



Charter School Renewal Report  
Charter Schools Accountability and Support  
2011-2012

**BRONX LIGHTHOUSE CHARTER SCHOOL  
ANNUAL SITE VISIT REPORT**

**MAY 2012**

## Part 1: Executive Summary

### **School Overview and History:**

Bronx Lighthouse Charter School is an elementary/middle/high school serving approximately 510 students from kindergarten through ninth grade in the 2011-2012 school year.<sup>1</sup> The school opened in 2004 with grades K-2. The school is under the terms of its second charter and is projected to expand to grades K-11 during its current term, which expires May 17, 2014. If approved for renewal, the school is projected to reach its full grade span, K-12, during the 2014-2015 school year.<sup>2</sup> The school is currently housed in a Department of Education (DOE) facility in District 12.<sup>3</sup>

The school enrolls new students in grades K-9. There were 1,568 students on the waitlist after the Spring 2011 lottery.<sup>4</sup> The student body includes 88.1% Free and Reduced Lunch students, compared to 83% in the district; 10.7% special education students, compared to 18.3% in the district; and 5.6% English language learners (ELL), compared to 19.0% in the district.<sup>5</sup> The average attendance rate for the school year 2011-2012 to date was 95.9%.<sup>6</sup> The school scored Average on the Communication and Safety & Respect sections of the NYC DOE School Survey in 2010-2011, and Below Average on the Academic Expectations and Engagement sections; 45% of the school's parents responded to the survey, 86% of the school's teachers, and 94% of the school's students.<sup>7</sup>

The school earned a 'D' grade on the Elementary/Middle School NYC DOE Progress Report in 2010-11, a 'B' in 2009-10, and an 'A' in 2008-09. The school has not yet earned a grade on the High School NYC DOE Progress Report.<sup>8</sup> In 2011, the school's percentage of students at Level 3 or better on the NYS ELA and Math assessments were higher than its district of location in all grades, 3-8, in Math and five of six grades in ELA, all but grade 8. The schools 2011 ELA and Math results were below city wide grade averages, except at grade 6 ELA and grades 3 and 6 in Math.<sup>9</sup> The high school has not yet had any Regents exam test-takers or a graduating cohort but will in the 2011-12 school year.

Bronx Lighthouse Charter School is part of the Lighthouse Academies network, a charter management organization (CMO). The CMO provides direct school support through a Regional Director and Vice President. Through them and its national organization, Lighthouse provides school leadership support and evaluation, back office support, payroll and HR, vendor management, and financial and accounting support. It also supports implementation of the Lighthouse education model, providing curriculum guides, supplemental resources to support Common Core instruction, and professional development. The annual budget is created in conjunction with the Board of Trustees of the school. The school paid a flat fee in 2011-12 of \$225,000 to Lighthouse for its support, resources, and services.

### **Annual Review Process Overview:**

The New York City Department of Education (NYC DOE) Charter Schools Accountability and Support (CSAS) office 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 CSAS and last the duration of one school day. The annual site visit begins with a meeting with the school leadership

---

<sup>1</sup> Self-reported by school on Annual Site Visit Data Collection Form dated 4/11/2012

<sup>2</sup> NYC DOE ATS system and charter agreement

<sup>3</sup> NYC DOE Location Code Generating System database

<sup>4</sup> Self-reported by school on Annual Site Visit Data Collection Form dated 4/11/2012

<sup>5</sup> NYC DOE ATS system as of 4/3/2012

<sup>6</sup> Self-reported by school on Annual Site Visit Data Collection Form dated 4/11/2012

<sup>7</sup> NYC DOE School Survey – <http://schools.nyc.gov/survey>

<sup>8</sup> NYC DOE Progress Report – <http://schools.nyc.gov/progressreport>

<sup>9</sup> NYC DOE website – <http://schools.nyc.gov/> (search: test results); District and city averages are for the grade levels corresponding to the school's testing grades in specified years

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 provide a snapshot of the school and reflects what was observed at the time of the visit.

