



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

**NEW HEIGHTS ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOL  
ANNUAL SITE VISIT REPORT**

**MAY 2012**

## Part 1: Executive Summary

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

New Heights Academy Charter School is a middle/high school serving approximately 743 students from fifth through twelfth grade in the 2011-12 school year.<sup>1</sup> The school is in the second year of its second charter term and is currently operating at its full capacity of grades offered. It has no plans for further grade expansion or replication during its current or next charter term.<sup>2</sup> New Heights is currently housed in a privately leased facility in District 6. The school's student body includes 91.1% students eligible for Free or Reduced Price Lunch, 20.4% English Language Learners and 12.4% special education students<sup>3</sup>.

The school has experienced low student attrition over the past two years, with less than 1% turnover in 2010-2011 and 1.6% turnover as of April 25, 2012.<sup>4</sup> There are currently 634 students on its waitlist<sup>5</sup>. The average attendance rate for school year 2011-2012 was 94%<sup>6</sup>.

The school earned an A on its elementary/middle school progress report in 2008-2009, a C on its elementary/middle school progress report in 2009-2010, and a B on its elementary/middle school progress report in 2010-11. It earned an A on its high school progress report in 2010-11 and an additional A on its high school progress report in 2009-2010.<sup>7</sup>

Based on 2010-11 state exam results, the school has been newly identified as being in Improvement status under the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), also known as the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. The school's current status is Improvement School: Year 1 – Comprehensive, with its Areas of Identification being Elementary-Middle Level English Language Arts and Elementary-Middle Level Science<sup>8</sup>.

New Heights Academy Charter School is an independent charter school not associated with a charter management organization (CMO) or other parent organization.

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

The New York City Department of Education (NYC DOE) office of Charter Schools Accountability and Support (CSAS) 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 CSAS and last the duration of one school day. The annual site visit begins with a meeting with the school leadership 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 8, 2012:

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<sup>1</sup> Self-reported on school's Annual Site Visit Data Collection Form (4/25/12)

<sup>2</sup> Self-reported on school's Annual Site Visit Self-Evaluation Form (Submitted in April 12)

<sup>3</sup> NYC DOE ATS system, April 2012; the school's self-reported numbers (4/25/12) are similar to those from the ATS system pull: 100% of students eligible for Free or Reduced Lunch (743 of 743), 21.1% English Language Learners (157 of 743, with another 87 students having been declassified during the school year), and 13.6% special education students (101 of 743)

<sup>4</sup> Self-reported on school's Annual Site Visit Data Collection Forms (4/1/2011 and 4/25/12)

<sup>5</sup> Self-reported on school's Annual Site Visit Data Collection Form (4/25/12)

<sup>6</sup> Self-reported on school's Annual Site Visit Data Collection Form (4/25/12)

<sup>7</sup> NYC DOE Progress Report webpage: <http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/tools/report/default.htm>

<sup>8</sup> NYSED Office of Accountability Title I School Status Report 2011-12:  
<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/accountability/T1/titleia/schoolstatusrpt.html>

- Gabrielle Mosquera, Director of Oversight, NYC DOE CSAS
- Rick Larios, Senior Director, NYC DOE CSAS
- Jessica Fredston-Hermann, Analyst, NYC DOE CSAS
- Dr. Elihu Feldman, Senior Special Education Program Review Specialist, NYC DOE Division of Students with Disabilities and English Language Learners

## Part 2: Findings

### Areas of Strength:

- The school is focused on increasing student achievement levels both in class grades and state assessments, and has made structural adjustments that reflect this.
  - New Heights has replaced its teacher-created interim assessments with quarterly mock Regents exams for high school students and mock state assessments for middle school students, three of which were administered before the state tests. Middle school leaders report that the increased exposure to the tests increased students' stamina over time and their general comfort level with state ELA and Math tests. High school leaders reported that this resulted in a high passing rate for the English January Regents. Additionally, the school now counts interim assessment results as 10 percent of class grades at the both the middle and high school level.
  - The school began using Aventa Learning for credit recovery in its high school grades and, in response to concerns regarding the rigor of some of its offerings, is following the NYC DOE's academic policy guidelines of allowing only 3 core academic credits to be earned through targeted credit recovery throughout high school.
  - The school has expanded its high school elective offerings to reflect elevated expectations for college preparedness and exam readiness. These now include Trigonometry Review, College Math, Eco Design, Senior Composition, SAT Prep, and various Regents review courses for students who have not passed a Regents exam.
  - The school implemented flexible, ability based grouping ("streaming") in its middle school Math and Social Studies classes this year in order to more efficiently differentiate instruction across a broad range of achievement levels. Additional middle school supports include Teaching Assistants in all English classes, a Saturday Academy program that pairs students with their classroom teachers for extra exam preparation, and an after school tutoring program launched during the fall that targets students scoring at the lowest level on last year's ELA exam.
  
