



**BROWNSVILLE ASCEND CHARTER SCHOOL
RENEWAL REPORT**

**2013 – 2014 SCHOOL YEAR
DECEMBER 2013**

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Part 1: Summary of Renewal Recommendation

I. Charter School Overview:

Name of Charter School	Brownsville Ascend Charter School
Current Board Chair(s)	Theodore J. Coburn
School Leader	Erica Murphy
Management Company (if applicable)	Ascend Learning, Inc.
Other Partner(s)	N/A
District(s) of Location	NYC Community School District 23
Physical Address	1501 Pitkin Avenue, Brooklyn 11212
Facility	Private
School Opened For Instruction	2009
Current Charter Term Expiry Date	1/12/2014
Maximum Grade Levels / Enrollment at Expiry Date	K-5 /640
Proposed Charter Term	3 years
Proposed Maximum Grade Levels / Enrollment at New Expiry Date	K-8 / 1,004

II. Overview of School-Specific Data:

Performance on the NYC DOE Progress Report

Progress Report Grade	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013
Overall Grade	-	-	B	C
Student Progress	-	-	C	C
Student Performance	-	-	B	B
School Environment	-	-	B	B
Closing the Achievement Gap Points	-	-	1.7	0.3

% Proficient in English Language Arts				
	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013
Brownsville Ascend Charter School	-	-	59.3%	24.6%
CSD 23	-	-	28.5%	10.9%
Difference from CSD 23	-	-	30.8	13.7
NYC	-	-	49.0%	27.7%
Difference from NYC	-	-	10.3	-3.1
New York State	-	-	55.2%	31.2%
Difference from New York State	-	-	4.1	-6.6

% Proficient in Math				
	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013
Brownsville Ascend Charter School	-	-	73.6%	39.3%
CSD 23	-	-	30.0%	11.0%
Difference from CSD 23	-	-	43.6	28.3
NYC	-	-	57.0%	34.2%
Difference from NYC	-	-	16.6	5.1
New York State	-	-	65.7%	28.9%
Difference from New York State	-	-	7.9	10.4

All comparisons to either the CSD or NYC take into account only grades the school itself serves.

Academic Goal Analysis					
	1st Year 2009-2010	2nd Year 2010-2011	3rd year 2011-2012	4th Year 2012-2013	Cumulative 4 Year Total
Total Achievable Academic Goals	0	0	4	5	9
# Met	0	0	4	4	7
# Partially Met	0	0	0	1	0
# Not Met	0	0	0	0	2
% Met	N/A	N/A	100%	80%	89%
% Partially Met	N/A	N/A	0%	20%	11%
% Not Met	N/A	N/A	0%	0%	0%

III. Rationale for Recommendation

A. Academic Performance

At the time of this school's renewal, Brownsville Ascend Charter School (Brownsville Ascend) has partially demonstrated academic achievement and progress. Though Brownsville Ascend's New York City Department of Education (NYC DOE) overall Progress Report grade dropped from a B in 2011-2012 to a C in 2012-13, the school continues to outperform its Community School District (CSD) 23 in the percentage of students proficient in both ELA and math in each grade that the school serves.

The New York Charter Schools Act of 1998 establishes a system of charter schools throughout New York State, with objectives that include, "(a) Improve student learning and achievement;" and "(b) Increase learning opportunities for all students, with special emphasis on expanded learning experiences for students who are at-risk of academic failure".

The mission of Brownsville Ascend Charter School is to equip every student with the knowledge, confidence, and character to succeed in college and beyond. "[S]tudents will, from the earliest grades, steadily build a strong foundation of learning habits, critical thinking skills, and knowledge; excel academically in the middle and high schools; and graduate as confident young adults, prepared to succeed as college students, citizens, and leaders in their chosen fields." The school is a replication of Brooklyn Ascend Charter School, currently serving students in grades K-7. Both schools plan to grow to serve students in kindergarten through twelfth grades. In grades kindergarten through five, Brownsville Ascend uses a lead teacher in each classroom, but the number of teachers in each classroom varies depending on grade level. There are collaborative team teaching (ICT) classrooms in kindergarten, first and second grades. In grades three through five, associate teachers push in to classrooms to work with small groups and learning specialists pull students out to work on targeted skill-building.

The school entered its fifth year of operation with the start of the 2013-2014 academic year and the NYC DOE has two years of New York State (NYS) assessment data to evaluate the academic achievement and progress of Brownsville Ascend's students. NYC DOE Progress Reports grade each school with an A, B, C, D, or F and are based on student progress, student performance, and school environment, with additional points for closing the achievement gap contributing to the overall grade. Scores are based on comparing results from one school to all schools citywide and also to a peer group of up to 40 schools with the most similar student population based on economic needs, percent students with disabilities, percent Black/Hispanic students, and percent English language learners.

As part of the Ascend Learning Inc. network, Brownsville Ascend has prioritized student performance since the school opened in the 2009-2010 academic year. In 2011-2012, the first year that the school was eligible for a Progress Report, the school earned an overall grade of B. In 2012-2013, the school earned an overall grade of C on the Progress Report. Despite this drop in the overall grade, Brownsville Ascend was consistent in the Student Performance subsection, earning a B for both years.

