



Office of School Design and Charter Partnerships
2013-2014

**NEW YORK CENTER FOR AUTISM CHARTER SCHOOL
ANNUAL COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW REPORT**

2013 – 2014 SCHOOL YEAR

Part 1: School Overview

School Information for the 2013-2014 School Year

Name of Charter School	New York Center for Autism Charter School
Board Chair(s)	Charles Chigas
School Leader(s)	Julie Fisher
Management Company (if applicable)	N/A
Other Partner(s)	N/A
District(s) of Location	NYC Community School District 4
Physical Address(es)	433 East 100th Street, New York 10029
Facility Owner(s)	DOE

School Profile

- New York Center for Autism Charter School (NYCA CS) is an ungraded school which served 32 students¹ during the 2013-2014 school year and is fully at scale. It opened in 2005-2006 and is under the terms of its second charter.
- The school is located in publicly-operated facilities in Manhattan within Community School District (CSD) 4.²
- NYCA CS enrolls new students at the age equivalent of Kindergarten (five years old). There were 72 students on the waitlist after the Spring 2013 lottery.³ The average attendance rate for the 2013-2014 school year to date as reported in February 2014 was 96.5%.⁴
- NYCA CS was renewed during the 2009-2010 school year for a full term (five years), and is consistent with the terms of its renewal application.
- The school leadership team includes Julie Fisher, Executive Director; Jennifer Connelly, Director of Education; Moira Cray, Director of Transition and Community Outreach; and Mark Saretsky, Chief Financial Operator. The Executive Director has been with the school since the 2008-09 school year.
- NYCA CS had a student to teacher ratio of 4:1:3 (four students: one certified special education teacher; three instructors) in six of its classrooms, 4:1:2 in one classroom, and 4:1:1 in one classroom in the 2013-2014 school year, and served 32 students between the ages of 5-19 in eight ungraded classes with an average class size of four.⁵
- The lottery preferences for NYCA CS' 2013-2014 school year included the New York State Charter Schools Act required preferences of returning students, students residing in the community school district of the school's location and siblings of students already enrolled in the charter school, as well as children with a primary educational classification of Autism and/or a medical diagnosis of Autism or Pervasive Developmental Disorder—Not Otherwise Specified.⁶

¹ Enrollment reflects ATS data from 10/31/13.

² NYC DOE Location Code Generation and Management System database.

³ Self-reported information from school-submitted data collection form on 2/14/14.

⁴ Self-reported information from school-submitted data collection form on 2/14/14.

⁵ Self-reported information given on 2/14/14.

⁶ New York Center for Autism Charter School's 2013-2014 lottery application.

Part 2: Summary of Findings

Essential Question 1: Is the school an academic success?

Overview of School-Specific Data through 2012-2013

NYCA CS serves 32 students ages five to 19 who are at various points on the autism spectrum or who have other pervasive developmental disorders. Due to its specialized focus, NYCA CS uses alternate assessments to gauge the performance and progress of all students and consequently did not receive Progress Reports or New York state assessment results for school years prior to and including 2012-2013. Instead, the primary measure of the school's performance is the degree to which students master the objectives set forth in their IEPs.⁷

Progress Towards Attainment of Academic Goals

- According to its 2012-2013 Annual Report to New York State Education Department (NYSED), NYCA CS fully met all four of the academic performance goals identified in its charter.

Responsive Education Program & Learning Environment

- NYCA CS continues to use mastery of the objectives as established in its students' IEPs as its primary measure of student performance. It also continues to supplement this with pre- and post-test data from one of three criterion-referenced assessments: the Verbal Behavior-Milestones Assessment and Placement Program (VB-MAPP); the Assessment of Functional Living Skills (AFLS); and/or the Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales.
- The school continues to assess some students in designated age or grade equivalents using the New York State Alternate Assessment (NYSAA) for students with severe disabilities. The school reports that 20 of its students were required to participate in the NYSAA in 2013-2014.
- The school continues to focus on enhancing programming for adolescents and young adults in preparation for their transition to adult services. The school has created an Adolescent and Young Adult Programming Task Force comprised of Board and staff members who have been tasked with researching the needs of this age group. This task force presented the first phase of its research at the school's 2013 summer Board retreat. This work analyzed the school's current student population and divided it into three groups based upon students' projected abilities in life and work. The school intends for this research to help determine future programming, staffing, and facility needs.
- The school's professional development (PD) program continues to consist of 10 days of in-service training, weekly supervisory meetings, and twice monthly staff development meetings. This is in addition to ongoing, individualized classroom training.
- The school continues to work on differentiating its staff training and ongoing professional development according to experience levels and skill sets. The school plans to offer in the future leveled training that could be offered simultaneously and is also exploring alternate modes of staff training (e.g., archived webinars) to maximize time efficiency in its PD delivery.
- The school continues to explore ways of sustaining parent engagement. While it reports high parent attendance at its monthly student clinics, the school continues to examine alternate ways to communicate the programming issues covered in these clinics to parents who cannot attend.
- Due to its families residing across all five boroughs of New York City, the school has begun using remote technology to increase attendance at its Parent Association meetings and workshops. School leadership reports that use of this technology almost doubled attendance at its most recent parent meeting.

