Lighthouse Academies
Self-Discipline Humility Intelligence Nobility Excellence

Bronx Lighthouse Charter School

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52 Chambers Street
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New York, NY 10007

May 27, 2008

Dear Jeannemarie:

Thank you and your team again for your visit to Bronx Lighthouse Charter School in April of this year and for your comprehensive report on your observations.

Attached please find a brief response to your report with some corrective actions for our school and some corrections. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Best,

Regan Kelly
Regional Director

Cc: Jeff Tsang
Reed Talada

Bronx Lighthouse Charter School

Response to DOE Annual Site Visit Comprehensive Report

DOE Recommended Improvement Action
Ensure that all teachers are equally consistent in their use of data to maximize effectiveness of their instruction and to show the progress of their students.
BLCS Response/Corrective Action
Teachers currently receive support using NWEA data to inform their instruction and to differentiate for individual or groups of students. The five full-days of professional development throughout the year have focused on this and are strategically timed to follow the release of NWEA data three times during the year. However, as noted, there is some inconsistency among teachers in the level of commitment to using data to inform and differentiate instruction consistently. During summer professional development in preparation for the 2008-2009 school year, greater emphasis will be placed on investing teachers in the consistent use of data (both from the NWEA and from curricular assessments). In addition, the professional development calendar for 2008-2009 will include more regular and consistent data "check-ins" during the interim between full-day professional development sessions (e.g., during grade level meetings).

DOE Recommended Improvement Action
Develop a consistency of practice in implementing Lighthouse expectation for classroom and behavior management.
BLCS Response/Corrective Action
BLCS has at least two structures that foster consistency among classrooms in management and expectations. First, BLCS uses Responsive Classroom as its social curriculum for all students in the school. Rather than prescribing fixed responses to specific student behaviors, Responsive Classroom provides guiding principles for teachers to follow in tailoring their responses to individual student and situational needs. Second, the school uses the *Lighthouse Academies School Culture Guide* for outlining key elements of routines and expectations in the school. However, teachers do have some flexibility within these structures for determining how they will be executed in their individual classrooms. It is duly noted that there are inconsistencies that may be taking away from the coherence of the school's culture as a whole. In preparation for the 2008-2009 school year, all new teachers, teachers not trained last year, and all upper academy (5th-6th grade) teachers will receive formal training on Responsive Classroom or Developmental Designs for Middle School (the middle school component of the Responsive Classroom curriculum) by a certified trainer. These teachers will receive additional training throughout the 2008-2009 school year and earn Responsive Classroom or Developmental Designs Level 1 certification. In addition, school site professional development this summer will include a component on the implementation of the *Lighthouse Academies School Culture Guide*.

Teachers and administration will review required components and spend time personalizing those that require elaboration by the school staff.

DOE Recommended Improvement Action
Review the issue of the direct employment of a speech teacher to better address the language difficulties of a significant number of students and increase provision.
BLCS Response/Corrective Action
After completing a cost/benefit analysis the school will maintain its current system of providing speech services. The school intends to hire a full-time speech teacher to improve services for students with speech disabilities once the number of students with such needs is sufficient to cover the costs of such a full-time position.

DOE Recommended Improvement Action
Implement the use of data to analyze difference in achievement between different groups and cohorts of students throughout the school.
BLCS Response/Corrective Action
In the 2008-2009 school year, BLCS will begin to use Pearson INFORM software for the collection of data. This new system will allow administration and teachers to see data disaggregated by groups and cohorts. It will also collect data from state assessments as well as our internal periodic assessment – the NWEA.

Below are comments included in the text of the report that were not a specific recommended improvement.

DOE Comment – Quality Statement 2 and Quality Statement 8
"What is not strongly developed is the expectation that parents will provide teachers with information about their children's needs on a regular basis." *Quality Statement 2* "Although interviewed parents had not felt the need to appeal, the school may continue communicating the appeals procedure to all parents." *Quality Statement 8*
BLCS Response/Corrective Action
• BLCS teachers regularly communicate with their students' families through yearly home visits (in the summer), quarterly conferences, monthly parent meetings, back to school night, and informal interactions in the school. These communications allow teachers to gain insight about family's perceptions of their children's needs. Parents are expected to participate in all regular meetings and conferences to provide information about their student's needs. • The current *BLCS Student-Family Handbook* states "If you are still not satisfied with the [principal's] response, you may bring your issue before the Board of Trustees, as they supervise the Principal. In order to address the Board of Trustees, please contact the Lighthouse Academies Regional Director, Regan Kelly, at 646-915-0025, ext 139. She will provide you with a full copy of the formal procedure for making a complaint to the Board; and she

can answer any questions you have about that procedure." *The 2008-2009 BLCS Student-Family Handbook* will include the formal Board Interaction and Complaint Procedure as an appendix so families have it more readily.

DOE Comment – Quality Statement 7
"During the examination and discussion, it was observed that the school's principal approves purchase orders as well as the invoices for payment. The school may consider revisiting that practice. In addition, individuals placing order of goods should not be the ones receiving goods on arrival. BLCS may think of avoiding signers having access to physical checks of the school. In general it is considered a weak practice."
BLCS Response/Corrective Action
• *Principal approval of purchase orders and invoices for payment*: At BLCS, all purchase orders require the dual signature of the principal and the Vice President of Finance for Lighthouse Academies, Inc. Invoices are approved and coded for the correct account by the principal or regional director. Once approved by the principal or regional director, the office manager posts the invoice to the accounting system for payment by the national office of Lighthouse Academies (LHA) and forwards invoices to LHA for processing and payment. The LHA senior accountant prepares checks for payment. Checks are signed by the Lighthouse Academies CEO or VP of Finance and mailed by Lighthouse Academies' senior accountant. If payment is more than $10,000 the check is signed by the CEO and VP of Finance. Having the principal approve the expenses gives him knowledge and familiarity of the accounts and better control over his budget. Having another employee approve invoices and the principal only approve a purchase order may cause confusion as there are some expenses for which purchase orders are not required, such as payroll costs, contracted services, utility and phone bills. • *Placing orders and receiving goods*: This is a correction to the information given to the DOE. The principal places all orders for goods. The goods are then received by the administrative assistant for inventorying against the order. • Per the recommendation of the DOE at the site visit, the imprest (petty-cash) checks were moved from the possession of a check signer, our office manager, to the administrative assistant's locked desk.