



Vertus HIGH SCHOOL

21 Humboldt Street
Rochester, New York 14609

Tel (585) 747-8911
Fax (585) 254-1251

New York State Board of Regents
State Education Department
Charter School Office
89 Washington Avenue
Albany, NY 12234

May 3, 2024

To the Board of Regents:

We appreciate the opportunity to provide evaluative comments in response to the Renewal Site Visit report received on April 26, 2024. We are proud of our growth over the past renewal term. We have worked hard to make gains in all ten benchmarks and are proud of having achieved a rating of **Meets** in nine out of the ten, an improvement over five meets in our last renewal and seven meets at our mid-term site visit. We want to provide context for your consideration regarding Benchmark 9.

Benchmark 9: Approaches

Three years from the heart of the pandemic, our enrollment is now at its highest ever, topping at 330 students, and demand is high. Our focus on enrollment and gaining notoriety in the community has paid dividends. We do not plan to let up on our efforts and will continue this enrollment for the foreseeable future.

Our ELL enrollment percentage continues to hold steady at 8%-9%. While that is under the district as a whole, it is higher than their overall high school percentage, which averages 7%. Based on the most recent data, I was able to find

RCSD's ELL population percentage by grade was:

9th grade- 10%

10th grade- 7%

11th grade- 5%

12th grade- 6%

<https://data.nysed.gov/ell.php?year=2023&instid=800000050065>



Vertus HIGH SCHOOL

21 Humboldt Street
Rochester, New York 14609

Tel (585) 747-8911
Fax (585) 254-1251

Since our mid-term report, we have solidified our relationship with the correct RCSD personnel to gain access to accurate FRPL data. This is shown in closing the gap between the number of ED students we serve.

Lastly, the retention data reflected in the report has sparked us to do an internal deep dive. This data does not accurately reflect information that we have within our student data management system. While I cannot pinpoint the difference at this time, it seems that we are retaining more students year over year based on our increased enrollment.

We proudly serve the highest needs students in the city of Rochester. Our charter outlines that in great detail:

“Vertus’ innovative, ungraded, mastery-based model is designed to serve the most severely at-risk young men, including Over-age / Under-credited students, in one of the state’s worst-performing school districts. Vertus is an innovative, all-boys “Brother’s Keeper” school designed to re-engage the young men who are most likely to be disengaged from school, drop out, be in gangs, or commit crimes. For many of these young men, Vertus is their only hope. There are few options in Rochester for male high school students who are significantly underperforming, especially if they have significant discipline issues or have previously failed high school grades. To our knowledge, no other charter high school in Rochester welcomes transfer students who have not succeeded in other schools. Vertus actively seeks to rebut the accusation that charter schools serve the “best” or most engaged students and families – Vertus welcomes the young men who are the least engaged, most troubled, and farthest behind.” – Vertus Charter.

We continue to grow and develop programs that will not only fulfill our charter but, more importantly, help the young men we serve become “Leaders of Character for the workplace and the community.” There are numerous roadblocks, but we are resilient, and so are our young men.

We are up for the challenge and look forward to providing them with the education they deserve in an environment committed to their success for the next five years.

Sincerely,

Julie A. Locey
School Leader and CEO