- The school has a reflective, responsive, and restructured leadership team that has made organizational and structural changes focused on improving school culture, and that continues to focus on improvement.
  - New Heights restructured its previous Staff Developer positions into Department Chair positions that have broader instructional oversight responsibilities. The school also replaced its Middle School and High School Directors with leaders it believed were more aligned with the school's focus on increased rigor in the classroom.
  - The school added two more Deans of School Culture to its roster this year and revised its discipline policy from a matrix of actions and consequences to a more streamlined set of four discipline levels that also includes more options for addressing discipline issues in the classroom. The deans track all discipline referrals, send weekly emails with discipline data, and observe classrooms to provide feedback on classroom management strategies.
  - The school's in-school and out-of-school suspensions have decreased significantly from the previous year (171 to 26 and 323 to 138, respectively).<sup>9</sup> Although expulsions increased over the same period (from 1 to 5), these were largely due to one incident of

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<sup>9</sup> Self-reported on school's Annual Site Visit Data Collection Form (4/25/12)

grade tampering involving several students, an infraction toward which the school exercises a zero-tolerance approach.<sup>10</sup>

- The school administered a mock DOE School Survey to staff members in January 2012 and saw improvement in results when compared to the DOE School Survey taken in the spring of 2011.
  - Several teachers interviewed on the day of the visit stated that the school's culture had changed for the better this year among both staff and student populations.
  - Based on this year's observation and feedback, school leaders have already brainstormed several potential areas of change in the future, including increasing standards for middle school promotion requirements and increasing the number of periods within the high school daily schedule.
- The school has increased the quantity of its formal mechanisms for teacher support with the goals of improving staff stability as well as aligning expectations around, and delivery of, instructional rigor.
    - The structural shift from staff developers to department chairs was described by teachers interviewed on the day of the visit as "truly helpful" and "a great change." Teachers specifically expressed enthusiasm for the increased frequency of observations as well as the chairs' promptness in giving feedback on both observations and lesson plans.
    - Regular grade-level meetings and common grade-level prep time for most middle school teachers were established this year, and the school has also implemented a mentor program for first-year teachers. Teachers interviewed on the day of the visit stated support for all of these initiatives.
    - Additionally, teachers interviewed on the day of the visit expressed positive feedback regarding the Deans of School Culture and their help with arranging parent contact.
    - Lesson plans are now submitted weekly instead of daily. Teachers interviewed stated that this helped them build in time for re-teaching.
    - In response to low staff scores in the Engagement portion the 2011 DOE School Survey, school leaders have made efforts to solicit staff input regarding school wide decisions, including recruiting some staff members to survey best practices among high-performing charter schools and make suggestions for the school based on their findings. These efforts resulted in a change to the school's first period schedule as well as the decision to keep the school's current PD schedule.
  - The school is developing consistent classroom routines across grade levels to help increase effectiveness of instruction and meet students' individual needs.
    - New Heights began using a consistent lesson plan template across grade levels this year.
    - Aims, Objectives, and Do Nows were evident throughout observed classrooms, as was the school's focus on writing across the curriculum, use of technology, use of homework folders, and other school-identified instructional priorities.
    - The school's Department Chairs are intentionally seated in the same office in order to promote collaboration and alignment in observation, testing procedures, and PD planning. The Chairs interviewed on the day of the visit reported that this helps them share best practices across grade levels and recognize which of these practices are being implemented.
  - The school maintains a strong and safe learning environment for students.
    - Most classes observed on the day of the visit were orderly, calm and respectful, with students largely on task.
    - Classrooms observed were print-rich, and teacher use of technological tools such as SMART Boards, SMART Response receivers and laptop carts was evident throughout lessons.

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<sup>10</sup> Self-reported on school's Annual Site Visit Data Collection Form (4/25/12)

- Although the school utilizes a class schedule that has all middle and high school students transitioning between classes at the same time (and in constricted hallway space) at several points during the day, observed transitions were largely orderly and efficient.