Brownsville Ascend earned a C grade on the Student Progress subsection for both the 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 NYC DOE Progress Reports. Median adjusted growth percentiles¹ are a major component for this subsection – in 2012-2013, Brownsville Ascend's English median adjusted

¹This measure calculates the median (middle) adjusted growth percentile of a school's eligible students. A student's growth percentile compares his or her growth to the growth of all students in the City who started at the same level of proficiency the year before. A student's growth percentile is a number between 0 and 100, which represents the percentage of students with the same score on last year's test who scored the same or lower than the student on this year's test. To evaluate a school on its students' growth percentile, the Progress Report uses an adjusted growth percentile. Growth percentile adjustments are based on students' demographic characteristics and reflect averages differences in growth compared to students with the same starting proficiency level. The Progress Report evaluates a school based on its median adjusted growth percentile, the adjusted growth percentile of the middle student when all students adjusted growth percentiles are listed from lowest to highest.

growth percentile placed it in the top 60% of elementary schools citywide; however, in math, the school ranked in the bottom 25% of elementary schools citywide.

The Student Performance section represents 25% of a school's total Progress Report score. Brownsville Ascend's percentage of students proficient in English and math surpassed CSD 23 in both subjects, and the New York City percentage in math, in both 2011-2012 and 2012-2013. At Brownsville Ascend, 24.6% of students are proficient in ELA, which ranks Brownsville Ascend in the top 40% of schools in the CSD. Brownsville Ascend's overall math proficiency is 39%, 28.3 percentage points higher than the CSD 23 average and 5.1 percentage points higher than the city average, which ranks the school in the top 1% of all elementary schools in the district and the top third in the city.

Over the course of the charter term, the school achieved 89% of its academic goals. In the most recent year, the school met 80% of its applicable charter goals.²

Over the course of its charter term, the NYC DOE has conducted five site visits: Annual Visits in the Spring of 2010, 2011, 2012, and 2013, and as part of the renewal process, a two-day visit in the Fall of 2013. During the visits, reviewers noted that the school has a comprehensive assessment system and uses data to drive instruction and student achievement. The school uses internal assessments to measure the student progress. The assessments include those aligned to the school's SABIS curriculum, as well as STAR (a computer-adaptive literacy test) and Continuous Academic Tests.

B. Governance, Operations & Finances

Brownsville Ascend is a viable organization.

Over the course of the school's charter term, the Board of Trustees has a developed governance structure and organizational design. The Board currently has seven members, more than the minimum number of five members delineated in the school's bylaws. As of July 1, 2013, the school's Board of Trustees moved to merge with the Boards of Brownsville Ascend Charter School, Bushwick Ascend Charter School and Brooklyn Ascend Charter School. At the time of this report, the Boards of all schools in the Ascend Learning, Inc. network are composed of the same seven members. The Board maintains authority over management, holding it accountable for performance as agreed under the charter contract, and requiring quarterly financial reports. The Board also ensures the delivery of services by Ascend Learning, Inc., (the schools' Charter Management Organization) as established in their contract with the management organization.

Over the course of the school's charter term, the school has partially developed a stable school culture. As indicated in the Annual Site Visit report from March 2012, the "school has established a goal-oriented environment that is safe, orderly, and focused on academic achievement" and "created a culture that is responsive to the needs of students' and teachers' development". However, the school has had leadership turnover over the course of the charter term, and is on its third school leader.

Brownsville Ascend has maintained strong grades for both years in the Learning Environment section of the Progress Report. In both years, Brownsville Ascend received a B on the Learning Environment section.

As it pertains to charter goals, Brownsville Ascend met enrollment goals as defined in its charter agreement. Further, Brownsville Ascend currently serves 665 students, which is within 15% of its

² It should be noted that because of the move to Common Core standards in 2012-2013, the NYC DOE did not include goals that measure a school's actual performance relative to 75% absolute proficiency or goals that measure reducing the performance gap of a cohort in ELA and math assessments in its analysis of progress towards goals. Goals that compared the school to the Community School District performance were included in the analysis. The school's charter goals also include the school being deemed in good standing with state and federal accountability which the met in 2010-2011.

full enrollment as defined in the school's charter agreement. In addition, the school has had a waitlist for each year that the school has been in existence. However, over the course of the charter term, Brownsville Ascend has fallen short of meeting the average daily attendance rate goal of at least 95%; it has only met this goal in the 2012-2013 school year.

Overall, the school is in a weak position to meet near-term financial obligations though the school is financially sustainable based on its current practices. There was no material weakness noted in the 2009-2010, 2010-2011, or 2011-2012 independent annual financial audits.

C. Compliance with Charter, Applicable Law and Regulations

Over the charter term, Brownsville Ascend has been compliant with some but not all applicable laws and regulations. The Board of Trustees for the school has been compliant with some but not all applicable laws, regulations, and provisions of the charter contract.

D. Plans for Next Charter Term

Brownsville Ascend Charter School plans to continue its full grade expansion (K-12), growing from serving grades kindergarten through fifth, to serving kindergarten through tenth during its next charter term. The school also plans to increase the number of students it serves across grades by increasing class sizes by 2 to 3 students per class. The school's projected full grade span upon renewal and approval is kindergarten through twelfth, which it is expected to reach in 2018-2019.

For the aforementioned reasons, the NYCDOE recommends a short-term renewal.

Part 2: School Overview and History

Brownsville Ascend Charter School is an elementary school serving approximately 665 students³ in kindergarten through fifth grade during the 2013-2014 school year. It opened in the 2009-2010 school-year, with kindergarten and first grade, and is under the terms of its first charter. Brownsville Ascend's intended full grade span is kindergarten through twelfth, which it is expected to reach in 2018-2019 upon renewal and approval.⁴ The school is located in a private facility in Community School District 23, in Brooklyn.⁵

The mission of Brownsville Ascend Charter School is to equip every student with the knowledge, confidence, and character to succeed in college and beyond. “[S]tudents will, from the earliest grades, steadily build a strong foundation of learning habits, critical thinking skills, and knowledge; excel academically in the middle and high schools; and graduate as confident young adults, prepared to succeed as college students, citizens, and leaders in their chosen fields.” The school is a replication of the Brooklyn Ascend Charter School. Both schools plan to grow to serve students in kindergarten through twelfth grades. In grades kindergarten through five, Brownsville Ascend uses a lead teacher in each classroom. There are collaborative team teaching (CTT) classrooms in kindergarten, first and second grades. In grades three through five, associate teachers push in to classrooms to work with small groups and learning specialists pull students out to work on targeted skill-building.

