

Vertus Charter School Board of Trustees Professional Learning Series
NYSED Performance Framework – Benchmark #2: Teaching and Learning
Vocabulary

1. Curriculum: _____

2. New York State Learning Standards: _____

3. Culturally Responsive Curriculum: _____

4. Horizontal Alignment (of curriculum): _____

5. Vertical Alignment (of curriculum): _____

6. Instruction: _____

7. Mastery: _____

8. Differentiation: _____

9. Response to Intervention: _____

10. Targeted Instruction: _____

11. Blended Learning: _____

12. Project-Based Learning: _____

13. Modalities for Instruction: _____

14. Teach Like a Champion, by Doug Lemov: _____

15. System of Assessments: _____

16. Diagnostic Assessment: _____

17. Formative Assessment: _____

18. Summative Assessment: _____

19. Students with Disabilities: _____

20. Committee on Special Education: _____

21. Integrated Co-Teaching (“ICOT”): _____

22. Section 504: _____

23. English Language Learners: _____

24. Economically Disadvantaged Students: _____

25. Cohort: _____



New York State Education Department

***Remote Renewal Site Visit Report for BoR-Authorized Charter Schools under the
2019 Charter School Performance Framework
2020-2021***

Vertus Charter School

**Remote Renewal Site Visit Dates: December 15-16, 2020
Date of Report: March 15, 2021**

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

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SCHOOL DESCRIPTION

Charter School Summary¹

Name of Charter School	Vertus Charter School
Board Chair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bryan Hickman (until December 31, 2020) • Victoria Van Voorhis (as of January 1, 2021)
District of location	Rochester City School District
Opening Date	Fall 2014
Charter Terms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial Charter Term: September 1, 2014 – June 30, 2019 • First Renewal Term: July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2021
Current Term Authorized Grades/ Approved Enrollment	Grades 9-12 / 340 students
Proposed Renewal Term Authorized Grades/ Proposed Approved Enrollment	Grades 9-12 / 340 students
Comprehensive Management Service Provider	None
Facilities	21 Humboldt Street, Rochester New York 14609 - Private Space
Mission Statement	<i>To develop leaders of character for the community and the workplace.</i>
Key Design Elements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong relationships • Personalized year-round academics • Character development • Career preparation
Requested Revisions	None

Noteworthy:

Vertus Charter School (Vertus), located in Rochester New York, is a high school for males focused on four pillars: establishing strong relationships, personalized year-round academics, character education and career preparation. It serves 263 students in a blended learning environment that combines online learning with teacher led classes that are personalized to meet the needs of each student. Every student is assigned a preceptor who functions like a guide and mentor to a small group of students and is the primary liaison to students and their families.

Renewal Outcomes

Pursuant to the Board of Regents Renewal Policy, the following are possible renewal outcomes:

- **Full-Term Renewal:** A school's charter may be renewed for the maximum term of five years. For a school to be eligible for a full-term renewal, during the current charter term the school must

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

have compiled a strong and compelling record of meeting or exceeding Benchmark 1, and at the time of the renewal analysis, have met substantially all other performance benchmarks in the Framework.

- **Short-Term Renewal:** A school's charter may be renewed for a shorter term, typically of three years. As discussed above, the Regents will place an even greater emphasis on student performance for schools applying for their second or subsequent renewal, which is consistent with the greater time that a school has been in operation and the corresponding increase in the quantity and quality of student achievement data that the school has generated. In order for a school to be eligible for short-term renewal, a school must either:
 - (a) have compiled a mixed or limited record of meeting Benchmark 1, but at the time of the renewal analysis, have met substantially all of the other performance benchmarks in the Framework which will likely result in the school's being able to meet Benchmark 1 with the additional time that short-term renewal permits, **or**
 - (b) have compiled an overall record of meeting Benchmark 1 but falls far below meeting one or more of the other performance benchmarks in the Framework.
- **Non-Renewal:** A school's charter will not be renewed if the school does not apply for renewal or the school fails to meet the criteria for either full-term or short-term renewal. In the case of non-renewal, a school's charter will be terminated upon its expiration and the school will be required to comply with the Charter School Office's Closing Procedures to ensure an orderly closure by the end of the school year.

