



Charter School Renewal Report
Charter Schools Office
2011-2012

BEGINNING WITH CHILDREN CHARTER SCHOOL ANNUAL SITE VISIT REPORT

FEBRUARY 2012

Part 1: Executive Summary

School Overview and History:

The Beginning with Children Charter School is an elementary/middle school serving approximately 444 students from kindergarten through eighth grade in the 2011-2012 school year.¹ The school converted to become a charter school in 2001 with grades K-8, making it one of the oldest charter schools in the City and among the few charter conversions. The lower school is currently housed in a DOE-leased facility in District 14, and the middle school is co-located with PS 373. The student body includes 6.3% English language learners (ELL), 17.6% students with disabilities (SWD), and 75.7% Free and Reduced Lunch students (FRL).² The school has experienced low student attrition with of 7% turnover as of February 2012.³ There are currently 2,573 students on the waitlist and the current daily attendance rate is 95%.⁴

The school earned a C on its progress report in 2010-11, a C in 2009-2010, and a B in 2008-2009. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 93.7%.⁵ The school is in good standing with state and federal accountability.⁶

The Beginning with Children Charter School (BwCCS) is part of the Beginning with Children Foundation network, a new charter management organization (CMO). The CMO provides an overarching Chief Academic Officer and an Assistant Superintendent, school leadership support and evaluation, back office support, curriculum assessment; student assessment data gathering, and technology support, among other services. BwCCS, working with and through the network, manages student information via ATS and invoices the DOE. The annual budget is created in conjunction with the Board of Trustees of the school. BwCCS is solely responsible for complying with all requirements of grants for the School, the School's governing charter, and all applicable laws. The fee structure is based on 9% of public non-competitive revenues such as per pupil funding and other public entitlement funding. As of the date of the visit, the Memorandum of Understanding between the Board of BwCCS and the CMO has not yet been executed.

Annual Review Process Overview:

The New York City Department of Education (NYC DOE) Charter Schools Office (CSO) conducts an annual site visit of charter schools authorized by the NYC DOE. The site visit is designed to address three primary questions: is the school an academic success; is the school a fiscally sound, viable organization; and is the school in compliance with its charter and all applicable laws and regulations? To ascertain matters of sustainability and strategic planning, we also ask about the school's plans for its next charter term. The visits are conducted by representatives of the CSO and last the duration of one school day. The annual site visit begins with a meeting with the school leadership team. Afterward, the reviewers visit classrooms and hold brief meetings with available administrators and teachers. 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 site visit is intended to be a snapshot of the academic year and reflects what was observed at the time of the visit.

The following experts participated in the review of this school on February 16, 2012:

- Sonia Park, Senior Director, NYC DOE CSO
- Sonya Hooks, Senior Director, NYC DOE CSO
- Etzer Botes, Director of Oversight, NYC DOE CSO
- Keisha Womack, Director of Operations, NYC DOE CSO
- Bertram Wyman, Analyst, NYC DOE CSO

¹ NYC DOE ATS system, April 2012

² Ibid.

³ BwCCS self reported School Evaluation Visit Data Collection Form (2/7/12)

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ NYC DOE School Progress Report, 2010-11.

⁶ New York State Education Department - www.nysed.gov

Part 2: Findings

Overview:

The Beginning with Children Charter School (BwCCS) was renewed for a full 5-year term in 2010-11. The renewal was conditional based on the following:

1. The school must demonstrate improved student achievement by scoring in the 25th percentile or above of all schools on the NYC DOE Progress Report within one year after renewal, in the 50th percentile or above of all schools on the NYC DOE Progress Report within two years after renewal, and in the 75th percentile or above of all schools on the NYC DOE Progress Report in each of the 3rd, 4th, and 5th years after renewal.
2. The Board must demonstrate a plan for sound oversight and evaluation of school leadership and the Beginning with Children Foundation (Foundation).
3. The school must demonstrate attainment of charter goals.

As part of the school's response to the conditions of its renewal, several changes have been instituted such as: restructuring the school with two distinct principals (one for the lower school, one for the upper); adopting a new reading program; and beginning more frequent informal classroom observations.

