



**Department of
Education**

Dennis M. Walcott, Chancellor

**Charter School Annual Site Visit Report
Charter Schools Accountability and Support
2011-2012**

METROPOLITAN LIGHTHOUSE CHARTER SCHOOL
ANNUAL SITE VISIT REPORT

MARCH 2012

Part 1: Executive Summary

School Overview and History:

Metropolitan Lighthouse Charter School is an elementary school currently serving approximately 186 students in kindergarten through grade three during the 2011-2012 school year.¹ The school is in its second year of operation and has plans to grow to serve kindergarten through grade five by the end of its original charter, which expires on September 14, 2014.² It is currently housed in DOE space at 1535 Story Avenue in the Bronx, District 8.³ The school anticipates moving to private space for the 2013-14 academic year.

The school population includes 86% of students who receive free/reduced price lunch, compared to 70.2% in the district and its student body includes 14% English language learners compared 11.6% in the district and 10.8% special education students compared 19.3% in the district⁴.

The school has not yet earned a Progress Report (PR) grade or state/federal accountability designation.⁵ Metropolitan Lighthouse will receive its first PR grade as an Early Childhood school this year (2011-12), as well as its first results on the NYS Assessments this summer. The school received mostly below average satisfaction scores on its 2010-11 DOE School Survey, including below average for Academic Expectations, Engagement, and Safety & Respect. Parent participation on the survey was just below citywide averages. The average attendance rate for school year 2011 - 2012 through March is 97.4%⁶.

The Metropolitan 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 \$125,000 to Lighthouse for its support, resources, and services.

Annual Review Process Overview:

The NYC DOE Charter Schools Accountability and Support (CSAS) 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 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 on March 20, 2012:

¹ NYC DOE Annual Site Visit Data Collection Form, 2012

² NYC DOE Annual Site Visit Data Collection Form, 2012

³ NYC DOE Location Code Generating System Database

⁴ NYC DOE ATS system; data pulled April 2012

⁵ New York State Education Department - www.nysed.gov

⁶ NYC DOE Annual Site Visit Data Collection Form, 2012

- Scott Torres, Director of Operations, NYC DOE CSAS
- Rick Larios, Senior Director, NYC DOE CSAS
- Paul O'Neill, Consultant to NYC DOE CSAS

Part 2: Findings

Areas of strength

- School leadership and staff have made progress from last year in generating a shared commitment to the school's mission and its academic and behavioral expectations, particularly in bridging the gap between administration and staff on student discipline and classroom management.
 - In interviews during the visit school leadership indicated, and a number of (but not all) staff confirmed, that they are more fully in sync than in the previous year regarding mission and academic expectations. A teacher new to the school reported being "really happy" at this school because everyone "really cares about kids."
 - Although more work needs to be done on aligning behavioral expectations, progress was noted, including staff discussing increased ownership of classroom management by teachers (fewer referrals, resolving more issues in the classroom), administrator responsiveness ("Courtney, can you come upstairs for a minute?" And she's there in a blink of an eye."), and improved respect.
 - Staff indicated that the school's leadership is open and frank, and effectively communicates. One teacher referred to the availability of the leadership team as "very helpful and encouraging."
 - Teachers interviewed stated that they support the school's program and emphasis on data driven instruction. One teacher remarked, "I've never been in a place this data-driven."
 - According to school leadership, internal staff survey results this year indicate that teachers feel the professional culture is improved and they want to collaborate to increase its effectiveness.
 - Lighthouse Academies implemented a system-wide goal of bolstering writing instruction this year, which has been embraced at the school, and the teachers are emphasizing student writing in several ways, including adoption of a school-wide writing assessment and rubric. Writing-center professional development is being provided to teachers.

- On the day of the visit, the overall school learning environment and climate were orderly, with teachers focused on teaching and students participating in learning activities in response to teacher direction.
 - Classroom instruction and management in observed classrooms were more consistent than those observed in the school's first year.
 - Observed classrooms were safe and more orderly than those of the previous spring's visit.
 - The school is working with the Responsive Classroom to help teachers continue to improve classroom management. Observed classes during Morning Meeting provided evidence of Responsive Classroom techniques and strategies, including use of "Put Ups" and SHINE and various routines to encourage connection both between students and between teachers and students.
 - Students in observed classes were typically on task and responsive to teacher directions and instruction.
 - Student attendance has improved and out-of-school suspensions have declined from last year.⁷
 - Classrooms were print-rich and had ample instructional resources.

