academic deficits with which they entered our school. We began to question whether there was a limit to the amount of growth we could expect our students to achieve given they were coming to us with these academic deficits and we only had them for the three middle school years. We explored what, if anything, was preventing us from expediting the time it had been taking for us to address their academic deficits in order to achieve more significant overall growth by the time they graduated from 8th grade.

We began to focus on the work of Carol Dweck and Jo Boaler and the growth mindset which had implications for student-engaged assessment practices. In order for students to truly take ownership of their own learning and growth, they had to develop their growth mindset—that someone's intelligence is not predetermined, instead simply put, if you work hard you can learn anything. As we continued to explore LOTL implementation, we realized in order to actualize its true potential for student ownership and achievement, we had to address our own collective mindsets about learning as a precursor to being able to transform that of our students'. The vast majority of our students were coming to having struggled academically in the past. Research has shown that students who have not achieved prior academic success are more likely to have fixed mindset. Thus, they were coming to us limited by their fixed mindset slowing their inherent potential for growth. We also realized that we as adults in the school were not always sending a unified message that reflected our own internalization of a growth mindset. When we as adults in the school suggested we don't have a "math brain" or that we were not artistically inclined, we were modeling to our students a fixed mindset, reinforcing their own beliefs that they are limited in what they could achieve. Further, and more fundamentally, we were realizing our curriculum, our instructional strategies and assessments were not supporting a growth mindset. It became clear that

perpetuating a true growth mindset classroom and schoolwide culture would further leverage the student growth that was possible through our student-engaged assessment practices and align with and support many of the other practices in our school.

While we became more aware of and intentional in the language we used to ensure our words were always promoting a growth mindset, our real push to incorporate a holistic growth mindset approach in our teaching and learning began in our math instruction. The data was clear that we needed to push more growth with our 6th and 7th graders. Their performance was linked to a fear of the subject matter which we theorized could be addressed with a shift in their mindsets. Our original exploration of *Growth Mindset Mathematics* came from our math coach, who had begun to study the literature around math and the growth mindset, and some of our math faculty attending the Mathematical Mindset professional development (PD) at Stanford University. Our entire math department read *Mathematical Mindsets* by Jo Boaler, Professor of Mathematics Education at Stanford University's Graduate School of Education, to drive the growth mindset change within our math classroom practice. Boaler's work offered very practical and clear strategies for how to change math classrooms, from culture to curriculum and instruction to assessment. The first step was continuing to be more thoughtful and more deliberate with the language that we used inside the classroom. We made immediate changes by adding in growth mindset messages like "mistakes are proof that you are learning" and supported this with growth mindset videos and research starting with those from Boaler and YouCubed and extended to other growth mindset resources.

The second major change focused on the actual work that we were giving students by focusing on two major themes from Boaler's work. The first theme was to create lessons that had a low floor and a high ceiling. The goal was to create lessons that had a low floor so that all learners could easily access our lessons. This created a major change in the type of Do Now problems that were given to students. Consistently using activities like pattern tasks and emoji task puzzles across time within and across grade levels have given students an easier entry into our lessons because they were visual problems that our students could access and also familiar tasks that gave them a better chance of understanding what to do. They also helped engage their prior knowledge from what they have learned to better understand what they are going to learn. Over the last two years, our math coach has been writing a new math curriculum for the school that is aligned with *Mathematical Mindsets* and which replaces Singapore Math's *Math in Focus* which had been our previous primary curricular resource. We continue to keep a high ceiling by using materials released by New York State, YouCubed, *Illustrative Mathematics* and online interactive resources created by *Desmos* to ensure that our instruction matched the rigor set for by the state.

The second theme was to create lessons that were more multi-dimensional. The research pushed for us to use more visual strategies and encourage students to represent solutions in different ways. Other strategies which promoted students' access to the material and confidence in their math abilities included asking students to create their own real world and story problems and explaining the problem/strategy/solution in their own words. Approaching instruction in this way served to reveal to our students the math potential in them. While we had been doing some of this work already, thinking about it and implementing it through the lens of a mathematical growth mindset provided us with a framework for *why* we were doing it and *how* it would promote a change in student attitude about math and their perceived and actual ability to learn it. This knowledge resulted in our teachers thinking more deeply and more intentionally about their practice. There is no question that the implementation of a growth mindset culture has been made easier by the fact that we could build on best practices already established in the school. As we continue to develop our staff, being able to build on past and current success is essential.

The third major change dealt with our assessments. The type of problems we began giving in assessments started to change to mirror the type of work we were giving them in class. We started to have students reflect on their assessments, asking them to determine their own strengths and weaknesses as they would be reassessed on this same standard later in the marking period. This year our grading program was set up to take the highest score for each standard. This helped our students to focus on their own growth knowing that if they did better on the second try, that score would be counted. This emphasized to our students that we valued their growth through hard work and perseverance, not just getting it right on the first try. Because Boaler's research on how speed creates anxiety in students especially in the math classroom, we also removed time requirements for all math assessments. If students have not finished an assessment, they are given more time to finish it later that day or the next day with no penalty.

We moved to full implementation of the Mathematical Mindset framework schoolwide in 2018-19 after we had begun to see real changes in the pilot not only in our students' approach to math but in the enthusiasm and motivation with which they approached their learning. We are fully invested in this approach and continue to send each one of our

math teachers to the Mathematical Mindsets PD institute at Stanford University and our math coach to the leadership trainings and conferences it offers so that he is able to continue to build his capacity to continue to advance this work.

Our math coach took the lead in facilitating the work to make the growth mindset part of our schoolwide culture. He has been responsible for hosting a Growth Mindset inquiry group—a cross-department group of interested staff rooted in both his research and the “Framework for Deeper Instruction” from *Learning That Lasts*—who meet to read and discuss growth mindset texts. Because of his leadership, the growth mindset is spreading beyond the math classrooms and into other departments as they begin the work to learn what it means to apply these principles in their instructional practice. We believe we are succeeding in making a growth mindset a part of our schoolwide culture, so much so, that our students are very attuned to when their teachers may not be exhibiting a growth mindset and call them out on it and challenge them to do better.

Of particular note, we have seen how enhancing our school culture with a growth mindset framework has had a dramatically positive impact on our work with students with disabilities (SWD). If we were to truly remove the “I can’t...” mindset, it followed that we had to move to a full inclusion model for all students. Thus, assuming SWD could achieve standards of mastery has become our norm. We have eliminated all pull-out from our special education programming, with the exception of speech therapy and counseling. It has challenged our teachers to determine learning access points for all students, and as we continue to explore growth mindset and learn from the curricular, instructional and assessment changes made in math driven by Mathematical Mindset, teachers are learning to think more deeply about planning their lessons with a low floor and high ceiling. Our work to move our SWD to self-advocacy from learned helplessness has been sustained and purposeful and something we are particularly proud of.

The power of our whole school culture approach to school improvement is that in making modifications aligned with our school culture or, in certain cases, making shifts to strengthen our school culture, we leverage existing best practices within our instructional model and learning environment that have been supporting student achievement. We believe as we more fully move LOTL and growth mindset into practice schoolwide, we will see these theories deepen the impact of our instructional program by providing a unifying structure ensuring that all our work builds upon our strengths and values. The following highlights some of these strengths that we consider to be our best practices.

Our daily math scheduling provides every student one period of whole class instruction at grade level and one period of small group targeted teaching based on skill level. This ensures that rigorous, grade level instruction pushes everyone to develop mastery of grade level standards while giving equal time to building key math skills that were not previously mastered or continuing to advance those accelerated students. This approach helps support the needs of our ELL, SWD and academically at-risk populations. This work goes hand in hand with our focus on developing a math growth mindset in our students as it is not simply enough for students to believe with effort and persistence they can achieve, we must provide structures within the school day for them to get the individualized support they need to move them towards understanding, reinforcing this mathematical mindset. There is a great deal of fluidity in student groupings for targeted teaching as students become confident in their abilities to move to mastery. Through LOTL’s student-engaged assessment practices, teachers working in department teams have strengthened their work in planning rigorous units and benchmark assessments aligned to NYSLS and exams as well as their facility in incorporating diverse CFU. This provides key data to inform instruction, including the composition of targeted teaching groups which are changed relatively regularly.

In ELA, all our 6th graders have one period of A3K per day while our 7th and 8th graders have two periods of this work per week. This program, paired with weekly one-on-one conferencing with teachers continues to improve our students’ non-fiction reading skills and move them towards college and career-readiness. This work with A3K has been strengthened by our schoolwide adoption of LOTL student-engaged assessment Learning Targets. As with other student-teacher interactions to discuss student progress, students are taking a much more self-directed role in their individual conferencing with their teachers, as they have been supported in reflecting on data that provides evidence about what they can do and the areas for improvement. Working with their teacher, they are able to determine and, thus, own their path forward to achieve Learning Targets and higher LOM.

