



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

THE ETHICAL COMMUNITY
CHARTER SCHOOL
ANNUAL SITE VISIT REPORT

MAY 2010

Part 1: Executive Summary

School Overview and History:

The Ethical Community Charter School is a K-12 school serving approximately 120 students from kindergarten through grade 1 in the 2009-2010 school year.¹ The school opened in 2009 with kindergarten and grade 1 and will grow to serve students kindergarten to grade 12.² It is currently housed in a DOE facility in District 14.³

The school population comprises 53% Black, 35% Hispanic, 8% White, and 1% Asian students. 77% of students are designated at Title I.⁴ The student body includes 2% English language learners and 8% special education students. Boys account for 56% of the students enrolled and girls account for 44%.⁵

The school is in its first year of operation and has not yet received a Progress Report or state/federal accountability designation.

Annual Review Process Overview:

The NYC DOE Charter School 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 School 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
- Aquila Haynes, Associate Director of Community Engagement, Charter School Office, NYC DOE
- Aamir Raza, Charter School Office, NYC DOE

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.

Part 2: Findings

What the school does well

- The school utilizes Differentiated Instruction and an Inquiry/Active Learning approach to deepen an integrated curriculum, aligned with state standards to promote content proficiency and actively engage students
 - Students were actively engaged in whole group lessons, class meetings, reading independently, working in “centers” groups on projects, in all content areas; there is much emphasis in literacy and numeracy in all the subjects
 - Students who need extra support receive intervention instruction in small groups or individually, in the classroom or with support personnel for specific needs
 - “Centers” Time includes Math, Reading, Big Books, Writing, Blocks, Science, Spanish, Legos, Geoblocks, Puzzles and games, Shoe tying, Play dough, Foundations, Dance, Listening, List making, etc. which implement daily lessons and study in the core subjects and additional areas depending on student needs
 - Different modalities are used to provide access points for different learning styles: art is integrated into the core subject work, music is part of the classrooms, and an additional class, PE is three times a week, as well as Ethics as an additional area of concentration
 - Discovery, Observations and Predictions support Inquiry learning
 - Some curriculum programs guide/shape the content areas, and the staff use, and adapt, the units in Lit Life Curriculum for LA, Foss Science Kits, the Investigating Math Series, readers and writers workshop models
- The school uses a variety of assessments to monitor student performance and inform teaching and learning
 - DIBELS and Mclass administered three times a year, pre and post tests in the Curriculum Guides for Math and ELA, Projects and Performance Assessments in Science and Social Studies
 - Student work is displayed in the classroom and the hallways to document (and celebrate) progress of each student
 - Teachers know each student well and have multiple forms of student work and evidence of learning for each child, in folders, in binders and through regular meetings to examine student work
 - Each student has at least one individual conference with his/her teacher each week; teachers have up to date information on each student
- The school fosters a safe learning environment that encourages student expression and ensures the security of students and faculty
 - The respectful and collaborative culture in each classroom is clear in the way staff and students interact with each other; the Ethics theme is prominent
 - Guidelines for positive focus on learning are posted in each room, developed by staff and students, in student friendly language- through the Responsive Classroom approach, classroom rules are strong parameters for the school environment
 - Bulletin Boards show writing, science projects, photos of classes and gym and trips, sharing and celebrating the academic efforts of the students
- The school has created a strong culture that encourages academic excellence and allows all students to interact in the supportive learning community
 - Each class has a morning meeting to welcome the students and begin the day that is connected to the academic agenda
 - Routines are clear and implemented in each of the classrooms

- Student voices, questions and understandings are prominent
- Trips help deepen the cultural curriculum supports, connected to the academic grade level units including: to the Metropolitan Museum, the Staten Island Ferry, the Transit Museum, the Queens Museum, the Top of the Rock, the Fire Station, a local Beauty Salon, the Train Exhibit at The Botanical Gardens, the Butterfly Exhibit at the Natural History Museum, etc
- The school is in good financial condition and maintains appropriate internal controls
 - As of June 14, 2010, the school possessed \$812,288 in current assets and \$1,149 in current liabilities. Therefore, for each outstanding dollar in current liability, the school possesses \$706.95 in current assets to meet its obligations. Please note that the ratio of \$706 in assets vs. each dollar in liability may be skewed due to the timing when the financial report was run by the school
 - The school's long-term financial outlook appears good based on the total assets of \$1,008,770 and total liabilities of \$1,149. Therefore, for each dollar in long-term liability, the school possesses \$877.95 in long-term assets to meet its obligations
 - The school exercises appropriate internal controls on its financial systems
- The school board is providing adequate and balanced oversight
 - Board gets reporting from the principal's report, finance committee report, attendance and suspension figures besides other statistics
 - Board is getting governance training and further workshops are scheduled

What the school needs to improve

- The school should continue its collaborative work in curriculum planning and cross-grade communication in order to articulate the content of the additional grades they will serve.
- The school should continue to document student progress and create more school-wide systems for staff sharing of data to inform unit and curriculum planning.
- The school should continue to deepen its partnerships and relationships with community agencies and institutions to encourage engagement in the external experiences available as the school grows.
- The board should continue to conduct strategic planning that lays out well defined goals for each year.
- The board should continue to pursue training on the practical aspects of running and overseeing a charter school to enhance operational capacity.

Part 3: Framing Questions

FRAMING QUESTIONS:

Throughout the Renewal Process and the life of each school's charter, the NYCDOE Charter School 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