



Office of School Design and Charter Partnerships
2013-2014

**TEACHING FIRMS OF AMERICA – PROFESSIONAL PREPARATORY
CHARTER SCHOOL**

ANNUAL COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW REPORT

2013 – 2014 SCHOOL YEAR

Part 1: School Overview

School Information for the 2013-2014 School Year

Name of Charter School	Teaching Firms of America – Professional Preparatory Charter School
Board Chair(s)	Latoya Massey and Shahidah Kalam Id-Din
School Leader(s)	Rafiq R. Kalam Id-Din II, Esq.; Damien Dunkley
Management Company (if applicable)	N/A
Other Partner(s)	N/A
District(s) of Location	NYC Community School District 16
Physical Address(es)	616 Quincy Street, Brooklyn 11221
Facility Owner(s)	DOE

School Profile

- Teaching Firms of America – Professional Preparatory Charter School (Teaching Firms) is an elementary school, which served 272 students¹ in grades K-3 during the 2013-2014 school year. It opened in 2011-2012. The school's anticipated full grade span is K-5 which it expects to reach in the 2015-2016 school year. The school is located in publicly-operated facilities in Brooklyn within Community School District (CSD) 16.²
- Teaching Firms enrolls new students in kindergarten but backfills empty seats in grades 1 through 3. There were 446 students on the waitlist after the Spring 2013 lottery.³ The average attendance rate for the 2013-2014 school year to date as reported in February 2014 was 93%.⁴
- Teaching Firms is in its first charter term and will be up for renewal in the 2014-2015 school year.
- The school leadership for the 2013-2014 school year included Rafiq R. Kalam Id-Din II, Managing Partner; Damien Dunkley, Stakeholder Partner; and Agnes Maddox, Director of Operations. Both Partners have been with the school since early 2011.
- Teaching Firms had a student to teacher ratio of 12:1 in the 2013-2014 school year, and served 12 sections across all grades, with an average class size of 23.⁵
- The lottery preferences for Teaching Firms' 2013-2014 school year included the New York State Charter Schools Act required preferences of returning students, students residing in the community school district of the school's location and siblings of students already enrolled in the charter school.⁶

¹ Enrollment reflects ATS data from 10/31/13.

² NYC DOE Location Code Generation and Management System database.

³ Self-reported information from school-submitted data collection form on 2/14/14.

⁴ Self-reported information from school-submitted data collection form on 2/14/14.

⁵ Self-reported information given on 9/29/14.

⁶ Teaching Firms of America-Professional Preparatory Charter School's 2013-2014 application.

Part 2: Summary of Findings

Essential Question 1: Is the school an academic success?

Overview of School-Specific Data through 2012-2013

Teaching Firms did not enroll students in state-mandated testing grades (grades 3-8) during school years 2009-2010 through 2012-2013. The school did not receive progress reports during these school years.

Progress Towards Attainment of Academic Goals

- Teaching Firms, according to its 2012-2013 Annual Report to the New York State Education Department (NYSED), has seven academic performance goals as identified in its charter. However, these goals were not applicable as of that report period because the school did not have its first year of students taking the New York State assessments until 2013-2014.

Responsive Education Program & Learning Environment⁷

- The school has aligned the academic rubrics, which are used to determine acquisition of knowledge and skill mastery, with the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS).
- The school has introduced new instructional tools in the 2013-2014 school year, including differentiation, mixed-ability grouping, and utilization of data analysis to drive instructional planning.
- The school reported the continued integration of reading skills practice across content areas, critical reading and analysis skills across content areas, and content exploration.
- The school uses Developmental Reading Assessments to monitor students' literacy levels.
- All instructional staff participate in the school's Instructional Methods and Professional Practice (IMAPP) conferences which are held quarterly. During the IMAPP conference, each grade team presents grade-level data for critical analysis and a discussion to determine where adjustments should be made and how the teachers can improve the learning outcomes.
- The school reported that instruction is differentiated for students with IEPs and English Language Learners (ELLs).
- School leadership emphasizes teacher autonomy as a key organizational component of the school's structure.
- The school utilizes the following staff development tools: 360-professional surveys, individualized instructional coaching feedback, and instructional video review and analysis.

Representatives of the NYC DOE team visited the school on June 19, 2014. Based on discussion, document review, and observation, the following was noted:

- School leadership reported that:
 - The school wants to promote leadership from within and is tracking its current talent to groom a leader of pedagogy, but will continue to not have the Pedagogy Partner position filled for another school year.
 - The school uses EngageNY to assess the rigor of the third quarter ELA assessments.
- Five classrooms across all grades were observed by members of the visit team and the following was noted:
 - At the time of the visit, the school was participating in an oratorical competition. Teachers were facilitating discussions with students around the school's character principles.