Another of our strong ELA practices is whole class reading of novels that are at or above grade level. We believe that the academic rigor pushes our students on ELA standards while improving engagement. It also supports our full inclusion model and provides SWD the critical opportunity to engage in grade-level texts with their peers, allowing for rich discussions and the appreciation and development of different skill sets. For example, an SWD with a reading disability might be very adept at oral debate, but if she only reads books at her level, she would miss out on this opportunity to develop and display this particular skill. It also reinforces the “I can” culture for everyone in the room—

accelerated students see that everyone can engage using their particular strengths and those who struggle begin to believe that not only do they possess unique strengths but they can also develop areas of challenge. To ensure teachers are able to facilitate this learning by scaffolding and providing multiple access points, we focus on building these skills in our work with our staff.

Finally, in Science and Social Studies, we believe having all students engage in a Regents-track course of study preparing our 8th graders to take the Earth Science Regents Exam and the U.S. History Regents Exam has improved student academic performance in many ways—from improved critical thinking skills to being better able to defend an argument to stronger writing skills. The improvement in writing skills, we believe, has contributed to the increase in overall ELA performance from 7th to 8th grade.

It is inherent in our school culture to strive for continual improvement. Each summer, the Leadership Team conducts a retreat to reflect on the year, including what worked and what is in need of improvement. During our reflections, the team includes data collected during staff feedback circles conducted at the end of the school year (along with all student achievement/growth data and NYCDOE survey data). These structured feedback circles provide essential feedback and ideas from teachers and staff on ways the school can continually improve, with topics ranging from classroom culture to parent engagement. There are a number of areas that we are working to address as discussed below.

We are beginning to see signs that the impact of our current ELA program has reached a plateau. We see tremendous growth over the time that a student enrolls in 6th grade and graduates in 8th grade. Our goal is to move more of our students to college and career ready status, but we worry that the program has reached its maximum impact. Given where students are when they enter, are we doing all we can in the three years that we have them, or can more be done? We believe that the answer may lie in a strengthening of all the components that comprise our ELA program with an overarching growth mindset framework. As we begin to incorporate the growth mindset framework in each of the school's departments, we are simultaneously examining how our curriculum, instructional strategies and assessments are supporting a growth mindset. To that end, in conducting a deep dive analysis of the Achieve3000 data, we identified the levers that we believe led to our students' growth in literacy. We are now in the process of identifying what the next levers must be to transition from the plateau and support continued growth.

We are also focusing on student writing and are implementing a common writing rubric which gives our students feedback with direct next steps on how to improve their writing. Students receive feedback from their teachers as well as their peers, in addition to being coached into self-assessment of their own writing. Students are given time in the class to revise their written work to build their writing skills and increase their growth mindset in ELA. The rubric has common language for all three grades and outlines the progress students will make as they progress through SHLACS.

Another challenge we have experienced is in supporting academic growth and achievement in students with profound disabilities. This is often discovered or confirmed when, following participation in our program, the student demonstrates no or negative growth. We are successful with some students with profound disabilities, including students with autism and students with intellectual disabilities. But other profound disabilities, typically emotional disabilities (8:1:1 or some 12:1:1), are a challenge in our environment. Students do not thrive and often leave our school for a more restrictive setting. When we moved to our remote learning program due to COVID-19, we started to see that some of our students with profound disabilities who struggled in the bricks and mortar building were having more engagement with our remote plan that included significant individual and small group support. While it was a strength of our remote program, our next step is to be more intentional about our small groups and the various ways we support our SWD both in distance learning and bricks and mortar. In addition to creating a more structured distance learning schedule, we have trained teachers on more interactive ways to support and engage students in small groups in a remote setting including, but not limited to, breakout rooms, Padlet, and Nearpod. We will also administer the NWEA MAP Assessment remotely in the fall, which will provide critical data to assist with small group placement.

Essential Question 2: Is the School Effective and Well-Run?

During the current charter term, SHLACS has met and exceeded the standards that NYCDOE has delineated for the key characteristics that define an effective and well-run school as set forth in the *Performance Framework: Supportive Environment, Operational Stability and Compliance with all Applicable Laws and Regulations* demonstrating that it is effective and well-run.

Supportive Environment: SHLACS has cultivated a supportive environment over the charter term.

Instructional Differentiation for SWD, ELLs and FRL: SHLACS's instructional model is an inclusive one that does not just hold all students, whether general education, SWD, ELLs/MLLs or FRL, to the same rigorous and high academic standards but provides every student with the supports and scaffolds that he or she needs to achieve them. First and foremost, foundational elements of our instructional program ensure that all students are able to meet NYSLS. Our co-teaching model allows students to benefit from two teachers in each core class. Recognizing that our 6th graders are coming to us with significant deficits in ELA and math as is evidenced by their performance on the NYS Grade 5 assessments, we provide them with robust instructional support in the classroom. All of our Grade 6 ELA and all math classes are delivered in a co-teaching model providing highly individualized instruction within the classroom. The co-teaching model leverages our use of student-engaged assessment practices in the classroom that, as they are highly data-driven, keep teachers and students attuned to student growth and needs. For instance, during whole group instruction, one teacher is able to lead the class in learning rigorous, grade-level standards while the second teacher in the room supports instruction by redirecting students and clarifying misconceptions individually, thus allowing the flow of the lesson to continue without students falling behind. In addition, co-teachers can plan for station teaching, parallel teaching, alternate teaching, team-teaching and the breaking out of smaller instructional groups within the classroom. As co-teachers plan for their lesson delivery, their use of student data to inform how they will co-teach and identify student groupings based on need ensures that students on grade level, those needing extra support and those needing stretch receive the appropriate differentiated instruction to achieve personalized goals. Thus, all students, particularly those representing special populations, have equitable access to a challenging curriculum as teachers plan lessons for students to master targeted skills and concepts without diluting the content. This also allows for multiple points of entry to engage a full range of students, inclusive of SWD, ELL and FRL students. We continue the co-teaching model in all math classes in Grades 7 and 8.

Further differentiation is evident when students read independent books that are at or slightly above their reading level and participate in in-class book clubs organized by reading levels. In math classes, half of the instructional block is broken into small groups in order to target instruction based on the specific needs of the students. Teachers also plan opportunities for student choice by designing curriculum that includes project menus and blended learning programs that give students and teachers easy access to different tasks that work towards mastery of the same standards. For our accelerated students, built in the daily schedule is a math enrichment period. Accelerated ELA and math clubs also meet afterschool for additional enrichment.

Additionally, our instructional model supports further differentiation of instruction by incorporating in every student's daily and weekly schedules small group instruction in ELA and math across all grade levels. These small instructional groups which are based on skill level allows teachers to provide highly personalized instruction to students to help fill in skills gaps or provide extra stretch.

In addition to these important elements of our general education program, we have a robust teaching staff and implement specific intervention and supports targeted to each of these special populations. Overseeing the instructional and intervention program for these special populations is our Director of Student Support Services (DSSS) who reports to the SHLACS Principal. Our robust instructional team includes special education teachers with content specific expertise, designated math teachers whose primary role is to provide targeted teaching and a team of ELA teachers who in addition to providing grade level ELA instruction, also facilitate our Achieve 3000 program, run small reading groups and book clubs, and a designated ELL teacher.

SHLACS's special education staffing allows us to meet the needs of our SWD. Our model is one of full inclusion. We offer ICT placement and our special education teachers are also certified in their specific content area so that their services are truly embedded in the classroom. For students who enter SHLACS with more restrictive placements on their IEP, we work with the student, parent/guardian and the CSE to review their IEP to include our less restrictive ICT setting, when appropriate. We also engage outside providers to deliver related services indicated on our students' IEPs including speech and occupational therapy. Our robust social-emotional team includes three Behavior Intervention Specialists and two Guidance Counselors, one of whom also is responsible for high school placement. The guidance counselors also provide mandated counseling to SWD whose IEPs requires such services. We have a close partnership with the CSE staff in our students' district of residences and our staff work closely with them in developing excellent, specific, data-driven IEPs, which are implemented with fidelity. Importantly, we include our SWD in their annual IEP reviews, empowering them to have a voice in evaluating their progress against goals and identifying their strengths and continued needs. Further, we have found that our focus on building a growth-mindset culture has had a dramatic and positive impact on our work with our SWD. Involving our SWD in reflecting on their progress against their

IEP goals in the annual review process is aligned with our student-engaged assessment practices and the goal of supporting students' metacognitive skills in taking ownership of their own learning, growth and attainment of goals. The strong performance of our SWD on NYS ELA and math assessments is evidence that our special education program is driving their academic progress. As the data in Table 12 showed, the 2019 ELA and Math NYS assessment data for our aggregated 6th through 8th grade SWD outperformed their SWD peers in both CSD 5 and NYC. Further, across the last three academic years for which we have NYS assessment data, with the exception of the performance on the NYS Math exam in 2017, SHLACS's aggregate Grade 6-8 SWD have demonstrated higher proficiency rates than their counterparts not only in CSD 5 and NYC but across NYS as well⁸.

