

Accountability Workshop for NYC DOE Authorized Schools 2012-2013



January 16, 2013



Charter Schools Accountability and Support Office
Sonia Park, Executive Director

We'd like to welcome everyone to this evening's workshop.

Introductions of the speakers: Maria Campo, Director of Oversight, Cohort 3; Rick Larios, Senior Director, Cohort 2; Gabrielle Mosquera, Director of Oversight, Cohort 2; and Andrea McLean, Director of Oversight, Cohort 1.

Our goals for this evening are to provide you with a better understanding of how our office views accountability, of why we look at what we do, of how you can use the tools and resources we provide or that you generate as part of your school data to think about and reflect upon for school improvement- all on the path toward renewal.

Session Overview

1. Welcome
2. Accountability and DOE-Authorized Charter Schools
3. Annual Accountability Cycle
4. Charter Renewal Process
5. Accountability Tools and Resources
6. Q&A and Cohort Break-outs

Tonight we'll be providing you with information to give clarity about our accountability process, including topics of doe-authorized accountability, annual accountability cycle, charter renewal process, and tools and resources for monitoring and evaluating performance.

There will be an opportunity at the end of each agenda section to take clarifying questions but we ask that you wait to the end of the presentation most of your questions and hold school-specific discussions until the cohort break out at the very end of the session.

1. Welcome (5 Minutes) Maria
 - Introductions
 - Agenda
2. Accountability & DOE Authorized Charter Schools (14 minutes) Rick
 - Law & Charter Expectations
 - Performance (Outcomes & Compliance)
3. Annual Accountability Cycle (10 minutes) Gabrielle
 - Reporting
 - Monitoring
 - Site Visits
4. Charter Renewal Process (18 Minutes) Gabrielle & Rick
 - Calendar, Application, Visits, Hearing, Board Meetings (G)
 - Renewal Process Outcomes (R)
 - Early Engagement (R)
5. Tools and Resources (10 Minutes) Andrea & Maria
 - School Progress Report & School Survey & Monitoring Plan
6. Q&A (15 minutes) Cohort Break-outs (15 minutes) All

Accountability Sources

Charter Law & Related Regulations

- Charter Law grants autonomy *with* expectations of results.
- High level expectations about performance
- Specific requirements regarding monitoring compliance and performance.

School Charters

- Provide specifics about performance, compliance, and school design.
- “Charter” includes:
 - Charter Application, Charter Agreement, & Monitoring Plan.
 - Renewal Application, Revised Charter, Renewal Report, Charter Agreement, & Monitoring Plan.

DOE Accountability Handbook & Framework

- Our guide to charter school accountability

NYS Charter School law 1998 (revised most recently in 2008 and 2010), Article 56, Sections 2850-2857.

Accountability Handbook, pages 3-6; CSAS Accountability Handbook was sent to schools July 16, 2012 in CSAS Weekly Communications. Four essential questions and strands that FW is built upon were shared at fall 2011 Accountability Workshop, as well as used during year on ASVs and Pop-ins. But essential questions have always been central to DOE’s approach to accountability and consistent with other NYS authorizers and aligned with charter law expectations of authorizers.

Talking Points:

Just some quick context for you: Charter schools were created to provide educational leaders autonomy in designing schools that would improve student achievement, improve learning opportunities for all students (particularly for at-risk learners), provide parents quality school choice, and to encourage innovation, move from rule-based to performance based accountability, and create new professional opportunities for educational staff.

Autonomy comes with expectations of superior results and superior results that come the right way (compliance).

In addition to the law, charter schools are bound by their charters, which have more specific information on performance (goals), how they will comply with applicable law and regulations, and what their unique school design and program are. Your charter is your contract with the state, your authorizer, and the community you serve. Note the explanation of what is meant by “charters”.

Our office has increased its capacity as the number of charter schools have increased and continued to develop our resources to provide guidance and support for schools in their unique paths to academic success. The 2012-13 Accountability Handbook, which includes the Accountability Framework are examples of that.



Talking Points:

Academic Success: Top-line/bottom line: performance and progress on academic measures, both those identified by the state and authorizer and those in your charter.

