



Office of School Design and Charter Partnerships
2014-2015

**BROOKLYN ASCEND CHARTER SCHOOL
ANNUAL COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW REPORT**

2014 – 2015 SCHOOL YEAR

Part 1: School Overview

Charter Authorization Profile

Brooklyn Ascend Charter School	
Authorized Grades	Grades K-11
Authorized Enrollment	1,381
School Opened For Instruction	2008-2009
Charter Term Expiration Date	June 30, 2018
Last Renewal Term Type	Full Term (5 years)

School Information for the 2014-2015 School Year

Brooklyn Ascend Charter School	
Board Chair(s)	Stephanie Mauterstock
School Leader(s)	Johana Andujar (Lower ES), Janna Genzlinger (Upper ES/MS)
District(s) of Location	NYC Community School Districts 18 (Grades K-3) and 17 (Grades 4-8)
Borough(s) of Location	Brooklyn
Physical Address(es)	205 Rockaway Parkway, Brooklyn, NY 11212 (Grades K-3)
	123 East 98 Street, Brooklyn, NY 11212 (Grades 4-8)
Facility Owner(s)	Private
School Type	Elementary/Middle School
Grades Served 2014-2015	Grades K-8
Enrollment in 2014-2015*	973
Charter Universal Pre-Kindergarten Program	No

* Enrollment data as of October 1, 2014

Enrollment Policies (School Year 2014-2015)*	
Primary Grade Level(s) for Which Student Applications for Admission are Accepted	Kindergarten
Additional Grade Level(s) for Which Student Applications for Admission are Accepted	Grades 1-8
Does School Enroll New Students Mid-Year	Yes
Number of Applicants for Admission	2,025
Number of Students Accepted via the Charter Lottery	145
Lottery Preferences (School Year 2014-2015)**	
Attends a Failing School	No
Does Not Speak English at Home	No
Receives SNAP or TANF Benefits	No
Eligible for Free or Reduced-Price Lunch	No
Has IEP and/or Receives Special Education Services	No
Homeless or Living in Shelter or Temporary Residence	No
Lives in New York City Housing Authority Housing	No
Unaccompanied Youth	No

* Enrollment policy information is based on self-reported data from the 2014-2015 DOE Annual Charter School Survey.

** Preferences were recorded from the NYC Charter School Center's Online Application. For schools that do not participate in the Common Application, their preferences were self-reported from the 2014-2015 DOE Annual Charter School Survey. If a field is marked "N/A", the school did not provide the information.

Management or Support Organization (If Applicable)	
Charter Management Organization (if applicable)	Ascend Learning, Inc. ("Ascend" or "Ascend Learning")
Other Partner(s)	N/A
Services Provided	<p>Ascend Learning is responsible for designing, selecting, acquiring, and implementing the school's educational program, including but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • curriculum and pedagogy; • Limited English Proficient (LEP)/English Language Learner (ELL) education; • special education services and programs; • school-year and school-day requirements; • student assessment systems and materials; • extracurricular activities and programs; and • instructional and curricular materials, equipment, and supplies. <p>Ascend Learning is also responsible for recruiting, recommending, and training the school director, and assisting the school director with selecting, reviewing, managing, and terminating all other school personnel, designing and implementing professional development activities for all school personnel; recommending the number, positions, and titles of all school personnel; and establishing all other employment practices and policies relating to school personnel.</p> <p>Lastly, Ascend Learning manages the day-to-day business of the school, including but not limited to the school's business administration; payroll; human resources and benefits administration; contracts with public or private entities for transportation, custodial, and food services, and all other services procured for the school; facilities and equipment; purchases and leases; and procurement of all other goods, services, or equipment that Ascend Learning deems necessary to attain the school's educational objectives.</p>
Management Fee	8%

For the self-reported mission of this charter school, please see their NYC Charter School Directory listing at <http://schools.nyc.gov/community/charters/information/directory.htm>.

