

# New York State Education Department

Renewal Site Visit Report  
2018-2019

American Dream Charter School

Visit Date: October 15, 2018  
Date of Report: May 14, 2020

Charter School Office  
89 Washington Avenue  
Albany, New York 12234  
[charterschools@nysed.gov](mailto:charterschools@nysed.gov)  
518-474-1762



# SCHOOL DESCRIPTION

## Charter School Summary

Name of Charter School	American Dream Charter School
Board Chair	Luz Maria Rojas
District of location	NYC CSD(Bronx)



educational success, but may be required to address organizational deficiencies that need to be corrected but do not prevent the Regents from making the required legal findings for renewal. A school may also meet the standards for full-term renewal or short-term renewal of only a portion of its educational program (e.g., for the elementary school program, but not the middle school program). Such additional terms and/or requirements may include, but are not limited to, restrictions on the number of students and grades to be served by the school, additional student performance metrics, heightened reporting requirements, or specific corrective action.

### SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS

#### Current Grade Levels and Approved Enrollment

	Year 1 2014 to 2015	Year2 2015 to 2016	Year3 2016 to 2017	Year4 2017 to 2018	Year5 2018 to 2019
Grade Configuration	Grades 6	Grades 6 - 7	Grades 6 - 8	Grades 6 - 9	Grades 6 - 10
Total Approved Enrollment	100	200	300	375	



For the site visit conducted from October 14

New York State Education Department  
Charter School Performance Framework Rating

Performance Benchmark		Level
Educational Success	<p>Benchmark 1: Student Performance: The school has met or exceeded achievement indicator for academic trends toward proficiency, proficiency and high school graduation. At all grade levels and all assessments, scoring proficiently means achieving a performance level of higher (high school Regents and Common Core Regents exam score of 65 or higher).</p> <p>Benchmark 2: Teaching and Learning:</p>	Meets





### Benchmark 1: Student Performance

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

Finding: Meets

The school model is based on:

€  
x

- x For students with disabilities (SWD) the school provides a range of services pertinent to their Individual Education Plans (IEPs) including speech therapists and individual support from paraprofessionals

#### Summative Evidence for Benchmark 1

See Attachment 1 for data tables and additional academic information.



- x Indicator b: Teachers' lesson plans do not consistently stimulate higher order thinking. In one of the observed classrooms, visitors observed groups of sixth grade students collaborate to debate and discuss whether capitalism or communism is best suited to function in a range of governmental forms such as oligarchy, direct democracy, etc. However, such student exploration of open-ended problems occurred in only two of 19 observed classrooms.
- x Indicator c: The school has practices in place to align curriculum horizontally across the grade level and vertically across grade levels. School visitors observed the same material being taught in multiple classrooms of the same grade level. Academic departments spend time, sometimes offsite, at the end of every academic year to vertically align curricula. Ninety seven percent of surveyed teachers assert that the school's curriculum is aligned horizontally and vertically.









- x Indicator b: The school made some changes in its social-emotional supports for students based on observations. According to school leaders, the school transitioned away from teachers documenting how each DREAM (diversity, respect, empowerment, advocacy and motivation) was supported in advisory to an environment in advisory focused less on compliance and more on building rapport with students. Similarly, in a focus group school leaders reported that the middle school reduced the number of advisory groups in a classroom from three to two in order to provide more privacy for intimate conversations. Notably, in a focus group teachers reported they would like support and training in how to better assist students with their social-emotional needs.

## Benchmark 4: Financial Condition

The school is in sound and stable financial condition as evidenced by performance on key financial indicators.

Finding: Meets

### Important Notes:

- x The key financial indicators used to evaluate this benchmark will be presented within a separate fiscal dashboard instrument that will provide context for the school's performance on each of the metrics, outline the specific targets for each metric, and provide additional subsidiary detail on each calculation.
- x Unless otherwise indicated, financial data is derived from the school's annual independently audited financial statements.

1. NearTerm Indicators:	
1a.	Current Ratio
1b.	Unrestricted Days Cash
1c.	Enrollment Variance
1d.	Composite Score
2. Sustainability Indicators:	
2a.	Total Margin
2b.	Debt to Asset Ratio
2c.	Debt Service Coverage Ratio

### Financial Condition

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

The Charter School Office reviews the financial performance and management of charters using quantitative and qualitative methods. Near term indicators, such as the current ratio and unrestricted days cash, are measures of liquidity and of the charter school's capacity to maintain operations. Long term indicators, such as total margin and debt-to asset ratio, are measures of the charter school's capacity to remain viable and to meet financial obligations.

### Overall Financial Outlook

A composite score is an overall measure of financial health calculated by the Department's Office of Audit Services. This score is based on a weighting of primary reserves, equity, and net income. A charter school with a score between 1.5 and 3.0 is considered to be in strong financial health. American Dream Charter School's 2016/2017 composite score is 3.0.

American Dream Charter School Composite Scores  
2014-2015 to 2016-2017

Year	Composite Score
2014-2015	2.6
2015-2016	2.9
2016-2017	3.0

Source: NYSED Office of Audit Services

Near-Term Indicators

Near-term indicators of financial health are used to understand the current financial performance and viability of the school. The Charter School Office uses three measures:

The current ratio is a financial ratio that measures whether or not a charter school has enough resources to pay its debts over the next 12 months. The ratio is mainly used to give an idea of the school's ability to pay back its short-term liabilities (debt and payables) with its short-term assets (cash, inventory, receivables). The higher the current ratio, the more capable the school is of paying its obligations, with a ratio under 1.0 indicating concern. For 2016-2017, American Dream Charter School had a current ratio of 4.6.

