



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

BROOKLYN CHARTER SCHOOL
ANNUAL SITE VISIT REPORT

MAY 2010

Part 1: Executive Summary

School Overview and History:

Brooklyn Charter School is an elementary school serving approximately 230 students from kindergarten through grade 5 in the 2009-2010 school year.¹ The school opened in 2000 with kindergarten and grade 1 and is currently operating at scale.² The school is currently housed in a DOE facility in District 14.³

The school population comprises 86% Black, 7% Hispanic, 2% White, and 1% Asian students. 74% of students are designated at Title I.⁴ The student body includes 0 English language learners and 10% special education students. Boys account for 45% of the students enrolled and girls account for 55%.⁵

The school earned a D on its progress report in 2010, a C on its progress report in 2009, and an A in 2008. The average attendance rate for the school year 2009 - 2010 was 93.7%.⁶ The school is in good standing with state and federal accountability.⁷

Annual Review Process Overview:

The NYC DOE Charter Schools 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 Schools 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
- Aamir Raza, Director of Oversight and Policy, NYC DOE Charter Schools Office

¹ NYC DOE ATS system

² NYC DOE ATS system and charter agreement

³ NYC DOE Location Code Generating System database

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

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

⁶ NYC DOE School Progress Report. This document is posted on the NYC DOE website at <http://www.schools.nyc.gov> and is also included in Part 7 of this report.

⁷ New York State Education Department - www.nysed.gov

Part 2: Findings

What the school does well

- The school has engaged in a process of teaching and learning that inspires excellence in increasing academic rigor, promoting lifelong learning, building self-respect, and developing responsible citizenry.
 - Teachers use leveled readers and pull from classroom libraries to enrich the curriculum; moreover, every student has a subscription to *Time for Kids Magazine*.
 - Students in K – 2 focus on phonetic codes using the *Phono-Graphix* methodology. In grades 3 – 5 students participate in *Test Prep* units as well as after-school tutoring sessions using a combination of *Kaplan*, *Buckle Down* and *NYS Mathematics Booklets*.
 - The school utilizes widely-respected programs in mathematics to enrich instruction: TERC Investigations in Number, Data and Space as well as Scott Foresman-Addison Wesley skills based material.
 - In social studies, the school focuses on project-based instruction and research practices. In K – 3 the Nystrom program emphasizes geography, world history, and the history of the United States. In grades 4 – 5 students use McGraw-Hill combined with components from the Teachers' Curriculum Institute.
 - Science is inquiry-based in all grades. Students participate in scientific experiments through hands-on and experimental activities. Students demonstrate their knowledge by producing their own science experiments and celebrating their achievements at an annual Science Fair.
 - The school exposes students to a variety of ancillary programs in the arts, music, visual arts and dance.
- The school has established a structured policy in which data informs promotion decisions on all grade levels.
 - A series of benchmark testing tools are used on each grade level: the Fountas and Pinnell Assessment System, the Early Childhood Mathematics Assessment (ECMA), and the Early Performance in Language Arts assessment (E-PAL).
 - In grades K – 5 students are held to clearly delineated criteria about attendance, benchmark testing, and teacher recommendations in order to determine promotion.
- Organizational structures are in place to ensure discipline, daily attendance, school safety, and health.
 - Discipline policy is written with specific guidelines, interventions and consequences to prevent and correct unwanted behavior; it allows children to understand choices, consequences, and the effect behavior has on learning.
 - Student dress code is enforced to ensure that students are focused on academic achievement.
 - Absences and tardiness are addressed and appropriate follow-up is enacted.
 - Expectations, requirements and consequences are made clear and enforced to ensure that arrival and dismissal procedures and practices promote a secure and safe environment.
- Continuous parent communication is considered paramount, as evidenced by multiple practices that are consistently utilized.
 - Phone numbers for staff (land and cell) are made available to all members of the school community.

- News Flash Notices, calendars, newsletters, daily posted schedules of teachers, curricular celebrations, and family involvement days alert parents to school-wide developments.
- Home visits, monthly progress reports, incident logs, and teacher conferences keep parents apprised about their children's progress.
- The school is in good financial condition and maintains appropriate internal controls.
 - As of April 30, 2010, the school possessed \$2,823,746 in current assets and \$847,324 in current liabilities. Therefore, for each dollar in current liability, the school possesses \$3.33 in current assets to meet its obligations.
 - The school's long-term financial outlook appears good based on the total assets of \$2,934,174 and total liabilities of \$847,324. Therefore, for each dollar in long-term liability, the school possesses \$3.46 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.
 - The board reviews reporting from the management, academic committee, standardized test data, attendance and suspension figures besides other statistics.
 - The board plans to have a retreat to assess board effectiveness and strategic planning.

What the school needs to improve

- The staff social worker's wide range of crisis intervention services are limited by space restrictions.
 - Currently, the social worker must share classrooms and offices during counseling sessions, which presents a challenge to confidentiality.
- The student ELL population does not match that of District 14.
 - Reviewers did not observe a targeted outreach effort to the ELL population in the district. It is suggested that the school consider targeted outreach strategies in order to attract and retain more ELL students.

Part 3: Framing Questions

FRAMING QUESTIONS:

Throughout the Renewal Process and the life of each school's charter, the NYC DOE Charter Schools 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