- As noted above, there is a strong emphasis on using assessment data to drive instruction and on developing a culture of achievement.

⁷ According to school's Annual Site Visit Data Collection Form attendance rose from 94.5% to 97.4% and out of school suspension had decreased from 28 to 18.

- The leadership team, with the help of consultants from Cambridge Education, is implementing the school-wide Culture of Achievement Plan (CAP) it established at the beginning of the academic year calling for an emphasis on student achievement in writing, developing a common vision of what constitutes effective teaching and engaged learning, celebrating student and staff accomplishments, and developing action plans tailored to the school's priorities.
 - On the day of the visit, school leaders and teachers in interviews focused on the importance of data in driving instruction and that emphasis permeated the culture of the school. The school uses Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) to set student growth goals and monitor progress. MAP is administered three times a year. The school also uses the Lighthouse writing assessments and rubric (adapted from Education Northwest's Six Trait Rubric, which focuses on Ideas, Organization, Voice, Word Choice, Fluency and Conventions).
 - Additional assessments include DIBELS, Running Records, assessments from *Saxon Math* and *Imagine It!*, as well as teacher-created interim assessments.
 - The school has improved its use of data by involving staff more directly in data analysis compared to the prior year and by adding programmatic elements to help address the need for differentiation. These include the school-wide "Power Hour" to provide a daily 45-minute block of differentiated small group ELA intervention.
 - In addition, this year teachers submit weekly ELA and math data trackers and weekly data meetings, and are held to evaluate and plan around the results.
- There is a strong positive working relationship between school leadership and Lighthouse Academies, the school's charter management organization (CMO).
 - In all phases of the visit, both the school leader and CMO representative have collaborated well and in been in agreement on school's strengths, areas of growth, and concerns. Leadership is satisfied with the support it has received and the resources and services provided by the CMO.
 - The CMO provides various supports and trainings (see Executive Summary, page 2), including site reviews by Lighthouse's education team, and is working with the Board and school leadership to secure and ready a private facility for the school to move into for the 2013-14 school year. It is also supporting the school in pursuing contingency plans should the site not be ready in time.
- School leadership reported staffing improvements over the previous year.
 - Recent additions to the teaching staff, particularly in grade three, come to the school with greater experience and established skills than last year's staff which were largely made up of first- and second-year teachers.
 - School leaders anticipate a considerably higher staff retention rate than the low (38%) retention rate last year.
 - The special education program, supported by a special education coordinator, is reported to be well established, compliant and focused on strong educational outcomes for students with disabilities. Its leaders are fully engaged with district and city special education resources and appear to provide a high level of expertise.
- The school serves a population of students that is largely representative of its community, including 86% of its students being eligible for Free or Reduced Price Lunch (FRL), compared to 70.2% in CSD 8, its district of location, and 14% of its students being English Language Learners (ELLs), compared to 11.6% in the district. Special education students represent 10.8% of the school's students, compared to 19.3% in the district.⁸
 - The school should continue documenting and monitoring its recruitment efforts, making adjustments as necessary, to ensure that it maintains comparable

⁸ NYC DOE ATS system; data pulled April 2012

enrollment and retention percentages to the district for its FRL and ELL populations and reaches a comparable percentage of special education students.

- Financial management and operational practices appeared to be sound.
 - The school is up-to-date in its operational and financial reporting requirements, including submission of a clean audit.
 - School leadership, the school's board and the CMO provide appropriate oversight with established internal controls.
 - Plans for a private facility are progressing and school is aggressively monitoring progress and proactively considering contingencies.