Please Note: The Regents may include additional terms, conditions, and/or requirements in a school's Full-Term or Short-Term Renewal charter to address specific situations or areas of concern. For example, a school may meet the standards for full-term renewal or short-term renewal with regard to its 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.

COVID-19 PANDEMIC NOTE: As of the publication of this report, New York State is in the midst of responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. NYSED understands that these are not normal times and state assessments for grades 3-8 as well as high school students were canceled for the 2019-2020 school year (see the applicable memos at <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/psc/aboutcharterschools/lawsandregs/law.html>). The NYSED Charter School Performance Framework is a robust document that allows NYSED to continue to use it as an evaluative tool even during the current statewide crisis. With state assessments cancelled for the 2019-2020 school year, Benchmark 1 allows for the use of longitudinal data and NYSED has been continuing to monitor and evaluate schools through the lens of the Performance Framework during the current crisis as Board of Regents-authorized charter schools have been implementing robust continuity of learning plans and adhering to NYSED's Remote Monitoring and Oversight Plan. Therefore, NYSED will

continue to use the Performance Framework and Board of Regents renewal policies to evaluate, in a summative manner, applicable charter schools for renewal recommendation determinations.

SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS

Current Grade Levels and Approved Enrollment

	Year 1 2019 to 2020	Year 2 2020 to 2021
Grade Configuration	Grades 9-12	Grades 9-12
Total Approved Enrollment	340	340

Proposed Renewal Term Grade Levels and Projected Enrollment Requested by the School²

	Year 1 2021 to 2022	Year 2 2022 to 2023	Year 3 2023 to 2024	Year 4 2024 to 2025	Year 5 2025 to 2026
Grade Configuration	Grades 9-12	Grades 9-12	Grades 9-12	Grades 9-12	Grades 9-12
Total Proposed Enrollment	340	340	340	340	340

METHODOLOGY

A two-day remote renewal site visit was conducted at Vertus Charter School on December 15-16, 2020. The New York State Education Department’s Charter School Office (CSO) team conducted interviews with the board of trustees, school leadership team, school support team, the social emotional support team and students. In cooperation with school leadership, the CSO administered anonymous online surveys to parents.

The team conducted 11 remote classroom observations in Grade 9-12. The observations were approximately 20 minutes in length and conducted jointly with the director of specialized services and the director of academics. NYSED utilizes the CSO’s remote Classroom Observation Worksheet as a lens for remote classroom observations. It is shared with the school prior to the site visit, and can be found in the Renewal SV Protocol.

² This proposed chart was submitted by Vertus in its renewal application. It is subject to change pending the final renewal recommendation and approval by the Board of Regents. This chart should not be used to determine the final approved grade levels or enrollment of the school in the subsequent renewal term.

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

- **Current 2020-2021 organizational chart;**
- **A 2020-2021 master school schedule;**
- **Board materials (roster, minutes, and strategic plan, if applicable) and a narrative describing the board's self-evaluation process;**
- **Narrative describing the process used to evaluate school leadership;**
- **Narrative describing the process school leadership uses to evaluate teachers;**
- **School administered teacher, parent/student survey results;**
- **Current school policies, including the discipline policy, complaint policy, enrollment and admissions policy, and by-laws;**
- **NYSED Attachment 1: Academic and Enrollment Data;**
- **NYSED Attachment 2: Fiscal Dashboard Data;**
- **Narrative describing the school's progress and efforts made toward reaching its enrollment and retention targets;**
- **Admissions and Waitlist information;**
- **Faculty/Staff Roster;**
- **Fingerprint Clearance Certificates for all instructional and non-instructional staff;**
- **School-submitted Annual Reports during current charter term;**
- **School's Self-Evaluation Tool;**
- **Prior CSO monitoring reports (check-in, midterm, renewals);**
- **Spring 2020 Continuity of Learning Plan;**
- **School's 2020 renewal application;**
- **School's 2019 Notices of Deficiency**
- **Any supplementary evidence or data submitted to NYSED by the school;**
- **School's Four Pillars tracking system; and**
- **Parent, student and staff surveys from 2019-2020**

BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

The 2019 Performance Framework, which is part of the Oversight Plan included in the Charter Agreement for each school, outlines 10 Performance Framework benchmarks in three key areas of charter school performance:

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

Observational findings from the review of the renewal application, supporting data, and the site visit will be presented in alignment with the 2019 Performance Framework benchmarks and Indicators according to the rating scale below. A brief summary of the school's strengths will precede the benchmark analysis. Each benchmark will be rated; and the report narrative will provide evidence-based information relative to each indicator.