Areas of Strength:

- BwCCS is in compliance with the 2010 amended Charter Schools Act regarding attracting and retaining target rates for enrollment and retention of students with disabilities and Free and Reduced Lunch students.
 - 17.6% of students have individualized education programs (IEPs) and/or 504 plans. School leaders indicated a number of other students were currently in the evaluation process. The percentage of SWD the school serves is on par with Community School District (CSD) 14, which has a rate of 17.24%.⁷
 - The percentage of FRL students served (75%) is more than CSD 14, which has a rate of 63.75%.⁸
- The BwCCS Board agenda and prior Board minutes are made available to the public through the school's website, in compliance with the Open Meetings Law (OML) (New York Public Officers Law, Article 7).⁹
- The restructured school leadership, with the support of the CMO, has prioritized increasing academic rigor and student proficiency and has implemented clearly articulated higher expectations for staff and students.
 - School leaders have created specific performance goals targeting significant gains in student proficiency that reflect the school's conditions for renewal.
 - Increased urgency toward preparation for state assessments was reported by additional time allotted during the school day, after school and on Saturdays for targeted remediation and test preparation.
 - The school also provides several options for higher-performing students, including an optional Morning Math session before the school day to prepare for the high school SHSAT, the Math Regents, and Enrichment classes during the school day.
 - In addition, BwCCS uses newsletters to communicate leadership expectations to staff and families around performance and test preparation.
 - Some teachers interviewed expressed higher academic performance expectations from school leadership and reported an increase in the use of interim and mock assessments to prepare students.

⁷ NYC DOE ATS system, April 2012

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Effective February 2, 2012, OML includes a new provision, subparagraph (e) of Section 103(2), calling for release of materials discussed at board meetings.

- BwCCS is adopting curriculum and assessments more aligned to Common Core standards.
 - The School is in the third year of implementation of the TERC Investigations Mathematics program.
 - This academic year a new ELA program that school leadership believes is more aligned to the Common Core, Reading Street, has been implemented and replaced Teachers College curriculum for Readers and Writers Workshop.
- School leadership reported increasing focus on instructional rigor across the entire school.
 - Teachers interviewed discussed the greater emphasis, in comparison to last year, on rigor in the classroom, effective questioning, and instructional practices.
 - Teachers reported receiving feedback on student work and being encouraged to provide greater depth on student feedback. In addition, learning environments have become better-organized according to some teachers.
- Some classrooms observed by the reviewers demonstrated a level of rigor that reflected the leadership's priorities.
 - In both the lower and middle school grades, small group instruction was in use and students were observed to be engaged in productive work.
 - The school uses its instructional resources effectively to involve students and drive student learning, including SmartBoards in every classroom and a school library.
 - Differentiation was observed in classrooms; some classes had three or more differentiated groupings.
 - In the middle school, visited classrooms had posted objectives and expectations, and reviewed student Portfolios included rubrics and feedback based on rubrics (and in some, direct student feedback).
 - Most observed students were engaged in class and with class work and were able to articulate lessons when asked.
- BwCCS has a collaborative team-oriented culture.
 - The use of instructional support was evident as the majority of teachers interviewed discussed receiving support from the ELL and SWD coordinators. Teachers discussed having time to engage in co-planning and collaboration with instructional support staff.
 - Some teachers interviewed discussed the strong support they receive from other teachers in the same grade.
- The school is establishing a data driven culture and systems to utilize student performance data to inform academic instruction.
 - BwCCS has implemented PowerSchool school-wide, making performance data more readily available and accessible for school staff.
 - Greater collection of data via frequent assessments (running records, mock and interim, unit based) has begun this academic year. The school has administered two Common Core-aligned mock ELA and Math exams and will administer the Terra Nova exam in May.
 - Teachers reported that pre and post unit tests are administered to track student progress.
 - Teachers interviewed discussed anecdotal and quantitative data that is used to assess student's baseline performance and progress toward goals. They also stated student performance data is collected and reviewed daily. Teachers participate in monthly data inquiry teams to review student performance data to inform curriculum and instruction.
- Teacher feedback from school leadership is frequent and takes various forms.
 - Teachers interviewed reported receiving informal feedback approximately 2-3 times per week and also reported receiving formal feedback through scheduled feedback sessions.