SHLACS' ELL program is guided by the NYSED office of Bilingual Education and World Language's *Blueprint for English Language Learner/Multilingual Learner Success*. Our ELL instructional model is one of sheltered English immersion to support ELLs in their acquisition of grade-level content in core subjects while promoting their development of English language proficiency. Our ELL teacher provides push-in English language support to ELLs and also provides pull out instruction to ELLs as part of the school's small group instructional schedule for all students. Importantly, our ELL teacher works together with general education teachers to review ELL English language proficiency and define language objectives in order to plan and make modifications for those ELLs who need it within the core content classroom. Our ELL teacher also provides support to general education teachers in modifying lessons to meet the needs of ELLs in addition to providing direct support to ELLs both inside and outside the classroom. Our ELL teacher uses specific curriculum to support ELLs including the Wilson Reading System that directly teaches the structure of the English language using multisensory language instruction, REWARDS (Reading, Excellence, Word Attack, and Rate, Development, Strategies) and A3K.

A major focus of our ELL teacher has been in explicitly building the vocabulary of our ELLs based on the research that shows that facility with academic vocabulary is crucial to reading and comprehension and a necessary component of academic success. Our ELL teacher works with all our ELLs in acquiring two new words a day per subject area aligned with the Three Tier Model that places vocabulary words into three categories: Tier 1 which consists of basic or common words, Tier 2 which involves words that are used across the curriculum and multiple meaning words and Tier 3 which is content specific vocabulary. Working closely with core content teachers, our ELL teacher selects vocabulary words, particularly Tier 2 and Tier 3 that are related to the material being covered in class so that his work supports content acquisition. Our ELL Teacher has also been encouraging classroom teachers to engage in this type of vocabulary development as part of classroom instruction, not only to support ELLs, but to support all students given that the majority of our students, whether ELL or English proficient, come to us with prior low academic performance which research has shown is associated with low academic language skills. Our ELL teacher also provides support to content teachers in incorporating ELL strategies in their own instruction. Notably, 100% of our teachers on the most recent NYC School Survey said, "they receive support around how to incorporate students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds in their practice."

Our ELL program has been successful in moving students to English proficiency during the time we have them at SHLACS. What is notable about the performance of our former ELLs is that our most recent NYS assessment data shows that percentage of our Former ELLs who scored proficient on the 2019 NYS ELA and math test was higher than the percent of all students at SHLACS who scored at least a Level 3 on these assessments that year as we discussed previously in *Essential Question 1 Is the School an Academic Success*. This is evidence of the strength of our ELL program in moving our students to English language proficiency.

Economically disadvantaged students or Title I students who are at risk of not meeting proficiency in English and math or who present significant behavioral and/or social and emotional challenges may fall into many categories, including ELLs and SWD, discussed previously, and the general education population. Our reading intervention program for academically at-risk students is designed to provide students with the skills that they most need to grow based on assessment data, by providing intervention in the area(s) of reading with which they struggle. In addition to scaffolded supports provided within the co-taught core classrooms, SHLACS's ELA teachers provide targeted intervention to students during our scheduled small group instruction discussed previously. Specific curricula are also used to support targeted reading instruction including A3K, Lexia and each classroom has a library of leveled books

⁸The NYS Grade 6-8 SWD proficiency rates on the NYS ELA exam was 8.3%, 12.4% and 12.2% in 2017, 2018 and 2019, respectively. In math, the NYS Grade 6-8 SWD proficiency rates were 7.1%, 10.1% and 11.6% in 2017, 2018 and 2019, respectively.

organized by genre so that teachers can assist their students with appropriate book selection for independent reading. Likewise, SHLACS's math teachers provide targeted instruction to students struggling with math using an online program, MAP Accelerator, a partnership between Khan Academy and NWEA MAP. Many of our students struggle with remedial math computation and lack the conceptual understanding that is necessary for grade level success in mathematics. These students, both with and without mathematics-related disabilities, require individualized instruction in remedial math concepts and procedures in order to fill the gaps in their knowledge and experience long term academic success. The math intervention is designed to provide instruction in the conceptual and procedural computation skills required to access grade level math.

Students are identified as requiring intervention services through multiple mechanisms. Schoolwide screening of basic math, reading comprehension, and decoding skills at the beginning of the school year based on NWEA MAP Reading and Math assessments, Brigance assessments, as well as prior year NYS ELA and Math assessment performance serves to identify students in need. Additionally, during the school year, using the school's Response to Intervention protocol, the Child Study Team (CST) comprised of teachers and intervention specialists and the DSSS meet in the Academic Intervention Conferences (AIC) to identify students who may require intervention and problem-solve ways to support these struggling students who fail to meet desired benchmarks. The CST supports the academic and personal success of all students through early identification of student difficulties and pro-active implementation of supportive interventions. The CST works cooperatively to empower teachers to address the needs of specific students and stimulate academic or emotional growth by reinforcing and promoting high expectations for academic achievement, helping develop and implement meaningful academic interventions and learning strategies for the general education classroom, including students in specific Tier I, II and III interventions, and addressing mental health concerns that represent barriers to learning.

Our high enrollment and retention rates for SWD, ELL and FRL students are evidence that families and students believe our learning environment is responsive to and supportive of their children's unique needs and is successful in promoting their academic growth and achievement. Not only do they seek to enroll their children in our school but once admitted they remain. The following table provides our actual enrollment and retention rate for these special populations over the last three years against our NYSED enrollment and retention target as calculated by the NYSED enrollment and retention calculator available on the NYSED website⁹. The table shows that with the exception of 2019-20 where we fell 0.5 percentage points short of our ELL enrollment target, we exceeded our enrollment targets for all special populations in each year 2017-18 to 2020-21. Likewise, with regard to our retention targets, we exceeded our retention target for each year 2017-18 to 2019-20 for all special populations. 2019-20 retention rates and 2020-21 enrollment rates represent data as of 9/30/2020 which is likely to remain the same as of the October 7, 2020 BEDS day.

Table 21: SHLACS Enrollment and Retention of Special Population Against SED Targets

ENROLLMENT		SHLACS				RETENTION		SHLACS		
	SED Target	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21		SED Target	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
FRL	85.5%	94.4%	95.7%	96.9%	TBD	FRL	84.1%	88.1%	86.1%	88.1%
ELL	11.3%	14.6%	13.0%	10.8%	13.2%	ELL	76.4%	93.2%	97.4%	95.0%
SWD	21.3%	21.5%	24.3%	25.4%	25.7%	SWD	82.9%	87.7%	87.7%	84.7%

Stakeholder Satisfaction: Another indication of the supportive learning environment we have sustained at SHLACS is in the positive experiences of our key stakeholders (students, parents and teachers). SHLACS administers the NYC School Survey to staff, students and parents each year to gauge stakeholder satisfaction. The results of the School Survey are integrated in the School's performance goals and reported in each year's Annual Report. We have a high participation rate on the NYC School Survey. A greater percentage of our students complete the NYC School Survey than their peers in NYC. In 2017-18 and 2018-19, 98% and 99% of our student body completed the survey compared with 91% and 92% citywide in each of those respective years. In this same two year period, 90% and 91% of our parents completed the survey, respectively, versus 59% and 60% in NYC. In 2017-18 97% of our teachers completed

⁹ <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/psc/enrollment-retention-targets.html>

the survey versus 86% in NYC. In 2018-19, our teacher participation dropped to 86%¹⁰ matching the NYC teacher participation rate that year.

Students: The strong engagement and high degree of satisfaction that students have with SHLACS is evident in a number of different data points. First and foremost, our students demonstrate their commitment to their learning by coming to school. We have a high student attendance rate. Prior to the school closure for COVID-19, our student attendance rate for 2019-20 was 94%. Once the school closed and we moved to remote learning, we maintained a 95% student attendance rate¹¹. In 2018-19, our attendance rate was 95% (which exceeded the NYC student attendance rate by 1 point) and in 2017-18 our attendance rate was 94% (which was on par with the NYC student attendance rate). This data is aligned with their responses on the NYC School Survey where 95% of our student responses were positive regarding the statement, “Most students feel it is important to come to school every day.” In 2018-19, the percent of SHLACS students who were chronically absent (14%) was 6 points less than the percent of students who were chronically absent in NYC (20%). We also saw a significant reduction (6 points) in the percent of our students who were chronically absent from the 2017-18 year, where 20% of our students fit this designation. Of note, during this same period, the percent of chronically absent students in the City remained flat at 20%.