Level	Description
Meets	The school generally meets or exceeds the performance benchmark; few concerns are noted. May be a potential exemplar, if noted.
Approaches	The school does not meet the performance benchmark; a number of concerns are noted.
Falls Far Below	The school falls far below the performance benchmark; significant concerns are noted.

For the site visit conducted from December 15, 2020 to December 16, 2020 at Vertus Charter School, see the following Performance Framework benchmark ratings and narrative.

**New York State Education Department
2019 Charter School Performance Framework Ratings³**

2019 Performance Benchmark		Level
Educational Success	Benchmark 1: Student Performance: The school has met or exceeded achievement indicators for academic proficiency, trends toward proficiency, similar schools, college and career readiness, and high school graduation, if applicable. Proficiency at the elementary/middle school level shall be defined as achieving a performance level of 3 or higher on Grade 3-8 state assessments in ELA, math, and science. At the high school level, passing shall be defined as obtaining a Regents exam score of 65 or higher.	Approaches
	Benchmark 2: Teaching and Learning: School leaders have systems in place designed to cultivate shared accountability and high expectations and that lead to students' well-being, improved academic outcomes, and educational success. The school implements research-based practices and has rigorous and coherent curriculum and assessments that are aligned to New York State Learning Standards for all students. Teachers engage in strategic practices and decision-making in order to address the gap between what students know and need to learn so that all students experience consistent high levels of engagement, thinking and achievement.	Meets
	Benchmark 3: Culture, Climate, and Student and Family Engagement: The school has systems in place to support students' social and emotional health and to provide for a positive, safe, and respectful learning environment that prepares all students for college and career. Families, community members and school staff work together to share in the responsibility for student academic progress and social-emotional growth and well-being. Families and students are satisfied with the school's academics and the overall leadership and management of the school.	Meets
Organizational Soundness	Benchmark 4: Financial Condition: The school is in sound and stable financial condition as evidenced by performance on key financial indicators.	Meets
	Benchmark 5: Financial Management: The school operates in a fiscally sound manner with realistic budgets pursuant to a long-range financial plan, appropriate internal controls and procedures, and in accordance with state law and generally accepted accounting practices.	Approaches
	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.	Approaches
	Benchmark 7: Organizational Capacity: The school has established a well-functioning organizational structure, clearly delineated roles for staff, management, and board members. The school has systems and protocols that allow for the successful implementation, evaluation, and improvement of its academic program and operations.	Meets
Faithfulness to Charter & Law	Benchmark 8: Mission and Key Design Elements: The school is faithful to its mission and has implemented the key design elements included in its charter.	Meets
	Benchmark 9: Enrollment, Recruitment, and Retention: The school is meeting or making annual progress toward meeting the enrollment plan outlined in its charter and its enrollment and retention targets for students with disabilities, English language learners, and students who are eligible applicants for the free and reduced priced lunch program; or has demonstrated that it has made extensive good faith efforts to attract, recruit, and retain such students. . High schools are meeting persistence rates commensurate with the NYSED target.	Approaches
	Benchmark 10: Legal Compliance: The school complies with applicable laws, regulations, and the provisions of its charter.	Approaches

³ Charter schools authorized or renewed beginning in the 2019-2020 school year and thereafter use the [2019 Charter School Performance Framework](#), and all other charter schools use the [2015 Charter School Performance Framework](#) until renewal. Refer to the appropriate framework for the applicable benchmark standards.

Summary of Findings

- Vertus Charter School is in year seven of operation and serves students in Grades 9-12. During its current charter term, the school is rated in the following manner: meeting five benchmarks and approaching five benchmarks. A summary of those ratings is provided below.