School Reported Current Key Design Elements	
Key Design Element	Description
Liberal Arts Education	The school's course of K-12 study develops children's full academic, social, artistic, and ethical potentials through courses in math, ELA, science, foreign language, music, the arts, and movement.
The Ascend Curriculum	The school teaches a challenging, sequential, Common Core Learning Standard-aligned (CCLS) college-preparatory curriculum.
The Ascend Culture	The school's warm and supportive student culture is rooted in the practices of Responsive Classroom in lower school and Origins in middle school.
Building Family/Community	The school actively builds a community through curriculum workshops, school events, an involved Family Association, and dialogue.
Varied Pedagogy	Direct instruction is used in courses like phonics and grammar. In others, such as Number Stories, Literature Circle, and Humanities, teachers tap inquiry-based learning experiences, cognitively guided instruction, and college-style discussion.
The Assessment Feedback Loop	Students are assessed, CCLS proficiency is estimated, weaknesses are diagnosed, teaching deficits are identified and remedied, and students are re-assessed.
Comprehensive Professional Development	Teachers grow through professional development activities focused on content mastery.

Grade-Level Enrollment (School Year 2014-2015)		
Grade Level	Number of Students	Section Count
Kindergarten	132	5
Grade 1	137	5
Grade 2	134	5
Grade 3	138	5
Grade 4	114	4
Grade 5	105	4
Grade 6	79	3
Grade 7	80	3
Grade 8	54	2
Total Enrollment	973	36

* Enrollment data as of October 1, 2014

Part 2: Annual Review Process Overview

Rating Framework

The New York City Department of Education (NYC DOE) Office of School Design and Charter Partnerships (OSDCP) performs a comprehensive review of each NYC DOE Chancellor-authorized charter school to investigate 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, OSDCP also inquires about the school's plans for its next charter term.

This review is conducted by analyzing student performance data and collecting and evaluating school-submitted documents during school year 2014-2015. The report outlines evidence found during this review.

As per the school's monitoring plan, the NYC DOE may also conduct a visit to a school. Visits may focus on academic outcomes, governance, organizational structure, operational compliance, fiscal sustainability or any combination of these as necessary.

Essential Questions

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 (as appropriate for grades served):

- New York State ELA and math assessment absolute results; New York State Regents exams passage rates;
- Comparative proficiency for elementary and middle schools, including growth rates for ELA and math proficiency;
- Comparative graduation rates and Regents completion rates for high schools;
- Closing the achievement gap performance relative to CSD or New York City public schools;
- New York State Alternate Assessment (NYSAA) or other approved alternate assessments; and
- Performance data pertaining to college and career readiness.

Is the school a fiscally sound, viable organization?

To assess whether a school is a fiscally and operationally sound, viable organization, OSDCP 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 National Association of Charter School Authorizers' Core Performance Framework.¹

OSDCP 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.

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

As it pertains to compliance, the NYC DOE identifies areas of compliance and noncompliance with relevant laws and regulations as identified in the NYC DOE OSDCP Accountability Framework.

¹ Please refer to the following website for more information:
http://nacsa.mycrowdwisdom.com/diweb/catalog/item/id/126547/q/%20q=performance*20framework&c=82

Part 3: Summary of Findings

Essential Question 1: Is the school an academic success?

Overview of School-Specific Data Since 2012-2013

ES/MS students scoring at or above Level 3 on NYS assessments, compared to CSD, NYC and State averages

% Proficient in English Language Arts		
	2012-2013	2013-2014
Brooklyn Ascend Charter School	21.9%	29.3%
CSD 18	20.3%	21.4%
Difference from CSD 18 *	1.6	7.9
CSD 17	-	19.6%
Difference from CSD 17 *	-	9.7
NYC	26.8%	28.3%
Difference from NYC *	-4.9	1.0
New York State **	31.1%	30.6%
Difference from New York State	-9.2	-1.3
% Proficient in Mathematics		
	2012-2013	2013-2014
Brooklyn Ascend Charter School	23.3%	26.0%
CSD 18	20.6%	23.4%
Difference from CSD 18 *	2.7	2.6
CSD 17	-	22.4%
Difference from CSD 17 *	-	3.6
NYC	31.7%	36.2%
Difference from NYC *	-8.4	-10.2
New York State **	31.1%	36.2%
Difference from New York State	-7.8	-10.2

* All comparisons to either the CSD or NYC take into account only grades the school itself served. Brooklyn Ascend Charter school served students in grades kindergarten through six in CSD 18 in the 2012-2013 school year. The school expanded into a new building in CSD 17 beginning in the 2013-2014 school year; in 2013-2014 the school served students in grades kindergarten through four at its original site in CSD 18 and students in grades five through seven in CSD 17.

