



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

ST. HOPE LEADERSHIP ACADEMY
CHARTER SCHOOL
ANNUAL SITE VISIT REPORT

MAY 2010

Part 1: Executive Summary

School Overview and History:

St. Hope Leadership Academy Charter School is a school serving approximately 200 students from grade 5 through grade 8 in the 2009-2010 school year.¹ The school opened in 2008 with grade 5 and will grow to serve grades K-12.² It is currently housed in a DOE facility in District 5.³

The school population comprises 73% Black, 23% Hispanic, 0% White, and 0% Asian students. 80% of students are designated as Title I.⁴ The student body includes 7% English language learners and 19% special education students. Boys account for 47% of the students enrolled and girls account for 53%.⁵

The school has not yet received a Progress Report. The average attendance rate for the school year 2008 - 2009 was 95%.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:

- 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.

⁶ NYC DOE School Progress Report. This document is posted on the NYC DOE website at <http://www.schools.nyc.gov>.

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

Part 2: Findings

What the school does well

- The school leadership team and the school staff demonstrate a shared set of values and goals to support student achievement.
 - The Pledge, Pillars and Harlem acronym (Honor, Absolute Determination, Responsibility, Leadership, Excellence, Mission Done) prominently displayed around the school support the belief that “to become smarter you must work harder.” These values are also interwoven into the curriculum and learning environment.
 - The Principal meets regularly with the Directors of Curriculum and Instruction, Student Support Services, Operations, and Student Affairs to provide strong whole school support as well as individual support to the students and staff.
 - Teachers and students are encouraged to participate and share ideas; the faculty strives to develop mechanisms for an inclusive collaborative community.
 - The school focuses on developing consistent norms and expectations for all members of the community. The school has conducted a needs assessment, reached out to parents, and set community-wide norms around behavior in the school building.
 - School begins in the middle of August so that there is time during the year to provide professional development for staff; reflection on practice and sharing of strategies/approaches are structured in throughout the year.
- The school is reflective and uses a data-driven approach to inform lesson and unit planning.
 - The Fountas and Pinnell reading assessments are administered regularly and staff reviews and analyzes the results. The school uses additional strategies to meet student needs, including Reading and Writing Workshops and small group instruction.
 - Edusoft also helps teachers with understanding individual strengths and areas of growth for each student.
 - The interim assessments serve as agendas for regular subject area meetings to review and plan whole and small group lessons and activities.
 - The school has collaborated with other charter schools to visit each other and reflect on practices.
- The school uses multiple strategies to address students’ different learning styles and abilities.
 - Classrooms feature attractive visuals that reinforce concepts students may refer to, including word walls, organizational cues for writing, class topics, diagrams and charts, colorful subject packet handouts, smart boards, displays of excellent student work, and other tools to engage students in academic work.
 - Students receive academic support in small groups, flexible pull-out sessions and through individual conferences. Several classes have two teachers. A Learning Center for small group support and instruction is provided as needed for all learners, not just those with IEPs.
 - Teachers use auditory, verbal, and tactile modalities during whole class, small group and individual instruction to activate learning styles. Grammar is structured in twice a week.
 - Programming is clear and responsive to student need; while Language Arts and Math are 100 minute periods each morning, the school was able to move Science class to the morning to provide additional preparation for an upcoming standardized test; teachers push in to other subject areas where possible.

- There is CTT support in many classes.
- Teachers try to help students make connections between class material and students' personal lives, societies, and the world.
- The school fosters a safe learning environment that encourages student expression.
 - Teachers use similar strategies and phrasing to move within each lesson, check for understanding, transition from independent work to whole class instruction, and refer to class behavior expectations. Classes follow clear beginning and closing procedures.
 - Routines are clearly evident in each classroom and in the transitions between classes, the cafeteria, and physical education.
 - Photos of students working in class and participating in special events bring personalization and celebration to the learning community.
 - A school social worker and support staff provide services to students and families.
 - The school provides personalized and varied experiences for student learning through advisory and community service, afternoon electives, and two college trips a year.
 - Bulletin Boards in hallways celebrate student work including Haikus, Genetics, Ellipses, Essays, Poetry, Inventions, How Fast are You?, etc.

What the school needs to improve

- The school should continue to consider ways to implement critical thinking strategies in classroom practice,
 - such as including more Habits of Mind in lesson and unit planning to foster student analysis, interpretation, use of evidence, and supposition;
 - finding ways to incorporate more higher-order thinking skills in the unit and daily plans, in addition to teaching subject area content;
 - and continuing to expand and deepen oral presentations and project-based learning to demonstrate this mastery of concepts and material.
- The school should develop their goal-setting by considering fewer, more specific goals that are implemented over longer periods of time, which all faculty shape and collaborate on developing strategies for best practices.
- Using the clear strengths of leadership and staff, the school should continue to examine ways to help students become more independent learners, moving from teacher-directed to more student-centered activities to facilitate student ownership of their learning.

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