Our work in the academic classroom to build students’ metacognitive skills, take ownership of their futures and develop their growth mindset spills over into the nonacademic realm. Students are given opportunities to be leaders and active participants in school life. In the *2017-18* and *2018-19 School Survey*, 98% and 97% of students, respectively, said the school “offers a wide enough variety of programs, classes and activities to keep them interested in school;” and 96% and 97%, respectively, of students on the two years’ surveys indicated that the “programs, classes and activities at their school encourage them to develop talent outside academics.” Students have many opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities where they are able to develop and demonstrate these talents. There is an active athletic program, with sports teams ranging from boys and girls basketball, girls and boys soccer, flag football, girls volleyball and girls softball. We are able to field some of these teams through our partnership with Asphalt Green. SHLACS also has a debate and math team which engage in interscholastic competitions, as well as a mentoring program with Stanford alumni called Rising Leaders. Through a partnership with Harlem Grown, some of our students (the Green Team) learn how to compost their breakfast and lunch scraps which are then sent to the Harlem Grown urban farm for its use. The Green Team also works at the urban farm and have monthly cooking classes where they use food grown on the farm in their meals. In addition, depending on availability of teachers to moderate these activities, we have had step club, Natural Hair Club and Coding Club.

SHLACS has a National Junior Honor Society Chapter (NJHS). Seventh and eighth graders are nominated for NJHS based on their cumulative GPA. NJHS and our active Student Government Association (SGA) work together on a key leadership and service initiative at the school. In keeping with our school culture of promoting student ownership and student agency, leadership in these two organizations spearhead monthly school-wide service initiatives. They are responsible for identifying the focus issue and its impact on the local, national and/or global community, and the ways the SHLACS school community can get involved to address the problem. They are responsible for designing the curriculum for the monthly issue which is rolled out in students’ Advisories each week. Over the course of the year, issues that NJHS and SGA have presented for school-wide focus are HIV and AIDS awareness, Cancer Awareness and Prevention and Hunger and Homelessness Awareness, among others.

Members of NJHS and SGA are also given opportunities to present to the SHLACS Board of Trustees (BOT) at least twice a year giving them a chance to hone their presentation and advocacy skills in a high-stakes environment. One of their presentations involves their sharing their experiences at the annual NJHS LEAD Conference in Washington DC. A second presentation is to propose an end-of-year trip for members of NJHS and SGA which involves their presenting an itinerary, a budget and how lessons learned will be shared with and impact the school community.

Our students have also been recognized for their leadership and character by outside organizations. For the last 2 years, at least one of our 8th graders has been accepted to the prestigious Jeter’s Leaders program run by Derek

¹⁰ The reduced participation rate in 2018-19 was due to the fact that 4 of our teachers took parental leave and were not available to complete the survey.

¹¹ During remote learning, students entered their attendance on our distance learning portal each morning and a daily work tracker monitored their completion and submission of assignments that day. Students who did not mark themselves present received a follow-up call is made to confirm that they were present and participating in distance learning.

Jeter’s Turn 2 Foundation. This highly competitive four-year leadership program provides them with experience and training to serve as ambassadors in the community and in completing high school and college.

After SHLACS students graduate from our school, we continue to have an influence on their actions in high school and beyond. We offer college scholarships to our alumni based on their academic performance and their leadership in high school and in their communities. The BOT launched the St HOPE HARLEM Scholarship in 2018 which awards four \$10,000 scholarships each year to alumni who are graduating from high school and attending college. The purpose of this scholarship is to encourage and enable St HOPE alumni to pursue their goals of graduating from college, and is open to students enrolling in an accredited community college, two-year college/university, or four-year college/university. The HARLEM Scholar Book Awards were also launched in 2018 which provide \$500 to assist with the cost of textbooks and/or supplies to two scholarship finalists not selected for the larger award. Since 2018, we have awarded St HOPE HARLEM scholarship to 12 of our alumni and book awards to six alumni. These scholarship and award winners are attending a range of colleges including NYU, Syracuse University, SUNY-New Paltz, York College and Brandeis University. In 2019, we added the Journey Scholarship for rising college juniors or seniors who needed additional financial help to finish college. The Journey Scholarship awards \$2,500 per year and we have awarded three scholarships to date. Since we founded our college scholarship program, we have awarded a total of \$135,500 in alumni scholarships.

Students recognize that the adults in SHLACS care about them, respect them and want them to succeed. In the most recent *School Survey*, 100% of students indicated “their teachers respect their cultures or background;” 98% of students say “there is at least one adult in the school that they can confide in” and “their teachers treat them with respect.” It is notable that our percent of positive responses to Student-Teacher Trust measures exceeds CSD 5 and NYC by 19 and 15 percentage points, respectively.

Parents: Parent survey data demonstrate satisfaction with SHLACS and the direction it is moving. As is evidenced by the results of the 2017-18 and 2018-19 *School Survey*, we continue to be a school community that parents feel is meeting the needs of their children, is open to them, where they feel welcomed and where their feedback is valued.

Importantly, survey responses from parents with children with IEPs are aligned with our strong retention rate of this population. Over the last two years, an increasing percent of our families who have a child with an IEP have responded positively to questions on the *NYC School Survey* about the services provided to their child:

Standard	2017-18	2018-19
Percent of Families of a Child with an IEP say that they are satisfied with the educational planning and IEP development process at their school	85%	88%
Percent of families with a child with an IEP say that their school works to achieve the goals on their child’s IEP	83%	88%
Percent of families with a child with an IEP say that their school offers a wide variety of activities and services (including related services and assistive and adaptive technologies where appropriate) to help improve life outcomes for their child.	71%	81%

In 2018-19, 96% of our parents, responded positively to “how satisfied are you with the education your child has received this year” and to “how satisfied are you with the response you get when you contact your child’s school.” Additionally, 97% of parents indicated that “the principal works to create a sense of community in the school”, 97% say “they trust the principal,” and 93% of parents indicated “the principal is strongly committed to shared decision making.” Parents have a high degree of trust with and feel respected by the individuals who work at the school. 96% of parents responded positively to the statement “I feel respected by my child’s teachers,” 93% to “the principal at the school work hard to build trusting relationships with families like them,” and 95% to “Teachers and families think of each other as partners in educating children.”

Parents overall expressed a great degree of satisfaction with the communication and collaboration between school and home. 91% of parents responded positively to, “School staff regularly communicate with parents/guardians about how staff can help students learn” and 94% to “Teachers work closely with families to meet students’ needs.” Teachers agree with parents’ feedback about the school’s outreach to parents with 100% and 97% of teachers responding to the previous two questions, respectively. Our parent responses to these two survey questions are important to SHLACS. While SHLACS emphasizes parent engagement and hosts social and celebratory events to bring parents into the school community, we believe the most important form of parent engagement is involving them in the academic and

personal development of their children. We host a Family Fair at the start of the school year where parents meet all of their child's teachers, learn about the programs for the year and learn about SWD/ELL support services. To ensure a high attendance rate at the Family Fair, it is a catered event and parents receive free books, can purchase school polos at discounted rates and enter a raffle for prizes such as an iPad mini. It is a very well-attended and anticipated event. We have two Parent Teacher Conferences each year and offer flexible times to accommodate the schedules and home situations of our parents. They are held on two consecutive days and offer parents times in the morning, afternoon and evening until 7 pm. This flexibility has resulted in high parent attendance—between 85% and 90% of our parents attend twice a year PTCs.

The SHLACS Principal and Director of Operations maintain ongoing communication with our parents. Our Principal sends out a weekly Parent Newsletter and we have an active presence on social media—Facebook, YouTube and Instagram. We ensure our communications are accessible to all parents. In fact, in our most recent *NYC School Survey*, 97% of our families responded positively to “the school communicates with them in a language and in a way that they can understand.” While SHLACS uses Jumprope as its central student data platform, which parents can access with real time information on their child's progress, our parents uniformly rely on Student Weekly Progress reports described previously in *Section 1: Is the School an Academic Success?* for real time access to their student's grades, homework assignments and overall GPA among other data points.

Teachers: We have experienced high staff retention rates, indicating a high degree of satisfaction with their experiences in our learning community. We have implemented compensation strategies and provide leadership opportunities that, to the greatest degree possible, have encouraged the retention of high quality staff. In addition, we prioritize providing our staff with high quality PD in order to build their instructional and leadership capacities. We provide performance-based raises each year for staff of 3% and 5% of base salary. We provide leadership opportunities for staff members, which also come with a stipend. These include Grade Team Leaders, Lead Teachers, SHSAT prep coordinators, our Rising Leaders mentor program and coaches for various academic and sports teams. In addition, there are unpaid student advisor roles for NJHS and SGA. To qualify for these opportunities, teachers must be in good standing. We do our best to provide a career ladder for our teachers beyond these leadership opportunities; despite the limitations of being a small school, we have been successful promoting a significant number of our talented teachers to leadership positions. Some examples include:

- Our current Assistant Principal (AP) was appointed to this position in 2018. He began as a SHLACS ELA teacher in 2012 and had been promoted to Literacy Coach in 2015 where he drove our ELA test score improvement.
- Our current DSSS was appointed to this position in 2017. She began her career at SHLACS in 2013 as a special education math teacher.
- Our current Literacy Coach was appointed to this position in 2019. She began at SHLACS in 2016 as an ELA teacher.
- One of our science teachers who was hired in 2009 started our successful A3K program in 2016 and this year was promoted to Director of Student Affairs, a new leadership position created this year.
- Our US History Teacher who was hired in 2014 was promoted to Lead Instructor for Social Studies in 2018 mentoring new department teachers and taking the lead in running half of the department meetings.