Areas for Growth

- The school should continue its work to improve the overall quality and effectiveness of its classroom instruction and the consistency of student engagement across classrooms.
 - Much of the observed instruction, outside the Power Hour, was whole-group and heavily teacher-directed with limited independent practice and checks for understanding. In instances where small-group activities were used, participation and quality of student-to-student interaction should be monitored more rigorously for full participation and quality of student discussion and problem-solving.
 - While all classrooms had posted objectives or aims, the quality of stated objectives varied from room to room and the connection between observed instruction and the stated objective was not always clear.
 - In some classrooms effective questioning and use and reinforcement of academic vocabulary was evident; in others the effectiveness was either limited by participation (teacher asking and only one or two students responding without whole group checks—agree or disagree, asking other students to extend or apply the responses of others, etc.) or the quality of the questioning was not geared toward higher level thinking.
 - Evidence of differentiation beyond Power Hour was limited or not observed at all in some rooms.
 - Several observed classrooms had students who were fully engaged in their learning, actively listening or participating in activities; others had students who were on task and responsive to directions but showed little enthusiasm or engagement. A few had student outliers, not engaged or on task in whatever students were being asked to do.
 - Improved behavior, staffing, and opportunities for collaboration and data use have created an opportunity for the school to continue its work in advancing its instructional mission and reaching the ambitious goals identified in its self-evaluation. The school should continue to advance this work intentionally and supported by monitoring instruction through observation and analyzing student performance results.
- The school should build on its foundational work in using data to drive instructional decision-making.
 - This year more teachers were engaged and supported in looking at data reports but data is largely pulled and presented by school leadership. Some teachers showed initiative in, for example, creating data trackers for *Imagine It!* data. Professional development and teacher team meetings should continue to be vehicles for developing teacher skills at collecting, analyzing, and applying data findings to instructional responses, including in improving ways and means of differentiating instruction to meet needs of all learners.
 - The school used NWEA MAP data and its internal interim assessments to predict grade level performance and proficiency on state assessments. It should compare actual results to interim assessment predictions to evaluate correlation of results and refine predictive value of its internal assessment system.

- The school is encouraged to continue working with its staff to reach a higher degree of consensus and effectiveness around its discipline practices and related culture. Despite the progress noted above, this remains, as interviewed leadership and staff observed, “a work in progress.”
 - Several interviewed teachers expressed concerns about what they characterized as a “fragmented” student discipline process within the school that they claimed puts too much emphasis on teacher referrals and determinations about what disciplinary steps should be taken in a given instance.
 - The school should review the 2011-12 DOE School Survey data when it becomes available to assess progress and prioritize further initiatives in its efforts to improve school participation and satisfaction results.

- While interviewed teachers were supportive of formal and informal observations and evaluation of staff performance they were not as supportive of the quality of the professional development offerings provided them. The school and CMO should continue to evaluate its professional development support to ensure it consistently addresses needs of staff and results in improved school performance.
 - Teachers interviewed provided inconsistent feedback on the sufficiency of the school’s professional development offerings. Some expressed satisfaction, but several interviewed teachers expressed strong concerns about receiving limited support from the school and CMO, indicating that they need to look to their graduate programs or Teach for America for support.
 - The school leadership and CMO should work together to review formal and informal survey data on staff support to determine strategies to continue to develop its professional development program.
 - While school leadership has a strong collaborative relationship with its CMO many staff were less aware of, or positive about, the role of the CMO in supporting the school. Some thought opportunities for collaboration with other schools in the network weren’t fully realized, including benefitting from lessons learned and best practices employed at the Bronx Lighthouse Charter School.

- The school should continue to proactively address any potential complications presented by its planned move to a private facility.
 - According to school leaders, the intended new facility is approximately seven miles from the school’s current location, which may present challenges for many families and lead to some student turnover.
 - At the time of the visit school leaders expressed a concern that the new facility might not be ready in time for the 2013-14 school year and might need to find alternate space for that year.

- The school should continue to work to improve parent support and the further development of its parent association.
 - The school family coordinator indicated that the school’s parent association needed to be “rebuilt” with nominations for parent association leadership roles would occur next month (April 2012).
 - School administrators stated that they would like to get more parents involved in the life of the school, although they reported strong attendance at parent-teacher conferences—“They all show up,” said the family coordinator.
 - In an effort to improve parent participation in the DOE School Survey, the school had planned to set up a room with laptops at events with high parent attendance to make it easier for parents to complete the survey.

The school should follow through on its plan to rebuild the parent association and to improve parent engagement. It should also monitor success of these efforts to replicate those that are successful and find new strategies for those that don’t have the desired impact. Further, the school should review parent results on the 2011-12 School Survey to identify areas where it can strengthen parent satisfaction.

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

<p>and enrollment calls, visitors, volunteers, etc.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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
<p>Evidence for a financially sound, viable organization may include, but not be limited to, the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 location⁹ 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

⁹ 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