** New York State proficiency rates were taken from data.nysed.gov.

Student improvement on the state tests compared to other students

Median Adjusted Growth Percentile - English Language Arts		
	2012-2013	2013-2014
Brooklyn Ascend Charter School - All Students	39.5%	64.0%
Peer Percent of Range - All Students	0.0%	69.3%
City Percent of Range - All Students	0.0%	51.5%
Brooklyn Ascend Charter School - School's Lowest Third	45.0%	75.0%
Peer Percent of Range - School's Lowest Third	0.0%	73.0%
City Percent of Range - School's Lowest Third	0.0%	50.0%
Median Adjusted Growth Percentile - Mathematics		
	2012-2013	2013-2014
Brooklyn Ascend Charter School - All Students	36.0%	51.0%
Peer Percent of Range - All Students	1.4%	28.8%
City Percent of Range - All Students	0.0%	15.5%
Brooklyn Ascend Charter School - School's Lowest Third	43.0%	65.0%
Peer Percent of Range - School's Lowest Third	0.0%	39.8%
City Percent of Range - School's Lowest Third	0.0%	25.0%

A comparison range consists of all possible results within two standard deviations of the average. A peer/city percent of range of 50% represents the position of the average and can be interpreted as a school outperforming 50% of their peer group/city.

Closing the Achievement Gap

Percent in the 75th Growth Percentile - English Language Arts		
	2012-2013	2013-2014
Students with Disabilities *	43.8%	36.7%
English Language Learner Students	-	-
Students in the Lowest Third Citywide	34.6%	50.6%
Percent in the 75th Growth Percentile - Mathematics		
	2012-2013	2013-2014
Students with Disabilities *	18.8%	33.3%
English Language Learner Students	-	-
Students in the Lowest Third Citywide	28.6%	35.9%

* Defined as students with a placement in Self-Contained, ICT, or SETSS.

Progress Towards Attainment of Academic Goals in 2013-2014²

Academic Goals		
Charter Goals		2013-2014
1.	Each year, 75% of third through eighth grade students will perform at or above Level 3 on the NYS ELA Exam.	Not Met
2.	Each year, 75% of third through eighth grade students will perform at or above Level 3 on the NYS Math Exam.	Not Met
3.	Each year, 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 NYS ELA Exam and 75% at or above Level 3 on the current year's NYS ELA Exam.	Not Met
4.	Each year, 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 NYS Math Exam and 75% at or above Level 3 on the current year's NYS Math Exam.	Not Met
5.	Each year, each cohort of students will reduce by one-half the gap between the percent passing the NYS Regents Math Exam and the previous cohorts' passing rate on the NYS Regents Math Exam.	N/A
6.	Each year, the percent of students performing at or above Level 3 on the NYS ELA Exam in each tested grade will place the school in the top quartile of all similar schools.	Not Met
7.	Each year, the percent of students performing at or above Level 3 on the NYS Math Exam in each tested grade will place the school in the top quartile of all similar schools.	Not Met
8.	Each year, the percent of each cohort of students passing the NYS Regents ELA Exam will place the school in the top quartile of all similar schools.	N/A
9.	Each year, the percent of each cohort of students passing the NYS Regents Math Exam will place the school in the top quartile of all similar schools.	N/A
10.	Each year, the school's aggregate Performance Index on the NYS ELA Exam will meet its Annual Measurable Objective set forth in the state's No Child Left Behind (NCLB) accountability system.	Met
11.	Each year, the school's aggregate Performance Index on the NYS Math Exam will meet its Annual Measurable Objective set forth in the state's No Child Left Behind (NCLB) accountability system.	Met
12.	Each year, the school's aggregate Performance Index on the NYS Science Exam will meet its Annual Measurable Objective set forth in the state's No Child Left Behind (NCLB) accountability system.	Met
13.	Each year, the school will make Adequate Yearly Progress in ELA, Math, and Science, and in the school's graduation rate.	Met
14.	Each year, at least 75% of each student cohort graduates after five years of beginning the upper school.	N/A
15.	Each year, fewer than 10% of students who have enrolled by their ninth grade year will drop out of school before their cohort graduates (exclusive of students who move out of the school district or transfer to another school).	N/A
16.	Each year, 100% of students in the school will apply to, and be accepted for, admission at a minimum of one institution of higher learning by June 1 of the year of their graduation.	N/A
17.	Each year, the school will have a daily student attendance rate of at least 95%.	Met

² Goals were self-reported by the school in the school's 2013-2014 Annual Report documentation submitted to NYSED. It should be noted that beginning with the 2013-2014 school year, due to a change in state regulation, the NYC DOE will not evaluate goals that are related to standardized assessments for students in grades kindergarten through two. Further, due to the elimination of the accountability instrument, the DOE will not evaluate goals related to NYC DOE Progress Report grades beginning with the 2013-2014 school year.

