

THE SUNY CHARTER SCHOOLS INSTITUTE

*RENEWAL RECOMMENDATION REPORT
SISULU-WALKER CHARTER SCHOOL
OF HARLEM*

*REPORT DATE: JANUARY 14, 2026
VISIT DATE: OCTOBER 2, 2025*



Charter Schools Institute
The State University of New York

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SCHOOL BACKGROUND

SISULU-WALKER CHARTER SCHOOL OF HARLEM

71-111 Convent Avenue, New York, 10027 | Grades: K-5 | Manhattan Community School District (“CSD”) 5



MISSION

The mission of the school is to prepare K-5 students living in and around Central Harlem for matriculation to outstanding public, private and parochial middle and high schools by nurturing their intellectual, emotional, artistic and social development.

SISULU-WALKER CHARTER SCHOOL OF HARLEM BOARD OF TRUSTEES¹

CHAIR

Martez Moore

VICE CHAIR

Minnie Goka

TRUSTEES

Erika Ewing

Rita Hanes

Joe Drayton

CURRENT CHARTER INFORMATION

Year Opened: 1999

Serves: Kindergarten – 5th

Chartered Enrollment: 200

Charter Expires on: August 9, 2026

FUTURE CHARTER INFORMATION

Serves: Kindergarten – 8th

Chartered Enrollment: 351

Charter Expiration: July 31, 2031

KEY DESIGN ELEMENTS

Extended block of instruction in English language arts (“ELA”) and mathematics using the workshop model	+
Research-proven, standards-based curricular programs in ELA, mathematics, science, and social studies	+
Comprehensive and ongoing staff member development in ELA and mathematics curricula implementation and general classroom strategies	+
Civics education, life skills, and service learning projects to instill the principles of public service and character strategies	+
Developing students’ knowledge of the arts through excellent staff members in music and visual arts	+

1. Source: The Institute’s board records at the time of the visit.

“+” : This indicator is generally present.

“-” : This indicator is generally not present.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

FULL-TERM RENEWAL

The SUNY Charter Schools Institute (the “Institute”) recommends the SUNY Trustees’ Charter Schools Committee approve the Application for Charter Renewal of Sisulu-Walker Charter School of Harlem (“Sisulu-Walker”) for a period of five years with authority to provide instruction to students in Kindergarten – 8th grade in such configuration as set forth in its Application for Charter Renewal with a projected total enrollment of 351 students. The Institute makes this recommendation as Sisulu-Walker meets the requirements for renewal set forth in the Policies for Renewal of Not-For-Profit Charter School Education Corporations and Charter Schools Authorized by the Board of Trustees of the State University of New York (the “SUNY Renewal Policies”).²

REVISION REQUEST

The Institute recommends the SUNY Trustees approve Sisulu-Walker’s revision request to expand to serve students in 6th – 8th grade. The school presents a clear plan for expanding its current program to serve students in a high quality middle school program. Leaders outline a clear projected budget and staffing plan that aligns with expanding grades and growing enrollment starting with 6th grade in 2026-27. The school did its due diligence to understand the needs of the community and presents a coherent plan to retain 5th grade students into its middle school program, recruit additional 6th grade students, and begin enrolling another section of Kindergarten. Leaders will establish a curriculum that aligns with Sisulu-Walker’s current elementary program. The school will employ the same strategies it has used in its long history to create a high quality middle school program with similar and more content-specific supports. The current facility has the capacity to serve the school’s growth and expansion plan.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Sisulu-Walker continues to meet the SUNY Renewal Benchmarks through strong instructional quality, organizational stability, and mission alignment. Over the charter term, the school has maintained consistent academic performance, effective teaching, and stable leadership. The leadership team is deeply committed to its mission of preparing Central Harlem students for rigorous middle and high school programs.

During the renewal visit, the Institute observed consistent use of standards-aligned curricula, clear lesson structures, and frequent checks for understanding. Teachers effectively implement the school’s literacy and mathematics workshop models with fidelity, emphasizing student engagement, foundational skills, and application of learning. The school’s diagnostic assessments and data cycles inform instructional grouping, responsive reteach, and targeted supports. Leaders and teachers use these data cycles purposefully to drive instructional decisions, professional learning priorities, and student support planning. The recent introduction of University of Florida Literacy Institute (“UFLI”) Foundations curriculum strengthens early literacy instruction with systemic phonics instruction and illustrates the school’s responsiveness to student needs.