- Some teachers reported receiving written and oral feedback on ways to improve instruction. Checklists are often provided to teachers outlining elements of the classroom or instructional practices that are effective or ineffective.
 - For example, teachers interviewed stated hearing practical feedback on how to improve bulletin boards and display of student work.
- The school maintains an orderly, positive, friendly school environment that is conducive to student learning and has established a strong school culture that promotes student achievement.
 - School has begun to emphasize a monthly Ethical Character Trait (February was *Courage*) that has become part of classroom discussions and was evidenced by acknowledgement on bulletin boards and in the Lower School newsletter.
 - School attendance has increased (94% in FY 11 to 95% to date in FY 12).
 - Interactions among all members of the school community (teachers, students, administrators) were observed to be positive.
 - In observed classrooms, most students were engaged in instruction and followed teacher directives.
 - Students did not display any significant behavioral or disciplinary issues.
 - Teachers interviewed expressed warm, positive relationship with students. They also spoke of open communication among grade level staff and ability to reach out for support.
 - Extracurricular activities include a variety of sports, debate, chess, sewing, student government, and other clubs.
 - The school has an active Parent-Teacher Association that meets monthly and encourages parental involvement. The school also offers workshops for parents which are taught by teachers.
- The operations team, both at BwCCS and CMO levels, work closely to support the day to day functions of the school as well as ensuring that state accountability measures are met. The CMO and school-level operations team meet regularly to discuss school operational issues.
 - The school has established operational procedures that are followed by school-level and CMO staff.
 - Student and staff records, which includes all employee records and student IEPs, are securely stored and their maintenance is in compliance.
 - A system has been established for teachers to review all records in their employee files in accordance with the UFT contract.
- The school has adopted a conservative budget approach.
 - The CMO operations team closely monitors pension rates that are established by the NYC Office of Actuary to ensure the appropriate funds are being set aside for the school's required contribution towards the unionized staff's pension funds.
 - The school principals are the only staff members with school credit cards.
 - The school budgets to ensure yearly surplus in the event unforeseen expenses arise.
- BwCCS has established safety measures to ensure the safety of students and staff.
 - Security was present at the entrance of the school. All visitors were required to sign in and show identification.
 - There are currently twelve trained staff members in AED/CPR Defibrillator use, which is more than State law requires and above the recommendation of the Department of Education.
 - Fire exit signs and evacuation instructions were visible in all school rooms and a log of all fire drills, for each site, were kept on record.

Areas of Growth

- BwCCS should continue to enact measures to be in full compliance with the 2010 amended Charter Schools Act. The primary area of concern regards meeting target rates for enrollment and retention for English Language Learners (ELL). For the third year in a row, BwCCS is below CSD 14 averages. The school should continue to refine and document its outreach strategies for recruitment

and retention of ELLs in order to be comparable to district CSD 14. The school reported using a variety of recruitment strategies and is developing multi-language marketing materials to reach out to families of English Language Learners. Indication that the outreach is moving in the correct direction is evidenced by the current first grade, which includes 20% ELL students.