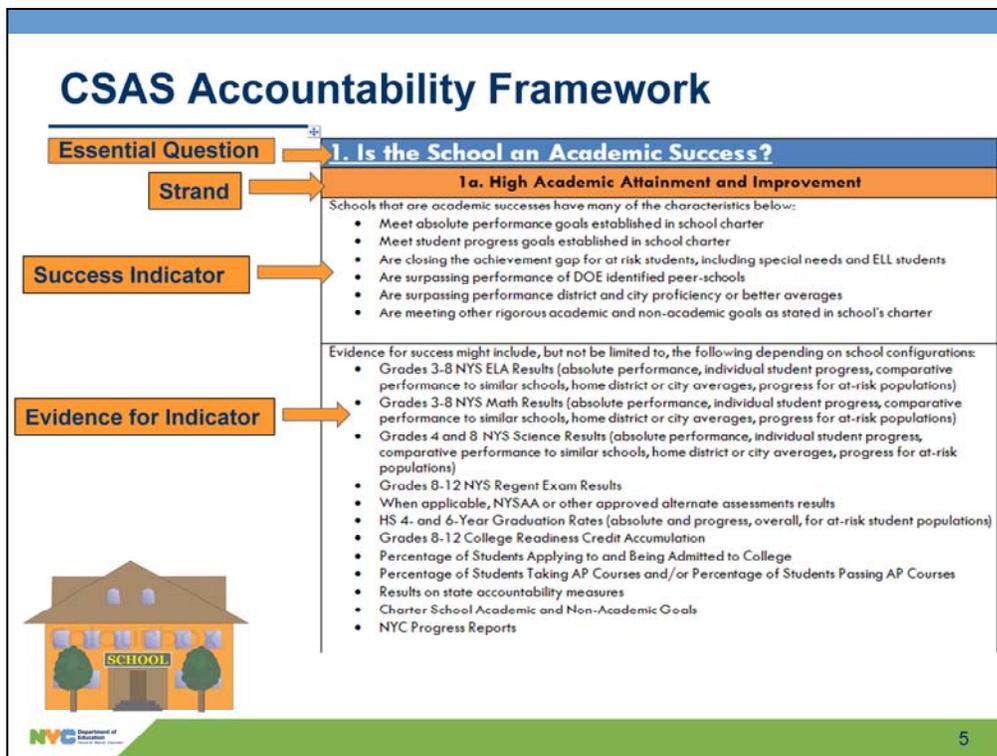
Other parts of 1 are enablers, the means to accomplish your goal. We are agnostic about the enablers...that's your call. We care about effectiveness, alignment, and implementation.

Financial and Organizational Viability: More enablers but just as critical as academic ones. Schools won't get renewed for academic failure; they may get non-renewed or revoked for financial or operational failure. Most common nationwide cause for revocation has been financial or operation failure. You need healthy enablers to be successful or to course correct.

Compliance: Less about enablers and more about disablers. Compliance failures can result in revocation or non-renewal. Because they vary; you need to know what your charter says and know which laws and regulations apply to you. Everyone must follow state and federal mandates related to special ed and title I. Schools don't need to follow chancellor regs unless they say they will in their charter or, for those related to safety, if they are in DOE space.

On Compliance: State has rolled out its system for targets for ensuring charters schools serve comparable percentages of FRL, SpEd and ELLs. Performance/progress against these targets will be part of accountability for new renewal terms. Boards and school leaders should be looking at their targets and understanding where they stand and if there are discrepancies be thinking about strategies for improving their enrollment and retention numbers—documenting those efforts (remember the requirement is comparable percents or a good faith effort). Our office, like SUNY and SED, will be working on guidance for how we will monitor and evaluate compliance on this and sharing it as soon as we can.

Renewal: Evidence of thinking ahead, particularly for things that require multi-year lead time (replication, movement into private facilities, etc.)



Accountability Framework, pages 7-15. (Also included in Charter School Renewal Application guidelines, pages 25-34; and in our site visit reports.)

Using the Accountability Framework, pages 15-18.