Unrestricted cash measures, in days, whether the charter school can meet operating expenses without receiving new income. Charter schools typically strive to maintain at least 90 days of cash on hand. For fiscal year 2016-2017, American Dream Charter School had 108 days of unrestricted cash on hand.

Benchmark 5: Financial Management

Benchmark 6: Board Oversight and Governance

The board of trustees provides competent stewardship and oversight of the school while maintaining policies, establishing performance goals, and implementing systems to ensure academic success, organizational viability, board effectiveness and faithfulness to the terms of its charter.

Finding: Meets

<u>Element</u>	<u>Indicators</u>
1. Board Oversight and Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The board recruits and selects board members with skills and expertise meet the needs of the school</li> <li>b. The board engages in strategic and continuous improvement planning b setting priorities and goals that are aligned with the school’s mission and educational philosophy</li> <li>c. The board demonstrates active oversight of the charter school management, fiscal operations and progress toward meeting academic and other school goals</li> <li>d.</li> </ul>

management, communication

## Benchmark 7: Organizational Capacity

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

Finding: Meets

<u>Element</u>	<u>Indicators</u>
1. School Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. The school has an effective school leadership team that obtains staff commitment to a clearly defined mission and set of goals, allowing for continual improvement in student learning.</li><li>b. Roles and responsibilities for leaders, staff, management, and board members are clearly defined. Members of the school community adhere to defined roles and responsibilities</li></ul>

- calling the homes of students who are performing under 73% in any class, and taking at least three workshops every summer
- x Indicator b: The school clearly defines the roles of its stakeholders. This academic year, with the assistant principal running the middle school and the principal overseeing the high school, responsibilities of the school's top leadership are clear. The school has thorough job descriptions for principal/principal



satisfaction. At the end of last year, school leaders met individually with teachers to assess their level of satisfaction and listen to teachers' suggestions for school improvements. In focus groups, school leaders reported that several teachers proactively and voluntarily approach their peers and that teachers, in turn, regularly lead those teachers for advice. School leaders then ask that small group of teachers for input on the sentiments of teachers across the school. Eighty-eight percent of teachers surveyed agreed that school leadership has systems in place to solicit staff feedback.

3. Element: Contractual Relationship:

- x Indicator a: N/A
- x Indicator b: N/A
- x Indicator c: N/A

## Benchmark 8: Mission and Key Design Elements

The school is faithful to its mission and has implemented the key design elements included in its charter.

### Finding: Meets

<u>Element</u>	<u>Indicators</u>
1. Mission and Key Design Elements	<p>a. School stakeholders share a common and consistent understanding of the school's mission and key design elements outlined in the charter</p> <p>b. The school has fully implemented the key design elements in the approved charter and in any subsequently approved revisions</p>

### Summative Evidence for Benchmark 8:

- x Indicator a: School stakeholders share a common understanding of the school's mission. Focus groups, board members and school leaders stated the importance and centrality of Spanish and English mastery, college preparedness and community involvement. One hundred percent of surveyed teachers asserted that the school's mission is clear and is shared by all stakeholders
- x Indicator b: The school implements its key design elements. The dual language program is evident at both campuses. The school's science classes feature project

### Benchmark 9: Enrollment, Recruitment, and Retention

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

#### Finding: Approaches

<u>Element</u>	<u>Indicators</u>
1. Targets are met	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. The school maintains sufficient enrollment demand for the school to meet or come close to meeting the enrollment plan outlined in the charter</li><li>a. The school is making regular and significant annual progress toward meeting targets</li><li>b. The school has implemented extensive recruitment strategies and program services to attract and retain students with disabilities, English language learners, and students who are eligible for free and reduced priced lunch. Strategies include,</li></ul>
2. Targets are not met	

Benchmark 10: Legal Compliance

Attachment 1: 2018-2019 Mid-Term Site Visit  
American Dream Charter School

Benchmark 1

Indicator 1: All Schools

1.a.i. Accountability ESEA Accountability Designation

This school is designated as a school of Good Standing under current New York State criteria as defined by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

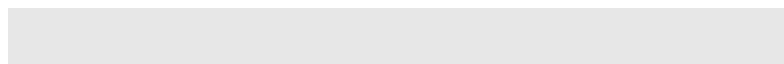
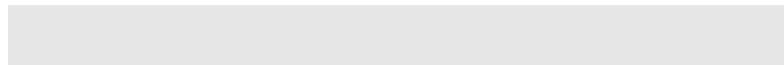
1.b.i. Similar Schools Comparison Comparative Proficiency

In ELA and math, American Dream Charter School students did not outperform students in schools with similar grade spans and demographics.

Indicator 2: Elementary/Middle School Outcomes

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

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



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

2.b.i. and 2.b.ii. Proficiency Aggregate and Subgroup School Level Proficiency See Table 2a and 2b below.

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

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

2.b.iii. Aggregate Grade Level Proficiency See Tables 3a and 3b below.

Table 3a: ELA Aggregate Grade Level Proficiency

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

Table 3b: Math Aggregate Grade Level Proficiency

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

Indicator 3: High School Outcomes

(Not applicable to the charter school.)





	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Grades Served	-	6	6-7	6-8	6-9
Maximum Chartered Grades Served	-	6-8	6-8	6-8	6-8
Chartered Enrollment	-	100	200	300	375
Maximum Chartered Enrollment	-	360	360	360	360
Actual Enrollment	-	81	167	245	341

**ASSETS**

Current Assets					
Cash and Cash Equivalents	-	232,531	813,042	1,304,642	1,739,225
Grants and Contracts Receivable	-	-	-	171,501	357,003
Prepaid Expenses	-	19,277	33,967	50,144	100,017
Other Current Assets	-	172,566	86,944	-	-
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>424,374</b>	<b>933,953</b>	<b>1,526,287</b>	<b>2,196,245</b>