⁷ Self-reported information from school-submitted self-evaluation form on 2/18/14.

- Student transitions were orderly and students were engaged in activities. Students also had a sense of ownership over their learning and could report on how they have grown in various character traits over the year.
- On the day of the visit, one-on-one interviews were conducted with seven teachers, a Learning Specialist, and the Dean of Students. The following was noted:
 - Some staff interviewed reported that they received both informal and formal observations. The formal observation takes place at the end of the year with one of the Partners and also entails a one-to-one conversation about progress.
 - Most staff interviewed reported the use of quarterly assessments, which are created by the school and are consistent across grade levels. Other interim assessments used throughout the quarter are individualized and developed by the teachers. Most teachers reported that the scope and sequences are created during summer professional development with the grade team.
 - All staff interviewed reported weekly professional development held at the school. Some staff also mentioned the professional development held in the summer before school started. Some of the PD sessions referenced included: neuropedagogy, Response to Intervention (RTI), and character issues.

Essential Question 2: Is the school a fiscally sound, viable organization?

Governance Structure & Organizational Design

After reviewing information and documentation concerning Board turnover, Board minutes, reporting structure, organizational chart, annual accountability reporting documents, Board agendas, and the school's website, the NYC DOE notes the following:

- The Board has seven voting board members. The Board Co-Chairs, Latoya Massey and Shahidah Kalam Id-Din, have been on the Board since February 2009 and August 2013, respectively.
- As evidenced from review of Board rosters, the Board experienced turnover after the 2012-2013 school year, with six Board members leaving between May and August 2013, and adding four new members at the end of August 2013.
- As recorded in the Board's minutes, the school leadership provides regular updates on academic, financial, and operational performance to the Board and its committees.

School Climate & Community Engagement

After reviewing information and documentation concerning leadership turnover, staff turnover, attendance rate, student turnover, NYC School Survey results and response rates, and PTO meetings, the NYC DOE notes the following:

- The school has experienced leadership turnover with the Pedagogy Partner leaving after the 2012-2013 school year. The position was not filled for the 2013-2014 school year. The Managing Partner, Stakeholder Partner, Dean of Students, and Executive Officer have been with the school since its founding.
- Instructional staff turnover was 29.2% with six out of 24 instructional staff that chose not to return in the 2013-14 school year from the prior year, and one teacher that was not asked to return. As of February 2014, during the 2013-14 school year, four teachers have left and one had been let go.⁸
- As of February 2014, average daily attendance for students during that school year was at 93%, which is higher than the school's charter goal of 90%.⁹
- Student turnover was 6.8% of students from the prior school year who did not return at the start of the 2013-2014 school year, and 3% of the students left the school between the start of the school year and February 2014.¹⁰
- The school reported having a parent organization for each classroom called a Parent Council. They also report having two other school wide parent support groups: My Sister's Keeper (female caregivers) and Baba Ndugu (male caregivers), each were started and are led by parents.¹¹

2012-2013 NYC School Survey Results¹²

Categories	Result	Community	Response Rate	Citywide Rate
Academic Expectations	Average	Parents	66%	54%
Communication	Average	Teachers	84%	83%
Engagement	Average	Students	N/A	83%
Safety & Respect	Average			

⁸ Self-reported information from school-submitted data collection form on 2/14/14.

⁹ Self-reported information from school-submitted data collection form on 2/14/14.

¹⁰ Self-reported information from school-submitted data collection form on 2/14/14.

¹¹ Self-reported information on school's website.

¹² Results are particular to the school type as identified in the 2013 School Survey.

Financial Health

Near-term financial obligations:

- Based on the FY13 financial audit and follow up, the school's current ratio indicated an ability to meet its current liabilities.
- Based on the FY13 financial audit and follow up, the school's unrestricted cash availability indicated an ability to cover at least two months of operations expenses without an infusion of cash.
- A comparison of the enrollment projections for the 2013-2014 budget to actual enrollment as of the last day of school revealed that the school met its enrollment target, supporting its projected revenue.
- As of the FY13 financial audit, the school met its debt obligations.

Financial sustainability based on current practices:

- Based on the financial audits from FY12 to FY13, the school generated an aggregate surplus over the two audited fiscal years, and in FY13 the school operated at a surplus.
- Based on the FY13 financial audit, the school's debt to asset ratio indicated that the school had more total assets than it had total liabilities.
- Based on the financial audits from FY12 to FY13, the school had overall negative cash flow from FY12 to FY13.