The career ladder at SHLACS is evident not only on the instructional side, but the operations side as well.

- Our founding Operations Associate in 2008 became a school counselor in 2012 after going back to school and earning a degree in counseling. Since 2014, she has added student High School Placement to her counseling role.
- Our Operations Associate who began at SHLACS in 2011, went back to school to earn her BA and was promoted to Behavior Intervention Specialists in 2017.

Establishing a career ladder at SHLACS so that we do not lose talented employees to other schools and are able to build our internal capacity and a pipeline of our own staff members who can step into leadership positions as part of planned and unplanned leadership succession has a priority for us. Our overall retention rate is evidence that we are succeeding. Almost 40% of our 2019-20 teaching staff has been with us for 4 years or more. While 30% of our teaching staff in 2019-20 were new hires, about 50% of the turnover we experienced from 2018-19 to 2019-20 were the result of life changes for these staff members and the majority of those who left the school taught at SHLACS for multiple years. Thus, we feel that we do not have significant uncontrolled instructional turnover. Our retention rate on the non-instructional side is even stronger. 70% of our non-instructional staff members in 2019-20 has been with the school at

least 4 years and almost 60% has been with SHLACS for 9 years or longer. Finally, we have had tremendous stability among members of our school leadership team. Our current principal, Meghann Persenaire, has been with SHLACS for 11 years, serving as Director of Student Affairs from 2009 to 2011, AP from 2011 to 2019 and promoted to Principal in 2019-20. Our AP and DSSS, as mentioned previously, have been in their positions for 2 and 3 years, respectively, but have been with SHLACS in an instructional capacity since 2012 and 2013, respectively. Our math and literacy coaches have been with SHLACS since 2012 and 2016, respectively, with our Literacy Coach assuming this position in 2019-20 after having been an ELA teacher at the school.

When Dr. Bond informed the BOT of her transition plans in 2019, she, along with the leadership team and BOT, began the process of determining the best organizational structure of the school going forward. With the school stabilized after the turnaround Dr. Bond led upon her appointment as ED/Principal, it was agreed that the school would no longer need an Executive Director. Instead, beginning with the 2020-21 school year, the Principal would be the school's overall instructional and administrative leader. The Principal would assume all Executive Director responsibilities and the bulk of the instructional leadership responsibilities would transition to the AP. The former AP for Student Affairs position would transition to a new leadership team position, Director of Student Affairs. The Director of Student Affairs would assume responsibility for overall school climate and school culture and as such would be responsible for the supervision and evaluation of the Behavior Intervention Specialists and the High School Placement Counselor. The BOT approved the revised organizational structure in February 2020.

Our efforts to increase the retention of staff members who value the opportunities they have to expand their capacities and enhance their experiences as educators has supported the BOT's long-term strategy for leadership succession by beginning to grow and develop an internal leadership pipeline. As a result, our leadership transition progressed smoothly and seamlessly. Members of our current leadership team were able to take on the additional roles required in this restructuring and we were able to fill the new Director of Student Affairs position from within. Further, we continue to have exceptional teachers within our instructional ranks to assume increasing leadership responsibilities. We believe our building of capacity within our ranks, our focus on providing opportunities for increasing leadership responsibilities for teachers and staff who distinguish themselves and the existence of a career ladder of opportunities in our school are best practices within our school's supportive environment.

The teacher satisfaction data contained in our most recent *NYC School Survey* confirms that SHLACS has established a professional learning community that is collaborative, supportive and student-centered during the current charter term. Among the teacher survey results that reflect this are the following: 100% responded positively to the following statement "the principal, teachers and staff collaborate to make this school run effectively;" 90% responded positively to "teachers design instructional programs together;" 100% responded positively to "...they had opportunities to productively with colleagues at their school on professional development;" 100% to "feel[ing] respected by other teachers at this school;" "principal has confidence in the expertise of teachers in the school;" and "principal is personally interested in the professional development of teachers." 97% of teachers indicated that "their professional development experiences included enough time to think carefully about, try and evaluate new ideas" and 100% of teachers indicated that their PD was "sustained and coherently focused."

School Climate: When we entered our last charter renewal, we had successfully piloted the implementation of Restorative Practices (RP) in the 7th grade and were moving to full implementation across the school as we closed out our second charter term. Since then, our entire middle school has been grounded in RP with all of our students experiencing the fullness of our school climate that focuses first on building relationships. This is accomplished through such structures as advisory, community building circles for both students and staff, office hours and frequent opportunities to build relationships through an academic lens in classes (group work, turn and talks).

Additionally, we have successfully transitioned to true shared ownership of the process of restoring relationships to resolve situations where harm is done. When we first began implementation of RP, only a subset of our staff was trained in facilitating conferences and informal conversations between those who had been harmed and those who were responsible for effecting the harm, and we had to rely on primarily one person or a small group of people to facilitate these restorative conversations. However, since then we have invested in all of our staff receiving ongoing PD around RP, supported the continued sharing of best practices and promoted a schoolwide focus on strategies and structures that build relationships. We see and have evidence of all persons now facilitating RP instead of resorting to punitive responses and, importantly, sharing the positive outcomes when harm is repaired and relationships are restored. The data clearly supports this transition to our schoolwide restorative capacity: 97% of teachers say that

teachers maintain discipline in the entire school, and 90% of teachers see disruptions as social-emotional learning opportunities.

Now, we are at the beginning of our next shift, having RP become more student-centered, student-facilitated, and student-led. Importantly, this shift is connected with our interrelated goals of increasing our students' self-efficacy, metacognitive skills and growth mindsets. As students take ownership of the restorative process, they must reflect on their mistakes in order to learn from them. They must also believe that they are not defined by their mistakes, but rather have the ability to grow, as a student and as a person, through this self-knowledge and through reparations with the person or persons who were impacted by their mistakes.

Our implementation of RP has clearly been the driving force in sustaining a strong student culture and climate this charter term. Stakeholder survey data confirm the positive school climate that has been maintained in the school in 2018-19. 2018-19 *NYC School Survey* responses indicate 99% of students felt safe in their classes and 98% felt safe in the hallways, bathrooms, locker rooms and cafeteria; and 93% of parents felt their child was safe at school. Importantly, 96% of SHLACS students responded positively to survey questions regarding the prevention of bullying indicating that students rarely or never harass, bully or intimidate each other. Our students' positive responses regarding this safe environment forged at the school was 33 percentage points higher than the positive responses in CSD 5 and 35 percentage points higher than the positive responses to these survey questions citywide.

Also, 86% of teachers say that adults at their school teach students how to advocate for themselves; 90% of teachers say that adults at their school recognize disruptive behavior as social-emotional learning opportunities; 97% of teachers say that adults at their school teach students the skills they need to regulate their behavior (by focusing their attention, controlling their emotions, or managing their thinking, behavior and feelings); 97% of teachers say that teachers maintain discipline in the entire school, not just their classrooms; 97% of teachers say that order and discipline are maintained in the school; and 98% of students say that their teachers treat them with respect. These data points also indicate that RP have specifically provided teachers with the tools they need to build strong culture and respectful and trusting student-teacher relationships

In 2019-20 in the months prior to the pandemic school closure, SHLACS was on track to reducing the number of student suspensions over the previous school year. From September 2019 to mid-March 2020, SHLACS had 11 student suspensions, representing 9 students. This is in comparison to the 15 student suspensions during the same period in the previous school year. The continued reduction in annual student suspensions is evidence of the impact RP are having on our school climate. Furthermore, of the 9 students who received suspensions this past year, 7 were 6th graders and 2 were 7th graders. There were no 8th graders who received suspensions. This data demonstrates that as students move from grade to grade at SHLACS and continue to be immersed in a restorative culture where they are given so many more opportunities to succeed than to fail, they rise to the occasion and exhibit fewer behaviors that warrant a suspension. The goal is always for teachers and students to work collaboratively to problem-solve, including problem-solving meetings, conflict resolution, social conferencing and other strategies to find resolution. Our focus on restorative efforts—helping a student engaged in transgressions restore his or her standing in the community through a reconciliation process with the person or people impacted by their transgression—has helped us cement a school environment grounded in our core values of HARLEM (Honor, Absolute Determination, Responsibility, Leadership, Excellence and Mission) and where every member of the community strives to realize these core values in all their actions and interactions in the school and beyond the school walls.

Operational Stability: SHLACS is operationally stable as measured against the standards for Operational Stability delineated in the *Performance Framework*. The School has codified all its operational procedures in the Financial Policies and Practices (FPP) manual and the Operations Manual available at the School for inspection. These written systems provide all employees, both new and old, with a consistent understanding of every detail of how SHLACS is run, particularly for those areas for which they are responsible.

