



**Department of  
Education**

*Dennis M. Walcott, Chancellor*

**Charter School Annual Site Visit Report  
Charter Schools Office  
2011-2012**

**NEW YORK FRENCH AMERICAN CHARTER SCHOOL  
ANNUAL SITE VISIT REPORT**

**MARCH 2012**

## Part 1: Executive Summary

### School Overview and History:

New York French American Charter School (NYFACS) is an elementary school serving approximately 182 students from kindergarten through grade three in the 2011-2012 school year.<sup>1</sup> The school opened in 2010 with grades kindergarten through two. It is currently housed in privately leased space at 311 West 120<sup>th</sup> Street in District 3.<sup>2</sup>

The school population comprises of 65% Black, 16.6% Hispanic, 13.4% White, 1.7% Asian, 0% Native American and 2.2% multi-racial students. Additionally, 1.1% of the students did not have a listed race/ethnicity.<sup>3</sup> The Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL) student population is 39.3% compared to 48.95% in the district 3.<sup>4</sup> The student body, as reported on the school data collection form completed by the school, includes 11.5% English Language Learners (ELLs) and 8.2 % Students with Disabilities (SWD).<sup>5</sup> Seven (7) percent of the students in District 3 are classified as English Language Learners and 13.9% are classified as special education students.<sup>6</sup> The school is in its second year and has not yet earned a Progress Report grade or state/federal accountability designation.<sup>7</sup>

On December 7, 2011, The New York French American Charter School (NYFACS) was put on probationary status pursuant to N.Y. Education Law § 2855(3) by its authorizer, The New York City Department of Education.

### Annual Review Process Overview:

The New York City Department of Education (NYC DOE) Charter Schools Office (CSO) conducts an annual site visit of charter schools authorized by the NYC DOE. The site visit is designed to address three primary questions: is the school an academic success; is the school a fiscally sound, viable organization; and is the school in compliance with its charter and all applicable laws and regulations? To ascertain matters of sustainability and strategic planning, we also ask about the school's plans for its next charter term. The visits are conducted by representatives of the CSO 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 be a snapshot of the academic year and reflects what was observed at the time of the visit.

The following experts participated in the review of this school on March 26, 2012:

- Sonia Park, Senior Director, NYC DOE CSO
- Etzer Botes, Director of Oversight, NYC DOE CSO
- Keisha Womack, Director of Operations, NYC DOE CSO
- Bertram Wyman, Analyst, NYC DOE CSO
- Laurie Pendleton, NYC DOE CSO Consultant

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<sup>1</sup> NYC DOE ATS system, April 2012

<sup>2</sup> NYC DOE Location Code Generating System database, April 2012

<sup>3</sup> NYC DOE ATS system, April 2012

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> NYFACS Self reported School Evaluation Visit Data Collection Form (March 2012)

<sup>6</sup> NYC DOE ATS system, April 2012

<sup>7</sup> New York State Education Department - [www.nysed.gov](http://www.nysed.gov)

## Part 2: Findings

### Overview:

On December 7, 2011, The New York French American Charter School (NYFACS) was put on probationary status pursuant to N.Y. Education Law § 2855(3) by its authorizer, The New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE). The probationary status was issued based on the following findings:

1. **School Policies and Procedures:** The NYCDOE Charter Schools Office (CSO) conducted the annual site visit in May 2011, subsequent visits during Fall 2011, and collected documents from NYFACS. The visits and documents revealed that NYFACS is in material and substantial violation of its Charter Agreement and School Monitoring Plan (2009). NYFACS has not abided by the conditions of the Charter Agreement and the School Monitoring Plan by failing to establish and comply with internal policies and procedures, notably regarding performing required background checks, discipline, and hiring of personnel.
2. **Compliance:** NYFACS had not complied with section 5.3 Audits of its Charter Agreement by providing its Annual Audit as required. As of December 5, 2011, the audit for 2010-11 was not submitted to the authorizer.
3. **Teacher Certification:** In accordance with the 2010 amended Charter School Act, no more than 30% of NYFACS's teaching staff (or five teachers, whichever is lesser) can lack state teacher certification. At the time of the CSO 2011 annual site visit, the school reported that 7 of 12 teachers (58.3%) were not state-certified. For the 2011-2012 school year, the school reports that 6 of its 17 teachers (or 35%) are not certified. This represents the second year in a row of continued non-compliance with charter law concerning teacher certification.
4. **Parent Association:** NYFACS is in material and substantial violation of Education Law sections 2590-h(15)(a) and 414(1)(c). Those provisions require that all located in New York City establish Parent Associations and that parent association meetings are, among other things, open to the general public. NYFACS has not demonstrated to CSO's satisfaction that it is meeting those requirements.