- **Summary of Areas of Strengths:**

The school's renewal documents, focus group conversations and classroom observations provided evidence of a strong focus on student engagement and relationships, particularly with the preceptors, but also with teachers and other staff. The school provided many examples of deep and varied services it provides to students and families, on-site and remotely, that result from a high degree of collaboration among the staff – an “all hands-on deck” approach. The board of trustees instituted a number of changes since the last site visit, including the addition of several members having specific skills and expertise, although other areas of expertise continue to be lacking. The collective board membership demonstrates a connectedness to the community at large and a strong commitment to the school and students. The school's key design elements serve as the organizing framework for the school, and all constituents discussed their work as it relates to one or more of the key design elements.

- **Summary of Areas in Need of Improvement:**

While the school's main academic focus is helping students master high school content despite most students' entering with skills well below grade level expectations, this goal has not yet been reached at the four-year graduation level. Although the Regents passing rate and graduation rate continue to improve year over year, the margin by which students are passing Regents exams remains minimal. The school continues to fall below the state average for the four-year cohort graduation rate, though the school's fifth- and sixth-year graduation rates exceed the state average. The school's fulfillment of the goal of attaining maximum enrollment has not been met this school year, which has impacted the school's financial resources. The school must remedy deficiencies in the school's fingerprinting process prior to hiring new staff members.

Benchmark 1: Student Performance

The school has met or exceeded achievement indicators for academic proficiency, trends toward proficiency, similar schools, college and career readiness, and high school graduation, if applicable. Proficiency at the elementary/middle school level shall be defined as achieving a performance level of 3 or higher on Grade 3-8 state assessments in ELA, math, and science. At the high school level, passing shall be defined as obtaining a Regents exam score of 65 or higher.

Finding: Approaches

Summative Evidence for Benchmark 1:

See Attachment 1 for data tables and additional academic information.

Note: State assessments were not administered in the 2019-2020 school year. As such, NYSED is not able to include results from that academic year in the analysis of this benchmark.

Benchmark 2: Teaching and Learning

School leaders have systems in place designed to cultivate shared accountability and high expectations and that lead to students' well-being, improved academic outcomes, and educational success. The school implements research-based practices and has rigorous and coherent curriculum and assessments that are aligned to the New York State Learning Standards (NYSL) for all students. Teachers engage in strategic practices and decision-making in order to address the gap between what students know and need to learn so that all students experience consistent high levels of engagement, thinking and achievement.

Finding: Meets

<i>Element</i>	<i>Indicators</i>
<i>1. Curriculum</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">a. The school has a documented curriculum that is aligned to current New York State learning standards.b. The curriculum is aligned horizontally across classrooms at the same grade level and vertically between grades.c. The curriculum and corresponding materials are differentiated to provide opportunities for all students to master grade-level skills and concepts, including students with disabilities, English language learners/multi-lingual learners, economically disadvantaged students, and other subgroups.d. The curriculum is systematically reviewed and revised.
<i>2. Instruction</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">a. The school staff has a shared understanding of high-quality instruction that supports all learners and observed instructional practices align to this understanding.b. Instructional delivery fosters engagement with all students.c. The school differentiates instruction to ensure equity and access for all students.d. The school provides staff with professional development opportunities that promote best practices and improves all students' success, including sub-groups.
<i>3. Assessment and Program Evaluation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">a. The school uses a system of formative, diagnostic, and summative assessments.b. The school uses qualitative and quantitative data to inform instruction and improve student outcomes.c. The school uses qualitative and quantitative data to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of the academic program and modifies the program accordingly for both individual students as well as subgroups.d. The school uses multiple measures to assess student progress toward State learning standards.
<i>4. Supports for Diverse Learners</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">a. The school follows the NYSED approved identification process for students with disabilities and English language learners/multi-lingual learners.b. The school provides supports to meet the academic needs for all students including, but not limited to: students with disabilities; English language

Element

Indicators

learners/multi-lingual learners; and economically disadvantaged students.
c. The school has systems to monitor the progress of individual students and to facilitate communication between interventionists and classroom teachers regarding the needs of individual students.