⁷ Self-reported information from school-submitted self-evaluation form on 2/14/14.

Essential Question 2: Is the school a fiscally sound, viable organization?

Governance Structure & Organizational Design

After reviewing information and documentation concerning Board turnover, Board minutes, reporting structure, organizational chart, annual accountability reporting documents, Board agendas, and school's website, NYC DOE notes the following:

- The Board has 14 voting board members and three ex-officio members. The Board Chair joined the Board in 2008.
- As evidenced from review of Board rosters, one Board member rotated off of the Board and one Board member was added during 2013-2014.
- As recorded in the Board's minutes, there is a clear reporting structure with school leadership providing regular updates on academic, financial, and operational performance to the Board and its committees.
- Board minutes and agenda items have been provided via the school's website for inspection by the public.

School Climate & Community Engagement

After reviewing information and documentation concerning leadership turnover, staff turnover, attendance rate, student turnover, NYC School Survey results and response rates, and PTO meetings, NYC DOE notes the following:

- The school did not experience leadership turnover in 2013-2014. It anticipates turnover in its Director of Education role before 2014-2015 due to the current Director's personal circumstances; however, the school reports that plans for this transition are in place.
- Instructional staff turnover was 28% with 12 out of 43 instructional staff members choosing not to return in the 2013-14 school year from the prior year. As of February 2014, the school had not experienced turnover within its instructional staff during the 2013-2014 school year.
- As of February 2014, average daily attendance for students during that school year was at 96.5%, which is higher than the school's charter goal of at least 95%.⁸
- Student turnover was 3% of students from the prior school year who did not return at the start of the 2013-2014 school year. 3% of the students left the school between the start of the school year and February 2014, reflecting one student who graduated to a less restrictive educational setting.⁹
- The school reports that it has a Parent Association, as evidenced in its ACR self-evaluation and Board minutes.

2012-2013 NYC School Survey Results¹⁰

Categories	Result	Community	Response Rate	Citywide Rate
Academic Expectations	Well Above Average	Parents	93%	54%
Communication	Well Above Average	Teachers	93%	83%
Engagement	Well Above Average	Students	N/A	83%
Safety & Respect	Well Above Average			

⁸ Self-reported information from school-submitted data collection form on 2/14/14.

⁹ Self-reported information from school-submitted data collection form on 2/14/14 and additional data supplied by the school on 9/19/14.

¹⁰ Results are particular to the school type as identified in the 2013 School Survey.

Financial Health

Near-term financial obligations:

- Based on the FY13 financial audit, the school's current ratio indicated a strong ability to meet its current liabilities.
- Based on the FY13 financial audit, the school had sufficient unrestricted cash to cover its operating expenses for at least two months without an infusion of cash.
- A comparison of the enrollment projections for the 2013-2014 budget to the actual enrollment as of the end of the school year revealed that the school had met its enrollment target, supporting its projected revenue.
- As of the FY13 financial audit, the school had no debt obligations.

Financial sustainability based on current practices:

- Based on the financial audits from FY11 to FY13, the school generated an aggregate surplus over the three audited fiscal years, and in FY13 the school operated at a surplus.
- 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 FY11 through FY13, the school generated overall positive cash flow from FY11 to FY13 and the school had positive cash flow in each measurable year.

Annual Independent Financial Audit

- An independent audit performed showed no material findings.

Essential Question 3: Compliance with charter and all applicable laws and regulations?

