



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

THE EQUITY PROJECT
CHARTER SCHOOL
ANNUAL SITE VISIT REPORT

MARCH 2010

Part 1: Executive Summary

School Overview and History:

The Equity Project Charter School is a middle school serving approximately 125 students in grade five in the 2009-2010 school year.¹ The school opened in 2009 with grade five. It has plans to grow to serve students grades five through eight.² It is currently housed in Transportable Classroom Units (TCUs) at 549 Audubon Avenue, New York, NY in District 6.³

The school population comprises 11.3% Black, 88.7% Hispanic, 0.0% White, and 0.0% Asian students. 84.7% of students are designated as Title I.⁴ The student body includes 21.6% English language learners and 18.5% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%.⁵

The school has not yet received a Progress Report. The school is in good standing with state and federal accountability.⁶

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, NYC DOE Charter Schools Office
- Tyler Whittenberg, Analyst-Charter Accountability, NYC DOE Charter Schools Office
- 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 New York State Education Department - www.nysed.gov

Part 2: Findings

What the school does well

- The school uses an interdisciplinary approach to promote content proficiency and actively engage students.
 - Teachers are paired each quarter to co-plan an outcome for both subject areas which supports connections between subject areas and core learning.
 - The teacher pairing structure promotes projects and connections that support students experiencing content from different perspectives. This pairing also encourages discussion of instructional strategies and best practices.
 - Teacher professional development occurs daily, as the teacher pairs spend a full period in partners' classrooms every instructional day, and debrief in a timely manner.

- The school uses multiple strategies to address students' different learning styles and abilities.
 - Classrooms feature attractive visuals that reinforce concepts students may refer to as they move through content areas, including word walls, timelines, organizational cues for writing, class topics and highlights, diagrams and charts, colorful subject packet handouts, and other tools used to engage students in academic work.
 - Students receive reading support in small groups.
 - Daily work on grammar is structured in the beginning of the day and students work in small groups with one teacher.
 - There is Collaborative Team Teaching support in classes.
 - Teachers encourage students to help each other with tasks.
 - Homework help and tutoring are available after school for small group support and instruction.
 - Teachers use auditory, verbal, and tactile modalities to activate learning styles.
 - A school social worker is available to support students and families.

- The school fosters a safe learning environment that encourages student expression.
 - Classes have clear beginning and closing procedures; students sit in assigned seats; students take on certain classroom responsibilities; and materials, computers and equipment are easily accessible in each room.
 - 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.
 - Routines are clearly evident in each classroom and in the transitions between classes, the cafeteria, and physical education.

- The school has created a culture that encourages academic excellence.
 - Weekly whole-school assemblies help create school-wide culture and allow students to share work with peers.
 - Students attend classes for all subjects every day.
 - Teachers work together to promote understanding of concepts, connections and skills.
 - Extended Day provides a continuum of clubs based on interests, homework help for all students, and academic support.

- Assessments provide a variety of indicators for each student in all subjects.
 - Teachers record pre- and post-subject test data, quizzes, and an informal review of student work daily.

- Staff shares student progress and observations to inform instruction.
- Folders for each student's work over time monitor progress and can be easily accessed by all teachers.
- The school is in good financial condition and maintains appropriate internal controls.
 - As of March 31, 2010, the school's current ratio was 1.82 and the school possessed \$831,349 in current assets and \$456,131 in current liabilities.
 - The school exercises appropriate internal controls on its financial systems.
- The school board is providing adequate and balanced oversight.
 - The board reviews the budget, the actual balance sheet, student level academic data, and verbal reports from school staff.
 - The board and school management managed the facilities well during the start-up period.

What the school needs to improve

- The school maintains individual and ongoing data on each student and is encouraged to create a school-wide assessment system available to students, staff and families.
 - Clear monitoring of progress is evident in classrooms. Thus a structured way of sharing the data to inform instruction may support the path towards school-wide academic goals and curriculum planning to meet those goals.
 - Supporting existing data with a structured systemic approach will help support shared goals and interdisciplinary approaches already in place.
- To continue to implement the school's educational goal of mastery of New York's state standards, additional college preparatory strategies could include:
 - Finding ways to incorporate more Higher Order Thinking Skills in the unit and daily plans, in addition to the understanding of subject information
 - Continuing and expanding oral presentations and project-based learning to demonstrate this mastery of concepts and material.
- The school is encouraged to utilize the many existing opportunities within the school's structure to increase the frequency of small advisory groups so that more social and emotional supports are in place to better foster academic progress and student well-being.
 - The school schedule includes small groups each morning for grammar work, small tutorial math and reading sessions during the day, and specific students assigned to one teacher—all of which are opportunities for meaningful advisory groups.
 - Utilizing and creating more advisory group opportunities will allow the adults to support the social and emotional experiences of students in a structured way, sharing and building on the contributions of the social worker on staff.