### Areas of Growth:

- The school should continue its efforts to strengthen the consistency of academic rigor and student engagement in the classroom, as well as overall rigor in academic structures.
  - The percentage of the school's students scoring at Level 3 or 4 in ELA (21%) on the 2011 state exams was significantly lower than both the city average (43.9%) and the District 6 average (37.8%). This percentage is also significantly below the school's percentage of students scoring at Level 3 or 4 in Math (62%).
  - Department Chairs expressed general concern regarding the high school's interim assessment results versus the school's expectations, and the implications these might have for future Regents results.
  - Instruction observed on the day of the visit (covering approximately 13 different instructors across middle and high school grades) was largely focused and purposeful; however, its level of rigor varied, with many observed tasks requiring only a basic-comprehension level of understanding. Additionally, most observed instruction was primarily teacher-dependent and did not integrate independent, student-led activities. Few examples of differentiation were observed.
  - While use of technology was evident during classroom observations, as mentioned above, it was primarily utilized by teachers (e.g., Whiteboards used as a projection surface for notes, graphic organizers, or PowerPoint illustrations intended for students to copy or observe), with limited evidence of higher-order student engagement with the same tools.
  - While the majority of observed classrooms showed students largely on task, the level of student engagement varied widely and several classrooms featured incidences of disruptive behavior. Additionally, school leaders described the general student motivation level as "appallingly low," with motivation among middle school grades being split (Grades 5 and 6 being higher than 7 and 8), but still higher overall than in most high school grades. Teachers interviewed also noted a divide in motivation levels between middle school and high school students.
  - School leaders acknowledged room for improvement in translating school's raised expectations into some of its formal structures, specifically the middle school's promotion criteria and the high school's schedule. The school's current requirements for middle school promotion allow students to fail 2 out of 4 core classes during the year if they are able to pass these during summer school and meet 3 out of 4 remaining middle school promotion criteria. The current high school schedule has only six periods, which according to the high school principal limits the school's ability to offer AP courses as well as opportunities for credit recovery during the instructional day.
- The school should strengthen its data storage, sharing, and analysis procedures in order to better track student progress over time.
  - Department Chairs interviewed stated that the school's lack of a central data warehousing system creates inefficiencies that prove challenging for instruction. Department Chairs currently email each other Excel spreadsheets based on testing Scantrons, and report that the lack of a central Student Information System makes it difficult to store students' academic results over time, specifically citing Science labs and Regents scores as examples.
  - School Directors also reported that the lack of centralized student data challenges their ability to track progress in student achievement levels as well as enforce accountability measures for teachers based on this progress. Additionally, they cited the fact that the middle and high schools share only one office administrator, who splits both operational and data-related responsibilities, as a constraint on their ability to further access and more deeply analyze achievement results.

- The school should continue its focus on school culture and developing and sustaining a high-quality staff.
  - New Heights did not retain approximately 36% of its instructional staff from the 2010-11 school year, and the majority of this attrition (80%) was voluntary<sup>11</sup>. This caused the school to miss its charter goal of 80% overall staff retention each year. Subsequently, staff alignment with the school's mission and vision was subsequently identified by the school as an area of growth.
  - In response to this turnover, the school focused resources on aligning new hires to the school's expectations around instructional rigor and school culture, and providing more supportive staff structures. However, while many of these structures have gained support from staffers (as detailed above), school leader estimates of anticipated turnover ranged from 13% to near 20%. To meet its charter goal turnover needs to be under 20%. The school should monitor actual turnover to ensure progress toward meeting its goal and to consider strategies for minimizing any potential disruption to school's improving culture.
  - In interviews and the leadership meeting, school leaders acknowledged that although the aforementioned mock DOE survey results showed improvement, when analyzed they showed a gap between first-year teachers (more favorable) and returning teachers (less so). School Directors stated in interviews that while they believed they had made progress in building productive relationships this year, many staffers were not yet adapting to such structural changes as the lesson plan template or increased frequency of observations and feedback.
  
- The school should continue to refine its systems for evaluation, PD, and feedback in order to both sustain and build upon the progress made in instructional consistency and cultural alignment.
  - Several teachers interviewed on the day of the visit stated that they found the feedback given as part of formal observations to be more helpful and actionable than feedback given during informal observations.
  - Teachers interviewed on the day of the visit varied in their ability to name how often they were formally and informally evaluated.
  - Additionally, some teachers interviewed stated that they voted against the aforementioned increase in PD frequency because they believed that many of the school's current PD sessions were more focused on proper implementation of school procedures than on improving instructional practice. The school is encouraged to look for ways to maximize efficiency of PD time in order to balance the need to clarify existing procedures and procedural changes with the additional need of continuous instructional improvement.
  
- The school should continue to refine its ability to provide differentiated support both in and out of the classroom in order to reach all students.
  - A review of records for students with special needs found that four students are not receiving occupational therapy services in accordance with the IEP mandates. The school should work to ensure that the students receive these mandated services.
  
- The school should continue to enact measures to be in full compliance with the 2010 amended Charter Schools Act as it relates to recruitment and retention of Special Education students, students eligible for Free or Reduced Price Lunch, and ELL students. The school's proportions of two of these high-needs groups is strong, with the percentages of students eligible for Free or Reduced Lunch (91.1%) and Special Education students (12.4%) being either comparable to, or exceeding, those of District 6 (80.0% for Free or Reduced Price Lunch; 13.8% for Special Education).<sup>12</sup>
  - However, New Heights' ELL population currently comprises 20.4% of its overall student population, which is significantly lower than the 33.4% average ELL population in District

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<sup>11</sup> Self-reported on school's Annual Site Visit Data Collection Form (4/25/12)

<sup>12</sup> NYC DOE ATS system, April 2012

6.<sup>13</sup> However, the school has successfully declassified approximately 36% of its ELL population (87 of the 244 ELLs from the start of the school year).<sup>14</sup> The school is encouraged to continue documenting both its outreach to new ELL students as well as the academic progress made among current ELLs.

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<sup>13</sup> NYC DOE ATS system, April 2012

<sup>14</sup> Self-reported on school's Annual Site Visit Data Collection Form (4/25/12)

## Part 3: Essential Questions and Accountability Framework

### The CSAS 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 Accountability and Support (CSAS) 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