Annual Independent Financial Audit

- An independent audit performed for FY13 showed no material findings.

Essential Question 3: Compliance with charter and all applicable laws and regulations?

After a review of documentation submitted for the NYC DOE annual accountability reporting requirements for the 2013-2014 school year, the NYC DOE finds the following:

Board Compliance

The Board is in compliance with:

- The Board's membership size falls within the range of no fewer than five and no greater than 15 members, as outlined in the school's charter and in the Board's bylaws.
- The Board has held the minimum number of Board meetings of at least six, as outlined in its bylaws. Based on submitted Board minutes, the Board held 10 meetings for the 2013-2014 school year in which quorum was reached.

The Board is out of compliance with:

- Currently, officer positions outlined in the Board's bylaws are filled, with the exception of the Secretary position.
- The Board did not provide written notice to the school's authorizer, NYC DOE, of the six Board member resignations, as per the school's monitoring plan.
- The Board did not submit the four new Board member candidates to the school's authorizer, NYC DOE, for approval, as per the school's charter agreement.

School Compliance

The school is in compliance with:

- All staff members have appropriate fingerprint clearance.
- The school has submitted required documentation for teacher certification and is compliant with state requirements for teacher certification.
- The school has the required number of staff with AED/CPR certification.
- The school has submitted appropriate insurance documents to the NYC DOE.
- The school has submitted its required immunization documentation and is in compliance with Department of Health standards of 99% for immunization.
- The school had an application deadline of April 1, 2014 and lottery date of April 3, 2014, adhering to charter law's requirement of accepting applications up to at least April 1.

The school is out of compliance with:

- The school leader was not trained in General Response Protocols/Fire Emergency Drill Conductor for NYC, as mandated by the NYC Fire Department as of May 2014.
- The school did not post its most recent NYSED Annual Report and annual audit to its website, as specified in charter law as of May 2014.

Essential Question 4: What are the school's plans for the next charter term?

As reported by the school's leadership, the following is noted:

- The school has not yet reached its full grade span of K-5, which it expects to reach in the 2015-2016 school year.
- The school is in its third year of operation, but the fourth year of its first charter term. The school will be up for renewal in the 2014-2015 school year.
- For its next charter term, Teaching Firms is considering expanding to include middle school grades 6 to 8, and applying to offer the Universal Pre-Kindergarten program.

Enrollment and Retention Targets

As a reminder regarding accountability in the next charter term:

- Amendments to Article 56 of the New York State Consolidated Laws: Education, which relates to Charter Schools, call for charter schools, as a consideration of renewal, "to meet or exceed enrollment and retention targets" for students with disabilities, English language learners, and students who are eligible for the free and reduced price lunch program. The amendments further indicate "Repeated failure to comply with the requirement" as a cause for revocation or termination of the charter.
 - The law directs schools to demonstrate "that it has made extensive efforts to recruit and retain such students" in the event it has not yet met its targets.
 - The NYC DOE, as authorizer, will annually monitor the school's performance against these targets and the efforts it makes to meet this state requirement.
- In school year 2013-2014 (and the two prior years) Teaching Firms served a higher percentage of students qualifying for free or reduced price lunch compared to CSD 16 and citywide averages. The school served a lower percentage of students with disabilities compared to CSD 16 and citywide averages. Teaching Firms served a higher percentage of English Language Learner students than the CSD 16 average, but a lower percentage than the citywide average.

Special Populations

	Free and Reduced Price Lunch					Students with Disabilities					English Language Learners				
	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
School	-	-	92.4%	85.6%	92.3%	-	-	10.7%	10.3%	12.1%	-	-	8.4%	6.7%	7.4%
CSD 16	-	-	81.7%	78.8%	86.0%	-	-	18.0%	17.8%	19.6%	-	-	4.0%	4.3%	4.5%
NYC	-	-	68.1%	69.8%	73.5%	-	-	15.7%	16.1%	17.1%	-	-	15.5%	15.0%	14.7%

Additional Enrollment Information					
	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
Grades Served	-	-	K-1	K-2	K-3
CSD(s)	-	-	16	16	16

Comparisons to both the CSD(s) and City are made against students in grades K-8, 9-12 or K-12 depending on the grades the school served in each school year. Special population figures are as of October 31 for each given school year, with the exception of the 2012-2013 school year, which is as of October 26, 2012.