



Charter School Renewal Report  
Charter Schools Office  
2011-2012

# **BEDFORD STUYVESANT NEW BEGINNINGS CHARTER SCHOOL ANNUAL SITE VISIT REPORT**

**APRIL 2012**

## Part 1: Executive Summary

### **School Overview and History:**

Bedford Stuyvesant New Beginnings Charter School is an elementary school serving approximately 246 students from kindergarten through fourth grade in the 2011-2012 school year.<sup>1</sup> The school opened in 2010 with grades K-3. The school is under the terms of its first charter and is expected to expand to its full grade span, K-5, during the 2012-2013 school year. The school's charter expires January 11, 2015.<sup>2</sup> The school is currently housed in a private facility in District 16.<sup>3</sup>

The school enrolls new students in grades K-4. There were 100 students on the waitlist after the Spring 2011 lottery.<sup>4</sup> The student body includes 91.0% Free and Reduced Lunch students, compared to 74.9% in the district; 12.7% special education students, compared to 20.3% in the district; and 6.1% English language learners, compared to 3.8% in the district.<sup>5</sup> The average attendance rate for the school year 2011-2012 to date was 94.2%.<sup>6</sup> The school scored Average on the Academic Expectations, Communication, and Safety & Respect sections of the NYC DOE School Survey in 2010-2011, and Below Average on the Engagement section; 66% of the school's parents responded to the survey, and 100% of the school's teachers.<sup>7</sup>

The school will be receiving its first graded NYC DOE Progress Report in 2012.<sup>8</sup> In 2010-2011, the school outperformed its Community School District in ELA and Math and also outperformed the city average in Math.<sup>9</sup>

### **Annual Review Process Overview:**

The New York City Department of Education (NYC DOE) Charter Schools Office (CSO) conducts an annual site visit of charter schools authorized by the NYC DOE. The site visit is designed to address three primary questions: is the school an academic success; is the school a fiscally sound, viable organization; and is the school in compliance with its charter and all applicable laws and regulations? To ascertain matters of sustainability and strategic planning, we also ask about the school's plans for its next charter term. The visits are conducted by representatives of the CSO and last the duration of one school day. The annual site visit begins with a meeting with the school leadership team. Afterward, the reviewers visit classrooms and hold brief meetings with available administrators and teachers. 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 site visit is intended to provide a snapshot of the school and reflects what was observed at the time of the visit.

The following experts participated in the review of this school on April 5, 2012:

- Daree Lewis, Director of Oversight, NYC DOE CSO
- Laurie Price, Director of Operations, NYC DOE CSO
- Simeon Stolzberg, Consultant

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<sup>1</sup> Self-reported by school on Annual Site Visit Data Collection Form dated 2/16/2012

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

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

<sup>4</sup> Self-reported by school on Annual Site Visit Data Collection Form dated 2/16/2012

<sup>5</sup> NYC DOE ATS system as of 4/3/2012

<sup>6</sup> Self-reported by school on Annual Site Visit Data Collection Form dated 2/16/2012

<sup>7</sup> NYC DOE School Survey – <http://schools.nyc.gov/survey>

<sup>8</sup> NYC DOE Progress Report – <http://schools.nyc.gov/progressreport>

<sup>9</sup> NYC DOE website – <http://schools.nyc.gov/> (search: test results); District and city averages are for the grade levels corresponding to the school's testing grades in specified years

