



Charter School Annual Site Visit Report  
Charter School Office  
2009-2010

GROWING UP GREEN  
CHARTER SCHOOL  
ANNUAL SITE VISIT REPORT

MAY 2010

# Part 1: Executive Summary

## **School Overview and History:**

Growing Up Green Charter School is an elementary school serving approximately 150 students in kindergarten and grade 1 in the 2009-2010 school year.<sup>1</sup> The school opened in 2009 with grades K-1 and will grow to serve students in grades K-5.<sup>2</sup> It is currently housed in a private facility in District 30.<sup>3</sup>

The school population comprises 19% Black, 33% Hispanic, 27% White, and 14% Asian students. 66% of students are designated at Title I.<sup>4</sup> The student body includes 10% English language learners and 6% special education students. Boys account for 46% of the students enrolled and girls account for 54%.<sup>5</sup>

The school is in its first year and has not yet earned a Progress Report or had a state or federal accountability designation.

## **Annual Review Process Overview:**

The NYC DOE Charter School Office conducts an annual site visit of New York City Department of Education authorized charter schools in order to assess three primary questions: is the school an academic success; is the school a viable organization; and is the school in compliance with applicable laws and regulations. The visits are conducted by representatives of the New York City Department of Education Charter School Office Accountability Team and last the duration of one school day. The annual site visit begins with a meeting with the principal and school leadership team. Subsequently, the reviewers visit classrooms and hold brief meetings with available administrators, teachers, and students. Areas of evaluation include, but are not limited to: academic goals and mission; curriculum and instruction; school culture and learning environment; assessment utilization; parent engagement; government structures and organizational design; community support; special populations; and safety and security.

The following experts participated in the review of this school:

- Robert Galli, Education Consultant
- Benjamin Carson, Charter School Office
- Aamir Raza, Charter School Office

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<sup>1</sup> NYC DOE ATS system

<sup>2</sup> NYC DOE ATS system and charter agreement

<sup>3</sup> NYC DOE Location Code Generating System database

<sup>4</sup> Demographic Data drawn from NYC DOE ATS System; Title I percentage from 2008 NY State Report Cards

<sup>5</sup> Student Demographic data is inputted by school staff into the ATS enrollment database and summarized by NYC DOE staff.

## Part 2: Findings

### What the school does well

- The school empowers students to be conscious, contributing members of the community through a rigorous curriculum and an engaging green culture
  - The following curricular programs are utilized: Wilson Foundations, Reading A to Z, Balanced Literacy – Lit Life and Everyday Math, Marilyn Burns Math Library, TERC Investigations, FOSS Science Kits and Harcourt Science Textbooks
  - The academic day is split into two sections; each morning there are both literacy and math blocks; afternoon “ED” time is for interdisciplinary units and creative planning
  - All projects meet NYS Learning Standards
  - Green themes and EIC model are visibly demonstrated
  - EIC model assists students in developing environmental beliefs through activities based in inquiry and reflection
  - EIC model promotes best practices in teaching and learning: integrated – interdisciplinary instruction, collaborative instruction, community based investigations, cooperative and independent learning, local and natural community surroundings as the context for instruction
  - The Responsive Classroom approach is used for the social curriculum: daily morning meetings, community rules, non-punitive measures, student empowerment, guided discovery practices, logical consequences
  - A 10 day rotating schedule is used to ensure equal time for math, literacy, science social studies and inclusion of a school wide re-teach enrichment day
- Teachers are empowered to become education-agents within their classrooms and the school community
  - Pacing calendars, distributed during August PD, help teachers gauge student learning time
  - Teachers have two formal planning times: Monday staff meetings and half day professional development
  - Teachers utilize technology as a professional resource to ensure student learning: email, Teacher Ease (student records), computer literacy, classroom computers
  - All teachers receive a “bundle” of supplies to assist with teaching and learning activities
  - Teachers consistently use scaffolding strategies to ensure understanding and academic growth
- School learning environment promotes and ensures high expectations as evidenced by the following observations made:
  - High frequency word walls
  - Leveled classroom libraries
  - Content area word walls
  - Green features – recycling bins
  - Carpeted meeting areas for discussion and reading sessions
  - Plants, animals and music are in all classrooms
  - Established learning centers in science and math
  - Celebration of student work displayed
  - Rubrics and purpose clearly identified
  - Lesson objectives and student support posters available for reference
  - School leader visits classrooms on a daily basis
  - Directors of Curriculum, Special Education and Assessment play an integral role in the teaching and learning process

- Inquiry based student behaviors are encouraged through extended conversations, building shared understanding of topics, higher order questioning and multiple perspectives
- Classroom environment supports the school's "community of caring" mission and vision
- The school addresses the needs of all students
  - Teachers and staff meet on a regular basis for case-conferencing sessions
  - An SSC committee has been established (Successful Student Committee) to review suggested strategies , interventions and CSE referrals
  - Each grade level (during year 2) will have one CTT classroom using the inclusion model
  - All families complete the HLS to identify LEP students – push in/pull out strategies are used to support students
- The school is in good financial condition and maintains appropriate internal controls
  - As of May 31, 2010, the school possessed \$350,434 in current assets and \$259,680 in current liabilities. Therefore, for each outstanding dollar in current liability, the school possesses \$1.35 in current assets to meet its obligations
  - The school's long-term financial outlook appears good based on the total assets of \$490,172 and total liabilities of \$259,680. Therefore, for each dollar in long-term liability, the school possesses \$1.89 in long-term assets to meet its obligations
  - The school exercises appropriate internal controls on its financial systems
- The school board is providing adequate and balanced oversight.
  - Board gets reporting from the Executive Director, Director of Assessment, Director of Curriculum, school dashboard, income statement and balance sheet, attendance and suspension figures besides other statistics
  - Board conducts regularly scheduled meetings with the Executive Director and other instructional staff.