Academic Program for High School:

- HS:
 - Vertus employs a blended model of instruction, combining online courses with teacher- led courses. The students progress through a series of online classes, demonstrating mastery of content areas and skills in preparation for their Regents exams.
 - The school provides wrap-around support services to students through its preceptors, staff members who focus on student engagement and support and are liaisons among the school, the community and students’ families.
 - The school provides career planning and a number of opportunities for students to prepare for their post-secondary experiences through college advisement, career explorations, internships and dual enrollment in certification programs.

Academic Program for Students with Disabilities (SWDs) and English language learners (ELLs):

- SWDs:
 - Students who receive special education services benefit from additional support provided by special education teachers who assist them in the school’s learning lab as well as provide additional one-to-one or small group support.
 - The director of specialized services monitors the progress of students with individual education plans (IEPs) by meeting with their teachers weekly and tracking student progress toward meeting the academic goals articulated in their IEPs
- ELLs:
 - The school supports its English language learners (ELLs) through its individualized support for all students as well through the services of an English as a New language (ENL) teacher who provides support to ELL students during learning lab in addition to providing a teacher-led class designed to support their English language acquisition.
 - The school’s online learning platform provides content in Spanish and other languages to support students content area acquisition while they are learning English. The school has also provided opportunities for ELLs to form a peer support network.

Summative Evidence for Benchmark 2:

1. Element: ***Curriculum:***

- **Indicator a:** According to the school’s renewal application, Vertus uses a blended learning model which consists of an on-line component as well as teacher-led classes. The school uses Edgenuity, an online education platform that offers courses in ELA, social studies, math, science and general electives, and is aligned to the New York State Learning Standards. A weakness in the Edgenuity

program, according to the academic support team, is writing; the school has met this challenge through use of old Regents exam questions and additional New Visions curricula. School leaders reported that Edgenuity releases new and/or updated courses each year, which Vertus accesses to expand upon its on-line curriculum. Courses are offered in translation as well, with the most often language accessed being Spanish. Teacher-led classes are proficiency-based and intended to prepare students for NYS Regents exams. Teacher-created curriculum is designed to support students' understanding of content and draws on curricular resources from New Visions, which are also aligned to the NYS Learning standards. Teachers customize courses to meet the interests and needs of their particular students. School leaders reported that during the spring of 2021 semester, life skills, music, and sociology courses will be added. Twelve students are currently enrolled in dual credit courses through the Monroe County College; teachers must meet community college requirements as well as those for charter schools. In their focus group, board members affirmed the close partnership the school maintains with the community college. Additional career-focused program offerings are being planned, including barbering, construction trades, and optics.

- **Indicator b:** In the renewal application, the school describes its non-graded and mastery-based instructional program which allows students, many of whom are overage and under-credited, to work at their own pace. The school's courses are mapped across academic skills so that as students advance, they demonstrate their mastery of one skill or content area before moving on to the next. As students advance through the school, content and skills increase in complexity and spiral toward high school graduation standards. During the student support focus group, the participants discussed the way they examine updated coursework on Edgenuity to ensure alignment with Regents exams. During the school leaders' focus group, academic leaders discussed how they align Edgenuity course work with teacher-led courses to support content mastery. Teachers continually discuss alignment as they work to prepare students for Regents exams.
- **Indicator c:** In the school's renewal application, the school asserts that its combination of Edgenuity coursework in addition to its teacher-led classes are differentiated. The school's focus on mastery allows teachers to personalize instruction for every student, beginning with where they are and helping them progress toward meeting grade level and Regents level mastery. The school utilizes Edgenuity's online intervention program, My Path, which provides targeted instruction aimed at addressing each student's learning gaps. This module also has a learning management system that articulates with students' IEPs to ensure that students are receiving instruction aligned to their learning goals as well as articulating any modifications and accommodations to which students are entitled. The school employs an integrated co-teaching model to provide additional content support and learning strategies for students who may need them. School leaders indicated that the remote setting provides a stronger special education program, as it focuses more on individual services which are provided by telephone or Zoom calls. The school's ENL teacher supports students who are ELL through push-in or pull-out services. Edgenuity also has resources in Spanish to support content acquisition.
- **Indicator d:** According to the school's renewal application and the school leaders, Vertus reviews its curriculum through the monitoring of student progress, as well as during summer professional development. Teachers, working closely with students, look at student work, test scores and surveys in addition to observing students to determine if additional learning opportunities are needed. The school's leadership team reviews the curriculum each spring to ensure its alignment with New York State Learning Standards as well as for its cultural relevancy. The school uses the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) as a framework for evaluating and updating its curriculum.