## Part 2: Findings

### Areas of Strength:

- Bedford Stuyvesant New Beginnings Charter School (BSNBCS) has established a comprehensive curriculum.
  - The school's curriculum is built around commercial programs and includes supplemental materials for meeting the needs of all students. The school intends to update its curriculum with resources aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards.
  - In addition to daily periods for English language arts and mathematics, the school has a daily period dedicated to science and social studies. Associate teachers are responsible for developing lessons for these subjects.
  - All teachers participate in Saturday Academy for 3rd and 4th grade students, where test preparation is the main focus.
  - Professional development has been provided to teachers to help them understand and use curriculum resources.
- The school has generally rigorous and engaging instruction.
  - Grade teams meet regularly to plan lessons. On the day of the visit, observed instruction was organized and purposeful. Teachers had clear objectives as well as relevant activities and materials.
  - Differentiated instruction and guided reading are a school priority this year, and there was evidence of its implementation throughout the school. All grades are using guided reading with leveled groups and texts. Some teachers used centers that provided students with a range of activities, including independent reading and writing and teacher-led small group instruction. The school utilizes a range of adults, including lead, associate, (academic intervention specialist) AIS/Title I and special education teachers to provide targeted instruction within the general education classroom. In addition, some assessments are differentiated.
  - Teachers generally used effective routine and procedures to maximize time on task. Most instruction was appropriately paced and transitions were quick and efficient.
- The school has established a warm and orderly environment conducive to learning.
  - In observed classrooms, teachers had established clear procedures and routines, which students had internalized. For example, teachers used call and response techniques to gain student attention, which were typically quick and effective. Transitions between classes are silent and efficient.
  - The school had adopted Whole Brain Teaching methods and provided training to the staff in its implementation. Whole Brain Teaching rules were posted throughout the school, and teachers used the related classroom management techniques.
  - The school climate is warm and positive. Observed teachers regularly used praise to reinforce expected behaviors. In many classes students appeared enthusiastic about participating in activities and volunteering answers.
  - The school has a consistent approach to discipline. Each class uses a color coded thermometer; students start the day on green and are asked to move their name along the thermometer if they are not meeting behavior expectations. They can return to green if their behavior improves.
  - The school has systems for recognizing and celebrating positive behavior. Students whose behavior is good all week join the "Super Green Team." According the school's self-evaluation, "each of our classes has special incentives tailored to their students' needs, interests and motivators."
- The school has robust systems for collecting, analyzing and using assessment data.

- BSNBCS administers a variety of diagnostic, formative and summative assessments. Fountas and Pinnell is administered three times per year to measure student reading levels and growth. The school introduced iReady assessments this year in English language arts and mathematics for students in state testing grades, which include a series of online exams as well as pencil and paper practice tests. The commercial curriculum programs provide lesson and unit assessments, which are augmented with teacher-developed assessments. Finally, the school created common writing rubrics, which were evident in Progress Writing Wall folders containing student work.
  - The school uses Teacher Ease to collect and store student performance data, including anecdotal information, which is then accessible to other teachers and parents. The iReady assessment results are also in a digital system that provides a range of reports to teachers and administrators. In addition, all teachers maintain data binders that include ongoing student assessments and results. Monitoring of student progress was evident; for example, the curriculum and assessment coordinator maintains a color coded wall chart of all students indicating individual changes in performance levels.
  - School leaders and teachers use assessment data to inform lesson planning, create and modify student groups for targeted instruction, and identify students for intervention.
  - Parents are provided with weekly reports about their child's performance in each subject and attainment of goals. In addition, teachers use their data binders to inform conferences with parents.
- The school has devoted considerable resources to meeting the needs of at-risk students.
    - The faculty includes an academic intervention specialist (AIS), special education and enrichment staff who provide both push-in and pull-out services. The school's use of Teacher Ease facilitates sharing of lesson plans and coordination of instruction.
    - A supplemental reading program is aligned to the school's general reading curriculum.
    - Ongoing assessment provides teachers with useful data with which to organize fluid small groups for targeted instruction.
  - The school provides teachers with ongoing support and professional development.
    - The school has a comprehensive professional development program that is aligned to school-wide priorities and the needs of individual teachers. Teachers participate in a summer intensive before students arrive and then have half-days for staff development each month. In addition to training led by school staff, the school has employed consultants to provide training and coaching in a variety of subjects, including Whole Brain Teaching, autisms and literacy for English language learners.
    - The principal and curriculum and assessment coordinator conduct frequent classroom observations and provide teachers with regular feedback.
    - The school has formal evaluation system based on the Danielson framework for effective teaching practice. Formal evaluations are conducted quarterly and review of sample documents indicated detailed reports supported with evidence. School leaders provide weaker teachers with feedback and expectations and timelines for improvement.

#### **Areas of Growth:**

- The school should continue to develop teachers' skill in differentiating instruction to meet the needs of all students.
  - The school made differentiation a professional development priority this winter and has devoted ongoing resources and coaching to enhance implementation in classroom practice. The effectiveness of observed differentiation varied, with some instances that would have benefited from more structured centers with more varied materials and activities. For example, in one classroom some students finished their center task and sat with nothing to do until the centers rotated.
- The school should continue documented outreach to special education students in order to match district averages.

- The school's population includes 12.7% special education students, which is lower than the district average of 20.3%.
- The school should enhance the coherence of recruitment and support strategies for at-risk students.
  - The school's population includes 12.7% special education students, which is lower than the district average of 20.3%.
  - The school's population includes 6.1% English language learners (ELL), which is higher than the district average of 3.8%.
  - The needs of ELL students are primarily met through general intervention programs for struggling students such as guided reading and AIS. There is limited disaggregation of ELL students as a sub-group.
  - The special education team is in the process of defining their model and the school is planning to hire next year a director of special services to coordinate programs for at-risk students.