Self-Reported Responsive Education Program & Learning Environment³

Curriculum Changes and/or Adjustments

- A new curriculum fosters inquiry-based learning in both ELA and mathematics. Lower school students learn habits of discussion in guided reading and Literature Circle beginning in kindergarten. In the Humanities Program, beginning in fifth grade, students regularly engage in class discussion with their peers to interpret complex texts. They also respond to rigorous questions posed by the teacher. Additionally, the humanities curriculum incorporates seminars and group projects, such as performances of scenes from plays by Shakespeare. In math, students engage daily in real world problem solving using the EngageNY curriculum. (The lower school employs Singapore math.) Both the lower and middle school students participate in Number Stories, which is based on Cognitively Guided Instruction. Every Number Stories lesson has a student discourse component in which three students are selected to share their method for solving the math problem, while peers either contribute their own ideas or pose questions to the presenters.
- Foundations, based on the Wilson Reading System principles, replaced the SABIS phonics, spelling, and grammar curricula. In kindergarten, the writing program is Units of Study in Opinion, Informational, and Narrative Writing, by Lucy Caulkins. Voyages in English: Grammar and Writing is now used to help students in later grades of the lower school with the mastery of grammar, writing, and the use of the English language.
- Ascend's Literature Circle program was adopted at Brooklyn Ascend Charter School to promote student discussion as teachers help students mine the deepest meaning of the finest children's literature, develop the habits of excellent readers, and build reading comprehension skills. Guided Reading, a separate reading class, has been expanded at the school. It creates a bridge between shared reading and independent reading. The program, which has been highly successful at several Ascend schools, is taught in small groups of students who are on the same reading level, as determined by individual one-on-one reading assessments.
- In the new social studies/shared text component, the teacher models the habits of a skilled reader, and leads students briskly to the meaning of a short complex text. Students are guided in answering Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS)-style comprehension questions and short response questions. In the lower school, shared text is a companion component of Literature Circle. Texts are selected to give historical context to the Literature Circle book under discussion.
- Singapore Math replaced the SABIS elementary school math curriculum as the primary math program in kindergarten through the fifth grade. The program focuses on building problem-solving skills and an in-depth understanding of essential math skills. It is closely aligned with curricular focal points recommended by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics and the Common Core Learning Standards.
- In Number Stories, students spend an entire period studying a single CCLS-style math problem, constructing their own solutions, defending their thinking, and comparing their approaches. For approximately 10-20 minutes a day, students practice Math Routines to build automaticity and fluency in computation.
- In the middle school, one of the 45-minute daily math periods is deployed for EngageNY. The second math period is dedicated to Number Stories and Math Routines.
- MacMillan/McGraw-Hill's A Closer Look science program was selected as the new curriculum for the lower school because of its strong CCLS alignment, integration of rich content with well-conceived inquiry experiments, and vibrant, engaging textbooks. In the middle school, students learn standards-based science in the context of intriguing personal and societal issues through the Science Education for Public Understanding Program (SEPUP), developed at the University of California at Berkeley. Other science middle school curricula include Issues and Earth Science, Issues and Life Science, and Issues and Physical Science.
- Sube (used in kindergarten and first grade) replaces the SABIS Spanish curriculum as a complete curriculum kit whose goal is to teach Spanish to students in a full-immersion environment. The students learn Spanish through music, art, and literature, and learn about Hispanic culture through dance and other authentic cultural activities. Descubre (used in second through fifth grade) aims to make learning and teaching Spanish an experience that is motivating, enriching, and effective for

³ Self-reported information from school-submitted ACR self-evaluation form on 5/1/15.

students. ¡Avancemos! by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt (for grades six through eight) is a curriculum designed to reach all students in the Spanish classroom by providing a wide-range of materials including literature, videos of Spanish speakers, music, technology, and diverse exercises to sharpen the skills of all students in the classroom.