Sisulu-Walker’s organizational capacity underpins the strength of its academic program. The long-tenured leadership team provides clear direction and cultivates a professional culture grounded in collaboration, trust, and accountability. High teacher retention ensures instructional coherence and sustained pedagogical practices across classrooms. The school’s successful transition to a new facility during the charter term further illustrates the

2. SUNY Renewal Policies (p. 14) are available on the [Institute’s website](#).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

strength of its operational systems and leadership. Leaders navigated the move with intentional planning and strong community engagement, ensuring continuity of culture and instruction in the new facility. Operational systems including fiscal oversight, compliance, and human resources function effectively and allow leaders to focus on teaching and learning. The board maintains fiscal stability of the school through prudent financial management and consistent oversight across charter terms.

FINDINGS & INFORMATION

Is the school an academic success?

Sisulu-Walker is an academic success, having met its Accountability Plan goals in both ELA and mathematics. Throughout the charter term, the school maintained a consistent record of high student achievement and growth. In ELA, the school's record of achievement was particularly strong, with results that exceeded the targets for all available comparative and growth measures in every year. These outcomes corroborate Sisulu-Walker's effective instructional practices, targeted interventions, and clearly-communicated high expectations for all students. Sisulu-Walker's track record of success is indicative of its capacity to sustain rigorous teaching and increase student achievement over time. The school further demonstrates success in the following ways:

- In ELA, Sisulu-Walker posted high achievement and growth over the term. Notably, in 2024-25, the school increased its overall proficiency rate for all tested students by 19 percentage points from the previous year.
- In mathematics, the school's tested students enrolled in at least their second year posted proficiency rates that exceeded the district in every year of the term by at least four percentage points. Sisulu-Walker also performed higher than expected each year in comparison to demographically similar schools across the state.
- Over the charter term, the school has demonstrated high achievement for its at-risk student population, including students with disabilities. From 2021-22 through 2024-25, the school's students with disabilities outperformed the district's results in both ELA and mathematics. Sisulu-Walker has nearly closed the ELA achievement gap between its overall student population and its population of students with disabilities. In 2024-25, 67% students with disabilities scored at or above proficiency, and 70% of all tested students scored at or above proficiency.

Is the school an effective, viable organization?

Sisulu-Walker is an effective, viable organization, and its board provides consistent strategic oversight. During the charter term, the school maintained strong academic leadership under a long-tenured principal who has led the school for more than a decade. The board has remained stable with several long-serving trustees including one founding member. The board effectively supports Sisulu-Walker's mission to prepare students in Central Harlem for success in middle and high school through a nurturing, academically rigorous environment. The school maintains a strong culture of family and community partnership that contributes to its consistent success with families describing the school as a steady anchor through challenges such as relocation and the pandemic.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Is the school fiscally sound?³

Sisulu-Walker is fiscally adequate based on the Institute’s review of the renewal documentation. The education corporation established robust budgeting processes that account for all school departments to produce accurate revenue and expense projections. The finance team meets with the board monthly to present an enrollment report and discuss results. The education corporation maintained adequate enrollment throughout the current charter term. The 2024-25 annual financial audit did not present any significant deficiencies or material weaknesses. Sisulu-Walker maintains a separate bank account with the established amounts for dissolution as required by the charter agreement.

Sisulu-Walker demonstrated adequate financial performance during the current charter term, with net assets of \$0.5 million and 2.4 months of cash on hand as of the 2024-25 school year. Sisulu-Walker experienced minor deficits across each of the five years of the charter term. The school absorbed the financial pressures of the facility move and added transportation costs while maintaining overall fiscal stability. During fiscal renewal discussions, the education corporation attributed its major expenses to staffing, transportation, and consulting. Despite the deficits incurred during the previous charter term, the Institute finds Sisulu-Walker’s current fiscal position to be adequate.

If the SUNY Trustees renew the school, are the education corporation’s plans for the school reasonable, feasible, and achievable?