The school is part of the Ascend Learning, Inc. network, a charter management organization (CMO). The CMO provides design and support of school program, curriculum assessment, student assessment data gathering, selection and management of school director, financial management and support, technology support, and facilities support. The annual budget is approved by the Board of Trustees of the school. Brownsville Ascend is solely responsible for complying with all requirements of grants for the school, the school's governing charter, and all applicable laws. The CMO charges a 9% management fee annually, based on the per pupil revenue.

The school typically enrolls new students across all grades it serves, depending on seat availability, and holds its yearly lottery for all grades. There were 1,715 students on the waitlist after the Spring 2013 lottery.⁶

Over the charter term, the school has served the following percentages of special populations of students:⁷

Special Populations

	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013
Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL)	82.6%	89.5%	60.9%	67.4%
Students with Disabilities (SwD)	9.3%	8.5%	8.0%	7.5%
English Language Learners (ELL)	1.7%	0.8%	0.5%	0.2%

Brownsville Ascend Charter School's Board of Trustees is led by Ted Coburn. The school's founder, Steven Wilson serves as the Chief Executive Officer of the Ascend Learning, Inc. network. The school is currently led by Erica Murphy, who joined the school at the start of the 2013 – 2014 academic year. In November 2010, the school's founding School Director, Keli Swearingen, was hired by Ascend Learning as the Director of Data and Analytics. Kelly Bowers and Angela Beal were appointed as Co-Directors. Ms. Beal stepped down in October 2012, and Ms. Bowers served as sole School Director through January

³ ATS data from 10/10/2013.

⁴ NYC DOE internal data.

⁵ NYC DOE Location Code Generating System database.

⁶ Self-reported on Data Sheet Submitted with Renewal Application September 6, 2013.

⁷ Special population figures are pulled from ATS as of June 1st each year. These figures are compared against the total population which is pulled from ATS as of October 31st each year.

2013. Ms. Bowers was hired by Ascend Learning as Director of Academic Development, and Erin Swan-Potras took over as School Director in February 2013 through June 2013. Ms. Murphy took over the School Director position July 1, 2013.

Part 3: Renewal Process Overview

Renewal Process

In the final year of its charter, a Chancellor-authorized charter school seeking renewal must demonstrate its success during the current charter term and establish goals and objectives for the next charter term. Ultimately, the renewal process offers an opportunity for the school community to reflect on its experiences during its first term, to make a compelling, evidence-based case that it has earned the privilege of an additional charter term, and, if renewed, to carry out an ambitious plan for the future.

As the school is approaching the end of its charter term, the NYC DOE performs a comprehensive review of the school's performance over the course of the charter. This renewal process is conducted through analyzing student performance data and collecting and evaluating school-submitted documents during the charter term. Evidence of a school's success is organized around the four essential questions that comprise the NYC DOE's Accountability Framework:

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 laws and regulations?
4. What are the school's plans for its next charter term?

A school will answer these overarching questions by demonstrating that its students have made significant academic progress and that the school has met the goals and objectives pledged in its initial charter. In addition, the school will describe challenges it has faced during its charter term, the strategies that were used to address those challenges and the lessons learned.

Renewal Report

This report contains the findings and recommendations of the NYC DOE regarding a school's application for charter renewal. This report is based on a cumulative record of the school's progress during its charter term, including but not limited to oversight visits, annual reports, and formal correspondence between the school and its authorizer, the NYC DOE, all of which are conducted in order to identify areas of weakness and to help the school to address them. Additionally, the NYC DOE incorporates into this report its findings from the renewal application process, which includes a written application, a report on student achievement data and a school visit by staff from the Charter Schools Accountability and Support (CSAS) team and other staff from the NYC DOE.

Upon review of all the relevant materials, a recommendation is made to the Chancellor. The Chancellor's determination, and the findings on which that decision is based, is then submitted to the New York State Board of Regents.

Is the school an academic success?

To assess whether a school is an academic success, the NYC DOE considers performance measures, including, but not limited to the following:

- Overall NYC DOE Progress Report score,
- New York State ELA and Math results and/or New York State Regents exams,
- ELA and Math proficiency compared to the district for elementary and middle schools, and graduation rates compared to the city for high schools,
- New York State Alternate Assessment (NYSAA) or other approved alternate assessments, and
- Performance data pertaining to college and career readiness.

Academic success is rated as **Demonstrated, Partially Demonstrated, or Not Yet Demonstrated.**

Is the school a fiscally sound, viable organization?

To assess whether a school is a fiscally sound, viable organization, the NYC DOE focuses on three areas: Governance Structure & Organizational Design, School Climate & Community Engagement, and Financial Health. This includes an analysis of the school's audited financial statements, based on the NACSA (National Association of Charter School Authorizers) Financial Framework⁸.

CSAS considers a variety of supporting materials and data, including but not limited to the following:

- Board of Trustee bylaws,
- Board of Trustee meeting minutes,
- Annual Reports submitted by schools to New York State Education Department (NYSED),
- NYC DOE School Surveys,
- Data collection sheets provided by schools,
- Student, staff, and Board turnover rates,
- Audits of authorized enrollment numbers, and
- Annual financial audits.

