



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

SUMMIT ACADEMY
CHARTER SCHOOL
ANNUAL SITE VISIT REPORT

APRIL 2010

Part 1: Executive Summary

School Overview and History:

Summit Academy Charter School is a middle/high school serving approximately 94 students in grade 6 in the 2009-2010 school year.¹ The school opened in 2009 with grade 6. It has plans to grow to serve students grades 6 through 12.² It is currently housed in P.S. 27 in District 15.³

The school population comprises 62% Black, 17% Hispanic, 2% White, and 1% Asian students. 78% of students are designated at Title I.⁴ The student body includes 3% English language learners and 25% special education students. Boys account for 55% of the students enrolled and girls account for 45%.⁵

The school is in its first year of operation and has not yet received a progress report or any designation of state/federal accountability status.

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:

- Marian Mogulescu, 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.

Part 2: Findings

What the school does well:

- The school's college preparatory curriculum and differentiated instruction promote content proficiency and college readiness.
 - Teachers use direct instruction, small group work, clear group work roles, pair sharing, and whole-class discussion to construct and reinforce learning.
 - Students in need of academic intervention are provided with Collaborative Team Teaching as well as a push-in, pull-out model for certain subjects.
 - Students receive tutoring after school and enrichment on Saturdays.
 - Attractive visuals in classrooms serve as aids for content and encouragement for students to work productively.
 - Students' academic achievement and progress/improvement are recognized on classroom walls and in the hallways.

- The school's systems of assessment are used to inform teaching practices, strategies, and student learning.
 - Breakfast worksheets check for understanding; teachers use results to inform lesson planning.
 - Scholar Weekly Paycheck Reports document progress and areas to work on each week, and also serve as motivation for students to improve behavior and performance.
 - Individual and whole-class formative assessment data is gathered through a variety of means: quizzes, tests, projects, model-making, completion of class work, and Fountas & Pinnell Reading Levels.
 - The Learning Coordinator/Principal meets weekly with each subject area teacher and support staff member to share, review, and plan, and is in the classrooms frequently to observe students, assist teachers, and participate.

- The school fosters a safe learning environment that encourages student expression and emphasizes academic achievement and responsibility.
 - Routines for transitions in the hallway and in the classrooms are clear and consistent from room to room and with all staff members.
 - Routines for student behavior are posted in the rooms and clearly understood by students.
 - Visual aids encourage students to be studious, critical, hardworking, organized, loyal, attentive, and resourceful.

- The school has developed a strong culture that encourages academic excellence and allows all students to interact with the learning community.
 - Students have job responsibilities in the classrooms.
 - Monday Whole School Advisory sessions work on character building using the framework Character Counts: Trustworthiness, Respect, Responsibility, Fairness, Caring, and Citizenship. Advisory sessions explore this theme and address academic, social, and emotional issues and concerns.
 - Community service includes integrated Thanksgiving and Christmas projects with local agencies and a program where Summit Academy students assist in the building with younger students.
 - Families receive a weekly newsletter of events and school news and attend monthly parent meetings.

- The school is in good financial condition and maintains appropriate internal controls.

- As of May 31, 2010, the school possessed \$433,505 in current assets and \$271,800 in current liabilities. Therefore, for each outstanding dollar in current liability, the school possessed \$1.59 in current assets to meet its obligations.
- The school's long-term financial outlook appears good based on the total assets of \$615,970 and total liabilities of \$271,800. Therefore, for each dollar in long-term liability, the school possessed \$2.27 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 Executive Director's report, dashboard, and the finance and executive committees.
 - The Board is focused on expanding membership to recruit fundraising, community member and academic expertise.

What the school needs to improve:

- The school should develop systems for consistently using school-wide academic data to inform school goals and planning.
 - Supporting existing data with a structured systemic approach will help support shared goals and interdisciplinary approaches already in place.
- The teaching of higher-order skills to complement the school's college preparatory mission was not always observed.
 - Reviewers noted opportunities for further integration of critical thinking skills into daily lesson planning.
- The school should continue to develop emotional and social developmental supports for individual students within its strong culture.
 - Reviewers did not observe small-group advisory meetings being used as an opportunity for students to develop consistent relationships with adults.

Part 3: Framing Questions

FRAMING QUESTIONS:

Throughout the Renewal Process and the life of each school's charter, the NYCDOE 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