Sisulu-Walker’s plans for the future are reasonable, feasible, and achievable. If approved, the school’s expansion and growth plan will allow the school to serve middle school students and increase its elementary enrollment. The school’s expansion plan allows current leaders to maintain the same core instructional program that has resulted in its current success. The school’s record of academic achievement, leadership stability, and operational health position it well to meet the demands of growth while continuing to deliver strong outcomes for Harlem students.

The future budget provided in the renewal documentation contains reasonable revenue and expense projections for the proposed charter term, given the history of the education corporation. The Institute reviewed Sisulu-Walker’s proposal for expansion and believes its fiscal plan is both reasonable and achievable given the documentation provided. Sisulu-Walker currently uses a New York City Department of Education (“NYCDOE”) non-co-located space and plans to remain in its current facility as it has sufficient space to accommodate increased enrollment.

³ The U.S. Department of Education has established fiscal criteria for certain ratios or information with high – medium – low categories, represented in the table as blue – gray – orange. The categories generally correspond to levels of fiscal risk, but must be viewed in the context of each education corporation and the general type or category of school.

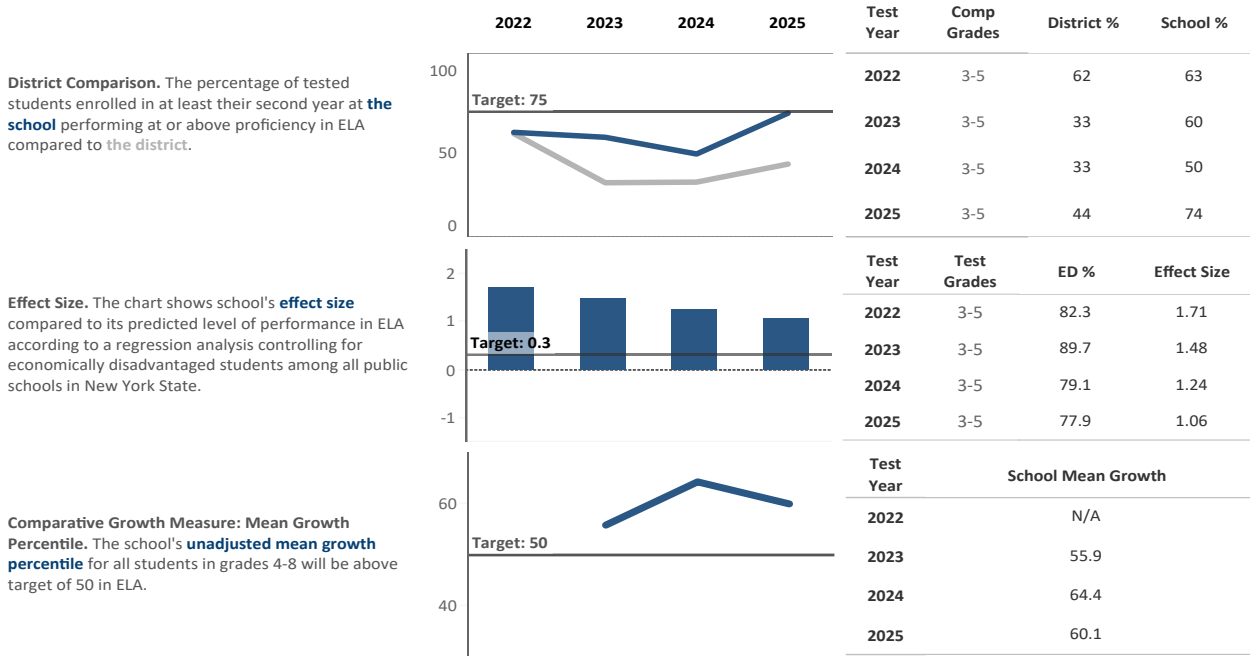


ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

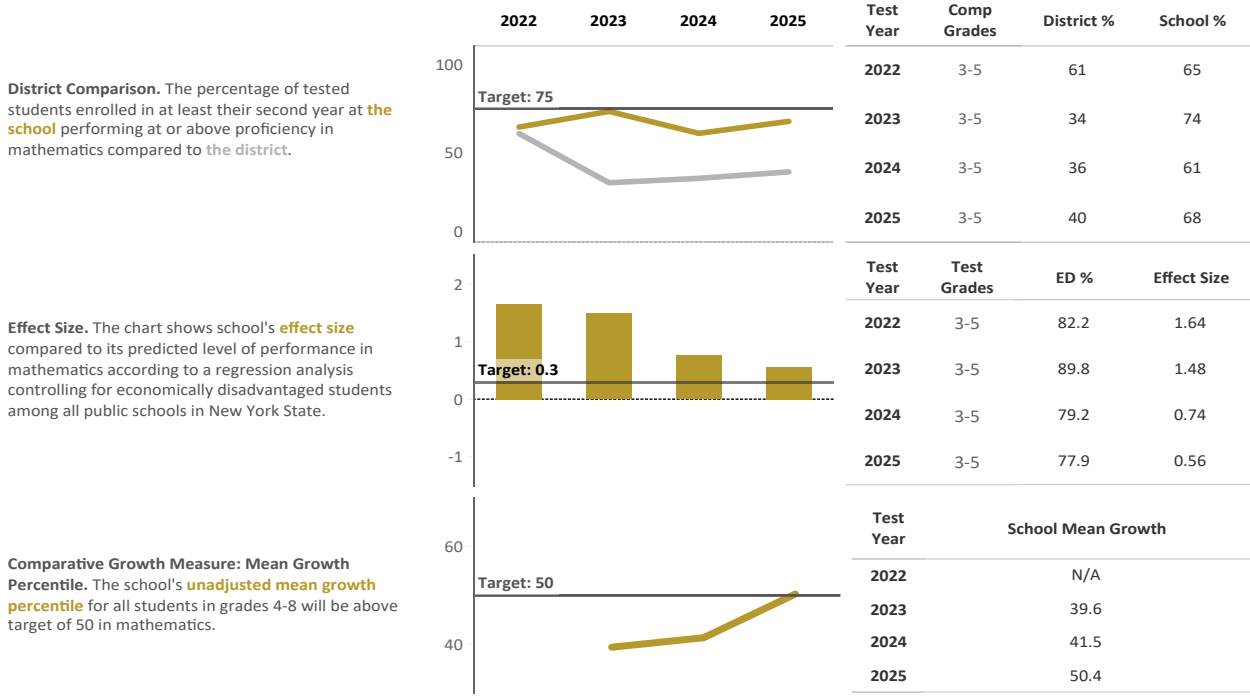
SISULU-WALKER CHARTER SCHOOL OF HARLEM

Manhattan CSD 5*

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN GOAL



MATHEMATICS ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN GOAL



*The district of comparison for Sisulu-Walker was Manhattan CSD 3 in 2021-22, and Manhattan CSD 5 in 2022-23, 2023-24 and 2024-25.

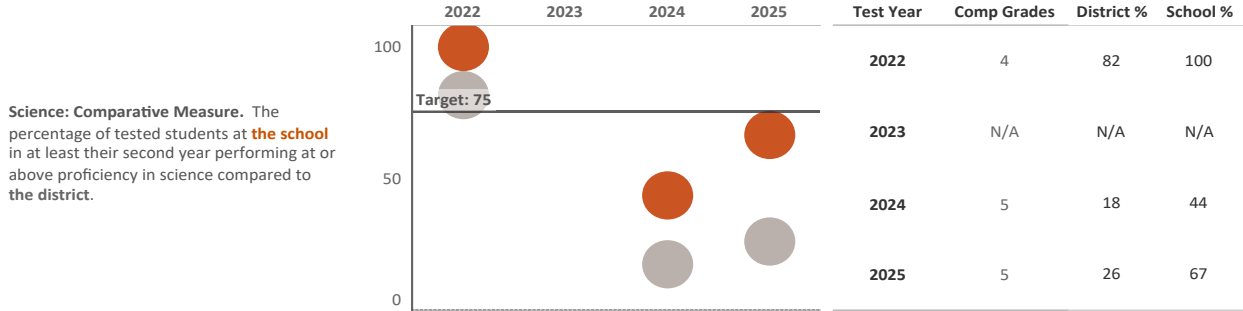


ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

SISULU-WALKER CHARTER SCHOOL OF HARLEM

Manhattan CSD 5**

SCIENCE ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN GOAL



Science: Comparative Measure. The percentage of tested students at the school in at least their second year performing at or above proficiency in science compared to the district.