- . BwCCS has a total population of 6.3% ELLs, which is lower than CSD 14's ELL rate of 11.40%¹⁰.
- The articulated set of goals and the school-wide, school-year focus on “questioning” wasn’t consistently reflected in the classrooms observed.
 - Reviewers noted inconsistent quality in teaching of lessons observed, and inconsistent evidence of high expectations for quality student work. The school should continue to support its teachers and staff developers in setting and maintaining high expectations for all classrooms. For example, some lower school students questioned were not able to recall the objective or directives of classroom assignments.
 - Higher order questioning was more inconsistent in observed lower grades than middle school grades. Questioning not as rigorous as it could be; there were several instances of “call and response” observed.
 - Transition between 5th grade to 6th grade has not been seamless for students. Teachers in lower grades do not regularly meet with the upper grade teachers to provide feedback and additional student information. A number of 5th students have been reported to be applying elsewhere for middle school.
- The school should continue efforts to develop and enhance systems to collect and analyze student performance data. Data driven culture still needs to be fully developed and implemented and there is a need to fully articulate analyzing student work to inform instruction.
 - While the school has begun administering interim assessments using past state test questions, it was unclear the extent to which teachers were using these results to plan their instruction.
 - Some classrooms visited lacked evidence of wrap-ups, check-lists, assessments or other checks for understanding that would allow teachers to gauge students’ learning and pinpoint misunderstandings.
 - The school has started implementing a comprehensive data system and has invested significant time and resources in an enhanced system, PowerSchool. The school is encouraged to continue to make student performance reports, including longitudinal and subgroup analysis, more readily available to teachers in the new system.
- The school should continue to train teachers to use data to inform their instruction to ensure that all students receive the support they need to perform at high levels and make progress.
 - While most teachers interviewed noted the importance of using data to differentiate instruction, in some classrooms observed it wasn’t clear to what extent teachers were using data to plan or modify their lessons to meet individual or small group needs.
 - Reviewers did note examples of data charts, graded student work, or rubrics being used in some classrooms to engage students in the learning process and support them in creating higher-quality work. Across entire school, use was inconsistent. The school provides teachers with item analysis reports broken down by performance standards and skills. However, lessons and lesson plans that were observed did not show evidence that teachers were using this data to target specific needs within the class, rather than larger school-wide or grade level concerns.
 - The school earned a C in Student Progress (16.8 out of 60), a C in Student Performance (6.3 out of 25), and a C overall (25th percentile rank) on the 2010-2011 Progress Report.

¹⁰ NYC DOE ATS system, April 2012

The school's score for ELA and math proficiency was low compared to its peer horizon schools (23.9th percentile and 20.7th percentile respectively).

- The school is encouraged to continue to develop its teacher observation evaluation and feedback processes to focus on positive reinforcement.
 - Some teachers cite the over-reliance on checklists and Do's and Don'ts as being ineffective. In addition, some of those interviewed described the feedback provided was more anecdotal rather than evidence-based.

- The school is encouraged to become more proactive with planning professional development in regards to which specific PD sessions are offered and when.
 - Some teachers reported the need for differentiated PD given the varying levels of experience of teachers at the school. In addition, the new curriculum shift was described as lacking ongoing appropriate support structures to guide teachers in their use of the curriculum. Teachers have requested additional PD to support their efforts to differentiate education with the new curriculum. The transition to Reading Street was commented on as not being wholly without issue as it was phased in and not implemented across all grades at the beginning of the school year. .
 - Some teachers also described PD sessions as not routinely scheduled and meeting during instructional time.

- BwCCS has an established school culture yet the student discipline/behavior rubric was not consistently observed across whole school. The school is encouraged to increase standardization and consistency of discipline policies.
 - Some teachers describe the discipline policy as being inconsistently applied across the school. In observed classrooms, a common language and approach was not always in evidence.

- The school should continue to improve the communication between teachers, leadership, and families.
 - Teachers reported that changes at the school are not always clearly communicated nor are the rationales for changes fully explained and transparent.
 - In the 2010-11 Learning Environment Survey teacher responses, positive response rates dropped to 61% from 78% the previous year specifically in the area of "School leaders invite teachers to play a meaningful role in setting goals and making important decisions for this school".

- At the time of the site visit, the Board had yet to finalize the contractual relationship between the school and CMO.
 - At the Board meeting held in March, the contract was discussed, in particular the increased management fee and the services that the CMO provides. The school is encouraged to formalize the nature of this relationship.

- The school should continue to establish an operations team that works specifically at the middle-school level to ensure that facilities and other day to day operational issues are being addressed.
 - During the time of the visit, the CMO was in the process of seeking an operations manager for the BwCCS middle school grades. (Subsequent to the CSO visit, an Operations Manager was hired.)

Part 3: Essential Questions and Accountability Framework

The CSO Accountability Framework

To help NYC DOE authorized charter schools better understand what we mean by success for charter schools, the NYC DOE's Charter Schools Office (CSO) has developed an Accountability Framework build around four essential questions for charter school renewal:

1. Is the school an academic success?
2. Is the school a fiscally sound, viable organization?
3. Is the school compliant with its charter and all applicable law and regulations?
4. What are the school's plans for its next charter term?