SHLACS embraces being held accountable for the attainment of its charter goals, which are ambitious and reflective of the high expectations that the School holds for its students. Our charter goals continue to be grounded in the NYCDOE definitions of "high standards for performance." In order to ensure appropriate progress towards attainment, SHLACS has developed systems for measuring, monitoring, and reporting progress to all stakeholders and implementing any essential adjustments to its programs to ensure successful outcomes. SHLACS has generally met all its reporting requirements with its authorizer and has posted all required documentation (including but not limited to: Annual Reports, Financial Audits, BOT meetings and BOT minutes) on its website.

PD and Performance Evaluation: SHLACS has established a process for providing PD to all staff that is effective, flexible and data-driven. SHLACS's robust PD program provides targeted training related to its instructional priorities and differentiates PD based on teachers' experience. PD at SHLACS is embedded in the school through grade-level and department meetings and other supports provided to teachers and instructional staff. As discussed previously, teacher responses on the *NYC School Survey* were overwhelmingly positive regarding the PD experiences they had during the 2018-19 school year. We continue to prioritize our investment in our teachers through PD and, as discussed previously, opportunities to participate in the decision-making process on issues that impact the growth and development of our school. These opportunities for teachers to provide us with input play a key role in cultivating a culture of collaboration and accountability.

PD is linked directly to our teacher evaluation process and is designed to address individual teacher needs and professional growth targets, as well as schoolwide needs and areas of growth. By linking teacher evaluation to coaching and PD, it becomes a means to support, build and strengthen the instructional capacity of individual teachers. SHLACS employs the Danielson Framework for its teacher observation and evaluation process. The Framework promotes the process of self-reflection and goal setting for individual teachers and assists the administration and teachers to identify the strengths and needs of individual teachers and to support the attainment of their professional learning goals to enhance their teaching performance. Teachers are using the Danielson rubric to reflect on their classroom practices and to set their pedagogical goals as one of several strategies to increase student progress. The Framework facilitates SHLACS teachers becoming more actively engaged in their own teaching practices. The overall goal is for teachers to take an active approach to improving themselves as they become more proficient in implementing the NYSLS.

Because coaches are heavily involved in our teachers' development, they, along with the AP and the DSSS, have responsibilities for supervising and evaluating teachers. In particular, the AP oversees performance of science, social studies and enrichment teachers, the DSSS oversees the performance of intervention teachers (special education, ELL, counselors), the Literacy Coach oversees the performance of ELA teachers and the math coach oversees the performance of math teachers.

In September, each teacher rates himself on the Danielson Framework and sets a year-long personal goal that they work on in their daily practice and in monthly sessions on Fridays. Teachers meet weekly with their coach for support with their goal and the overall Department goal. Coaching includes modeling instruction, grading with teachers, leading small groups, and helping design curriculum. In December and February, coaches meet with teachers to reflect on and rate their performance. Teachers are invited to include a written reflection of their work in their mid-year and final evaluations. If a teacher consistently demonstrates unsatisfactory performance, s/he is placed on an improvement plan that is filed with HR. This document outlines areas for professional growth, supports that have and will continue to be provided to the teacher, and a timeline to meet expectations. In April, decisions are made as to which teachers are invited to return the following year and what their compensation will be. Performance-based raises are based on the Leadership Team's reflections about the teacher's value to SHLACS, including their impact on students' growth and achievement, contributions to the school's culture, and professionalism. Importantly, SHLACS included as one of its charter goals, "Each year, 100% of teachers will engage in a faculty evaluation process including quarterly written performance reviews." SHLACS has met this goal during the current charter term.

Teachers are supported in their goals not only through their own coaching but also through work with other instructional leaders, their peers (through grade team meetings, department meetings, peer observations), literacy and math coaches and external workshops. To help teachers develop their practice, we also have year-long Affinity Groups where teachers work on their year-long personal goal with a professional learning community of their peers that meets one Friday per month. Affinity Groups typically focus on ways to improve engagement and instruction by studying research and applying strategies on topics that cover the four domains of the Danielson Framework for Teaching.

Every Friday, students are dismissed early so that teachers can engage in a full afternoon of designated PD. In addition to short sessions that meet once annually (i.e. Building Safety Protocols), there are four types of PD that occur each Friday (typically one per month): Antiracist Pedagogy, Advancing the Schoolwide Student-Centered Learning Initiative, Affinity Groups, and Extended Grade Team Meetings. Advancing the Schoolwide Initiative is based on the school's long-term commitment to successfully implementing the student-centered practices in *LOTL* with sessions typically led by the AP, along with the instructional coaches. This year the focus is on taking the foundation we have built through several years and running an expanded pilot of Project-Based Learning based on PBL Works's Gold Standard PBL approach. The once per month Extended Grade Team Meetings provide teachers and counselors time to analyze grade-level student performance data and determine if further scholar intervention, including RTI referral, is

recommended. Affinity Groups, co-facilitated by a member of our Leadership Team and a teacher, are doing data-based research on future levers for our school. Significant department time is also provided to either the STEM team (math and science) or the Humanities team (ELA and social studies) every other Friday morning. This ensures that each department has adequate opportunity to look at student work/data and plan at least twice per month, including time with the DSSS to ensure teachers are up-to-date on SWD needs. The team that teaches that Friday also has extended class periods to conduct science labs (on STEM Friday) or social studies research (on Humanities Friday).

Our integrated model of PD, teacher observation and teacher evaluation has played a significant role in our being able to create a sustainable learning environment where academic rigor is valued; where all decisions are informed by data; where all stakeholders are self-reflective in order to improve and meet the standards to which they are held accountable, as individuals and as a collective community; and where collaboration is at the heart of our professional learning community.

Governance: The BOT is a well-functioning governing body currently comprised of 10 members with the clear capacity to lead the school, provide effective oversight of the school's leadership, monitor the school's operations in accordance with the mission and approved charter, and hold the school leader accountable for attaining the charter goals. The BOT has operated in compliance with the requirements for size, public notice, Open Meeting Law, Code of Ethics and Conflict of Interest and all the requirements of its governing by-laws. Evidence of the BOT's compliance is reflected in such documents as our BOT minutes and copies of public notices regarding BOT meetings that are posted (including on SHLACS's website and electronic calendar) to inform the school community. The BOT and leadership team are cognizant of their responsibilities to oversee the School's operation in accordance with the approved charter and regularly consult with the School's independent legal counsel, its authorizer, and other local charter support entities in every effort to maintain compliance. As is evident by the information in SHLACS's most recent ACR, SHLACS held the required number of meetings each year and had quorum at each meeting.

At the committee level and the full BOT level, it has closely monitored the school's performance against academic, operational and fiscal benchmark measures as identified in the school's accountability plan and NYCDOE Performance Framework and has held the school leadership accountable for identifying and implementing measures that would allow for the continued strengthening and growth of the program. The BOT is also cognizant of when it needs outside experts to assist them in their oversight of the school.

SHLACS continues to comply with NYCDOE's requirements for reporting changes in BOT membership and securing approval for new BOT members. The correspondence between SHLACS and NYCDOE is available at the school for inspection for the BOT members who were seated during this charter term

The collective BOT possesses a range of skills and experiences to oversee the academic, organizational, and fiscal performance of the School. The Executive Committee routinely assesses the BOT's capacity for providing effective oversight. When a Trustee resigns or when there is an absence of a specific and necessary expertise on the BOT, the BOT recruits, nominates, and inducts the new member with the authorizer's permission and in accordance with the BOT election and orientation process led by the Nominating Committee. New members of the BOT are recruited through professional and personal affiliations based on the BOT's needs assessment. The current SHLACS BOT balances both continuity from veteran members (40% have at least four years of experience on the BOT) with new perspectives and experiences from new members, to support the continued growth and development of SHLACS.

Compliance with all Applicable Laws and Regulations: SHLACS has operated an academic and operational program that is in compliance with its approved charter and charter agreement, including meeting enrollment and retention of special populations described earlier in this response. In addition, it has adhered to all the academic, behavioral, oversight, management and operational policies and procedures that were outlined in its charter, as revised in its most recent charter renewal. The BOT and school leadership are cognizant of the procedures that must be followed should modifications to the academic, fiscal and operational program be deemed necessary, and they have been in compliance with all requisite procedures as prescribed by its authorizer to implement those changes. A copy of SHLACS's current charter is available in the main office of the school and on our website, in compliance with FOIL, is made available to any person or entity that requests it.

Discipline, Promotion and Retention—SHLACS implements discipline, promotion and retention policies and procedures that adhere to all laws and regulations related to SWD and due process regulations. Evidence of SHLACS's discipline, promotion and retention policies are available at the school and are distributed to parents each year in its Scholar and Family Handbook. The discipline policies and procedures are vetted annually by legal counsel to ensure continued compliance with all laws and regulations.

Properly Certified Staff with Appropriate Clearances—SHLACS has been in compliance during the current charter term with the requirement to have appropriately certified teachers for their positions and all SHLACS staff have undergone the required background checks and received appropriate security clearances.