2. Element: **Instruction:**

- **Indicator a:** In the school's renewal application, instructional strategies that define the school's approach are described, including blended learning, project-based instruction, co-teaching, culturally responsive instruction and techniques from *Teach Like a Champion*, by Doug Lemov. These strategies support the school's mission to make the content and curriculum accessible and meaningful, ensure academic rigor and high-quality instruction. The application describes the elements of face-to-face learning which includes whole class direct instruction, small group lessons, formative and summative assessments, peer collaboration, exhibitions and performances. The renewal application describes the school's approach to remote learning during the pandemic as expanding the use of Edgenuity through the creation of teacher-led classes that provide a platform for pre-recorded video instruction, PowerPoint presentations and additional online materials that have been uploaded to provide students with access. During the site visit, the CSO SV team observed teacher-led classes that were conducted through Zoom as well as prerecorded mini- lessons that students can view on demand. The components of the approach to online learning listed here were observed in the remote classes viewed by the team.
- **Indicator b:** The school's renewal application describes student engagement as one of the primary goals of its instructional approach. The pillars of the school's design include strong relationships, personalized year-round academics, character education and career readiness. All of these elements are tools to ensure that every student is engaged. This is particularly important given the school's target population, males, has been mostly unsuccessful in their previous schooling. Every student is assigned a learning team that consists of a preceptor who serves as a mentor, core content teachers and co-teachers to deliver classroom instruction. This intensive support, combined with blended learning, is designed to engage every student. During the focus groups with school leaders and academic and social emotional support staff conducted during the remote site visit, school staff described the many ways they work with students and their families to maintain student engagement. School leaders described remote daily seminar meetings which serve to replace on-site motivational morning meetings. These seminars provide a positive start to the day. Students maintain communication with their preceptors daily, preceptors visit classrooms to support students and serve as the main liaison in connecting students and their families with services that the school provides which include transportation and support for medical and other needs in addition to maintaining its own food pantry. School leaders discussed their outreach to students who do not live in a consistent residence as well as students involved in the justice system, ensuring students have access to the internet and technology to maintain their studies despite their circumstances. Preceptors discussed making visits to students' homes, especially those whose attendance and work production has fallen off. Student productivity is monitored through their engagement with Edgenuity and well as their attendance in remote classes and work submission.
- **Indicator c:** The school's primary approach to student learning is tailored to meet each student at his level. The school's renewal application describes how Edgenuity provides instruction based on students' current skill and content knowledge levels and moves them toward graduation standards. Edgenuity provides many different modalities for instruction, from videos and podcasts to digital assignments, group discussions and digital assessments so that students can choose which modality engages them best. The director of blending learning assists the instructional staff by providing data on course completion, work submission and time engaged in online courses on a daily, weekly and periodic basis. School leaders monitor Regents completion rates and career explorations in addition to online learning.
- **Indicator d:** In the school's renewal application, Doug Lemov's book, *Teach Like a Champion* is identified as a primary training tool for teachers. The techniques outlined in the book stem from

a framework that provides common structure across classes that support learning and preparation for college. The techniques shape student behavior by emphasizing high expectations for students through rigorous teaching practices designed to increase learning and prepare students for the academic demands of college coursework. During the school leadership focus group, school leaders discussed their use of these techniques and the way they have supported teachers in using classroom strategies to keep all students engaged by the way they call on students as well as having teachers check students' understanding of concepts during class discussions. The school submitted an "Educator Staff Meeting" schedule, organized by staff sub-groups, to demonstrate how regularly scheduled time is purposed for staff learning. The school holds monthly professional development sessions as well.