After a review of documentation submitted for the NYC DOE annual accountability reporting requirements for the 2013-2014 school year, the NYC DOE finds the following:

Board Compliance

The Board is in compliance with:

- The Board's membership size falls within the range of no fewer than five and no greater than 18 members, as outlined in the school's charter and in the Board's bylaws.
- The Board has held 6 Board meetings with quorum in 2013, as outlined in its bylaws. As of February 2014, all officer positions outlined in the Board's bylaws are filled.

School Compliance

The school is in compliance with (as reviewed during May 2014):

- All staff members have appropriate fingerprint clearance.
- The school has submitted required documentation for teacher certification and is compliant with state requirements for teacher certification.
- The school has the required number of staff with AED/CPR certification.
- The school has submitted appropriate insurance documents to the NYC DOE.
- The school had an application deadline of April 1, 2014 and lottery date of May 17, 2014 adhering to charter law's requirement of accepting applications up to at least April 1.
- The school leader was trained in General Response Protocols/Fire Emergency Drill Conductor for NYC, as mandated by the NYC Fire Department.
- The school has posted its 2012-13 NYSED Annual Report and annual audit to its website, as specified in charter law.

The school is out of compliance with:

- The school has submitted its required immunization documentation however is not in compliance with Department of Health standards of 99% for immunization, with an immunization rate of 93.1% as of June 2014. However, the small sample size impacts the rate (30 out of 32 students) of compliance.
 - Additional data submitted by the school after June 2014 stated that one of the two students has met immunization requirements, bringing the school to 97% compliance (31 out of 32 students)

Essential Question 4: What are the school's plans for the next charter term?

As reported by the school's leadership, the following is noted:

- NYCA CS is increasingly asked to provide consultation services to schools, organizations and parent groups. Consequently, the school reports that it intends to examine its current and potential capacity for outreach and dissemination activities during its charter renewal process in 2014-2015.
- The school received a NYS Dissemination grant and is working with three public schools serving children with autism to further train teachers and paraprofessionals, offer support and guidance, and improve practices. The dissemination activities will continue through 2014-15, with project evaluation in Year Three.

Enrollment and Retention Targets

As a reminder regarding accountability in the next charter term:

- Amendments to Article 56 of the New York State Consolidated Laws: Education, which relates to Charter Schools, call for charter schools, as a consideration of renewal, "to meet or exceed enrollment and retention targets" for students with disabilities, English language learners, and students who are eligible for the free and reduced price lunch program. The amendments further indicate "Repeated failure to comply with the requirement" as a cause for revocation or termination of the charter.
 - The law directs schools to demonstrate "that it has made extensive efforts to recruit and retain such students" in the event it has not yet met its targets.
 - The NYC DOE, as authorizer, will annually monitor the school's performance against these targets and the efforts it makes to meet this state requirement.
- New York Center for Autism Charter School has consistently served a significantly higher percentage of students with disabilities compared to CSD 4 and citywide averages. In 2013-2014, the school served a lower percentage of students who qualify for free or reduced price lunch compared with CSD 4 but a higher rate than the citywide average. The school served a lower percentage of English Language Learner students compared to CSD 4 and citywide averages.¹¹

Special Populations

	Free and Reduced Price Lunch					Students with Disabilities					English Language Learners				
	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
School	17.9%	23.3%	25.0%	27.3%	75.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	97.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	3.1%	3.0%	3.1%
CSD 4	71.0%	73.2%	75.3%	75.5%	78.4%	19.2%	19.4%	19.5%	20.0%	21.7%	12.2%	12.3%	11.1%	10.8%	10.4%
NYC	61.7%	64.5%	67.3%	69.3%	72.7%	14.9%	15.0%	15.1%	15.5%	16.4%	14.8%	15.0%	14.6%	14.2%	13.9%

Additional Enrollment Information					
	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
Grades Served	Ungraded	Ungraded	Ungraded	Ungraded	Ungraded
CSD(s)	4	4	4	4	4

Comparisons to both the CSD(s) and City are made against students in grades K-8, 9-12 or K-12 depending on the grades the school served in each school year. Special population figures are as of October 31 for each given school year, with the exception of the 2012-2013 school year, which is as of October 26, 2012.

¹¹ However, it is noted that the NYCA CS serves students with limited linguistic proficiency who are not designated as ELL students by the Committee on Special Education due to the nature of the severe language deficiency which is a component of their autism classification.