### Areas of Strength:

- NYFACS has some enacted measures in order to be in full compliance with the 2010 amended Charter School Act. Targeted populations for enrollment and retention, specifically for students considered English Language Learners (ELLs) is higher than the school's community school district, CSD 3.
  - NYFACS has a population of 11.5% ELLs<sup>8</sup>, higher than CSD 3's ELLs rate of 7.08%<sup>9</sup>.
- The school's leadership is focusing on improving instruction.
  - The school's administration team created an observation calendar to ensure all teachers will be formally observed four times by the end of the year and communicated these expectations to teachers.
  - Teachers interviewed reported they have received a formal rubric based on the Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Teaching which lays out expectations for instruction and feel the rubric makes expectations clear.

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<sup>8</sup> NYC DOE ATS system, April 2012

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

- Documents reviewed on the day of the visit included pre-observation, observation, and post conference information for one observation. Additional observations are scheduled to take place throughout the spring.
- The school created an instructional calendar that is sent home to parents to increase parent engagement.
- On the day of the visit, lesson objectives and student work samples with rubrics and specific feedback were posted in the majority of classrooms.
- The school's leadership team reported developing systems to track and improve student performance.
  - The school has administered two interim assessments in math and English Language Arts to 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students and has used the results to identify students in need of additional support. Targeted students are provided with additional support during a 9<sup>th</sup> period (an extra period) class and a Saturday Success Academy.
  - Teachers are using running records in both English and French to track student performance in reading.
  - Grade teams meet monthly to review academic performance data.
  - The school has taken a more formalized approach to identifying students in need of additional support through the creation of an Instructional Support Team. Teachers who are concerned about a student's progress can refer them to the IST. Teachers must document all interventions attempted including parent communication.
  - The school has created ways to gather data on teacher-created assessments in both Google Docs and Dropbox.
- The school has implemented systems to improve school-wide discipline.
  - The school reported the use of behavior contracts to remind students of classroom behavioral expectations.
  - Each classroom observed had "How to Stay On Green" posters and teachers appeared to be using the stop light system to effectively manage student behavior.
  - Teachers observed used a variety of routines to manage student behavior such as quiet signals, rhythmic clapping, and the awarding of points for participation.
  - "Star Student" or "Student of the Day" displays were evident in the majority of observed classrooms.
  - On the day of the visit, the cafeteria was well-supervised by parent volunteers, teaching assistants, and interns and students were well-behaved.
- NYFACS is improving its technology infrastructure to drive operational efficiencies.
  - Teachers all received laptops to allow them to access work activities at and away from school.
  - At the time of our meeting, telephones were being delivered and installed in all classrooms to improve communication.
  - The school reported that is in the process of implementing a new student management system in an effort to improve record keeping and tracking of student performance data.

#### **Areas of Growth:**

- The school is encouraged to enact corrective measures in order to be in full compliance with the 2010 amended Charter School Act. Areas of concern regard meeting target rates for enrollment and retention of Students with Disabilities (SWD) and Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL) students.
  - The school should continue to document outreach to SWDs in order to be comparable to the district, CSD 3. The school's population includes 8.2%<sup>10</sup> SWDs, which is lower than CSD 3's 13.9%<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