1. Is the School an Academic Success?

1a. High Academic Attainment and Improvement

Schools that are academic successes have many of the characteristics below:

- Meet absolute performance goals established in school charter
- Meet student progress goals established in school charter
- Are closing the achievement gap for at risk students, including special needs and ELL students
- Are surpassing performance of DOE identified peer-schools
- Are surpassing performance district and city proficiency or better averages
- Are meeting other rigorous academic and non-academic goals as stated in school's charter

Evidence for success might include, but not be limited to, the following depending on school configurations:

- Grades 3-8 NYS ELA Results (absolute performance, individual student progress, comparative performance to similar schools, home district or city averages, progress for at-risk populations)
- Grades 3-8 NYS Math Results (absolute performance, individual student progress, comparative performance to similar schools, home district or city averages, progress for at-risk populations)
- Grades 4 and 8 NYS Science Results (absolute performance, individual student progress, comparative performance to similar schools, home district or city averages, progress for at-risk populations)
- Grades 8-12 NYS Regent Exam Results
- When applicable, NYSAA or other approved alternate assessments results
- HS 4- and 6-Year Graduation Rates (absolute and progress, overall, for at-risk student populations)
- Grades 8-12 College Readiness Credit Accumulation
- Percentage of Students Applying to and Being Admitted to College
- Percentage of Students Taking AP Courses and/or Percentage of Students Passing AP Courses
- Results on state accountability measures
- Charter School Academic and Non-Academic Goals
- NYC Progress Reports

1b. Mission and Academic Goals

Schools with successful missions and goals have many of the characteristics below:

- Have an animating mission statement that staff, students and community embrace
- Set ambitious academic and non-academic goals that entire school community knows and embraces
- Have processes for regular monitoring and reporting on progress toward school goals
- Have processes for adjusting strategies in support of goals as appropriate in response to monitoring data

Evidence for successful missions and goals might include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Mission statement, charter, external documents (parent and family handbooks, school website, etc.)
- Annual reports, school improvement plans, leadership board reports
- Board agendas and minutes
- Parent, student, and teacher satisfaction surveys
- Parent association meeting agendas and minutes
- Participation at parent-teacher conferences, school advocacy events, participation in academic goal related programs
- Stakeholder (board, parents, staff, students, etc.) interviews

1c. Responsive Education Program

Schools with successful education programs have many of the characteristics below:

- Are self-reflective and examine practice based on outcomes against goals
- Have well-thought out curricular programs that are aligned with NYS learning outcomes as described by state standards and the new Common Core Curriculum.
- Use instructional models and resources consistent with school mission and that are flexible in addressing the needs of all learners
- Offer defined opportunities for remediation and acceleration
- Have effective strategies and quality instructional programs for addressing students with special needs and ELLs
- Have defined strategies that they can measure and monitor for closing the achievement gap
- Implement a coherent and effective interim assessment system (e.g., use of formative, interim, and summative assessment data) for monitoring progress, predicting performance, and adjusting instruction
- Have an effective process for supporting improved classroom instruction, including frequent observation and feedback
- Use a defined process for evaluating curricular tasks, programs and resources for effectiveness and fit with school mission and goals
- Have school calendars and day schedules that provide the time necessary to deliver on the school's mission and academic goals

Evidence for successful education programs, in addition to positive results, may include, but not be limited to, many of the following:

- Instructional planning documents (alignments, scope and sequences, curriculum maps, unit and lesson plans, etc)
- Student/teacher schedules
- Classroom observations
- Student Intervention / Response to Intervention program description and resources

- Special Education/ELL progress monitoring documentation
- Interim assessment results
- Student and teacher portfolios
- Data findings; adjusted lesson plans
- Self-assessment documentation
- Professional development plans and resources
- School calendar and daily schedules
- DOE School Surveys and internal school satisfaction surveys
- Instructional leader and staff interviews

1d. Learning Environment

Schools with successful learning environments have many of the characteristics below:

- Have a strong academic culture that creates high academic and behavioral expectations in a way that motivates students to consistently give their best efforts
- Use a comprehensive approach to student management, including positive behavioral expectations and a clear discipline policy to build and sustain a safe, orderly, and supportive classroom environment
- Provide for safe, respectful, efficient transitions, hallways, cafeteria, yard, etc.
- Have classrooms where academic risk-taking and student participation is encouraged and supported
- Provide opportunities for students to actively engage in their own learning and in the life of the school
- Have a plan with formal or informal structures or programs in place that provide students opportunities to develop as individuals and citizens (for example: a character education, citizenship, or community involvement or service program)

Evidence for successful learning environments may include, but not be limited to, many of the following:

- School mission and articulated values
- School calendar and class schedules
- Student management plan (code of conduct, school values, discipline policy, positive incentive system, etc.)
- Student attendance and retention rates
- Student discipline data (referral, suspension, expulsion)
- DOE School Survey student results
- DOE School Survey parent and teacher safety and respect results
- Parent complaint/concern information
- Internal satisfaction survey results
- Leadership, staff, and, if appropriate, student interviews
- Classroom observations
- Scheduled student engagement opportunities (e.g., student advisory, internships, student government, student led conferences, peer tutoring, peer mediation, etc.)

2. Is the School a Fiscally Sound, Viable Organization?

2a. Governance Structure and Organizational Design

Schools with successful governance and organizational design structures have many of the characteristics below:

- Have a clearly articulated governance structure, compliant with its charter and all applicable laws and regulations, with clear lines of accountability for the Board, school leadership and all staff
- Have a capable Board of Trustees with appropriate officers, committees, and a purposeful blend of skills and experiences to provide oversight and strategic direction to fulfill the mission and goals of its charter
- Have a Board that is fully compliant with all applicable laws and regulations, particularly but not limited to open-meeting laws and conflict of interest regulations, and is fully compliant with its Board approved by-laws (number of meetings, quorum, posting of calendar, agenda and minutes)
- Have a defined process for Board reflection on effectiveness, assessing developing needs, and plan for professional growth
- Have developed a succession plan for board and school leadership, consistent with the charter and Board by-laws, to ensure continuity of direction and leadership over time and despite circumstance
- Implements a school leadership structure that is aligned with charter and that is sufficient to fulfill school's mission and achieve its accountability goals and, if and when necessary, makes timely adjustments to that structure with proper notice to and approval by its authorizer
- If applicable, school relationship with a charter management organization is identified in charter and supported by a management agreement that spells out services, responsibilities, accountability reporting, performance expectations, and fees
- Have timely and appropriate access to legal counsel
- Implements a process for recruiting, hiring, compensating, monitoring, and evaluating the effectiveness of the school's staff that is clearly defined in staff handbook
- Have instructional leadership staffing and support structures that holds staff accountable for student learning outcomes and provide regular feedback on instruction to teachers, including both formal and informal observations

Evidence for school governance and organizational design may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- School charter
- Board by-laws, roster, trustee resumes, calendar of meetings, meeting agenda and minutes
- Annual conflict of interest forms
- Board resources for evaluating school leadership and staff, including rubric/performance metrics
- Board resources for self-reflection and professional growth
- Board development plan
- Board interviews
- Staff roster, job descriptions, staff handbook, operations manual
- School calendar
- Professional development plan for leadership staff
- School leadership and staff interviews

2b. School Climate and Community Engagement

Schools with a sustaining school climate and engaged parent and community support have many of the characteristics below:

- Create and maintain a healthy professional school climate that is collaborative, student centered, and aligned with school mission and values
- Implement flexible, data-driven approach to professional development for all staff
- Encourage professional conversations about effective performance and quality instruction among staff, through, for example, such means as regular and periodic teaming (grade level teams, data days, etc.) and peer observations
- Have systems in place to evaluate professional development effectiveness and provide ongoing support for school-wide and individual initiatives
- Employ an effective means of measuring and monitoring core constituency satisfaction (parent, staff, and, when age appropriate, student), including, but not limited to, the DOE School Survey
- Have effective home-school communication practices and engagement strategies to ensure meaningful parent involvement in the learning of their children
- Engage parents actively in the life of the school, including advocacy, community engagement, and feedback on school policies and initiatives
- Develop strong community-based partnerships who support and advocate for the school
- Have a clear procedure for parents and staff to express concerns to school leadership and the Board, as appropriate, including a clearly articulated escalation path to authorizer