A school's Governance Structure & Organizational Design and Climate & Community Engagement are rated as **Developed, Partially Developed, or Not Yet Developed**. A school's Financial Health is rated to indicate whether there are concerns about the near-term financial obligations and the financial sustainability of the school.

Is the school compliant with its charter and all applicable laws and regulations?

As it pertains to compliance, the NYC DOE identifies areas of compliance and noncompliance with all applicable laws and regulations.

Staff Representatives

The following NYC DOE staff representatives participated in the review of this school, including the visit to the school on October 8 and 9, 2013:

- Daree Lewis, Senior Director, NYC DOE Charter Schools Accountability and Support
- Sonya Hooks, Senior Director, NYC DOE Charter Schools Accountability and Support
- Maria Campo, Director of Oversight, NYC DOE Charter Schools Accountability and Support
- Dean Guzman, Associate Director of Planning, NYC DOE Office of Portfolio Management
- Jose Castro, National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) Fellow

⁸ http://www.qualitycharters.org/assets/files/images/stories/pdfs/publications/Performance_Framework_Fall_2012_Draft.pdf, page 38-59

Part 4: Findings

Essential Question 1: Is the School an Academic Success?

At the time of this school's renewal Brownsville Ascend Charter School has partially demonstrated academic achievement and progress.

Academic Attainment and Improvement

The school has received two NYC DOE Progress Reports and has two years of NYS assessment data at the time of this report. (For detailed information on the progress reports and grade-level data on NYS assessments, please see Appendix A.)

Progress Report Grade	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013
Overall Grade	-	-	B	C
Student Progress	-	-	C	C
Student Performance	-	-	B	B
School Environment	-	-	B	B
Closing the Achievement Gap Points	-	-	1.7	0.3

% Proficient in English Language Arts				
	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013
Brownsville Ascend Charter School	-	-	59.3%	24.6%
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New York State	-	-	55.2%	31.2%
Difference from New York State	-	-	4.1	-6.6

% Proficient in Math				
	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013
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NYC	-	-	57.0%	34.2%
Difference from NYC	-	-	16.6	5.1
New York State	-	-	65.7%	28.9%
Difference from New York State	-	-	7.9	10.4

All comparisons to either the CSD or NYC take into account only grades the school itself serves.

Mission and Academic Goals

Over the charter term: 4 of 4 applicable charter goals were achieved in the third year of the charter, 4 of 5 were met in the fourth year.⁹ (None of the school's goals were applicable in its first and second years of the charter.)

Progress Toward Academic Charter Goals

	Met in 2009-10?	Met in 2010-11?	Met in 2011-12?	Met in 2012-13?
1) Each year, 75 percent of 3 rd -8 th -graders will perform at or above Level 3 on the New York State ELA examination.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2) Each year, 75 percent of 3 rd -8 th -graders will perform at or above Level 3 on the New York State mathematics examination.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
3) For the 2008-09 through 2011-12 school years, each cohort of students will reduce by one-half the gap between percent passing the Math Regents examination and the previous cohort's passing rate on the Math Regents examination.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
4) For the 2007-08 through 2011-12 school years, grade-level cohorts of students will reduce by one-half the gap between the percent at or above Level 3 on the previous year's state ELA exam and 75 percent at or above Level 3 on the current year's state ELA exam.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
5) For the 2007-08 through 2011-12 school years, grade-level cohorts of students will reduce by one-half the gap between the percent at or above Level 3 on the previous year's state math exam and 75 percent at or above Level 3 on the current year's state math exam.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
6) Each year, the percent of students performing at or above Level 3 on the state ELA exam in each tested grade will place the school in the top quartile of all similar schools (defined as schools in the CSD 23 serving the same grades).	N/A	N/A	Yes	Partial
7) Each year, the percent of students performing at or above Level 3 on the state math exam in each tested grade will place the school in the top quartile of all similar schools (defined as schools in the CSD 23 serving the same grades).	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes
8) Each year, the percent of each cohort of students passing the ELA Regents examination will place the school in the top quartile of all similar schools.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
9) Each year, the percent of each cohort of students passing the Math Regents examination will place the school in the top quartile of all similar schools.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
10) Each year, the school's aggregate Performance Index on the state ELA exam will meet its Annual Measurable Objective set forth in the state's No Child Left Behind (NCLB) accountability system.	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes
11) Each year, the school's aggregate Performance Index on the state math exam will meet its Annual Measurable Objective set forth in the state's No Child Left Behind (NCLB) accountability system.	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes

⁹ It should be noted that because of the move to Common Core standards in 2012-2013, the NYC DOE did not include goals that measure a school's actual performance relative to 75% absolute proficiency or goals that measure reducing the performance gap of a cohort in ELA and Math assessments in its analysis of progress towards goals. Goals that compared the school to the Community School District performance were included in the analysis.