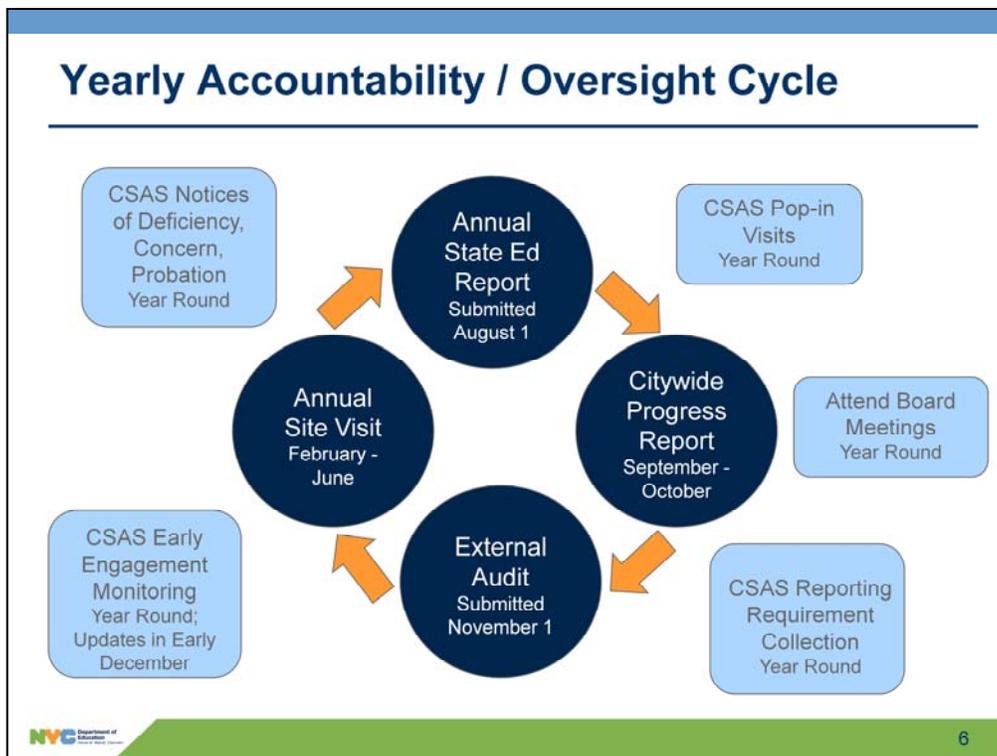
Talking Points:

To illustrate how the Accountability Framework is organized this is the first question and the first strand for this question...again, the most important one. Neither the success indicators or examples of evidence of success should be considered exhaustive. Not all the items identified in evidence apply to all schools—graduation rates apply to HS but not to elementary, for example. Some evidence of success may not have been identified in your charter goals but can and should be included in telling your story.

Question 1 is most important but all four questions matter. For schools up for the first renewal where there is limited data at the time of the renewal or where data is inconsistent or poor the other strands and questions begin to matter more as indicators that a school is positioned for continued or new success. In other words, when academic results don't speak for themselves, other data and other elements of the program will inform our monitoring and renewal thinking.

And to be clear, compliance always matters. Fiscal and operational issues can threaten a school's ability, even when academically successful, to sustain its success, or in worst case scenarios may represent intolerable abuse of public funds or denial of open access to all students. Compliance issues are expected to be fixed or could result in conditional renewal, non-renewal or revocation.

The framework is a reference tool, a guide for thinking and reflecting on your progress toward your fulfilling your mission and goals.

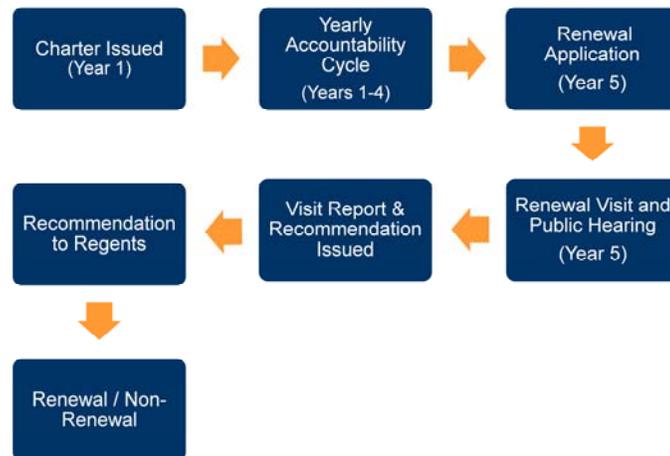


Accountability Handbook, page 6 (though additional blue box on Notices of Concern is not on page 6 chart but is talked about, along with Early Engagement, on pages 37-38).