Evidence for school climate and community engagement may include, but not be limited to, the following:

- DOE School Survey satisfaction parent, teacher, and, if appropriate student results
- Internal satisfaction surveys
- Staff handbook
- Student retention and wait list data
- Staff retention data
- School Professional Development Plan and staff feedback on professional development events
- Resources for evaluations and observations, scheduled opportunities for professional collaboration, staff feedback on professional development events
- Leadership, staff, parent, student interviews
- Student and staff attendance rates
- Parent/Student Handbook
- Parent attendance at parent-teacher conferences
- Parent association meeting calendar and minutes
- Community partnerships and sponsored programs
- Parent and community feedback via public hearings, renewal calls to parents, etc.
- Community outreach documents (newsletters, announcements, invitations, etc.)

2c. Financial and Operational Health

Schools that are responsible stewards of public funds and effective, sustaining organizations have many of the characteristics below:

- Consistently meet student enrollment and retention targets
- Maintain annual budgets that meet all short- and long-term financial responsibilities with available revenues
- Provide rigorous oversight of financial and operational responsibilities, as school leadership and Board levels, in a manner that keeps the school's mission and academic goals central to short- and long-term decision-making

- Have clearly established policies and procedures for overall fiscal and operational health of the school (onboarding of all new staff, record-keeping, processing requests of HR services, application and enrollment calls, visitors, volunteers, etc.)
- Maintain effective internal controls of finances to ensure integrity of financial management and a proactive approach to mitigating risk
- Receive consistently clean financial audits
- If applicable, have strong, accountable partnerships with management organizations and other partners and significant vendors to support delivery of charter school design and academic program
- Ensure a safe, clean and appropriately resourced educational facility with all appropriate services specified in charter and mandated by appropriate law and regulations
- Have appropriate insurance coverage

Evidence for a financially sound, viable organization may include, but not be limited to, the following:

- School budget, P&Ls, and monthly/quarterly cash-flow reports
- Financial leader(s) job description, resume and accountability documents
- Financial and operational organizational chart
- Financial audits
- Contracts or Memos of Understanding (MOUs) for significant partnerships and vendor relationships
- Operational policies and procedures, including training resources
- Staff turnover and retention records
- Secure storage areas for student and staff records
- Policies/protocols for maintaining secure records
- Required facility documents (lease, certificate of occupancy, fire and safety inspections, etc.)
- School safety plan
- Appropriate insurance documents

3. Is the School in Compliance with its Charter and All Applicable Law and Regulations?

3a. Approved Charter and Agreement

Schools in substantial compliance with their charter and agreement have:

- Implemented the key features of their charter as described in the original charter and, if appropriate, as modified in approved revisions to their charter, including but not limited to mission, academic program, school organization, grade configuration, enrollment, goals, etc.
- Ensure that up-to-date charter is available on request to staff, parents, and school community
- Implemented comprehensive academic, behavioral, oversight, management, and operational policies and procedures that are substantially aligned with the charter and the school's stated mission and vision

Evidence for a school's compliance with the terms of its charter and charter agreement may include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Authorized charter and signed agreement
- Charter revision request approval and documentation

- School mission
- School policies and procedures
- Annual Site Visit reports
- Board meetings, agendas and minutes
- Leadership, Board, staff and community interviews
- Public hearings (renewal or material revision hearings)

3b. Applicable Federal and State Law

Schools in substantial compliance with federal and state law:

- Meet all legal requirements for Title I and IDEA regulations and reporting
- Meet or exceed enrollment and retention targets for FRL, ELL and Special Education students to those of their district of location¹¹ or are making documented good faith efforts to reach comparable percentages for enrollment and retention
- Implement school policies related to student discipline and promotion and retention that are fully compliant with laws and regulations related to students with disabilities and due process regulations
- Conduct an independently verified fair and open lottery and manage with integrity enrollment process and annual waiting lists
- Employ instructional staff with appropriate security clearances and certification requirements