The following experts participated in the review of this school on May 3, 2012:

- Richard Larios, Senior Director, NYC DOE CSAS
- Gabrielle Mosquera, Director of Oversight, NYC DOE CSAS
- Jessica Fredston-Hermann, Analyst, NYC DOE CSAS

## Part 2: Findings

### Areas of Strength:

- School leadership, working with regional support from CMO, has been actively engaged in addressing challenges facing the school.
  - School replaced Upper Academy principal mid-year, with CMO support lead serving as interim principal.
  - School self-evaluation completed prior to the visit and discussion during leadership meeting at the visit' start indicated that leadership team is reflective, frank and committed to improving academic outcomes, school-wide culture, and improving existing systems to support (assessment, behavioral, instruction and instructional support).
  - School will be implementing a new leadership structure going into the 2012-13 school year, with a new Head of School position overseeing the principals of the Lower and Upper academies. The school's goal is to increase the capacity of principals and directors of instruction to focus on instruction by freeing them of operational and some administrative responsibilities.
  
- Classrooms observed on the day of the visit were safe and orderly.
  - Students in the Lower Academy were consistently on task and responsive to teacher directions and instruction, and students in the Upper Academy, with some exceptions, were similarly on task and responsive. In some observed classrooms, particularly in Lower Academy, students displayed enthusiasm for their learning, eager hand-raising and animated responses to questions.
  - Hallway transitions were safe, orderly, and efficient. No disruptive behavior was observed on the day of the visit.
  - In January, after a leadership change, the Upper Academy launched a new discipline policy as a first step, according to new leadership, of changing culture to be more disciplined and academically focused. Some interviewed teachers endorsed the change and its impact. One observed, "The new discipline policy is helpful." Another stated, "As soon as changes were made administration tackled consequences which were clear cut. Students seem now invested in their achievement." A third said, "Transition has been tough but changes are positive." A fourth said, "drastic changes were needed" and he was "impressed with the changes made."
  - While, as leadership noted in morning interview, there is more work to be done, implementation of Responsive Classroom approach to classroom management was visible in observed classrooms, particularly in Lower Academy. Evidence included displays of SHINE (Self-Discipline, Humility, Intelligence, Nobility, Excellence) in many classrooms, use of frequent praise, and use of common routines and practices like red, yellow, green stoplight system for monitoring classroom behavior.
  - Interviewed teachers who have looped with students from one grade to the next praised the practice as being helpful with relationships and providing greater continuity and efficiency with classroom management and instruction.
  
- The school's instructional initiatives and priorities were visible in classrooms during the day of the visit.
  - Emphasis on 6 +1 Writing Traits, a CMO network focus adopted from Education Northwest, was evident in observed ELA classrooms and in student writing displays.
  - Reading and Writing across the curriculum was also evident as a school priority in leadership and teacher interviews and observed classrooms.
    - Visitors observed teachers reinforcing literacy skills in classrooms other than ELA.
    - Visitors observed students being encouraged to write in math journals and describe their thinking in response to problem-solving or to explain mathematical concepts in their own words.

- The school has worked to implement and integrate its Response to Intervention (RtI) program with student support services and general education efforts.
  - School leadership and interviewed teachers reported greater collaboration between special education and general education teachers. “Administration,” said one teacher, “has coordinated preps so we can plan together.”
  - Specials teachers interviewed described a strong partnership among themselves and much improved communication with others, noting improvement in co-teaching: “Very improved from previous years when it was more like a helper [to general education teacher]; now it’s more 50-50.”
  - RtI teams, one each for Upper and Lower Academy, each meet weekly, supported by the academy principal, special education coordinator, counselors and school psychologist.
  - Intervention support and the co-teaching model, according to interviewed teachers, allow for much more small group instruction with learning activities that are more targeted to individual or small group needs. Visitors observed some effective examples of co-teaching during the classroom observations.
  - The twice-weekly “Power Hour” supports small group instruction (typically 10 students or less in a group) with homogeneous ability groups, sometimes involving cross-grade groupings, that can focus on a targeted set of ELA concepts and skills that everyone in the group is struggling to master.
  
- The school has worked to improve support of teachers and teacher collaboration through a variety of efforts, including structured reviews of assessment data.
  - Administration has adjusted scheduling to encourage regular grade level/subject area team meetings for lesson planning, collaboration with co-teachers and peers, and weekly staff meetings for data reviews. Interviewed teachers identified this as an improvement, particularly in support of co-teaching efforts.
  - Interviewed teachers were generally positive of support received from administrators. Teachers noted that principal and director of instruction’s doors “were always open.” Some stated appreciation for lesson plan feedback and feedback from informal observations. Many teachers praised the spirit of collaboration and peer support.
  - Some teachers spoke positively of professional development and “flexibility” in how PD is provided, including staff meetings, supported use of external PD (TFA and Teachers College writing workshop support), and Cambridge Education consultant support for secondary teachers, including social studies and writing.
  - Several teachers spoke positively about assessments and data reviews, particularly of Northwest Evaluation Association’s Measures of Academic Process (NWEA-MAP), the school’s monthly writing assessments, and its efforts through parent portal to engage parents in monitoring student progress.