Interim Assessments

- The school uses Ascend-created benchmarks aligned to EngageNY and the NY Ready Practice Tests made by Curriculum Associates. Students are assessed against these benchmarks four times during the school year. Scores on these assessments administered in the spring of 2013 proved to be predictive of Ascend student performance on the state exam later that spring. Additionally, the school replaced the STAR reading assessment, which provided erratic, inconsistent measures of reading skills. The school has been accepted into the University of Chicago's STEP running record assessments in grades kindergarten through four. The tests are administered approximately every nine weeks. The school uses the TerraNova, a national norm-referenced test, to provide school staff and external parties with a measure of how students are performing relative to their peers in other New York City schools and nationwide. The school also uses Ascend-created content- and unit- based assessments, administered every three to four weeks.

Approach to Data-Driven Instruction

- Brooklyn Ascend Charter School has improved its academic feedback loop by which students are assessed: their proficiency on the CCLS is estimated, their weaknesses are diagnosed, teaching deficits are identified and remedied, and then students are re-assessed. Further, the school has adopted an assessment system that provides more useful information. In the current approach, assessment advances five purposes: (1) identify student strengths and weaknesses on CCLS, (2) evaluate student mastery of taught curriculum content, (3) evaluate student tenacity on long and varied assessments, (4) enable customized literacy instruction, and (5) report student performance against national norms. For the 2014-2015 school year, as trained in a professional development session on data driven instruction, teachers followed a set procedure for each benchmark assessment (administered four times during the school year): (1) Two weeks before the benchmark exam, teachers previewed the exam with their dean of instruction, co-developing remaining lesson plans to address anticipated academic deficits; (2) immediately after the exam, teachers performed a thorough data analysis of the results and drafted a six-week instructional plan to address the needs of their classes and individual students; and (3) teachers monitored progress on goals using quizzes and classwork. Additionally, the Response to Intervention (RTI) team (described below) analyzed each benchmark exam, providing Tier 2 services to any student who fell below 67% on the test.

Philosophy on Special Education and English Language Learner Service Provision

- The school educates all students and is committed to providing all with the services needed to be successful. During the 2014-2015 school year the school had nine integrated co-teaching (ICT) classrooms, as well as six full-time "special education teacher support services" (SETSS) teachers and two special education (SPED) coordinators to oversee the provision of services for our special education (SPED) population. The first and second components of the school's approach to SPED are the SETSS and ICT models, respectively. The school serves English Language Learners using several intervention programs including Wilson Reading Intervention, Leveled Literacy Intervention, Visualizing Verbalizing, as well as aspects of the general education curriculum. For 2015-2016, the school plans to provide additional support across its Ascend sister campuses through a pull-out model of intervention focused on vocabulary acquisition, reading and listening comprehension, and written and oral expression. During the 2014-2015 school year the school had four full-time social workers who met required mandates on student Individual Education Programs (IEPs) while simultaneously serving the entire student body, as needed.

Professional Development Opportunities

- The three to four week pre-service Summer Institute has four components: the school's approach to student culture and discipline; training on the instructional programs; school-wide policies and

procedures, including the “Ascend Teaching and Learning Framework” (the “Framework”) and teacher evaluation tool; and team-building.