Evidence for compliance with applicable federal and state law may include, but not be limited to, the following:

- School reporting documents
- School's Annual Report
- Student recruitment plan and resources
- Student management policies and promotion and retention policies
- Family/Student handbook
- Student discipline records
- Parent complaint/grievance records
- Lottery policy, resources, and records; enrollment procedures and records
- Demographic data (school, district, and other as appropriate)
- Staff roster, fingerprint clearance for all staff, certification status of all instructional staff

3c. Applicable Regulations

Schools in substantial compliance with applicable regulations have:

- Safe and secure facilities with no significant compliance concerns with applicable regulations
- Consistently clean annual audits, up-to-date escrow accounts, and have completed all other financial reporting as required
- Boards that meet requirements for size, meeting frequency, public notice, applicable open-meeting and conflict of interest regulations, as well as complying with NYC DOE CSAS's requirements for reporting changes in board membership and securing approval for new board members.
- Informed NYC DOE CSAS, and where required, received CSAS approval for changes in significant partnerships, such as dropping/replacing a management organization
- Effectively engaged parent associations

¹¹ School-specific targets for enrollment and retention are to come from NY State Education Department

Evidence for compliance with applicable regulations may include, but not be limited to, the following:

- School or building safety plan; appropriate inspection documents
- Annual audits, escrow accounts, other financial reporting documents
- Board roster, calendar, agenda and minutes, conflict of interest documents, notification of changes/approval of new member request documents
- Charter revision requests, revised or new contracts
- Parent association calendar of meetings, identified officers, parent association agenda and minutes, parent satisfaction survey results
- Interviews with Board, staff, parents, students or others, as appropriate

4. What Are the School's Plans for its Next Charter Term?

4a. School Expansion or Model Replication

In anticipation of a new charter term schools may be considering various growth options: replication, expansion to new grades or increased enrollment or altering their model in some significant way. Successful schools generally have processes for:

- Conducting needs/opportunity assessments
- Forming Board and leadership committees or subcommittees to investigate options, develop action plans, ensure capacity and resources are aligned, etc.
- Engaging school community in articulating charter revisions (or a new charter in cases of replication) to address the proposed growth plans
- Ensuring that the final proposal is ambitious but realistic in its plans
- Creating a well-reasoned and documented prospective for the school's new charter term and, if applicable, a new charter proposal (for replication)

Evidence for likely success in planning for school growth in a new charter term may include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Renewal application narrative, including performance results and analyses of the current charter term
- Renewal application revised charter submission, including mission, program description, governance, organization, budget, etc. for new term
- Charter (replication) Application
- Leadership and Board interviews

4b. Organizational Sustainability

Successful schools consistently perform despite change. While there is no single path for ensuring sustainability, successful schools often have the following features:

- School anticipates organizational opportunities/needs and plans for resource development (human resource policies for growing your own talent, for example, or fundraising or budget management to take care of anticipated capital needs and to mitigate risks for the unexpected, or board development to bring new talent or specific needs-based expertise to the school)

Evidence for organizational sustainability may include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Renewal application narrative, including performance results and analyses of the current charter term
- Renewal application revised charter submission, including mission, program description, governance,

organization, budget, etc. for new term

- Board roster and resumes
- Board committees and minutes
- School organization chart
- Staff rosters
- Staff handbook
- Leadership and staff interviews
- Budget

4c. School or Model Improvements

Successful schools are thoughtful about the continued appropriateness of school design features and elements of their models. They:

- Review performance carefully and even if they don't make major changes through expansion or replication, they are careful to adjust elements to ensure continued and improved success.
- Develop plans to improve the school learning environment, including improving their facilities to expand program offerings and/or developing new partnerships to further the school's mission.

Evidence for successful improvements to a school's program or model may include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Renewal application narrative, including performance results and analyses of the current charter term
- Renewal application revised charter submission, including mission, program description, governance, organization, budget, etc. for new term
- Leadership and board interviews
- Contracts or Memos of Understanding (MOUs) with partners or important vendors