Open Lottery and Enrollment Process: SHLACS has been in compliance with all applicable lottery and enrollment regulations. Our lottery is conducted via a computer program that randomizes the selection process as required by law. The lottery is taped and made available to the public. Our lottery policies and procedures are described in our student marketing materials and on our website, as well as being made available upon request. In addition, our process to remove students off the waitlist is transparent and complies with all requirements. SHLACS maintains documentation of its process in offering admission to students on its waitlist in the order that they appear on the waitlist when a seat becomes available in a grade. Numerous and documented attempts are made to reach out to parents on the waitlist before the child is removed from the waitlist and the School moves on to the next child. Documentation is available at SHLACS to support the integrity of the lottery, enrollment and waitlist process.

SHLACS has continued to be in compliance with all applicable Federal and state laws during the current charter term. Specifically, SHLACS implements Title I programs, which are supplemental to the regular instructional program. The office staff and the Director of Operations are trained to ensure that all incoming documentation is carefully reviewed, accurately completed, and safely stored in secured student files. The BOT's Finance Committee work in conjunction with the Principal and Charter School Business Management (CSBM) to monitor for appropriate allocation of funding and resources in accordance with Title I regulations. The Principal and Director of Operations ensure that all required reporting and documentation are completed and submitted in a timely manner. The Director of Operations monitors for compliance with required practices including the Parental Involvement Policy, Parent Meetings, distribution of information in more than one language, and accurate recording of payroll allocations and purchase inventories. Evidence of compliance in Title I reporting and appropriate allocation of funding and resources are available for inspection at the School.

The DSSS is the main compliance officer responsible for monitoring adherence to IDEA regulations and reporting mandates. The DSSS ensures that our procedures for identifying, monitoring, evaluating and supporting SWD and the required reporting documentation are accurately maintained. Teachers have access to IEPs for SWD enrolled in their classes for the duration of time they are under the teacher's supervision. All files are safely and securely stored in locked cabinets. The DSSS carefully trains the staff in understanding students' rights, such as those mandated by FERPA, and supports collaboration between content teachers and the special education staff in providing support to best meet the students' needs, in accordance to their IEPs. The DSSS maintains an active relationship with the CSE of the districts of students' residence, and provides all required documentation. The DSSS ensures staff and parents are informed and included in all aspects of the identification and referral process, as applicable, and provides parents with a copy of the Procedural Safeguards. The DSSS completes and submits all required documentation under the supervision of the Principal.

Facilities—SHLACS continues to be housed in an existing NYCDOE building. The environment is clean, safe, and provides adequate space to house our Grades 6-8 program with dedicated classrooms, offices, and resource rooms. In addition, we share the cafeteria, gymnasium, auditorium, playground and library. As an existing public school building, our home remains compliant with all federal, state, and municipal requirements for codes, health, and safety regulations. The School's safety plan, available on site for inspection, is reviewed annually and updated as necessary. Further, SHLACS's reopening plan is posted on the school's website and gives detail on how we have prepared for hybrid learning, including adherence to CDC and NYCDOH guidelines regarding social distancing, health and safety and contact tracing, among other issues within the COVID-19 environment.

Essential Question 3: Is the School Financially Viable?

SHLACS has remained a financially viable institution throughout the current charter term. The BOT and school leadership continue to demonstrate responsible stewardship of public funds. We have maintained strong financial health during the current charter term. Our 2018-19 audit resulted in an unqualified opinion, no major findings and no deficiencies in internal controls. We expect this will be the case with our 2019-20 audit. The finding of no deficiencies in internal controls reflects our strong financial practices that are codified in our Financial Policies and Procedures (FPP) Manual, available for review at the school. These practices are vigilantly followed by staff and reviewed and, if necessary, updated annually by the BOT. In fact, our FPP was most recently updated by Charter School Business Management (CSBM) in collaboration with school leadership in January 2020 and included, among other revisions,

updates to reflect the current organizational structure of the school and personnel involved in carrying out the relevant financial functions.

The FPP ensures sound internal controls, fiscal responsibility and accountability in accordance with the Generally Accepted Accounting Principles and rules and regulations of the Financial Accounting Standards Board and delineates the process by which all financial matters at the school will be handled and by whom. The FPP provides the guidelines and controls designed to mitigate risk and liability to the School. In addition, we maintain a contract with CSBM to ensure the policies and procedures are being implemented correctly. CSBM reviews the internal accounting system monthly and conducts periodic internal audits of the daily transactions.

The *Performance Framework* has identified two key areas—short-term financial viability and long-term financial sustainability—and the corresponding standards that indicate whether a school has solid financial health. Our analysis of SHLACS’s performance against each of the benchmarks indicate our school is in a strong financial position and financially viable. As the following illustrates, SHLACS has met, and in most cases well exceeded, these benchmarks. Note that as our 2019-20 audit is not yet finalized, data for the just completed fiscal year is based on our unaudited 2019-20 financial statements.

SHLACS Short-Term Financial Viability Indicators and Metrics		
INDICATOR	2018-19	2019-20¹²
Cash Position	Calculation: Cash (Excluding Escrow Account)/Annual Operating Expenses/365>60	
Result	92.86	101.12
Liabilities	Calculation: Current Assets (Excluding Escrow Account)/Current Liabilities>1	
Results	3.124	5.544
Projected Revenues	Calculation: Ratio of Actual Enrollment to Projected Enrollment should be greater than or equal to 0.85 but less than or equal to 1.15	
Results	1.002	0.983
Debt Management	Calculation: Debt to Equity Ratio: Total Liability/Total Equity<1	
Results	0.167	0.101
SHLACS Long-Term Financial Viability Indicators and Metrics		
INDICATOR	2018-19	2019-20
Total Margin	Calculation: Total Revenues-Total Expenses>0	
Results	\$547,479	\$383,093
Aggregated 3-Year Margin	Calculation: Three Year Total Revenue-Three Year Total Expenses>0	
Results	\$939,142	\$1,321,013
Debt/Asset Ratio	Calculation: Total Liabilities/Total Assets<1	
Results	0.143	0.091
Aggregate Assets/Liabilities	Calculation: Total Assets/Total Liabilities>1	
Results	7.003	10.946
1-Year Cash Flow	Calculation: Net Change in Cash and Cash Equivalents>0	
Results	\$520,993	\$91,116
Multi-Year Cash Flow	Calculation: Three Year Accumulated Change in Cash and Cash Equivalents>0	
Results	\$1,168,351	\$1,173,965

SHLACS has also met the financial sustainability and internal controls goals and conditions contained in our most recent charter agreement with NYCDOE at the time of our last approved renewal. The three goals to which we have been held accountable, and that we have exceeded, are the following: (1) Each year, the school will maintain a stable cash flow as evidenced by having 60 days of unrestricted cash on hand reported in their yearly independent financial audit; (2) Each year, the school will operate on a balanced budget; and (3) Each year, the school will meet or exceed 85% of their authorized enrollment on 10/31 as recorded in ATS.

¹² FY 20 ratios are based on unaudited financials.

Our success in meeting the first two goals is heavily tied to meeting the third goal: our annual student enrollment goals—the main driver of our revenue. Our BEDS enrollment and FTE reconciled enrollment have been consistently within +/- 15% of our approved charter enrollment. Based on our 10/31 enrollment as required by the NYCDOE benchmark above, in FY 19 our actual 10/31/2018 enrollment of 298.485 was 99.5% of our authorized enrollment of 300; in FY 2020 our actual 10/31/19 enrollment was 289.825 which was 96.6% of our authorized enrollment of 300. Further, our final reconciled FTE student enrollment—a better indication of how close we were to our chartered enrollment over the course of the year—was 98.5% of our authorized enrollment in FY 2019 and 96.7% in FY 2020.

Additionally, SHLACS exercises conservative budgeting practices. While our authorized enrollment is 300, for *budgeting* purposes, we assume enrollment of five students less than our authorized enrollment recognizing that we may not always be able to replace students who leave during the school year. Based on this budgeted enrollment of 295, SHLACS actual enrollment as of 10/31 was 101.18% of budgeted enrollment in FY 2019 and 99.7% of budgeted enrollment in FY 2020. Furthermore, our final reconciled student enrollment was also greater than our budgeted enrollment. As such, SHLACS generated more per pupil revenue than it had budgeted in each year of the charter term.

We also built up a substantial reserve fund. In January 2017, the BOT approved the transfer of \$1.4 million of our accumulated surplus into a low-risk investment account with Vanguard, a highly reputable mutual fund company. The purpose of this fund is to use the income it generates for alumni college scholarships. To date, SHLACS has awarded 15 scholarships to SHLACS alumni totaling \$132,500. As of June 30, 2020, the value of this fund was \$2,158,330 of which \$17,600 was gross unrealized gains for the year. The BOT's intention is to preserve this fund for scholarships, unless there is an emergency that requires SHLACS to draw on the fund for current operations—which has not been necessary to date. At any given time, SHLACS has a four-year obligation to scholarship awardees; as such, this obligation is recorded accordingly on our books and once the scholarships are awarded, the entirety of the four-year funding is withdrawn from the investment account and deposited in a discrete scholarship account to ensure these funds are protected from potential market vagaries.