- NYFACS should continue to document outreach to students eligible for FRL in order to be comparable to the district, CSD 3. The school's population includes 39.3%<sup>12</sup>, which is lower than CSD 3's 48.95%<sup>13</sup>.
- The school is encouraged to review their process for the collection of student lunch forms. The school has experienced a drop from 84% qualifying for free or reduced priced lunch to approximately 39%. The change can result in the school being categorized as ineligible for certain State and Federal grants.
- At the time of the visit, the school's instruction lack rigor and a coherent curriculum design.
  - The school does not appear to have an effective approach to bilingual instruction and research-based bilingual strategies appear to be inconsistently applied throughout the classrooms. For example, the majority of French instruction classes observed did not have visuals or dual language labeling to support English only students. Teachers interviewed shared that they feel many students struggle with understanding content in French-led courses and the school is not providing support for these students. They also shared their need for additional professional development in bilingual instruction.
  - The rigor and pacing in classroom instruction was inconsistent on the day of the visit. In some classrooms the level of questioning was observed to be at a very low level; students were disengaged, posted student work did not show differentiation, and instruction was largely teacher directed. In some classrooms students were not engaged in the lesson or had completed assigned work and did not have meaningful extension work given to them.
  - The school is encouraged to continue the work of the Curriculum Committee to align French, NY State, and Common Core standards and to increase the overall rigor of instruction.
- NYFACS should continue to develop a school culture that promotes academic achievement.
  - In some observed classrooms, students made defiant and disruptive comments to teachers.
  - During classroom observations, several instances of students not following teacher directives occurred with no apparent consequences.
  - On the day of the visit, several students were heard talking to each other disparagingly during classroom instruction.
- The school should continue to develop meaningful professional development opportunities to meet teachers' needs.
  - Teachers noted that the professional development framework is led by management with little to no input by teachers.
  - Some teachers reported that recent PD opportunities led by the principal and Director of Instruction was insufficient for meeting their goals.
- Although the Board has established a facilities committee, there is a need for a clear, realistic school expansion plan for the 2012-2013 school year and beyond.
  - For the 2012-2013 school year, there is a plan to add three additional rooms to the already existing space. A timeline and detailed budget for the proposed project has yet to be established.
  - The enrollment of 182 is currently far below the initial projected enrollment of 205. A decrease in per pupil funding can have a significant impact of the school's ability to expand and meet future operational costs.

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

- The school should continue to streamline their operations to better support the instructional programming.
  - Teachers interviewed reported the current French instructional materials do not meet the needs of native English speakers.
  - Teachers also reported difficulty with getting supplies necessary to meet the needs of the instructional program.
- The school is encouraged to review its agreement with outside contractors to ensure their roles and responsibilities are clearly defined. The school has a current contract with Victory Schools. Victory Schools is contracted to provide human resources, technology and financial services support to the school but it appears as if roles and responsibilities of some of the school operations team mirror that of the contractor.

## The CSO Accountability Framework

To help NYC DOE authorized charter schools better understand what we mean by success for charter schools, the NYC DOE's Charter Schools Office (CSO) has developed an Accountability Framework build around four essential questions for charter school renewal:

1. Is the school an academic success?
2. Is the school a fiscally sound, viable organization?
3. Is the school compliant with its charter and all applicable law and regulations?
4. What are the school's plans for its next charter term?

### 1. Is the School an Academic Success?

#### 1a. High Academic Attainment and Improvement

Schools that are academic successes have many of the characteristics below:

- Meet absolute performance goals established in school charter
- Meet student progress goals established in school charter
- Are closing the achievement gap for at risk students, including special needs and ELL students
- Are surpassing performance of DOE identified peer-schools
- Are surpassing performance district and city proficiency or better averages
- Are meeting other rigorous academic and non-academic goals as stated in school's charter

Evidence for success might include, but not be limited to, the following depending on school configurations:

- Grades 3-8 NYS ELA Results (absolute performance, individual student progress, comparative performance to similar schools, home district or city averages, progress for at-risk populations)
- Grades 3-8 NYS Math Results (absolute performance, individual student progress, comparative performance to similar schools, home district or city averages, progress for at-risk populations)
- Grades 4 and 8 NYS Science Results (absolute performance, individual student progress, comparative performance to similar schools, home district or city averages, progress for at-risk populations)
- Grades 8-12 NYS Regent Exam Results
- When applicable, NYSAA or other approved alternate assessments results
- HS 4- and 6-Year Graduation Rates (absolute and progress, overall, for at-risk student populations)
- Grades 8-12 College Readiness Credit Accumulation
- Percentage of Students Applying to and Being Admitted to College
- Percentage of Students Taking AP Courses and/or Percentage of Students Passing AP Courses
- Results on state accountability measures
- Charter School Academic and Non-Academic Goals
- NYC Progress Reports