TESTED PERCENTAGES

	2022		2023		2024		2025	
	ELA	Math	ELA	Math	ELA	Math	ELA	Math
School Tested Number (N)	59	61	59	61	68	67	64	64
School Tested %	72.0	75.3	78.7	81.3	85.0	83.8	80.0	80.0
District Tested %	91.9	92.4	80.3	81.0	74.3	79.5	74.8	78.6

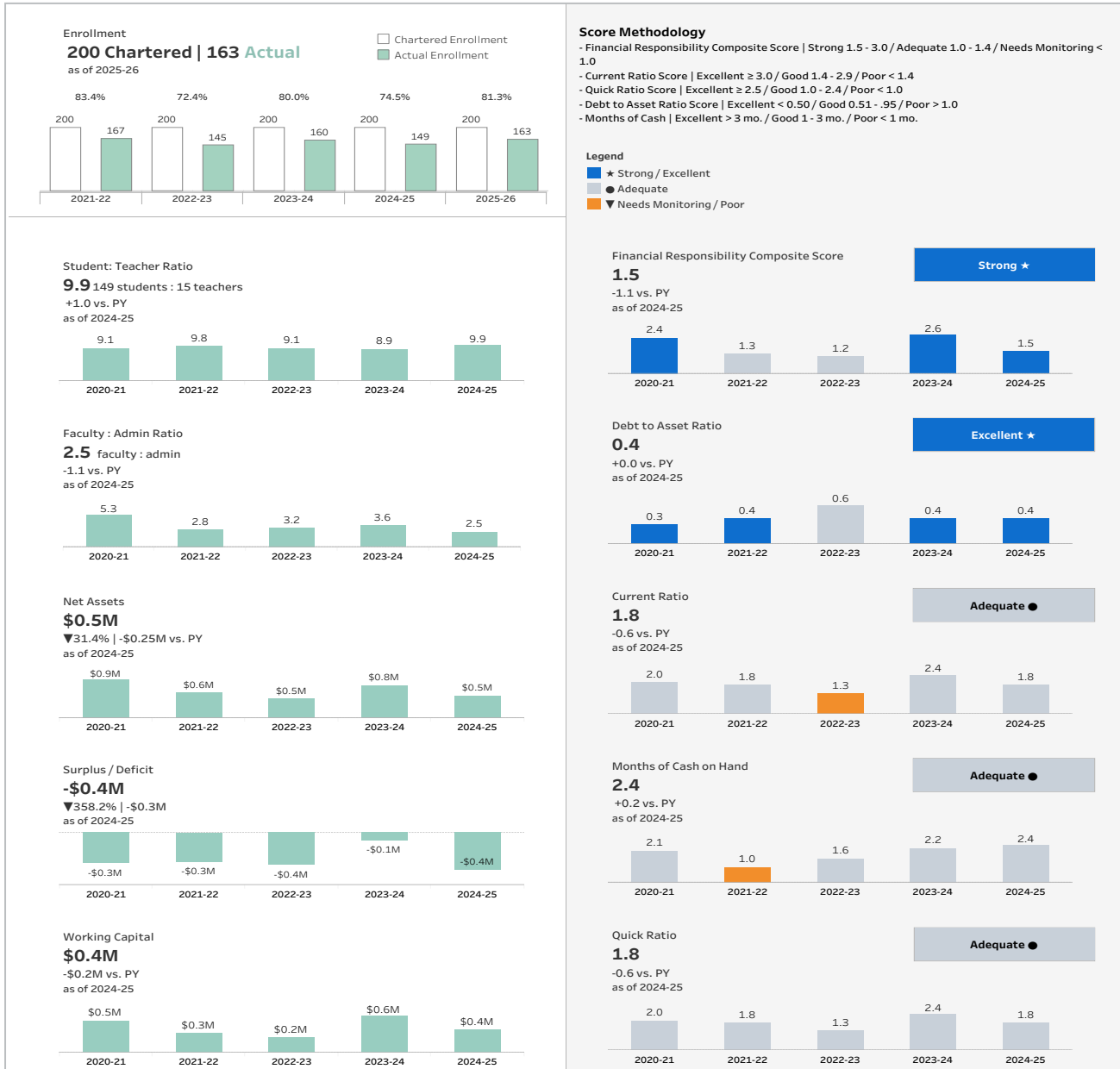
PERFORMANCE OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS*