Part 3: Framing Questions

FRAMING QUESTIONS:

Throughout the Renewal Process and the life of each school's charter, the NYCDOE Charter Schools Office uses the following framing questions to monitor Charter School success:

1. Has the School Been an Academic Success?
2. Has the School Been a Viable Organization?
3. Has the School Been in Compliance with All Applicable Laws and Regulations?

Annual Site Visit Rubric:

1. Has the School Been an Academic Success?
 - Academic Goals and Mission
 - School components and curriculum align together and holistically support the mission
 - School has high academic expectations and employs strategies for the full range of students served by the school, including those at risk and those with special needs
 - Curriculum and Instruction
 - The educational plan is flexible and is adjusted to meet the performance levels and learning needs of all enrolled students
 - School implements programming to address the needs of students with disabilities and ELLs
 - Teachers demonstrate the use of differentiated instructional techniques to support the varying ways by which students learn
 - School has implemented programming for students who need remediation or acceleration
 - School Culture
 - The culture is strong, intentional, supportive and sustainable and promotes student learning
 - The school motivates all students and respects the diversity of learners and cultures in the community
 - School offers programs, activities or support services beyond academics to address students' social and emotional needs
 - School calendar and day are set to provide extra supports to ensure that students are able to meet and exceed academic goals
 - Schedule for communication to parents/students is timely and allows for due process, includes strategies to prepare students for transitions and strategies for those students who are not on schedule, presents a clear and fair system that complies with students' due process rights
 - Structures that foster the development of authentic, sustained, caring, respectful relationships among all stakeholders within school
 - Behavioral expectations and social supports that reflect the school's mission and comply with all applicable laws and regulations
 - Assessment
 - Establishes a culture of continuous improvement and accountability for student learning
 - Develops assessments that shape and inform instruction on an ongoing basis and develop data that's used to gauge student, teacher and school progress through formative and summative assessment
 - Student learning measured with multiple forms of assessments/metrics
 - Develops educational goals and performance metrics that are SMART – Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Reflect the Mission and Time-Specific
 - Develops assessments that are appropriately aligned with curriculum, instruction, and adopted standards

- Provides evidence of how data will influence instruction, professional development and curricular adjustments
 - Parent Engagement
 - Parent engagement strategies that integrate and mobilize parents within the school community as conduits for student success
 - Capacity to communicate effectively with parents and families
 - Parent engagement strategies that integrate and mobilize parents within the school community as conduits for student success
2. Is the School a Viable Organization
- Governance Structures and Organizational Design
 - School has articulated appropriate roles, responsibilities, and decision-making structure for school community members (including Board of Trustees and school leadership)
 - An accountability structure that provides effective oversight of the educational program and fiscal components of the school is in place and utilized
 - Board regularly reviews a data dashboard of student achievement and fiscal management that forms the basis for Board discussions and decisions
 - Board has diverse skill set that lends itself to strong educational / operational oversight
 - Board has an articulated process for ongoing policy development, Board member development and self-evaluation
 - Organizational charts are aligned with mission; roles and responsibilities are clearly defined
 - Board has developed essential strategic partnerships with organizations that support the mission of the school
 - Community Support
 - School Leadership demonstrated responsiveness to the unique needs and interests of the community to be served
 - School has established a presence in the community and has buy in from community members
3. Is the School in Compliance with Applicable Laws and Regulations
- Special Populations
 - Well-defined plan and sufficient capacity to service the learning needs of Special Education students, English Language Learners
 - School adequately addresses the academic and non academic needs of students in need of remediation, students with disabilities, students with interrupted formal education, and gifted students
 - There is a coherent plan for meeting the non-academic needs of students with disabilities, students with interrupted formal education, and other populations
 - School employs a process to identify students at risk of not meeting expectations and creates intervention plans and follow up
 - School demonstrates a comprehensive recruitment, enrollment and retention approach that is sensitive to the diverse needs of students
 - School admission policy and lottery preferences serve to create a student body that reflects community demographics and give a preference to community school district residents
 - Safety and Security
 - School is well maintained
 - Transitions and student gatherings are orderly and well supervised
 - Expectations for student behavior are well known and are enforced fairly
 - School is current with all safety recruitments and drills.
 - AED machines are in operation and school staff is trained in CPR