## Part 3: Essential Questions and Accountability Framework

### The CSO Accountability Framework

To help NYC DOE authorized charter schools better understand what we mean by success for charter schools, the NYC DOE's Charter Schools Office (CSO) has developed an Accountability Framework build around four essential questions for charter school renewal:

1. Is the school an academic success?
2. Is the school a fiscally sound, viable organization?
3. Is the school compliant with its charter and all applicable law and regulations?
4. What are the school's plans for its next charter term?

#### 1. Is the School an Academic Success?

##### 1a. High Academic Attainment and Improvement

Schools that are academic successes have many of the characteristics below:

- Meet absolute performance goals
- Meet student progress goals
- Are closing the achievement gap for at risk students, including special needs and ELL students
- Are surpassing performance of DOE identified peer-schools
- Are surpassing performance district and city proficiency or better averages
- Are meeting other rigorous academic and non-academic goals as stated in school's charter

Evidence for success might include, but not be limited to, the following depending on school configurations:

- Grades 3-8 NYS ELA Results (absolute performance, individual student progress, comparative performance to similar schools, home district or city averages, progress for at-risk populations)
- Grades 3-8 NYS Math Results (absolute performance, individual student progress, comparative performance to similar schools, home district or city averages, progress for at-risk populations)
- Grades 4 and 8 NYS Science Results (absolute performance, individual student progress, comparative performance to similar schools, home district or city averages, progress for at-risk populations)
- Grades 8-12 NYS Regent Exam Results
- When applicable, NYSAA or other approved alternate assessments results
- HS 4- and 6-Year Graduation Rates (absolute and progress, overall, for at-risk student populations)
- Grades 8-12 College Readiness Credit Accumulation
- Percentage of Students Applying to and Being Admitted to College
- Percentage of Students Taking AP Courses and/or Percentage of Students Passing AP Courses
- Results on state accountability measures
- Charter School Academic and Non-Academic Goals
- NYC Progress Reports

##### 1b. Mission and Academic Goals

Schools with successful missions and goals have many of the characteristics below:

- Have an animating mission statement that staff, students and community embrace
- Set ambitious academic and non-academic goals that entire school community knows and embraces
- Have processes for regular monitoring and reporting on progress toward school goals
- Have processes for adjusting strategies in support of goals as appropriate in response to monitoring data

Evidence for successful missions and goals might include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Mission statement, charter, external documents (parent and family handbooks, school website, etc.)
- Annual reports, school improvement plans, leadership board reports
- Board agendas and minutes
- Parent, student, and teacher satisfaction surveys
- Participation at parent-teacher conferences, school advocacy events, participation in academic goal related programs

### **1c. Responsive Education Program**

Schools with successful education programs have many of the characteristics below:

- Are self-reflective and examine practice based on outcomes against goals
- Have well-thought out curricular programs that are aligned with NYS learning outcomes as described by state standards and the new Common Core Curriculum.
- Use instructional models and resources consistent with school mission and that are flexible in addressing the needs of all learners
- Have defined strategies that they can measure and monitor for closing the achievement gap
- Offer defined opportunities for remediation and acceleration
- Implement a coherent and effective interim assessment system (e.g., use of formative, interim, and summative assessment data) for monitoring progress, predicting performance, and adjusting instruction
- Have an effective process for supporting improved classroom instruction, including frequent observation and feedback
- Have effective strategies and quality instructional programs for addressing students with special needs and ELLs
- Use a defined process for evaluating curricular tasks, programs and resources for effectiveness and fit with school mission and goals

Evidence for successful education programs, in addition to positive results, may include, but not be limited to, many of the following:

- Instructional planning documents (alignments, scope and sequences, curriculum maps, unit and lesson plans, etc)
- Student/teacher schedules
- Classroom observations
- Student Intervention / Response to Intervention program description and resources
- Interim assessment results
- Student and teacher portfolios
- Data findings; adjusted lesson plans
- Self-assessment documentation
- Professional development plans and resources

### **1d. Learning Environment**

Schools with successful learning environments have many of the characteristics below:

- Have a strong culture that connects high academic and behavioral expectations in a way that motivates students to give their best effort academically and socially
- Use a comprehensive approach to student management, including positive behavioral expectations and a clear discipline policy to build and sustain a safe, orderly, and supportive classroom environment
- Provide for safe, respectful, efficient transitions, hallways, cafeteria, yard, etc.
- Have classrooms where academic risk-taking and student participation is encouraged and supported
- Provide opportunities for students to actively engage in their own learning and in the life of the school

- Have a formal or informal character education, social development, or citizenship program that provides opportunities to develop as individuals and citizens

Evidence for successful learning environments may include, but not be limited to, many of the following:

- School mission and articulated values
- Student management plan (code of conduct, school values, discipline policy, positive incentive system, etc.)
- Student attendance and retention rates
- Student discipline data
- DOE School Survey student results
- DOE School Survey parent and teacher safety and respect results
- Self-administered satisfaction survey results
- Leadership, staff, and, if appropriate, student interviews
- Classroom observations
- Scheduled student engagement opportunities (e.g., student advisory, internships, student government, student led conferences, peer tutoring, peer mediation, etc.)