	2022		2023		2024		2025	
	ELA	Math	ELA	Math	ELA	Math	ELA	Math
Students with Disabilities Tested on State Exam (N)	9	9	10	10	9	10	15	16
School % Proficient on Exam	55.6	55.6	50.0	50.0	44.4	40.0	66.7	43.8
District % Proficient	26.1	28.3	17.0	18.8	17.1	23.1	24.1	22.5

	2022	2023	2024	2025
Tested on NYSESLAT Exam (N)	5	5	6	7
School % Making Progress	s	s	0.0	42.9

*Academic outcome data describing the performance of students with disabilities and English language learners ("ELLs") are not tied to separate goals in the charter school's formal Accountability Plan. The New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test ("NYSESLAT") is a standardized New York State assessment given annually to students classified as ELLs. Student scores are categorized into five proficiency levels: Entering, Emerging, Transitioning, Expanding, and Commanding (the highest proficiency level). For elementary and middle school students, "Making Progress" is defined as: testing at the Commanding level, or moving up at least one proficiency level from the prior year, or testing at the Expanding level and testing proficient on the NYS ELA exam in that same year. For high school students, "Making Progress" is defined as: testing at the Commanding level, or moving up at least one proficiency level from the prior year. To comply with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act ("FERPA") regulations on reporting education outcome data, the Institute does not report assessment results for groups containing five or fewer students, and indicates such instances with an "s".
**The district of comparison for Sisulu-Walker was Manhattan CSD 3 in 2021-22, and Manhattan CSD 5 in 2022-23, 2023-24 and 2024-25.

SISULU-WALKER CHARTER SCHOOL OF HARLEM



Schools report actual enrollment on a quarterly basis to the Institute, and the actual enrollment for 2025-26 reflects the most recently submitted quarterly submission.

COMPLIANCE REPORTING



HAS THE SCHOOL SUBSTANTIALLY COMPLIED WITH APPLICABLE LAWS, RULES AND REGULATIONS, AND PROVISIONS OF ITS CHARTER?

The education corporation substantially complies with applicable laws, rules and regulations, and provisions of its charter. During the current charter term, the education corporation demonstrates a clear record of compliance with the terms of its charter including the timely submission of required reporting to the Institute.

ELL Program

At the time of the renewal visit, the Institute noted compliance issues with the ELL program. However, the Institute has worked with the school to correct the issues and will continue to monitor the school's compliance over the next charter term.

Teacher Certification

The Act allows charters to hire up to 15 uncertified lead teachers contingent upon those teachers meeting certain requirements including: two years of Teach for America experience; three years of teaching experience; status as a higher education professor; exceptional experience in a subject; or, teaching science, technology, engineering, and mathematics ("STEM") or career and technical education courses.

To recruit certified teachers, Sisulu-Walker leverages relationships with the City College of New York and Columbia University to post job openings on their internal job boards and share them through alumni networks. The school also requires uncertified teachers to make progress toward certification within five years of hire and to meet established performance standards.

At Sisulu-Walker, three out of the 12 teachers are uncertified, which is within the allowable limit under the Act. All three uncertified teachers meet the additional qualifications under the Act.

COMMUNITY SATISFACTION & ENROLLMENT AND RETENTION

To report on parent satisfaction with the school’s program, the Institute used satisfaction survey data, information gathered from a focus group of parents representing a cross section of students, and data regarding persistence in enrollment.

Parent Survey Data

The Institute compiled data from the NYCDOE’s annual family survey. The NYCDOE conducts an annual survey to gauge satisfaction with schools’ programs. In 2024-25, 44% of families responded to the survey. Of those respondents, 95% indicated satisfaction with the school. The Institute recognizes that the low response rate may not be representative of the whole community.

Parent Focus Group

The Institute asks all schools facing renewal to convene a representative set of parents for a focus group discussion. A representative set includes parents of students in attendance at the school for multiple years, students new to the school, students receiving general education services, students with disabilities, and ELLs.

The 13 parents and caretakers in attendance at the focus group indicated high levels of satisfaction with Sisulu-Walker. School staff members regularly communicate with parents and caretakers through a variety of methods, including personalized communication. Parents report that students feel safe, supported, and able to bring their authentic selves to school each day. Parents and families appreciate the school’s focus on building community while implementing consistent security systems and protocols. Families report that leaders are visible and accessible, and they value the frequent opportunities to communicate with the school and participate in classroom activities and school events.