The BOT and Finance Committee has committed to ensuring that the account would never sustain a loss which would cause the school's annual budget to run a deficit in any fiscal year. In establishing the fund, the BOT recognized there was a risk in exposing significant school financial resources to market uncertainty and instability and, as such, vigilantly monitors market conditions regularly. The BOT and school leadership acted quickly in the first quarter 2020 to preserve this investment fund from the significant market volatility due to the pandemic. In February 2020 as the growing health crisis impacted global financial markets, the BOT and Finance Committee was successful in shielding the investment fund from what could have resulted in a significant loss. After a meeting of the Executive and Finance Committee, the BOT approved the transfer of the entire investment fund from what had been a 60/40 equities/bond mix to 100% short term Treasuries.

Never before has the school's financial strength and viability and the BOT's and school leadership's effective oversight, prudent decision-making and ability to take definitive action been more tested than in 2020 as a result of the pandemic. As just discussed, our BOT's Finance Committee's and school leadership's attention to global events and financial market conditions and informed subsequent action, ensured that our investment fund remained stable despite market volatility. Further, our financial operation experienced no interruption, delays or setbacks after we closed our school building and transitioned all instructional and non-instructional operations to a remote basis. SHLACS had already created an electronic process by which PO's and payments could be approved by the Principal and the BOT Treasurer and then sent to CSBM for processing that fell within the requirements of our FPP. Further, the bill payment function has also been carried out by a contracted offsite provider since 2018 (the offsite bill payment system maintains compliance with the required approval routes delineated in our FPP). Once the school transitioned to a remote operation, we identified other processes that needed to be adjusted to an online system (for instance the expense reimbursement process of teacher-incurred school-related purchases) further demonstrating our ability to quickly surface issues and develop solutions as they arise. Thus, even though everyone has been working remotely from their homes since the school's closure due to COVID-19, we have continued to adhere to our FPP and our financial operations have continued to run smoothly.

We have also been cognizant of unbudgeted expenses that we have incurred and are likely to continue to incur particularly related to our provision of computers and internet access to our students to participate in our remote learning plan. In the spring, 180 of our students required a laptop for distance learning, which represented 1/2 of the school's computer inventory last year. Therefore, we made the decision to purchase 270 new Chromebooks for the current year in order to ensure we have the inventory we need for an extended period of virtual instruction. Every

student will receive a SHLACS Chromebook so we can better monitor and guarantee access to remote learning programs, including the NWEA MAP will be administered in a virtual capacity. We anticipate the school will bear increased costs related to repair and replacement of damaged or lost computers. These increases have been incorporated in our 2020-21 school budget. Furthermore, our strong financial position will also help us weather the 5.5% per pupil reduction due to the economic impact of COVID-19 announced in the NYS budget.

Plans for the Next Charter Term

Changes Made to the Educational Continuity Plan (ECP) based on Learnings from Remote Instruction: SHLACS submitted its 2020-21 Re-Opening Plan to NYSED and NYCDOE. This plan is continually updated to reflect new guidance received by CDC, NYCDOH, NYSED and NYCDOE. We refer the reader to our Re-Opening Plan on our school website for detailed information on all aspects of SHLACS' re-opening.

Our ECP reflects the effective remote learning strategies we implemented last Spring and addresses the challenges that revealed themselves as our students engaged in a virtual environment from March through June. Among the effective strategies that we implemented that are continuing in our remote plan this year are: (1) the central SHLACS distance learning portal where students and staff can access all schedules, links, materials for virtual instruction, etc.; (2) our various methods of attendance collection and verification as well methods of direct communication with students and families when a student is not present; (3) daily individualized student support and wellness checks by our counseling staff; (4) daily support of our ELLs by our ELL instructor/coordinator; (5) daily support of our SWDs by our DSSS to ensure all students are receiving mandated services indicated on their IEPs, including counseling/speech/related services continue in the virtual environment; (6) our virtual instructional model that includes synchronous and asynchronous instruction through Zoom and Google Classroom, A3K, Khan Academy, IXL, Lexia and Castle Learning; (7) twice-weekly Advisories; (8) continuation of standards-based grading with grades posted in Jumprope and grade reports sent to students weekly; (9) the design and implementation of a variety of assessments where students can demonstrate their mastery of standards; (10) weekly virtual staff grade team and department meetings; and (11) daily teacher support by school leadership.

There were many lessons we learned from last spring that have been addressed in our re-opening plan. First and foremost, we have ensured that all of our students have the requisite technology and technological infrastructure in their homes to participate fully in SHLACS' remote learning program. We purchased 270 new Chromebooks to ensure that every student was provided with a high functioning, school-issued laptop. Importantly, each one of these laptops has the NWEA testing program installed on it allowing us to administer baseline MAP Reading and Math assessments to all of our students in September. This ensures our ability to measure annual growth of our students, particularly important in the event that the NYS Testing Program is canceled again this year. We also purchased additional WAPs for students who have trouble accessing reliable internet at home.

We created and implemented a robust new and returning student orientation to focus on crucial relationship building between teachers and students before instruction began. In the absence of being able to be together physically in school and recognizing how detrimental the pandemic has been on our students' social/emotional and mental health, it was critical that we begin the year focused on building relationships and trust.

We have created a daily schedule for students that follows a more traditional bricks and mortar schedule to create structure and predictability and help keep students focused throughout the day. Balancing this with remaining flexible on when and how assignments are submitted to respect the different home environments and responsibilities of our students. To support our virtual day that mimics our in-school day, we have increased the amount of synchronous instruction to both improve direct instruction, particularly of new concepts, and student engagement and community building. All students have 2-3 sessions of synchronous instruction each day while in a virtual environment. Our synchronous classrooms are co-taught as much as possible to better support individual students (for instance, one teacher teaching, one teaching using the chat function to provide individual support). Importantly, we distributed books to every student prior to the start of school that included 4-5 independent reading books and a copy of the book that will be read by the class during Quarter 1 ELA instruction. Because of the abrupt closing of the school last March, we did not have time to distribute books which impacted our ability to implement our robust literacy program. We are also utilizing breakout rooms and small groups in every class every day to better support learning for all of our students, particularly SWD and ELLs. Teachers will be utilizing a variety of virtual instructional tools to increase ways into and engagement with content, including Padlet, Flipgrid, NearPod, and Loom. We are introducing MAP Accelerator, an

online math program that aligns with the NWEA MAP assessment in Math and assigns students lessons in Khan Academy aligned with students' "ready to learn" standards.

Our virtual day includes downtime for both students and teachers with a 45-minute lunch break. In response to what we learned from our teachers last spring regarding the greater time needed to plan for virtual instruction, we have increased teacher planning time, particularly within departments and for virtual co-teachers.

Modification of School Schedule in the Renewal Term: We are seeking one non-material revision to our charter in the renewal term. We are proposing to shorten the length of the school day for students. The school day currently ends at 4 pm. In the next charter term, we are proposing to end the day at 3:20 pm and offer a more robust afterschool enrichment program.

Rationale: Over the past four years, we have increased the rigor of our program and, as a result, observed a steady increase in student achievement. However, we have also observed that our students reach a limit each day in terms of the amount of time they can actively and productively engage with rigorous content. Research shows that when students live in this zone of proximal development, they learn at high levels. But students can only engage at this level for so many hours per day before they need time to disengage and process what they learned. We have observed that by 3 pm, our students are intellectually exhausted. This lines up with research out of Finland, Singapore and other high-performing countries that limit their academic school days to no more than 5 hours (not including recess, lunch and enrichment classes like PE and art). We also observe a significant increase in behavior issues after 3 pm, likely because students have reached their limit.

By ending the academic portion of the school day 40 minutes earlier and using that time to extend our afterschool enrichment program, we are creating a better balance for our students. We intend to provide our students with increased opportunities to engage in different types of learning in the afterschool hours and expand their frame of reference. We will add student government, dance clubs, coding club and other areas of interest to our students to our current offerings which include competitive sports and debate and math teams. This extended afterschool time will also allow our teachers to offer office hours in a timeframe that allows our students to head home before 4:30.

As evidenced by our proposed student schedules contained in our revised charter application, our academic program would remain unchanged. In fact, it would be enhanced to consider post-COVID learning gaps. In our previous schedule, 6th graders had A3K daily, 7th graders two days per week, and 8th graders as part of their ELA program but not daily. In the proposed schedule, classes would continue to be 44 minutes, and all students would have A3K daily to both address the post-COVID learning gap and the student achievement which remained the same for two years. We are removing our last period "Exploration" class, a program our parents have requested again and again, which is better suited for an optional after school program rather than a mandatory class period.

This schedule change would still provide our students with an extended school day that exceeds state requirements. NYSED requires that middle schools have 5.5 hours/day, not including lunch. With this proposed change, we will have 7 hours per day, which exceeds the daily requirement by 1.5 hours. Even with our 1:15 dismissal on Fridays to provide staff development time, we will have 33 hours per week, exceeding the state requirement by 5.5 hours.