- Slide outlines elements of our annual accountability cycle. The first four have fixed points: Annual Report, PR, Audit, and ASV. The second set can take place at any point throughout the year.
- Annual Report and Audit deadlines are set in charter school law; Progress Report and Annual Site Visits are not
- Regarding site visits, the office is in the process of planning for the upcoming ASV season and will update you shortly on whether your school will be receiving an ASV or pop in visits or no visit this year. All DOE-authorized schools will receive a request for ASV-related documentation soon.
- Pop-in Visits*: short, not the entire cohort team, usually unannounced, no report issued afterward
- Board Meetings*: we may either request to speak to the Board as part of the meeting or simply observe the meeting itself
- Reporting Requirements*: outlined in our reporting calendar, included in the Accountability Handbook and in reminders from our weekly email. If anyone on your staff is involved in submitting these documents and doesn't get our weekly email, contact your Director of Oversight
- Notices of Deficiency, Concern, Probation*: usually given for reasons related to fiscal, operational, and compliance-related matters, but are not limited to these; covered in more depth in the Accountability Handbook
- Early Engagement* is covered in a later slide

CSAS Renewal Process: Overview

The renewal timeline will vary for each school depending on the month the charter was issued or renewed.



Four Essential Questions of Accountability Framework drives renewal decisions. For Renewal Process see pages 26-32 of Accountability Handbook and current edition of Renewal Guidelines.

Renewal should be viewed as a five year process that begins with the decision to award you a charter. This slide provides an overview of that process from Year 1 through Year 5; next slide will cover the sequence of Year 5 in more detail.

For schools that receive a three-year renewal, the process for the new charter term is the same with the Renewal Application and Renewal Visit occurring in Year 3.

Question: What is the most important bucket in that process? (Answer: second one; yearly accountability cycle—years .) Essentially all you can do in the rest of the process is make your case—you can't really alter the facts of your case.

CSAS Renewal Year Event Sequence

- Renewal Kickoff Phone Call
- Renewal Application Due
- CSAS Review and Clarification of Application Materials
- TBD with Each School:
 - Pre-Visit Documentation Submission Due
 - Renewal Site Visit
 - Public Hearing
- Following the Site Visit:
 - Chancellor's Decision/Report of Findings
- Prior to Charter Expiration Date:
 - Submission to the New York State Education Department (NYSED)
 - Renewal Vote by Board of Regents on Chancellor Decision

For Renewal Process see pages 26-32 of Accountability Handbook and current edition of Charter School Renewal Application guidelines, particularly pages 27-28.

•**Renewal Kickoff Call:** initiated by us and held between the school leadership and cohort team; covers application guidelines and questions; establishes potential dates for visit and hearing

•**Renewal Application:** one document now, not two; organized around the four Qs; intended to streamline and align the process for schools

•First 3 Qs: give the school an opportunity to make its case for renewal based on performance in its first charter term—academic, financial, operational and compliance (formerly the Retrospective portion of the app)

•Fourth Q: gives the school an opportunity to outline its plans for the next charter term, including proposed grade expansion or refinements (formerly the Prospective portion of the app)

•Application also includes Data Collection Templates, Annual Report results, and indicators of student and parent satisfaction

•Application also includes a revised charter (clean copy for CSAS; school should maintain a tracked copy for its records) and summary of charter revisions made in prior term

•**Renewal Site Visit:** Larger, more comprehensive version of Annual Site Visit; typically two days in length.

•Includes teacher and student interviews; parent feedback; meeting with board chair and attendance of board meeting; review of documents; interviews with leadership and administrative staff; and whatever else is necessary to make a recommendation.

•Visit team is full cohort team plus other outside participants (someone with SpEd expertise, potentially consultants and/or CSD supt)

•Visit Report becomes part of overall Report of Findings; draft is first sent to school to check for factual errors

•**Renewal Hearing:** public hearing held to solicit public comment on the renewal and any programmatic changes planned for the next charter term

•**Report of Findings:** public document that includes a recommendation

•Also includes: Renewal Site Visit Report; DOE Progress Reports; Progress Toward Goals; Performance Data; ASV reports.

•Chancellor reviews and forwards to Regents, who have the final vote.

We're looking to expand the time between the kickoff call and the application deadline, and the application deadline and the visit, to give schools a little more time to prepare their applications and us a little more time to review them in advance of our renewal visits.

•If you are one of the five schools whose charter expires December 15, 2013, or one of the other five schools whose charter expires between January 12 and February 9, 2014, you should hear from your cohort's SD very soon regarding the start of the renewal process. (In your breakout session after the Q&A you can confirm with your cohort's SD the calendar for spring renewals).

