

## **New York State Enrollment and Retention Target Policy for Chancellor-Authorized Charter Schools (August 2015)**

### **Executive Summary**

Under the New York State Charter Schools Act of 1998 (“the Act”), one of the objectives of charter schools is to “increase learning opportunities for all students, with special emphasis on expanded learning experiences for students who are at-risk of academic failure.”<sup>1</sup> In an effort to satisfy this objective, charter schools are required to meet or exceed enrollment and retention (E&R) targets for students with disabilities (SWD), English language learners (ELLs), and students who are eligible applicants for the free and reduced price lunch program (FRPL) (collectively “special populations”).<sup>2</sup> Charter schools are also required to demonstrate efforts towards meeting these targets as part of their annual report and at the time of renewal in addition to compliance being a factor considered at the time of a revision, including mergers.

This document comprises the New York City Department of Education’s (NYC DOE) policy regarding E&R targets for Chancellor-authorized charter schools, including repercussions for not demonstrating efforts towards and meeting E&R targets. Best practice efforts to enroll and retain special populations are also provided.

### **E&R Target Policy for Chancellor-Authorized Charter Schools**

The New York State Education Department (NYSED) and the Board of Trustees of the State University of New York (SUNY) have prescribed an E&R target methodology to generate the applicable E&R targets for each charter school.<sup>3</sup> Pursuant to the Act, charter schools are required to meet or exceed these E&R targets<sup>4</sup> and demonstrate efforts towards doing so as part of the NYSED annual report and at the time of renewal.<sup>5</sup> The NYC DOE will also review efforts towards meeting E&R targets should a charter revision be requested, including mergers. Efforts to attract and retain special populations at rates equal to, or greater than, a school’s E&R targets should be continuous and ongoing. Efforts towards meeting E&R targets are not substitutes for failing to meet or exceed the targets themselves.<sup>6</sup>

### **E&R Target Methodology**

The NYC DOE applies the E&R target methodology developed by NYSED and SUNY to all Chancellor-authorized charter schools. E&R targets are derived from the enrollment figures of the primary Community School District (CSD) of location for each charter school, as well as the individual charter school’s enrollment and grades served at the end of the school’s charter term. This target methodology uses a school’s E&R data as reported to the NYC DOE through the Automate the School (ATS) database.<sup>7</sup>

For charter schools that are located in more than one CSD, the primary location of a Chancellor-authorized charter school is the CSD in which the earliest intake grade is located.

To ensure that schools are not “penalized” for declassifying students over time, a student in a special population category who is subsequently declassified will count towards that category for three additional years after declassification, as per the approved methodology.

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<sup>1</sup> N.Y. Educ. Law § 2850(2)(b).

<sup>2</sup> N.Y. Educ. Law § 2855(1)(e).

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/psc/enrollment-retention-targets.html>

<sup>4</sup> N.Y. Educ. Law § 2855(1)(e).

<sup>5</sup> N.Y. Educ. Law §§ 2851(4)(e) and 2857(2)(d).

<sup>6</sup> N.Y. Educ. Law §§ 2851(4)(e) and 2857(2)(d).

<sup>7</sup> Please note: If a school uses a private vendor for school food services at any grade level (i.e., is its own school food authority), and that school is below the enrollment and/or retention targets for students eligible for FRPL, the school may remit its student-level FRPL data, with student OSIS numbers, to [charterschools@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:charterschools@schools.nyc.gov) for further review. If the school chooses to send the NYC DOE student-level FRPL data, they must include student-level data for the current school year and the four prior school years, to the extent applicable.

It is a best practice to compare the demographics of the students enrolled to E&R targets at the start of each school year and when any changes to a school's charter are being contemplated. All charter schools should review the E&R methodology and utilize the target calculator provided on [NYSED's web site](#).

### **Demonstrating Efforts to Enroll and Retain Special Populations**

At the time of renewal, enrollment related revisions, including mergers, and as part of the NYSED annual report, schools are required to demonstrate the efforts they have undertaken to meet or exceed E&R targets and their anticipated future plans towards meeting this requirement. In order to demonstrate these efforts, charter schools must maintain detailed records of the means taken to enroll and retain special populations. Such evidence will be submitted by the school at the time of renewal and for any enrollment related charter revision, including mergers. The NYSED annual report requires all charter schools to describe their efforts towards meeting E&R targets but does not require charter schools to submit evidence of such efforts.

A non-exhaustive list of efforts that a school may take to enroll and retain special populations can be found below. E&R efforts are not limited to the items outlined below, nor does the demonstration of one or more of those items automatically constitute sufficient efforts to meet E&R targets. If a Chancellor-authorized charter school does not meet its E&R targets, the NYC DOE will consider the school's self-reported efforts towards meeting the target(s) and any extenuating circumstances that may apply.

### **Holding Schools Accountable for meeting E&R Targets**

All Chancellor-authorized charter schools are required to meet the standard relating to E&R targets set forth in this policy, their charter agreement, and charter.

Chancellor-authorized charter schools will be held accountable to meeting or exceeding E&R targets at the time of renewal.