### **Areas of Growth:**

- School leadership and the CMO regional support team should continue their efforts to ensure the transition that they identified as the theme of their self-evaluation, and which at the time of the visit was in its beginning stages, continues and brings stability, a stronger school-wide learning environment, and professional culture.
  - The school should complete its planned changes to its leadership structure and fill open leadership positions with quality educational leaders quickly to ensure a smooth and effective transition and a strong summer pre-opening preparation and start to the 2012-13 school year.
    - The school’s second charter expires on May 17, 2014 with a likely fall 2013 Renewal Visit. The school received a D on its most recent Progress Report (2010-11) and will have the 2011-12 and 2012-13 Progress Reports to demonstrate improved academic achievement prior to the renewal process.

- In the current school year there has been significant turnover among school leadership, with the previous principal of the Upper Academy leaving, replaced by an interim before the current principal was hired. The Lower Academy principal notified the Board that she is leaving at the end of the school year.
  - In its ASV leadership team meeting, school leaders indicated that because they were still in transition they anticipated additional staff turnover.
  - Interviewed teachers from both academies raised concerns about the turnover at the leadership and staff level, with one Lower Academy teacher saying, “Turnover hasn’t had an impact this year but will next year. Kids will be affected.” Another said that the current year’s transitions had been hard and there was “now too much micro-managing.” Another teacher said that “drama at the school is driving people away.” While many teachers were positive about the necessity for and impact of the changes made this year there are clearly significant concerns among some teachers.
  - The school’s increased enforcement of academic expectations for students has resulted in an increase in number of students receiving promotion in doubt notices. School leaders report that they have been clear in communicating these renewed expectations and rigorous in communicating with parents whose children’s promotion is in doubt.
  - A couple of interviewed teachers said that communication about next year was non-existent or unclear, with some teachers knowing what was happening and others out of the loop. One teacher said there was “no school culture” and others talked about the need to develop trust and improve communication.
- The school must continue its efforts to improve classroom instruction, improving consistency across classrooms, alignment across academies, overall instructional rigor, differentiation, and the school’s arts infusion program.
  - While classrooms were consistently safe and orderly on the day of the visit, with students typically on-task, student engagement varied from enthusiastic to responsively compliant to, in some classes of the Upper Academy, instances where a handful of students were disengaged from instructional activities.
  - The school’s emphasis on lesson plan review has resulted in some consistent lesson structures across all rooms, including posting of lesson objectives, but greater consistency of quality in lesson objectives is needed. Many objectives displayed in classrooms on the day of the visit were not a standards-based lesson objective or outcome but identifications of a particular focus skill. Lesson objectives should be standards-based, rigorous and meaningful enough to apply to all learners in the room with flexibility of application for appropriate differentiation.
  - Rigor too varied from one observed classroom to another, and was also noted as an area of continued growth by instructional leaders in the leadership meeting. Worksheets were frequently used in observed classrooms as independent learning activities but consistently lacked any differentiation and sometimes lacked even a clear tie-in to posted objectives.
  - In many of the observed classrooms the pace of instruction was slowed by excessive teacher dependence—directions, direct instruction, and management of discussion that limited student participation by dominating the instructional period. Instead of quickly and efficiently involving students in well-paced Do Nows, for example, with effective and engaging checks for understanding, teacher talk extended lesson parts and checks for understanding were limited or skipped.
  - There was little evidence of a strong, coherent alignment of curriculum and academic expectations across grade levels, academies and subject areas in the Upper Academy. In interviews there was evidence that this work had begun but more work needs to be done prior to the start of the next school year to ensure that instructional coherence, rigor, and instructional efficiency is the norm in all rooms and settings.