Renewal Decisions

Potential Outcomes:

- Full Term Renewal, with or without conditions
- Three Year Renewal with conditions
- Non-Renewal

The Question of Grade Expansion:

- Proposed expansion to new grades in next term are evaluated as part of renewal process.

Accountability Handbook, pages 31-32, for possible renewal outcomes; Accountability Handbook, pages 16-18 for how we use FW in our monitoring visits and renewal evaluations.

Talking Points:

The law says charter schools may be renewed for a term of up to five years. There are three potential outcomes from the renewal process.

* A five year renewal is a full term renewal. Full term renewals may be granted with or without conditions, depending on the circumstances of the individual school.

* A three-year renewal may be granted when, as the first charter term expires, there is limited data available and/or the data is limited and inconsistent. It may also be granted to a school that is in its second or later charter term where the most recent data is positive following a period of poor performance.

* Non-renewal may occur due to consistently poor academic performance and/or serious fiscal and operational issues that have not been remedied over time.

Schools are only authorized for the grade spans they will serve during a given charter term—that is consistent across authorizers. If you plan on expanding, for example, to middle school grades in your next charter term—even if that intention was declared in your original charter application—approving that grade expansion will be part of the renewal decision and your application should make the case for expansion and share plans for it (capacity, program elements, etc.).

Regarding grade spans, it should also be noted that a condition of renewal for *existing* K-8s or 6-12s or K-12s, for example, might be truncation if there is a significant difference in the performance of the elementary grades versus the middle or the middle and HS grades and the renewal team may recommend renewal for the middle but not for the HS. That's not to say that an unbalanced performance automatically results in truncation, just that that is a possible outcome in a renewal situation.

Early Engagement & Renewals

In 2012-13 Early Engagement Process was linked to renewal:

- Charter Schools up for renewal that received Ds or worse in their two most recent PRs *or* an F on the most recent PR were flagged for Early Engagement.
- Early Engagement was official DOE communication of concern about academic performance.
 - Schools that submitted a renewal application were given an opportunity to make revisions to their applications.
 - Parents were notified of Early Engagement and a parent meeting was held.
- Early Engagement DOES not mean a decision to non-renew has been made.

Accountability Handbook, pages 37-38.

The NYCDOE Early Engagement process has included DOE authorized charter schools for the past two years.

During the current year Early Engagement was linked to poor academic performance, as indicated by PR grades, by schools in their Renewal year.

EE is about ensuring that schools whose performance is of concern are informed and their communities are as well.

EE is about transparency in communication (and consistency of treatment for traditional schools and DOE authorized charter schools). The renewal process is a comprehensive review of a school's performance over a charter term and its plans and capacity for a future term. It takes place regardless of EE designation, and the outcome of the renewal process is not dependent on EE status.

Accountability Tools and Resources

NYC DOE School Progress Report

- *It's about progress.* Progress for ***all*** students matters more than progress for some.
- Peer group comparisons matters ***more*** than city comparisons.
- Close analysis of section results can highlight patterns and trends in academic performance and school culture.
- Acts as an indicator under Strand 1 of the Framework- "Is the School an Academic Success?"

NYC DOE School Survey

- DOE School Survey contributes to the Progress Reports
- Unlike the PR, schools on the School Survey are compared to all other city schools with similar grade configurations.
- Higher participation yields a more trustworthy representation of the school's environment
- Carefully looking at individual responses may uncover any potential concerns



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Tools and resources we use & so should you!

Some examples of tools and resources we use to evaluate your school and what you should be utilizing to evaluate yourselves are:

✓ NYC DOE Progress Report, NYC DOE School Survey, Annual Report, Monitoring Plan, Annual Site Visit Report, Annual Financial Audits, etc.

In truly understanding and utilizing these resources it can provide school leaders and BOTs, with opportunities to think about school performance from various perspectives.

NYC DOE School Progress Report

The Progress Report is one of the fixed points of our annual accountability cycle, as mentioned earlier.

It was designed to empower school leaders and teachers to accelerate academic achievement (toward the goal of career and college readiness for all students). Tracks student academic progress, so that the school can identify steps to improve each student's learning. In short, helping school leaders and Board of Trustees reflect and improve on school performance.

It shows the progress of all of the students from one year to the next. In focusing on growth, it gives the school another measure of student achievement other than absolute goals.

The data provided is meaningful and actionable, and therefore can help with improvement planning.

