



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

BRONX ACADEMY OF PROMISE  
CHARTER SCHOOL  
ANNUAL SITE VISIT REPORT

MAY 2010

# Part 1: Executive Summary

## **School Overview and History:**

Bronx Academy of Promise Charter School is an elementary and middle school serving approximately 250 students from kindergarten through grade 3 in the 2009-2010 school year.<sup>1</sup> The school opened in 2008 with grades K-1 and will grow to serve students up to grade 8.<sup>2</sup> It is currently housed in a private facility in District 9.<sup>3</sup>

The school population is comprised of 54% Black, 43% Hispanic, 0% White, and 0% Asian students. 91% of students are designated as Title I.<sup>4</sup> The student body includes 21% English language learners and 11% special education students. Boys account for 46% of the students enrolled and girls account for 54%.<sup>5</sup>

The school has not yet earned a Progress Report. The average attendance rate for the school year 2008 - 2009 was 94%.<sup>6</sup> The school is not in good standing with state and federal accountability.<sup>7</sup>

## **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:

- Sylvia Rabiner, Education Consultant
- Aamir Raza, Director of Oversight, Charter School Office – NYC DOE

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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.

<sup>6</sup> 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.

<sup>7</sup> New York State Education Department - [www.nysed.gov](http://www.nysed.gov)

## Part 2: Findings

### What the school does well

- The school has high academic expectations and employs strategies for the full range of students served including special needs and English Language Learners
  - The school curriculum in English, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies is mapped to State Standards designed around monthly Focus calendars for every grade.
  - Learning objectives are clearly visible in every classroom and align with the state standards. For example, student work exhibited in a third grade ELA class stated that students “Interpret information by drawing on prior knowledge”.
  - An emphasis on critical thinking was observed in a third grade literacy classroom where students were analyzing the motivation of different characters in a text, in a first grade classroom where students shared writing in which they had described an object and determined its importance, and in Kindergarten where students were using various strategies to pronounce words.
  - School wide lessons are developed using consistent templates which focus on key vocabulary, key questions, learning activities and clear and measurable outcomes for what students will know and do.
  
- The school utilizes differentiated instruction and an integrated curriculum to promote content proficiency and actively engage students.
  - Students were actively engaged in a variety of instructional activities including whole class instruction, small group instruction, individually utilized audio books, individually utilized computer instruction, and individual instruction.
  - In a first grade reading workshop, students worked at six different stations while one teacher circulated and the second teacher assisted three children who needed additional reading support.
  - ELL and students with special needs are assisted in pull-out groups of 3 to 4 students.
  - A wide variety of multilevel texts and materials are available in all classroom libraries.
  
- The school fosters a safe and comfortable learning environment which encourages both student academic achievement and teacher professional development.
  - Classrooms are clean and attractive with an abundance of teaching tools, charts, and visual aides posted to keep students focused and on task.
  - Positive student behavior is continually affirmed. “Pennies” were awarded to students for positive behavior. There is a monthly whole school meeting for celebrating individual students and class rooms which exhibit positive behaviors.
  - Teachers are provided with common planning time from 12:30-3:30 once a month for a full faculty meeting, as well as grade team meeting time three days weekly for 45 minutes. In addition, teachers attend professional development for two weeks in August.
  
- The school employs rigorous assessment and data-tracking tools to monitor student performance and behavior and to inform teaching and learning.
  - The school uses the Terra Nova assessment in the fall to determine student skill groupings and again in the spring to measure gains.
  - The Houghton Mifflin and Saxon assessments are used to determine student progress and to realign student groupings.
  - Assessment data is formally reviewed three times yearly to determine student progress, identify students in need of academic intervention, inform instruction, curriculum and professional development.

- The school is in weak financial condition but maintains appropriate internal controls.
  - As of May 31, 2010, the school possessed \$247,223 in current assets and \$449,862 in current liabilities. Therefore, for each outstanding dollar in current liability, the school possessed \$0.55 in current assets to meet its obligations.
  - The school's long-term financial outlook appears weak based on the total assets of \$370,167 and total liabilities of \$449,862. Therefore, for each dollar in long-term liability, the school possessed \$0.82 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 gets reporting from the Principal, Terra Nova, data consultant report, income statement and balance sheet besides other statistics.
  - The Board plans to expand and bring fiscal, authorizing, and public relations expertise.

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

- The school is encouraged to continue its professional development to deepen teacher understanding of differentiated instruction and higher order thinking. The school is also encouraged to expand teacher strategies for the implementation of differentiation and higher order thinking in classroom practice
- The school's Board of Trustees has done limited fundraising to date. The Board, in collaboration with the school, should increase its fundraising efforts to meet the increased expenses the school will incur after its move to a new site next January.
- The school is encouraged to continue its collaborative work in curriculum planning and cross grade conversations to articulate with the additional grades it will serve.

## **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 follows up.
    - School demonstrates a comprehensive recruitment, enrollment and retention approach that are 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.