- In only a handful of observed classrooms was any evidence of the school's commitment to arts infusion, a highlighted part of the school's mission and educational program in its charter, observed.
- The school should continue and accelerate its efforts to improve the school's learning environment and professional culture to ensure that expectations for performance are at the high level articulated in the school's mission, that they are shared by all stakeholders, and that effective support systems and communication are in place so that everyone has the same expectations, commitment, and focus in the critical two years ahead.
  - Teacher and student satisfaction scores on the most recent DOE school survey are below average. The school should review the 2011-12 survey results to evaluate impact of efforts to improve school culture and analyze individual responses to target future areas for improvement.
  - While most teachers recognized the improvements brought about by the school's new discipline policy, some interviewed teachers reported that the new policy was either never consistently enforced or only consistently enforced for the first month; others claimed that there was a lack of clarity concerning initial consequences and that "certain students are getting into trouble without anything happening" to them as a consequence.
  - Several interviewed teachers said there was a "separation" between the two academies and that it didn't feel like one school.
  - At the time of the visit, the school was out of compliance on teacher certification requirements and should ensure they reach compliance and maintain it going forward.
  - Some interviewed were very supportive of the directors of instruction for the two academies and praised the professional development but others claimed that it was too reactive to "emergencies" and less proactive than it should be. Non-core teachers said they received helpful feedback during observations but that there wasn't enough PD support for them compared to core subject teachers.
- The school should continue its foundational work refining its school-wide assessment system, developing teacher data analysis and usage, and engaging greater student and parent involvement in academic goal setting and ownership of student learning.
  - The use of weekly staff meetings to provide structured data reviews were frequently mentioned as helpful by interviewed teachers. However, some interviewed teachers were not yet on board with the school's data driven focus, saying the school was too much "about numbers" or complaining that there was too much data with too little value attached to it.
  - In the school's self evaluation both principals identified making refinements to interim assessments, refining planning in response to assessments to identify more opportunities to adjust instruction for re-teaching and enrichment, and to improve support and structures for learning community reviews of assessment data.
  - A variety of assessments are in use: NWEA-Map, teacher-created interim assessments, quarterly writing assessments using a 6 +1 writing rubric, Study Island, monthly unit assessments, homework, and Acuity. Interviewed teachers couldn't articulate a consistent sense of the school's assessment program or its data collection process. One said there "are too many ways to collect data" and it should "be more consistent."
  - Some teachers talked about student goal setting and ownership of learning, as well as involving parents in regular tracking their children's performance, most did not and the absence of evidence in observed classroom of that level of student engagement indicate that a start has been made here but more progress is necessary to achieve goals behind this initiative.
- The school should continue its efforts to reach compliance with the amended 2010 charter law requirements related to the enrollment and retention of at-risk student populations, specifically students with free or reduced price lunch (FRL), special education students, and English Language Learners (ELLs). The school should monitor its existing strategies, evaluating the

impact of each and making any necessary adjustments to reach comparable averages to the district serving at-risk students.

- Bronx Lighthouse serves a comparable percent of FRL students, with 88.1% of its students receiving FRL compared to 83% of CSD 12 students.
  - The school serves a lower percentage of special education students--10.7% compared to 18.3%--than the district and a lower percentage of ELLs than its district of location, 5.6% compared to 19%.
  - The school leaders expressed a willingness to recommend to its board an adjustment to school lottery preferences should the spring 2012 lottery indicate this year's recruitment efforts had obtained intended success.
- The school should continue to work to improve parent support and engagement.
    - School satisfaction results on the DOE School Survey have declined for the past three years, from mostly well-above average in 2008-09 to above average in 2009-10 to average on the 2010-11 school survey in all categories. During this time parent participation has remained below city-wide averages, 47% in 2010-11 compared to 52% city-wide.
    - Current parent participation in school's parent association is limited to a "small core group" but more involvement is necessary to create stronger advocacy support for the school and help get more parents involved.
    - Interviewed teachers were mixed in describing parent involvement, with many saying parents weren't as accountable for supporting their children's behavioral and academic performance.
- The school should continue to monitor the development of its new secondary facility to ensure its readiness of occupation as scheduled.
    - Leadership reports that the new building is scheduled to be ready by the end of July and they've begun the process of securing a Certificate of Occupancy, which they expect to be ready by mid-August.
    - Contingency plans have been developed, including the possibility of a slight delay to the start of the school year.