12) Each year, the school's aggregate Performance Index on the state science exam will meet its Annual Measurable Objective set forth in the state's No Child Left Behind (NCLB) accountability system.	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes
13) Each year, at least 75% of each student cohort graduates after five years of beginning the upper school.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Responsive Education Program

As part of the renewal review process, representatives of the NYC DOE visited the school on October 8 and 9, 2013. Based on discussion, document review, and observation, the following was noted:

- Alignment with Common Core
 - The SABIS system has already aligned its curriculum to the Common Core standards. SABIS and Ascend have refined the alignment each summer, as the roll out of the new standards has progressed. For example, the ELA curriculum was modified to include more non-fiction passages, and Common Core-aligned exit tickets were designed to assess the students' understanding of the standard taught in the lesson.
 - The academic leadership team at the network continues to provide the school with on-going support in the alignment of the curriculum and assessments to the Common Core. The Chief Curriculum Officer specifically leads this work.
- Interim Assessment System
 - The school uses SABIS internal assessments to measure academic growth. The school's primary goal is to have student scores average 85% and higher on their SABIS periodic exams, for English, math, social studies, and science. At the end of the 2012-2013 school year, the school reported that averages on SABIS ELA and math assessments were:
 - Grade 1: ELA- 83.1%, Math- 88.9%
 - Grade 2: ELA- 82.2%, Math- 80.7%
 - Grade 3: ELA- 76.7%, Math- 87.3%
 - Grade 4: ELA- 88.3%, Math- 81.2%
 - The school uses two nationally norm-referenced assessments, STAR and Terra Nova. Terra Nova is administered on an annual basis during the spring to measure each cohort's progress in reading and math over the course of their time at the school. STAR is administered six times each year to evaluate student achievement in literacy.
- Addressing the Needs of All Learners
 - To meet the needs of at-risk learners, over the course of its charter, the school has increased the number of its special education faculty from one to five special education certified teachers, including SETSS and the coordinator. The school also employs two social workers and one SETSS teacher.
 - The school utilizes the Response to Intervention model for its pre-referral program. Its special education program consists of SETSS offered school-wide and collaborative team teaching in grades K to 2.
 - For students who may need remediation or acceleration, the school offers an Intensives program, in order that students who are behind their peers can gain mastery on "essential concepts."
- Instructional Model and Classroom Instruction
 - The instructional academic team at the school has been expanded and now includes a Principal, two Directors of Instruction, (one for grades K-2 and one for grades 3-5) an Associate Dean of kindergarten and an Associate Dean of 5th grade. All of these individuals implement coaching on a weekly basis to assigned teachers.
 - During the visit, nineteen classrooms, grades K-5, were observed with the school's instructional leadership and the following was noted:
 - At Brownsville Ascend, classrooms that are kindergarten through second grade employ a co-teaching model. For these classrooms, the method of instruction varied between lecture and lead and monitor.

- Class sizes ranged from 21 to 29, with two teachers in classrooms of grades K-2, and one teacher in classrooms of grades 3-5.
- Forms of questioning during the classroom observations included basic fact recall and challenging students to demonstrate understanding by explaining or restating.
- In most rooms, observed checks for understanding included questioning, class work, teacher observation, peer review, and polling.
- On the days of the renewal visits, there was no evidence of differentiation of materials, modality, tasks, products or assessments.
- In most observed classes, students were responsive to teacher directions and instruction. However, there were four classrooms observed that had challenges keeping students engaged and on-task.
- In most observed classes, the majority of students were on task.
- Based on debriefs with the school's instructional leaders after classroom observations, all classrooms had instruction that aligned with the instructional model and current academic goals of the school. School leaders also identified instances where teachers needed more development around student engagement, better questioning, and clarity during the teach section of the lesson.

Learning Environment

NYC DOE representatives conducted one-on-one interviews with twenty-two members of the instructional staff including the Deans of Instruction (for K-2 and 3-5 grades), Associate Deans of kindergarten and fifth grade, the Special Education Coordinator, and seventeen teachers.

- Most of the instructional staff interviewed reported that the school has a positive adult culture and that they felt supported by instructional leaders.
- Most of the interviewed teachers reported that they received school-based professional development both during the summer and weekly throughout the school year, with the administration providing resources and additional coaching. Teachers reported that the weekly professional development was differentiated for teachers based on experience levels.
- Some teachers mentioned that a focus for the 2013-2014 school year was on improving questioning during lessons, which was consistent with what the school leadership described as a goal for the school.
- Teachers reported that lesson plans are created by designated teachers on each grade level, for each core subject, throughout the Ascend network and then vetted by the network. The network then distributes to its schools, a week out from when the lesson will be taught.
- Some of the interviewed teachers discussed the use of informal observations for receiving feedback from the coaches on a weekly basis, as well as to review progress on individual, actionable goals. The teachers also reported that in previous years, they received two formal evaluations, one mid-year and one at the end of the year, but that the evaluation process for the 2013-2014 school year had not yet been discussed with them at the time of the renewal visit.
- Teachers in third to fifth grades reported that they administer SABIS Academic Monitoring System (AMS) tests in English and math weekly, in order to assess students understanding of the concepts that have just been taught. Some of the teachers interviewed discussed the periodic assessments, given about every six weeks, which are cumulative and cover all the material teachers have taught to date. The teachers reported that they used the data from the periodic assessments to adjust their future lesson plans.

Essential Question 2: Is the School a Fiscally Sound, Viable Organization?

Governance Structure & Organizational Design

Over the course of the school's charter term, the Board of Trustees has developed its governance structure and organizational design. On October 21, 2013, as part of the renewal review process, representatives of the NYC DOE attended a meeting of the school's Board of Trustees. Based on document review and observation, the following was noted:

- The Board currently has seven active members. The Board has experienced minimal turnover throughout its charter term. The school's Board was reconfigured as of July 1, 2013, in connection with a merger of all the schools in the Ascend Learning, Inc. network. Therefore, the Boards of all schools in the network are composed of the same panel of seven trustees. The Board has kept membership within the minimum of 5 members and maximum of 11 members, as established in the Board's bylaws. Ted Coburn has been the Board Chair since the 2010-2011 school year, and was a founding Board member of the school.
- The Board has consistently achieved quorum, as recorded in meeting minutes.
- The School Director and Director of Operations update the Board on academic progress and operations at the school, as recorded in meeting minutes. Additionally representatives from the CMO, Ascend Learning, Inc., including the Chief Executive Officer, the Chief Operating Officer, Chief Financial Officer, Chief Academic Officer, and other staff, present relevant updates to the Board, as recorded in meeting minutes.
- There are clear lines of accountability between the Board and school leadership as evidenced by the school's organization chart and school leadership's monthly updates on academic, financial and operational performance to the Board and its committees, as recorded in Board meeting minutes.
- The Board has active and functioning committees, as required by its bylaws, including an Executive Committee, a Finance Committee, and an Education/Accountability Committee, as recorded in meeting minutes.
- The school's founder, Steven Wilson serves as the Chief Executive Officer of the Ascend Learning network. The school is currently led by Erica Murphy, who joined the school at the start of the 2013 – 2014 academic year. In November 2010, the school's founding School Director, Keli Swearingen, was hired by Ascend Learning as the director of data and analytics. Kelly Bowers and Angela Beal were appointed as Co-Directors. Ms. Pereira stepped down in October 2012, and Ms. Bowers served as sole School Director through January 2013. Ms. Bowers was hired by Ascend Learning as Director of Academic Development, and Erin Swan-Potras took over as School Director in February 2013 through June 2013. Ms. Murphy took over the School Director position July 1, 2013.

School Climate & Community Engagement

Over the course of the school's charter term, the school has partially developed a stable school culture.

- To date, the school has met its charter goal of having an average daily student attendance rate of at least 95%, for only one year of the charter term in 2012-2013.¹⁰

Average Daily Attendance	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
	94%	94%	94%	96%

- As the school staff has grown over the course of its charter, instructional staff turnover has remained around 40%. From 2010-2011 to 2012-2013, the instructional staff turnover was 38%, 41%, and 41%, each respective year. For each year, about 5% of the turnover in instructional staff has been due to teachers joining the leadership team.¹¹

¹⁰Self-reported information from school-submitted data collection form on 1/2013

¹¹Self-reported information from school-submitted data collection form on 1/2013

- Over the course of the charter term, Brownsville Ascend’s NYC School Survey results were:

Brownsville Ascend Charter School NYC School Survey Results

	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Academic Expectations	-	Average	Average	Below Average
Communication	-	Below Average	Average	Average
Engagement	-	Below Average	Average	Well Below Average
Safety & Respect	-	Average	Average	Average

- Over the course of its charter term, the school has met its charter culture goal, which states that “95% of all parents will ‘agree’ or ‘strongly agree’ with the statement, ‘My children are safe at the school.’”¹²
- The other culture related charter goal states that “parents will express satisfaction with the school’s program, based on the NYC DOE Learning Environment Survey in which the school will receive scores of 7.5 or higher in the four survey domains, and at least 50% of parents participate in the survey.” The school met the goal in 2009-2010 and 2011-2012, and partially met the goal in 2010-2011 and 2012-2013.¹³
- Over the course of the charter term, Brownsville Ascend’s NYC School Survey response rates were:

Brownsville Ascend Charter School Response Rates Compared to Citywide Average

	Parents	Citywide	Teachers	Citywide	Students ¹⁴	Citywide
2009-10	-	49%	-	76%	-	-
2010-11	85%	52%	67%	82%	-	-
2011-12	83%	53%	96%	82%	-	-
2012-13	55%	54%	58%	83%	-	-

As part of the renewal process, representatives of the NYC DOE have collected evidence relevant to the school’s climate and community engagement over the school’s charter term. Based on discussion, document review, and observation, the following was noted:

- During its first year, Brownsville Ascend established a Family Association (BAFA), which holds meetings on a monthly basis to provide opportunities to give feedback on school policies; as well as holds events such as potluck dinners, book fairs, box top drive to generate funds for school supplies, and a raffle to raise money for the school, and to engage families in the school community.
- The school places great emphasis on the parent-teacher conferences as a central component of the home-to-school communication strategy. Parent-teacher conferences are held twice a year and are focused around objective data on each child’s performance. The school has had a 95% attendance rate at the parent-teacher conferences every year of the charter term.
- The school has a Student Life Organization, which they plan on further establishing as an opportunity for the students in the upper grades to serve partner community-based organizations.
- The NYC DOE conducted a public renewal hearing for the school in an effort to elicit public comments. Twenty-five participants attended the hearing, four speaking in support of the school and none speaking in opposition.

¹² Self-reported information from the school’s Progress Toward Attainment of Charter Goals.

¹³ Brownsville Ascend Charter School NYC School Surveys for all eligible years of the charter term.

¹⁴ Student Response Rates on the NYC School Survey have not been applicable for this school over the course of the current charter term.

- The NYC DOE made randomized phone calls to parents from a roster provided by the school for students of all grades. Calls to parents/guardians were made until twenty phone calls were completed. Of these calls, 100% provided positive feedback regarding the school.

For grades four and five, a group of ten students in each grade, were interviewed. Based on student interviews conducted on the October 9th visit to the school, the following was noted:

- Students interviewed reported that the school's core values included achieving with integrity, always being at school, investing in knowledge, and striving for excellence.
- Students interviewed reported that the difficulty level of their school work was mixed with some classes being hard and some classes being easy.
- Students interviewed reported that they could go to teachers if they needed help in class or could be tutored after school.

Financial Health

Overall, Brownsville Ascend Charter School is in a weak position to meet near-term financial obligations.

- Based on the Fiscal Year (FY) 2013 financial audit, the school's current ratio indicated a risk that the school may be unable to meet its current liabilities.
- Based on the FY13 financial audit, the school's unrestricted cash availability indicated a risk that the school would be unable to cover one month of its operating expenses without an infusion of cash.
- A comparison of the enrollment projections for the 2013-2014 budget to the actual enrollment, as of October 31, 2013, shows that the school met its enrollment target supporting its projected revenue.
- As of the FY13 financial audit, the school had met its debt obligations.

