



February 14, 2023

Dr. Lisa Long, Executive Director
NYSED Charter School Office
Room 5N EB Mezzanine
89 Washington Ave
Albany, NY 12234

Dear Dr. Long:

American Dream's leadership team and Board of Trustees have reviewed the final Mid-Term Site Visit Report. Our evaluative comments in response to the final Report are addressed below.

Although the final report better highlights American Dream Charter School's (ADCS) student success with the New York State Seal of Biliteracy (NYSSB) compared to the state average, it fails to specify by how much, which is a significant differential. ADCS exceeds New York State's average of high school graduates who earn the New York State Seal of Biliteracy by sixty-two percent. One hundred percent of our students who graduate with a New York State Seal of Biliteracy are students of color. This, too, is significant compared to the rest of the state's NYSSB graduates, of whom four percent are Black, twenty-three percent are Latino, and fifty-nine percent are White. Additionally, our graduation rate is in line with New York State and is twelve percentage points higher than Community School District Seven. This is clear evidence of academic success and is all the more noteworthy given that ADCS is located in one of the nation's poorest congressional districts. The "approaches" rating on Benchmark 1 is supported by outdated middle school data. It does not appear to consider the consistent record of success demonstrated as students advance in grade level.

There were instances in the Mid-Term Site Visit Report where ADCS was criticized and given an "approaches" rating based on criteria that have never been expressed as a requirement. The ADCS leadership team and Board of Trustees would like to reiterate that the evidence the Charter School Office (CSO) uses to justify the rating of "approaches," particularly in Benchmark 6 and Benchmark 10, cannot be tied to law, regulation, or policy but rather are simply "indicators" that do not have the same gravity as law, regulation, or policy. If the intention is for indicators to carry the same weight as law, regulation, or policy, that needs to be made clear by the CSO at the inception of a new charter term by



being made part of the Charter Contract between the CSO and the School. ADCS believes this should never occur, but certainly not in the midst of a charter term. Accordingly, ADCS believes these subjective indicators have unfairly been used to lower our rating to “approaches” for Benchmark 6 and Benchmark 10. The leadership team and Board would like to reiterate that we believe these should have received a “meets” rating.

As a high-performing charter school, ADCS strives for continuous improvement. As it relates to Benchmarks 6 and 10, the Board of Trustees plans to focus on strategic planning during their annual meeting in July. Per our last communication, our partnerships with Youth Communications and Panorma are examples of the systems we already have in place that yield data. ADCS will continue to expand and leverage these relationships and routines to support our students’ social-emotional growth and well-being.

On behalf of our School Leaders, our Board of Trustees, and all members of the American Dream family, I thank you for your review and consideration of our factual corrections and evaluative comments. We look forward to continuing to serve the children and families of our community.

Sincerely,

Melissa Melkonian
Founder and Executive Director