3. Element: ***Assessment and Program Evaluation:***

- **Indicator a:** The school's assessment system is outlined in the school's renewal application. The school uses exit tickets, student work, Edgenuity quizzes and tests for formative and summative assessment of student learning and growth. NWEA academic progress assessments are implemented two to three times a year and Regents and ACT exams are administered during established testing windows. During the spring of 2020, since the Regents exams were cancelled, the school used Edgenuity assessments and correlated the data along with course completion data to ascertain how students would have done were the Regents exams given. During the focus group, school leaders discussed the ways teachers developed their own assessments, which are aligned to Regents exam questions, in order to track student preparedness to sit for the exams.
- **Indicator b:** In the school's renewal application, it is reported that teachers and preceptors use student work, observations and discussions to identify students in need of additional support. Student progress toward graduation is monitored through this data and additional support is provided to students who are not making adequate progress. This data also supports the configuration of student groupings for targeted instruction and provides feedback to students which validates their gains and serves to hold them accountable for their progress. During the school leader and support services focus groups, school staff discussed their focus on student engagement which they define, in part, as completion of work and passing online courses. Students who are struggling can receive help during learning lab or as needed from their preceptors and from support teachers. Students who are recommended for academic intervention are triaged through a response to intervention protocol that provides support in tiers and monitors the effectiveness of the interventions.
- **Indicator c:** In the renewal application, the school describes how it uses assessment data to improve student outcomes. The school cites its improvement on lab completions as well as its improvement in academic interventions as two areas that were identified through the use of formative and summative assessment analysis. The school also uses Edgenuity's Lesson Master report, which charts class and individual student progress throughout each course. This data is used by teachers to identify content areas in need of reteaching. During the school leadership focus group, school leaders discussed how using the data of course completion led to making changes in their teacher-led classes; students had higher course completion rates in Edgenuity when the online class was paired with a teacher-led class designed to reinforce and review concepts.
- **Indicator d:** In the Vertus's renewal application, the school discusses the ways it measures the progress of students toward graduation. The school uses all of its assessments, in addition to course completion and course grades, to monitor student progress. Family nights are held three times a year, so that staff can meet with students and their families to discuss and review each student's academic progress, character growth and progress towards graduation. During the

school leaders focus group, participants explained how students and parents are kept informed of students' progress toward graduation, which includes credit accumulation, mastery of subject matter, character development and Regents exams passed. During the student support team focus group, school leaders discussed meeting with teacher teams weekly to monitor IEP students' progress toward meeting their IEP goals in addition to discussing all students who are in need of support.

4. Element: ***Supports for Diverse Learners:***

- **Indicator a:** In the Vertus renewal application, the school notes that 28 percent of its students are identified as SWDs, nine percent of students are ELLs and 86 percent of students are economically disadvantaged (ED.) The school's department of specialized services oversees SWD, and ELL students as well as those with 504 accommodations. The department of special services employs a case management team approach to support and monitor progress of SWD, communicating with the Committee on Special Education (CSE) and ensuring the provision of all mandated services as well as supporting and tracking student progress. During the student support focus group, school leaders discussed the way students are supported in the school's learning lab. Special education teachers as well as general educational teachers and preceptors all lend support to students, while they are in the lab on a rotating basis. In addition, the preceptor plays a liaison role for students, connecting them with additional supports which include academic intervention services as well as counseling and other supports provided by the school. In the school leaders and student support team focus groups participants discussed the way they continue to provide individualized support during remote learning by creating smaller teacher-led classes, and increasing their one-on-one work with students to assist them with their school work. Additionally, preceptors work with students to develop productive habits while working at home, in order to maintain students' motivation and engagement.
- **Indicator b:** In its renewal application, the school explains that it serves SWD through their ICT teacher-led classrooms in addition to providing small group and push in support. The school also uses a Response to Intervention (RTI) protocol to identify students in need of additional support. Beginning in the 2019-2020 school year, Vertus implemented a formal academic intervention program with scaffolded targets and interventions provided by academic intervention specialists. Student identified, in part by NWEA assessments, now attend a daily academic intervention class which supports their individualized needs. Student who fail Regents exams are also provided with this additional support. Edgenuity addresses the needs of SWD through its toolkit which includes very explicit instructions, models learning strategies, and provides feedback. The platform also adapts content materials to make them accessible, adapting to student need. During the student support focus group, school leaders described their targeted efforts for ELLs. The school employs an English as a New Language (ENL) teacher as well as Spanish speaking staff to support ELLs. The school has implemented a learning-lab approach to its support of ELLs and differentiates their support according to students NYSESLAT scores. The school also reports its system of support for ED students via its personalized approach, small class environments, and establishment of strong relationships between students and teachers. School leaders and trustees, during their focus groups described addressing students' (and their families') economic needs by establishing a food pantry and clothing closet.
- **Indicator c:** According to Vertus' renewal application, the school monitors the progress of individual students weekly through their RTI team meetings. They discuss individual students and monitor their progress. Students who are receiving Tier 2 or Tier 3 interventions are regularly monitored to ensure they are meeting the goals of the intervention strategy. Students who are receiving special education services are monitored by their case manager on a regular basis.