The demonstration of efforts towards meeting E&R targets is not a substitute for failure to meet the targets themselves. Failure to demonstrate efforts that were, or will be, made by the school towards meeting or exceeding E&R targets<sup>8</sup>, or at the time of renewal, may result in a shortened charter renewal term, non-renewal, or other authorizer action as per the *Accountability Handbook for NYC DOE Chancellor-Authorized Charter Schools*. Failure to meet or exceed E&R targets, or the failure to demonstrate efforts towards doing so, will also be evaluated when an enrollment related charter revision or charter merger is requested. Schools that fail to meet their E&R targets in consecutive charter terms will be required to demonstrate "extensive efforts."<sup>9</sup>

When evaluating enrollment related charter revisions for Chancellor-authorized charter schools, the DOE will strongly consider E&R targets.

### **Best Practices for E&R Target Efforts**

At the time of renewal, enrollment related charter revisions, mergers, and as part of the annual accountability cycle, the NYC DOE requires charter schools to describe past efforts and future plans to recruit and retain special populations.

The following list of enrollment "best practices" are examples of efforts that schools can take to meet or exceed E&R targets, or demonstrate efforts towards doing so. The NYC DOE recognizes that this list is not exhaustive and encourages schools to develop further practices. The best practices are divided into high and low impact efforts. High impact best practices are expected to have a greater impact on enrollment outcomes as compared to low impact practices. As with the NYC DOE's accountability framework, the NYC DOE focuses on the outputs of each school's efforts, and so each school should determine which efforts to employ in order to meet or exceed E&R targets. These efforts are only provided as a guide. Schools may

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<sup>8</sup> As reported in the NYSED annual report.

<sup>9</sup> N.Y. Educ. Law § 2855(1)(e).

have more or less success using these best practices depending on their community and the resources committed.

Enrollment Best Practice Examples

<b>High Impact Best Practices</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation of authorizer-approved lottery preferences for SWD, ELLs, and/or students eligible for FRPL.</li> <li>• Demonstrated efforts to work collaboratively with the local district Committees on Special Education to educate them about the services, settings, and special program features available at the school.</li> <li>• Demonstration that the school has provided and disseminated outreach materials including, but not limited to, information about the school, information on how to apply to the school, and contact information for the school for stakeholders to reach out to with further questions, that are accessible to all parents.</li> <li>• Direct targeted mailings, radio, and newspaper advertising in languages prevalent in the area.</li> <li>• Outreach by multi-lingual staff to parents, stakeholders, and community members. Demonstration that the school has provided and disseminated outreach materials including, but not limited to, information about the school, information on how to apply to the school, and contact information for the school for stakeholders to reach out to with further questions, that are accessible to all parents.</li> <li>• Outreach to specialized feeder schools and programs and a demonstration that the school has provided with disseminated outreach materials including, but not limited to, information about the school, information on how to apply to the school, and contact information for the school for stakeholders to reach out to with further questions that are accessible to all parents.</li> <li>• Developing ongoing relationships with programs that serve high-needs populations.</li> <li>• Targeted in-person recruitment methods including in-person meetings with CBOs and parents, and canvassing communities with a demonstration that the school has provided and disseminated outreach materials including, but not limited to, information about the school, information on how to apply to the school, and contact information for the school for stakeholders to reach out to with further questions, that are accessible to all parents.</li> <li>• Ongoing partnerships with community based and social service agencies.</li> <li>• Material revision to add district parents and community members to the board.</li> </ul>

<b>Low Impact Best Practices</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outreach to students, families, and other stakeholders that does not involve a demonstration that the school has provided and disseminated outreach materials including, but not limited to, information about the school, information on how to apply to the school, and contact information for the school for stakeholders to reach out to with further questions, that are accessible to all parents.</li> <li>• Announcing during Open House events that the school welcomes students with special needs.</li> <li>• Special education personnel available to all interested special education enrollees to clearly explain how the school delivers at-risk and special education services.</li> <li>• Google language translator dropdown added to school's website.</li> <li>• Translators available during open houses and other school events.</li> <li>• All materials explain the ELL and SWD programming and supports available at the school.</li> <li>• Translation of all school materials, including enrollment materials, into the predominant language of the communities served.</li> <li>• Authorizer-approved charter lottery admissions preferences.</li> </ul>

**Retention Efforts**

Schools normally describe their retention efforts through the programming and services offered to special populations. Some examples of retention efforts are:

- Creating positive family relationships through consistent communication and events
- Student/family orientation
- Offering free/reduced price meals/snack
- ELL, special education, and at-risk student programming and support
- Academic and behavioral supports
- High quality staff training and development
- Disaggregating data by student group and looking for positive gains or reductions in classification
- Efforts to close the achievement gap for special populations of students, as evidenced by state accountability data
- Developing new programs that support special populations
- Hiring staff with appropriate licensure and expertise
- Parent/community outreach
- Vigilant monitoring of disciplinary practices
- Having an inclusive school culture and environment that is reflective of and welcoming to the population the school serves