#### 1b. Mission and Academic Goals

Schools with successful missions and goals have many of the characteristics below:

- Have an animating mission statement that staff, students and community embrace
- Set ambitious academic and non-academic goals that entire school community knows and embraces
- Have processes for regular monitoring and reporting on progress toward school goals
- Have processes for adjusting strategies in support of goals as appropriate in response to monitoring data

Evidence for successful missions and goals might include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Mission statement, charter, external documents (parent and family handbooks, school website, etc.)
- Annual reports, school improvement plans, leadership board reports
- Board agendas and minutes
- Parent, student, and teacher satisfaction surveys
- Parent association meeting agendas and minutes
- Participation at parent-teacher conferences, school advocacy events, participation in academic goal related programs
- Stakeholder (board, parents, staff, students, etc.) interviews

## 1c. Responsive Education Program

Schools with successful education programs have many of the characteristics below:

- Are self-reflective and examine practice based on outcomes against goals
- Have well-thought out curricular programs that are aligned with NYS learning outcomes as described by state standards and the new Common Core Curriculum.
- Use instructional models and resources consistent with school mission and that are flexible in addressing the needs of all learners
- Offer defined opportunities for remediation and acceleration
- Have effective strategies and quality instructional programs for addressing students with special needs and ELLs
- Have defined strategies that they can measure and monitor for closing the achievement gap
- Implement a coherent and effective interim assessment system (e.g., use of formative, interim, and summative assessment data) for monitoring progress, predicting performance, and adjusting instruction
- Have an effective process for supporting improved classroom instruction, including frequent observation and feedback
- Use a defined process for evaluating curricular tasks, programs and resources for effectiveness and fit with school mission and goals
- Have school calendars and day schedules that provide the time necessary to deliver on the school's mission and academic goals

Evidence for successful education programs, in addition to positive results, may include, but not be limited to, many of the following:

- Instructional planning documents (alignments, scope and sequences, curriculum maps, unit and lesson plans, etc)
- Student/teacher schedules
- Classroom observations
- Student Intervention / Response to Intervention program description and resources
- Special Education/ELL progress monitoring documentation
- Interim assessment results
- Student and teacher portfolios
- Data findings; adjusted lesson plans
- Self-assessment documentation
- Professional development plans and resources
- School calendar and daily schedules
- DOE School Surveys and internal school satisfaction surveys
- Instructional leader and staff interviews

## 1d. Learning Environment

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

- Have a strong academic culture that creates high academic and behavioral expectations in a way that motivates students to consistently give their best efforts
- Use a comprehensive approach to student management, including positive behavioral expectations and a clear discipline policy to build and sustain a safe, orderly, and supportive classroom environment
- Provide for safe, respectful, efficient transitions, hallways, cafeteria, yard, etc.
- Have classrooms where academic risk-taking and student participation is encouraged and supported
- Provide opportunities for students to actively engage in their own learning and in the life of the school
- Have a plan with formal or informal structures or programs in place that provide students opportunities to develop as individuals and citizens (for example: a character education, citizenship, or community involvement or service program)

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

- School mission and articulated values
- School calendar and class schedules
- Student management plan (code of conduct, school values, discipline policy, positive incentive system, etc.)
- Student attendance and retention rates
- Student discipline data (referral, suspension, expulsion)
- DOE School Survey student results
- DOE School Survey parent and teacher safety and respect results
- Parent complaint/concern information
- Internal satisfaction survey results
- Leadership, staff, and, if appropriate, student interviews
- Classroom observations
- Scheduled student engagement opportunities (e.g., student advisory, internships, student government, student led conferences, peer tutoring, peer mediation, etc.)