During the student support focus group, school leaders discussed the way students are supported during their learning lab time. Preceptors, intervention teachers and special education teachers rotate through the learning labs in order to provide support to students as needed. During remote learning, this support continues to be provided through smaller teacher-led classes and one on one support sessions with support providers and teachers. The director of specialized services works with the CSE of Rochester City School District or other districts of residence to ensure that services that are provided by the district are coordinated with the school's planning.

Benchmark 3: Culture, Climate, and Student and Family Engagement

The school has systems in place to support students' social and emotional health and to provide for a positive, safe and respectful learning environment that prepares all students for college and career. Families, community members and school staff work together to share in the responsibility for student academic progress and social-emotional growth and well-being. Families and students are satisfied with the school's academics and the overall leadership and management of the school.

Finding: Meets

<u>Element</u>	<u>Indicators</u>
1. <i>Measures of Culture, Climate, and Student Engagement</i>	<p>a. The school has processes and procedures in place to address chronic absenteeism for all students and sub-groups such that all students are fully engaged within the school community and have access to the educational program. Given the increased autonomy to engage students, chronic absenteeism rates are expected to be equal to or less than those of the district of location. In New York City, the district of location is the community school district. Charter schools that have a mission or key design element to serve students in a particular school district will also be compared to that school district. In addition, charter schools with more than 40% of enrolled students residing in districts other than the district of location, or the school district they are mandated to serve, will also be compared to the next highest district where students reside. ⁴</p> <p>b. The school has processes and procedures in place to address out of school suspension rates for all students and sub-groups such that all students are fully engaged within the school community and have access to the educational program. Given the increased autonomy to engage students, out of school suspension rates are expected to be equal to or less than those of the district of location. In New York City, the district of location is the community school district. Charter schools that have a mission or key design element to serve students in a particular school district will also be compared to that school district. In addition, charter schools with more than 40% of enrolled students residing in districts other than the district of location, or the school district they are mandated to serve, will also be compared to the next highest district where students reside. ⁵</p> <p>c. The school has an NYSED approved process in place to measure and evaluate school climate and culture.</p>
2. <i>Behavior Management and Safety</i>	<p>a. The school has a clear approach to behavioral management, including a written discipline policy that is applicable to all students, includes a policy that addresses</p>

⁴ See <https://www.regents.nysed.gov/common/regents/files/P-12%20New%20York%20State%20Safe%20Schools%20Task%20Force%20Recommendations%20Status%20Update%20.pdf>.

⁵ Student Suspension rate is determined by dividing the number of students who were suspended from school (not including in-school suspensions) for one full day or longer anytime during the school year by the Basic Educational Data System (BEDS) day enrollments for that school year. A student is counted only once, regardless of whether the student was suspended one or more times during the school year. Data Source: L2RPT Report SIRS-351: Student Attendance Summary Report - http://www.p12.nysed.gov/irs/level2reports/documents/SIRS_351-360-361-370AttendanceAbsenceandDayCalRprtGuiderev3.6.18.pdf.