Overall, the school is financially sustainable based on its current practices.

- Based on the financial audits from FY10 to FY13, the school generated an aggregate surplus over the four audited fiscal years.
- Based on the FY13 financial audit, the school's debt-to-asset ratio indicated that the school had more total assets than it had total liabilities.
- Based on the financial audits from FY10 to FY13, the school generated overall positive cash flow and the school had positive cash flow in each measurable year.

There was no material weakness noted in the last four independent annual financial audits from years 2009-2010, 2010-2011, 2011-2012, and 2012-2013.

Essential Question 3: Is the School Compliant with its Charter and All Applicable Laws and Regulations?

Over the charter term, Brownsville Ascend Charter School has been compliant with some applicable laws and regulations, but not others. The Board of Trustees has been compliant with some applicable laws and regulations, but not others.

The Board of Trustees is in compliance with:

- Membership size. The Board has consistently had a membership size that falls within the range of five to eleven Board members outlined in the school's charter and in the Board's bylaws.
- The required number of Board meetings. Over this expiring charter term, the board's bylaws stated that the Board of Trustees would meet not less than six times each year. The Board complied with its bylaws with holding six meetings since 2009-2010. In the 2009-2010 school year, of the six meetings, four had quorum. In all subsequent years over the charter term, all meetings had quorum. The Board will amend the bylaws to comply with the meeting requirements as stated in the 2010 amendments to the NYS Charter Schools Act for the proposed new charter term.
- Submission of Board membership required documents. All current Board members have submitted conflict of interest and financial disclosure forms and do not demonstrate conflicts of interest.¹⁵
- Availability of board documents. The Board has made all Board minutes and agendas available upon request to the public prior to or at Board meetings, by posting in the school's main office and on the school's website.

The Board of Trustees is out of compliance with:

- Submission of all required documents. The Board has inconsistently provided timely submissions of accountability documents to the NYC DOE.

The school is in compliance with:

- Submission of safety documents. The school has submitted the required safety plan. The school is in compliance with AED/CPR certification requirements.
- Fingerprint clearance. Over the charter term, all staff has had the required fingerprint clearance.
- Insurance requirements. The school has all appropriate insurance documents.
- Certification of staff. Staff is either certified or highly qualified, and those that are not, fall under the requirements outlined in the NY State Charter Schools Act. A school can have no more than 5 teachers or 30% of the teaching staff uncertified, whichever number is lower. Although the school currently has 13 uncertified teachers, only four are not highly qualified.

The school is out of compliance with:

- Submission of all required documents. The school has inconsistently provided timely submissions of accountability documents to the NYC DOE.

¹⁵ Source: New York State Education Department Annual Report, 2012

Essential Question 4: What are the School's Plans for the Next Charter Term?

As reported by school leadership and the school's Board, the following was noted:

- The school has plans to grow toward its intended grade span of kindergarten through twelve, serving kindergarten through ten during the next charter term, upon approval. The school's projected full grade span upon renewal and approval is kindergarten through twelfth, which it is expected to reach in 2018-2019.
- In response to the 2010 amendments to NYS Charter Schools Act requiring schools to attract and retain percentages of students who are designated as free and reduced lunch learners, students with disabilities, and English language learners, the school is making demonstrated efforts to attract and retain these students.
 - During the 2012-2013 school year, Ascend Learning hired a manager of community outreach and student recruitment. The network plans to provide dedicated student recruitment support to its schools, including Brownsville Ascend.
 - For the 2014 recruitment season, the manager of community outreach and student recruitment created a plan to target organizations and community-based organizations that work directly with non-English speaking communities, as well as to organizations that provide early intervention services to children who are eligible for an in-district preference at Ascend schools.
 - During the 2012-2013 school year, Ascend Learning's Director of Student Services initiated a parent support group for parents of special needs students at all of the network's schools. The network plans to continue this support group.

Part 5: Background on the Charter Renewal Process

Statutory Basis for Renewal

The Charter Schools Act of 1998 (“the Act”) authorizes the creation of charter schools to provide opportunities for teachers, parents, and community members to establish and maintain schools that operate independently of existing schools and school districts in order to accomplish the following objectives:

- Improve student learning and achievement;
- Increase learning opportunities for all students, with special emphasis on expanded learning experiences for students who are at-risk of academic failure;
- Provide parents and students with expanded choices in the types of educational opportunities that are available within the public school system;
- Create new professional opportunities for teachers, school administrators and other school personnel;
- Encourage the use of different and innovative teaching methods;
- Provide schools with a method to change from rule-based to performance based accountability systems by holding the schools accountable for meeting measurable student achievement results.¹⁶

When granted, a charter is valid for up to five years. For a school chartered under the Act to operate beyond the initial charter term, the school must seek and obtain renewal of its charter.¹⁷

A school seeking renewal of its charter must submit a renewal application to the charter entity to which the original charter application was submitted.¹⁸ As one such charter entity, the New York City Department of Education (“NYC DOE”) institutes a renewal application process that adheres to the Act’s renewal standards:

- A report of the progress of the charter school in achieving the educational objectives set forth in its charter;
- A detailed financial statement that discloses the cost of administration, instruction and other spending categories for the charter school that will allow a comparison of such costs to other schools, both public and private;
- Copies of each of the annual reports of the charter school including the charter school report cards and certified financial statements;
- Indications of parent and student satisfaction.