### **What the school needs to improve**

- Director of Assessment prepares benchmark tools and assists with classroom instruction. As the school grows beyond the current K-1 levels, the Director will need to expand his knowledge base and develop a comprehensive time management system. The Director of Assessment should be encouraged to participate in extended professional development and the school should begin to review practices and procedures to sustain the Director of Assessment's expertise and availability as the school grows toward capacity
- The school utilizes a "turn and talk" practice during classroom instruction. To ensure that this practice ensures student learning and focused participation, additional support techniques should be implemented. For example, educators could ask students follow-up questions, require all students to share discussion topics, during case-conferencing have teachers identify additional strategies that ensure that all students remain focused and actively engaged, etc.
- To ensure a rigorous curriculum and green model of environmental and social concerns, the school should continue to revisit and evaluate those strategies and techniques which support this mission.
  - Mid year reviews, outside consultants, self-assessment reflections, continuous professional development and parental/community input may be necessary on-going components of the school's structure.

## Part 3: Framing Questions

### FRAMING QUESTIONS:

Throughout the Renewal Process and the life of each school's charter, the NYCDOE Charter School Office uses the following framing questions to monitor Charter School success:

1. Has the School Been an Academic Success?
2. Has the School Been a Viable Organization?
3. Has the School Been in Compliance with All Applicable Laws and Regulations?

### Annual Site Visit Rubric:

1. Has the School Been an Academic Success?
  - Academic Goals and Mission
    - School components and curriculum align together and holistically support the mission
    - School has high academic expectations and employs strategies for the full range of students served by the school, including those at risk and those with special needs
  - Curriculum and Instruction
    - The educational plan is flexible and is adjusted to meet the performance levels and learning needs of all enrolled students
    - School implements programming to address the needs of students with disabilities and ELLs
    - Teachers demonstrate the use of differentiated instructional techniques to support the varying ways by which students learn
    - School has implemented programming for students who need remediation or acceleration
  - School Culture
    - The culture is strong, intentional, supportive and sustainable and promotes student learning
    - The school motivates all students and respects the diversity of learners and cultures in the community
    - School offers programs, activities or support services beyond academics to address students' social and emotional needs
    - School calendar and day are set to provide extra supports to ensure that students are able to meet and exceed academic goals
    - Schedule for communication to parents/students is timely and allows for due process, includes strategies to prepare students for transitions and strategies for those students who are not on schedule, presents a clear and fair system that complies with students' due process rights
    - Structures that foster the development of authentic, sustained, caring, respectful relationships among all stakeholders within school
    - Behavioral expectations and social supports that reflect the school's mission and comply with all applicable laws and regulations
  - Assessment
    - Establishes a culture of continuous improvement and accountability for student learning
    - Develops assessments that shape and inform instruction on an ongoing basis and develop data that's used to gauge student, teacher and school progress through formative and summative assessment
    - Student learning measured with multiple forms of assessments/metrics
    - Develops educational goals and performance metrics that are SMART – Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Reflect the Mission and Time-Specific

- Develops assessments that are appropriately aligned with curriculum, instruction, and adopted standards
  - Provides evidence of how data will influence instruction, professional development and curricular adjustments
  - Parent Engagement
    - Parent engagement strategies that integrate and mobilize parents within the school community as conduits for student success
    - Capacity to communicate effectively with parents and families
    - Parent engagement strategies that integrate and mobilize parents within the school community as conduits for student success
2. Is the School a Viable Organization
- Governance Structures and Organizational Design
    - School has articulated appropriate roles, responsibilities, and decision-making structure for school community members (including Board of Trustees and school leadership)
    - An accountability structure that provides effective oversight of the educational program and fiscal components of the school is in place and utilized
    - Board regularly reviews a data dashboard of student achievement and fiscal management that forms the basis for Board discussions and decisions
    - Board has diverse skill set that lends itself to strong educational / operational oversight
    - Board has an articulated process for ongoing policy development, Board member development and self-evaluation
    - Organizational charts are aligned with mission; roles and responsibilities are clearly defined
    - Board has developed essential strategic partnerships with organizations that support the mission of the school
  - Community Support
    - School Leadership demonstrated responsiveness to the unique needs and interests of the community to be served
    - School has established a presence in the community and has buy in from community members
3. Is the School in Compliance with Applicable Laws and Regulations
- Special Populations
    - Well-defined plan and sufficient capacity to service the learning needs of Special Education students, English Language Learners
    - School adequately addresses the academic and non academic needs of students in need of remediation, students with disabilities, students with interrupted formal education, and gifted students
    - There is a coherent plan for meeting the non-academic needs of students with disabilities, students with interrupted formal education, and other populations
    - School employs a process to identify students at risk of not meeting expectations and creates intervention plans and follow up
    - School demonstrates a comprehensive recruitment, enrollment and retention approach that is sensitive to the diverse needs of students
    - School admission policy and lottery preferences serve to create a student body that reflects community demographics and give a preference to community school district residents
  - Safety and Security
    - School is well maintained
    - Transitions and student gatherings are orderly and well supervised
    - Expectations for student behavior are well known and are enforced fairly
    - School is current with all safety recruitments and drills.
    - AED machines are in operation and school staff is trained in CPR