The annual perspective offers a clear picture of where the school is and can be used to strategize on how and where to improve student performance.

It shows where you are and where you want it to be, and allows you to plan on how to get there.

We use it especially in regards to the Accountability Framework, Strand 1 as evidence of an indicator for High Academic Achievement & Improvement, and has been used to determine Early Engagement in previous years.

We have hardcopies of the Educator's Guide for Progress Report that give detailed guidance on how to read and interpret the entire Progress Report.

Each section matters and is weighted on a point basis- Student Progress (60 points), Student Performance (25 points), School Environment (15 points), and Closing the Achievement Gap (varies, up to 16 for ES, or 17 for MS & K-8). Fourth section (aka Closing the Achievement Gap) varies dependent on the grade configuration. For HS, the main three sections are weighted a little differently, because there is an additional category called College and Career Readiness that accounts for 10 points.

Are there any schools that have yet to receive a PR?

You need results to get a PR- first year schools typically don't get a PR or get an ungraded one but K-3s do get a graded ECS PR

NYC DOE School Survey- Accountability Framework Indicator under Strand 1d. Is the School an Academic Success?

The School Survey while a component of the Progress Report, in the School Environment section, is a valuable resource in its own right because of its invaluable information on critical stakeholder opinions—the teachers, parents, and if serve grades 6-12, the students.

Directly or indirectly, satisfaction is important to charter schools. Directly: some have satisfaction goals in their charters. Indirectly: staff and student retention goals are usually written into charters.

Generally charter schools have higher participation rates and have higher satisfaction rates than district schools, and those rates are continuing to increase each year.

With higher participation, the survey gives a broad and more representative perspective of the school's environment.

It is helpful for schools to look at the specific responses, in addition to overall scoring, because potential trends and hidden areas for improvement may be identified.

Also used as evidence of an indicator for the Framework's Strand 1, in Learning Environment.

We have hardcopies of the 2012 Survey Scoring Model for Community Schools, that breaks down the School Survey.

The Monitoring Plan

Purpose

- Establish Reporting Requirements for Oversight
- Designate Guidelines for Record-keeping
- Outline Reporting requirements required by Charter Schools Act

Sections

- Chancellor's Actions to Keep Schools Compliant
- Changes to Charter
 - School provides a written request to CSAS at least thirty (30) days prior to the anticipated implementation of any change to the approved charter
- Notifications
 - Written notice to CSAS within five (5) days of certain occurrences, such as additions/removals of Board members & hiring/dismissal of director/principal
- Record-keeping
 - Maintaining records for the Chancellor, Regents, and/or their agents
- Timely Response
 - School ensures that a timely response is made to all of CSAS's requests

Question: How many people know what the monitoring plan is? And where you can find it?

Answer: The Monitoring Plan is a document that outlines the reporting requirements required by the Charter Schools Act. The Monitoring Plan establishes the reporting requirements for oversight and designates the guidelines for record-keeping. It can be found in your charter agreement (Exhibit B).

Consider the Monitoring Plan a resource to help you understand accountability. It is directly tied to the law that governs your charter.

The Monitoring Plan is broken down into sections emphasizing:

• The Chancellor's (and his agents, CSAS) actions which ensure schools are accountable and compliant. Such actions include, but are not limited to *annual site visits, visiting board meetings, ongoing communications and monitoring operations*.

The other sections outline the responsibilities of the schools to maintain compliance and adherence to their charter.

• **Changes to Charter** – note that for different types of changes to your charter, the time requirement may differ. Changes include *Curriculum or Instructional Approach*, changes to *By-laws* and changes to *Code of Ethics*

• **Notifications** – other changes may include: *contracts or debts or summons (amounts specified on your Monitoring Plan) or if the school received a summons or complaint where BOT members are named*

• **Record-keeping** – the school is responsible for keeping records such as *IEP's, Board Minutes, Certificates of Occupancy and Student Academic and Health Records*.

• **Timely Response** – Pursuant to § 2855 of Education Law, if a school does not respond in a timely matter, this could be grounds for action.

(If the time requested is not clearly indicated, then assume 30 days).

The Monitoring Plan provides clear expectations, which are grounded in law, about what we are looking for with regards to accountability. Take a look at this document when also looking at our Accountability Handbook.

For more details, please refer to Monitoring Plans located again...in your Charter Agreement.

Questions and Answers

Contact us for more information

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