Where the NYC DOE approves a renewal application, it is required under the Act to submit the application and a proposed charter to the Board of Regents for its review and approval.¹⁹

¹⁶ See § 2850 of the Charter Schools Act of 1998.

¹⁷ See §§ 2851(4) and 2852 of the Act.

¹⁸ See §§ 2851(3) and 2851(4) of the Act.

¹⁹ See § 2852(5) of the Act.

Part 6: Authorizer Responsibility Under the NY State Charter Schools Act and the DOE Accountability Framework

The New York State Charter Schools Act (“the Act”) states the following regarding the renewal of a school’s charter:

§2851.4: Charters may be renewed, upon application, for a term of up to five years in accordance with the provisions of this article for the issuance of such charters pursuant to section twenty-eight hundred fifty-two of this article; provided, however, that a renewal application shall [also] include:

- (a) A report of the progress of the charter school in achieving the educational objectives set forth in the charter.
- (b) A detailed financial statement that discloses the cost of administration, instruction and other spending categories for the charter school that will allow a comparison of such costs to other schools, both public and private. Such statement shall be in a form prescribed by the Board of Regents.
- (c) Copies of each of the annual reports of the charter school required by subdivision two of section twenty-eight hundred fifty-seven of this article, including the charter school report cards and the certified financial statements.
- (d) Indications of parent and student satisfaction. Such renewal application shall be submitted to the charter entity no later than six months prior to the expiration of the charter; provided, however, that the charter entity may waive such deadline for good cause shown.
- (e) The means by which the charter school will meet or exceed enrollment and retention targets as prescribed by the board of regents or the board of trustees of the state university of New York, as applicable, of students with disabilities, English language learners, and students who are eligible applicants for the free and reduced price lunch program which shall be considered by the charter entity prior to approving such charter school's application for renewal. When developing such targets, the board of regents and the board of trustees of the state university of New York shall ensure (1) that such enrollment targets are comparable to the enrollment figures of such categories of students attending the public schools within the school district, or in a city school district in a city having a population of one million or more inhabitants, the community school district, in which the charter school is located; and (2) that such retention targets are comparable to the rate of retention of such categories of students attending the public schools within the school district, or in a city school district in a city having a population of one million or more inhabitants, the community school district, in which the proposed charter school would be located.

The NYC DOE may recommend four potential outcomes for charter schools applying for renewal: full-term renewal, renewal with conditions, short-term renewal, or non-renewal.

Full-Term Renewal

In cases where a school has demonstrated exceptional results with its students, a five-year renewal will be granted. A school must show that its program has yielded strong student performance and progress, has met the majority of its charter goals, has demonstrated financial stability, has attained sufficient board capacity, and has an educationally sound learning environment in order to gain this type of renewal.

Renewal with Conditions

In cases where a school has demonstrated mixed academic results or concerns about organizational viability, renewal is contingent upon changes to the prospective application or new charter, new performance measures, or both. These may include changes to curriculum, leadership, or board governance structure that are intended to yield improved academic outcomes during the next chartering period.

Short-Term Renewal

In cases where a school is up for renewal of its initial charter and has fewer than two years of state-assessment results, a renewal of three-years or fewer may be considered. In limited circumstances, a

school not in its initial charter or in its initial charter with more than three years of state assessment data, may be considered for a short-term renewal.

Non-Renewal

Schools that have not demonstrated significant progress or high levels of student achievement and/or are in violation of their charter will not be renewed.

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 & 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 laws 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: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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 Laws 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

<p>Schools in substantial compliance with applicable regulations have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 NYCDOE CSAS, and where required, received CSAS approval for changes in significant partnerships, such as dropping/replacing a management organization • Effectively engaged parent associations
<p>Evidence for compliance with applicable regulations may include, but not be limited to, the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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

Appendix A: School Performance Data

% of Third Graders Proficient in English Language Arts				
	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013
Brownsville Ascend Charter School	-	-	59.3%	17.3%
CSD 23	30.7%	28.3%	28.5%	11.1%
Difference from CSD 23	-	-	30.8	6.2
NYC	46.5%	48.1%	49.0%	28.1%
Difference from NYC	-	-	10.3	-10.8

% of Third Graders Proficient in Math				
	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013
Brownsville Ascend Charter School	-	-	73.6%	37.8%
CSD 23	29.9%	28.3%	30.0%	12.9%
Difference from CSD 23	-	-	43.6	24.9
NYC	54.3%	54.8%	57.0%	33.1%
Difference from NYC	-	-	16.6	4.7

All comparisons to either the CSD or NYC take into account only grades the school itself serves.

% of Fourth Graders Proficient in English Language Arts				
	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013
Brownsville Ascend Charter School	-	-	-	32.9%
CSD 23	28.7%	36.2%	30.6%	10.7%
Difference from CSD 23	-	-	-	22.2
NYC	45.6%	51.0%	52.4%	27.2%
Difference from NYC	-	-	-	5.7

% of Fourth Graders Proficient in Math				
	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013
Brownsville Ascend Charter School	-	-	-	41.2%
CSD 23	33.4%	37.1%	37.0%	9.1%
Difference from CSD 23	-	-	-	32.1
NYC	58.4%	62.3%	65.7%	35.2%
Difference from NYC	-	-	-	6.0

All comparisons to either the CSD or NYC take into account only grades the school itself serves.

Appendix B: Additional Accountability Data

NYC DOE Progress Reports

[2012 – 2013 Academic Year](#)

[2011 – 2012 Academic Year](#)

NYC DOE Accountability Reports

[Annual Comprehensive Review 2012-2013](#)

[Annual Site Visit Report 2011-2012](#)

[Annual Site Visit Report 2010-2011](#)

[Annual Site Visit Report 2009-2010](#)