Public Comments

In accordance with the Act, the Institute notified the district in which the charter school is located regarding the school’s Application for Charter Renewal. The full text of any written comments received from the district appears below, which also includes a summary of any public comments.

The NYCDOE held its required hearing on the renewal application for Sisulu-Walker on December 16, 2025. The school leader described the school’s more than 25 year history as New York State’s first charter school and emphasized its focus on academic rigor, strong relationships, and consistent family engagement. The school leader discussed the school’s expansion request and shared that the proposed growth is intentionally gradual to ensure continuity, stability, and appropriate student supports. The proposed middle school program would build on the existing elementary school program and would gradually increase student independence over time.

Enrollment and Retention

Sisulu-Walker makes good faith efforts to meet its enrollment and retention targets. The school comes close to meeting the enrollment targets for students with disabilities and economically disadvantaged students. The school continues to reflect on ways to increase its ELL enrollment.

COMMUNITY SATISFACTION & ENROLLMENT AND RETENTION

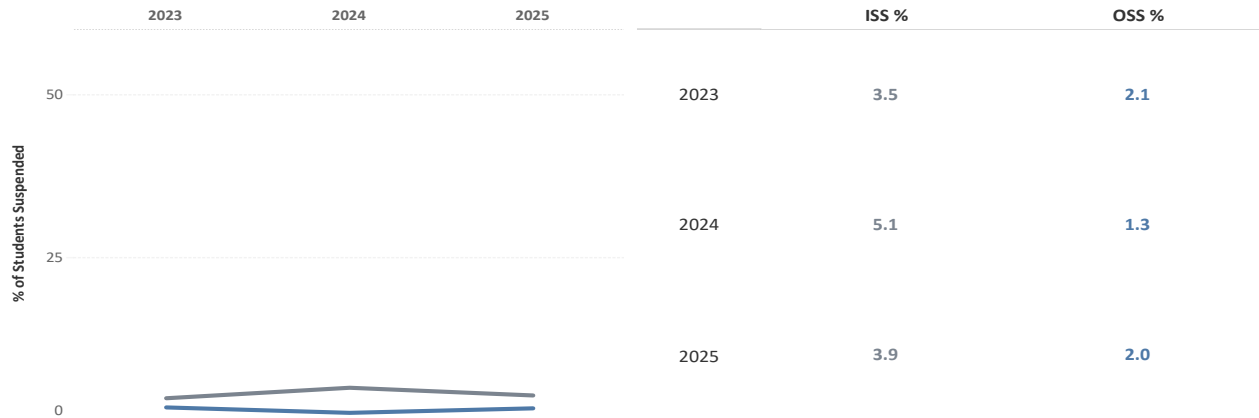
Persistence in Enrollment

An additional indicator of parent satisfaction is persistence in enrollment. In 2024-25, 80% of Sisulu-Walker students returned from the previous year. Student persistence data from previous years of the charter term is available in the student demographics section of the report.

The Institute derived the statistical information on persistence in enrollment from its database. No comparative data from the NYCDOE or the New York State Education Department ("NYSED") is available to the Institute to provide either district or statewide context.

COMMUNITY SATISFACTION & ENROLLMENT AND RETENTION

Sisulu-Walker Charter School of Harlem



Data suitable for comparison are not available. The percentage rate shown here is calculated using the method employed by NYCDOE: the total number of students receiving an in school or out of school suspension at any time during the school year is divided by the total enrollment, then multiplied by 100.

Persistence in Enrollment: The percentage of students eligible to return from previous year who did return



Expulsions: The number of students expelled from the school each year

Year	2023	2024	2025
Expulsions	0	0	0

Sisulu-Walker Charter School of Harlem's Enrollment and Retention Status: 2024-25

		Target %	School %
Enrollment	Economically Disadvantaged	87.6	84.9
	English Language Learners	12.3	6.6
	Students with Disabilities	24.6	24.3
Retention	Economically Disadvantaged	88.5	78.8
	English Language Learners	90.3	60.0
	Students with Disabilities	87.3	72.7

Discipline data above reflect information reported by the education corporation and validated by the Institute. Enrollment and retention data reflect available BEDS day information as reported by the NYSED.



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