## 2. Is the School a Fiscally Sound, Viable Organization?

### 2a. Governance Structure and Organizational Design

Schools with successful governance and organizational design structures have many of the characteristics below:

- Operate with a clearly articulated governance structure, compliant with its charter and all applicable laws and regulations
- Have a capable Board of Trustees with appropriate blend of skills and experiences to provide oversight and strategic direction to fulfill the mission and goals of its charter
- Have a Board that is fully compliant with all applicable laws and regulations, particularly but not limited to open-meeting laws and conflict of interest regulations
- Have developed a succession plan for board and school leadership, consistent with the charter and Board by-laws, to ensure continuity of direction and leadership over time and despite circumstance
- Implements a school leadership structure that is aligned with charter and that is sufficient to fulfill school's mission and achieve its accountability goals; it also has clear lines of accountability for leadership roles, accountability to Board, and, if applicable, relationship with a charter management organization
- Have timely and appropriate access to legal counsel
- Implemented a process for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the school's organization and leadership structure
- Have instructional leadership staffing and support structures that holds staff accountable for student learning outcomes and provide regular feedback on instruction to teachers

Evidence for school governance and organizational design may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- School charter
- Board by-laws, roster, trustee resumes, meeting agenda and minutes
- Annual conflict of interest forms
- Staff roster, job descriptions, staff handbook, operations manual
- School calendar, professional development plan

### 2b. School Climate and Community Engagement

Schools with a sustaining school climate and engaged parent and community support have many of the characteristics below:

- A healthy professional school climate that is collaborative, student centered, and open to parents and community support
- An effective process for recruiting, hiring, supporting, and evaluating leadership and staff
- A flexible, data-driven approach to professional development for all staff
- An effective way of measuring and monitoring core constituency satisfaction (parent, staff, and, when age appropriate, student), including the DOE School Survey
- Effective home-school communication practices to ensure meaningful parent involvement in the learning of their children
- Strong community-based partnerships and advocacy for the school

Evidence for school climate and community engagement may include, but not be limited to, the following:

- DOE School Survey satisfaction parent, teacher, and, if appropriate student results
- Student retention and wait list data
- Staff retention data
- Leadership, staff, parent, student interviews
- Student and staff attendance rates
- Parent attendance at parent-teacher conferences
- Parent association meeting calendar and minutes
- Community partnerships and sponsored programs

## **2c. Financial and Operational Health**

Schools that are responsible stewards of public funds and effective, sustaining organizations have many of the characteristics below:

- Consistently meet its student enrollment and retention targets
- Annual budgets that meets all short- and long-term financial responsibilities with available revenues
- School leadership and Board that oversee financial and operational responsibilities in a manner that keeps the school's mission and academic goals central to decision-making
- Boards and school leadership that maintain effective internal controls of finances to ensure integrity of financial management and a proactive approach to mitigating risk
- Consistently clean financial audits
- If applicable, strong, accountable partnerships with management organizations and other partners and significant vendors to support delivery of chartered school design and academic program
- A safe, clean and appropriately resourced educational facility with all appropriate services specified in charter and mandated by appropriate law and regulations

Evidence for a financially sound, viable organization may include, but not be limited to, the following:

- School budget, P&Ls, and monthly/quarterly cash-flow reports
- Appropriate insurance documents
- Required facility documents (lease, certificate of occupancy, fire and safety inspections, etc.)
- Financial audits
- Financial leader(s) resume and accountability documents
- Operational policies and procedures
- Operational org chart
- Secure storage areas for student and staff records
- Policies/protocols for maintaining secure records
- School safety plan

### 3. Is the School in Compliance with its Charter and All Applicable Law and Regulations?

#### 3a. Approved Charter and Agreement

Schools in substantial compliance with their charter and agreement have:

- Implemented the key features of their charter as described in the original charter and as modified in approved revisions to their charter, including but not limited to mission, academic program, school organization, grade configuration, enrollment, goals, etc.
- Ensure that update-to-date charter is publicly available to staff, parents, and school community
- Implemented comprehensive academic, behavioral, oversight, management, and operational policies and procedures that are substantially aligned with the charter and the school's stated mission and vision