## 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
- Meet student progress goals
- 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
- Participation at parent-teacher conferences, school advocacy events, participation in academic goal related programs

### **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
- Have defined strategies that they can measure and monitor for closing the achievement gap
- Offer defined opportunities for remediation and acceleration
- 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
- Have effective strategies and quality instructional programs for addressing students with special needs and ELLs
- Use a defined process for evaluating curricular tasks, programs and resources for effectiveness and fit with school mission and 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
- Interim assessment results
- Student and teacher portfolios
- Data findings; adjusted lesson plans
- Self-assessment documentation
- Professional development plans and resources

### **1d. Learning Environment**

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

- Have a strong culture that connects high academic and behavioral expectations in a way that motivates students to give their best effort academically and socially
- 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 formal or informal character education, social development, or citizenship program that provides opportunities to develop as individuals and citizens

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

- School mission and articulated values
- Student management plan (code of conduct, school values, discipline policy, positive incentive system, etc.)
- Student attendance and retention rates
- Student discipline data
- DOE School Survey student results
- DOE School Survey parent and teacher safety and respect results
- Self-administered 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:

- Operate with a clearly articulated governance structure, compliant with its charter and all applicable laws and regulations
- Have a capable Board of Trustees with appropriate 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
- 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; it also has clear lines of accountability for leadership roles, accountability to Board, and, if applicable, relationship with a charter management organization
- Have timely and appropriate access to legal counsel
- Implemented a process for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the school's organization and leadership structure
- Have instructional leadership staffing and support structures that holds staff accountable for student learning outcomes and provide regular feedback on instruction to teachers

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

- School charter
- Board by-laws, roster, trustee resumes, meeting agenda and minutes
- Annual conflict of interest forms
- Staff roster, job descriptions, staff handbook, operations manual
- School calendar, professional development plan

### 2b. School Climate and Community Engagement

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

- A healthy professional school climate that is collaborative, student centered, and open to parents and community support
- An effective process for recruiting, hiring, supporting, and evaluating leadership and staff
- A flexible, data-driven approach to professional development for all staff
- An effective way of measuring and monitoring core constituency satisfaction (parent, staff, and, when age appropriate, student), including the DOE School Survey
- Effective home-school communication practices to ensure meaningful parent involvement in the learning of their children
- Strong community-based partnerships and advocacy for the school

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
- Student retention and wait list data
- Staff retention data
- Leadership, staff, parent, student interviews
- Student and staff attendance rates
- Parent attendance at parent-teacher conferences
- Parent association meeting calendar and minutes
- Community partnerships and sponsored programs

## **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 its student enrollment and retention targets
- Annual budgets that meets all short- and long-term financial responsibilities with available revenues
- School leadership and Board that oversee financial and operational responsibilities in a manner that keeps the school's mission and academic goals central to decision-making
- Boards and school leadership that maintain effective internal controls of finances to ensure integrity of financial management and a proactive approach to mitigating risk
- Consistently clean financial audits
- If applicable, strong, accountable partnerships with management organizations and other partners and significant vendors to support delivery of chartered school design and academic program
- A safe, clean and appropriately resourced educational facility with all appropriate services specified in charter and mandated by appropriate law and regulations

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
- Appropriate insurance documents
- Required facility documents (lease, certificate of occupancy, fire and safety inspections, etc.)
- Financial audits
- Financial leader(s) resume and accountability documents
- Operational policies and procedures
- Operational org chart
- Secure storage areas for student and staff records
- Policies/protocols for maintaining secure records
- School safety plan

### 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 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 update-to-date charter is publicly available 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
- Site visits
- Board meetings, agendas and minutes
- Leadership/board interviews

#### 3b. Applicable Federal and State Law

Schools in substantial compliance with federal and state law have:

- Met all legal requirements for Title I and IDEA regulations and reporting
- Comparable enrollment of FRL, ELL and Special Education students to those of their district of location *or* are making documented good faith efforts to reach comparable percentages
- Implemented 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
- Conducted independently verified fair and open lottery and manage with integrity enrollment process and annual waiting lists
- Employed 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
- Student discipline records
- Lottery policy, resources, and records; enrollment procedures and records
- 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 CSO's requirements for reporting changes in board membership and securing approval for new board members.
- Informed NYCDOE CSO, and where required, received CSO approval for changes in significant partnerships, such as dropping/replacing a management organization
- Effectively engaged parent associations

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

#### **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:

- Application Part I: Retroactive Analysis, including performance results and analyses of the current charter term
- Application Part II: Prospective Analysis, including mission, program description, governance, organization, budget, etc. for new term
- 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:

- 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:

- Application Part I: Retroactive Analysis, including performance results and analyses of the current charter term
- Application Part II: Prospective Analysis, including mission, program description, governance, organization, budget, etc. for new term
- Leadership and board interviews
- MOUs or contracts with partners