Evidence for a school's compliance with the terms of its charter and charter agreement may include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Authorized charter and signed agreement
- Charter revision request approval and documentation
- School mission
- School policies and procedures
- Site visits
- Board meetings, agendas and minutes
- Leadership/board interviews

#### 3b. Applicable Federal and State Law

Schools in substantial compliance with federal and state law have:

- Met all legal requirements for Title I and IDEA regulations and reporting
- Comparable enrollment of FRL, ELL and Special Education students to those of their district of location *or* are making documented good faith efforts to reach comparable percentages
- Implemented school policies related to student discipline and promotion and retention that are fully compliant with laws and regulations related to students with disabilities and due process regulations
- Conducted independently verified fair and open lottery and manage with integrity enrollment process and annual waiting lists
- Employed instructional staff with appropriate security clearances and certification requirements

Evidence for compliance with applicable federal and state law may include, but not be limited to, the following:

- School reporting documents
- School's Annual Report
- Student recruitment plan and resources
- Student management policies and promotion and retention policies
- Student discipline records
- Lottery policy, resources, and records; enrollment procedures and records
- Staff roster, fingerprint clearance for all staff, certification status of all instructional staff

#### 3c. Applicable Regulations

Schools in substantial compliance with applicable regulations have:

- Safe and secure facilities with no significant compliance concerns with applicable regulations
- Consistently clean annual audits, up-to-date escrow accounts, and have completed all other financial reporting as required
- Boards that meet requirements for size, meeting frequency, public notice, applicable open-meeting and conflict of interest regulations, as well as complying with NYC DOE CSO's requirements for reporting changes in board membership and securing approval for new board members.
- Informed NYCDOE CSO, and where required, received CSO approval for changes in significant partnerships, such as dropping/replacing a management organization
- Effectively engaged parent associations

Evidence for compliance with applicable regulations may include, but not be limited to, the following:

- School or building safety plan; appropriate inspection documents
- Annual audits, escrow accounts, other financial reporting documents
- Board roster, calendar, agenda and minutes, conflict of interest documents, notification of changes/approval of new member request documents
- Charter revision requests, revised or new contracts
- Parent association calendar of meetings, identified officers, parent association agenda and minutes, parent satisfaction survey results
- Interviews

#### **4. What Are the School's Plans for its Next Charter Term?**

##### **4a. School Expansion or Model Replication**

In anticipation of a new charter term schools may be considering various growth options: replication, expansion to new grades or increased enrollment or altering their model in some significant way. Successful schools generally have processes for:

- Conducting needs/opportunity assessments
- Forming Board and leadership committees or subcommittees to investigate options, develop action plans, ensure capacity and resources are aligned, etc.
- Engaging school community in articulating charter revisions (or a new charter in cases of replication) to address the proposed growth plans
- Ensuring that the final proposal is ambitious but realistic in its plans
- Creating a well-reasoned and documented prospective for the school's new charter term and, if applicable, a new charter proposal (for replication)

Evidence for likely success in planning for school growth in a new charter term may include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Application Part I: Retroactive Analysis, including performance results and analyses of the current charter term
- Application Part II: Prospective Analysis, including mission, program description, governance, organization, budget, etc. for new term
- Leadership and Board interviews

##### **4b. Organizational Sustainability**

Successful schools consistently perform despite change. While there is no single path for ensuring sustainability, successful schools often have the following features:

- School anticipates organizational opportunities/needs and plans for resource development (human resource policies for growing your own talent, for example, or fundraising or budget management to take care of anticipated capital needs and to mitigate risks for the unexpected, or board development to bring new talent or specific needs-based expertise to the school)

Evidence for organizational sustainability may include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Board roster and resumes
- Board committees and minutes
- School organization chart
- Staff rosters
- Staff handbook
- Leadership and staff interviews
- Budget

#### **4c. School or Model Improvements**

Successful schools are thoughtful about the continued appropriateness of school design features and elements of their models. They:

- Review performance carefully and even if they don't make major changes through expansion or replication, they are careful to adjust elements to ensure continued and improved success.
- Develop plans to improve the school learning environment, including improving their facilities to expand program offerings and/or developing new partnerships to further the school's mission.

Evidence for successful improvements to a school's program or model may include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Application Part I: Retroactive Analysis, including performance results and analyses of the current charter term
- Application Part II: Prospective Analysis, including mission, program description, governance, organization, budget, etc. for new term
- Leadership and board interviews
- MOUs or contracts with partners