- The school uses weekly instructional observations and one-on-one coaching of teachers by the dean of instruction assigned to a teacher. This model is based on the weekly observation and coaching cycle detailed in Paul Bambrick-Santoyo’s book, *Leverage Leadership*. Each teacher is observed for 20-30 minutes weekly by his or her dean of instruction. The dean then meets with the teacher within one or two days to establish a personalized “bite-sized” goal for the teacher based on the teacher’s current skill level.
- On a weekly basis, staff development sessions are held on the school’s Friday early dismissal day. The content of the weekly staff development sessions is driven by two factors: the upcoming units of study in various content areas as well as the school’s skill development needs. In sessions focused on the upcoming units of study, leaders guide teachers through sessions where the “bottom lines,” or critical understandings of the units, are established. Sessions may revolve around instruction, culture, and the implementation of new policies and procedures.
- Leadership teams from across the network came together three Wednesdays each month during the 2014-2015 school year. For each benchmark assessment, leaders collaborated with Ascend curriculum developers and instructional leaders to complete a thorough analysis of math and ELA results. The leaders started the day with classroom observations, focusing on the implementation of the curriculum. They spent 60-90 minutes in classrooms and then debriefed about the lessons observed. The second part of the day involved content-focused professional development (PD) for leaders on upcoming units of study. The third part of the day provided time for leaders to plan what they would turnkey to teachers and when. In the last part of day, deans met with their school director and revised their PD plans for upcoming weeks as necessary. As the year progressed, teachers joined Ascend curriculum developers and school-based leadership teams across the network to collaboratively draft plans intended to address deficits uncovered in the data analysis.
- Weekly team meetings provide a time for teachers within a grade level or subject discipline to collaborate with one another and discuss upcoming lesson plans. These meetings are planned and facilitated by grade team leaders.
- Quarterly professional development days provide teachers with ample time to investigate student performance data and to plan to alter instruction accordingly.
- Select teachers who are on the path to leadership have the opportunity to become a mentor teacher and coach other teachers in their grade.
- Select teachers who are on the path to leadership have the opportunity to lead their grade team. Responsibilities include leading grade-level team meetings, planning field trips, and working with deans to plan academy wide events.

Teacher Evaluation

- The first line of teacher evaluation is teacher self-assessment, which is accelerated by giving teachers feedback on their students’ performance directly upon the student taking assessments. Every six weeks in math and ELA, students take benchmark assessments for which each question is coded based on the CCLS. To assess teachers’ efficacy, the school director and deans rely heavily on reports from the Illuminate DnA system. Importantly for accountability purposes, the system delivers an array of reports on academic performance, from that of a child in a single subject to the school as a whole. Additionally, Brooklyn Ascend Charter School uses STEP in grades kindergarten through four. Rigorous and frequent classroom observations and other measures likewise closely assess students’ progress and teachers’ performance.
- The deans of instruction evaluate all instructional staff formally at mid-year and again at year’s end, using an evaluation form. The instrument has six sections: lesson planning, classroom environment, instruction, data-driven assessments, professional responsibilities and partnerships, family and community. The tool is based on the Ascend Teaching and Learning Framework which is itself loosely based on the Danielson framework. If at any time instruction is found lacking, lead teachers, the deans of instruction, the school director, and/or instructional experts from Ascend will take immediate action, using pre-defined interventions, to bolster teacher effectiveness.

Differentiated Instruction

- The school adopted a new practice for meeting the needs of students at risk of academic failure based on the Response to Intervention (RTI) model. RTI is a multi-tiered model, which denotes that each stage provides more intensive support than the one before it. Struggling students receive additional support beyond what is provided in class, though they continue to attend their main subject classes while they receive such extra support. For instance, the school staffs many of its grades with SPED-certified intensives (remedial) teachers who work with at-risk students in small groups. Teachers conference with individual students, pull small groups during independent practice, modify handouts and materials, and collaborate with the deans of instruction, special education coordinator, and one another. Student progress is monitored regularly by teachers, and support staff if appropriate, to ensure that students exhibit improvement toward mastery of grade-level standards. Changes to the frequency, time, or intensity of the intervention depend on students' individual needs and progress. In the case of unsuccessful interventions, the RTI Team moves to refer the student to the regional Committee on Special Education (CSE) for an evaluation to determine if the student qualifies as a student with a disability. Students with IEPs are supported with both inclusion settings and small group work to best target their goals.

Adjustments Based on 2013-2014 Data

- Brooklyn Ascend Charter School adopted changes to its school design model in the 2014-2015 school year in four important areas:
 - leadership team and faculty structure;
 - curriculum;
 - assessment; and
 - professional development.
- Detailed educational model improvements are identified in the Curriculum Changes and/or Adjustments section on page 9 of this report. The new educational model provides students with explicit instruction in new concepts, methods and time to attack complex problems in multiple ways, and time to develop basic number sense and fluency. All aspects of the curriculum promote problem solving, conceptual understanding, and discussion amongst students.

Learning Environment

- Brooklyn Ascend Charter School has adopted a warm and supportive culture rooted in Responsive Classroom in the elementary grades, and Origins Developmental Designs (DD) in middle school. Because the school believes that student success relies on a blend of good relationships, social skills, and engagement with learning, the Responsive Classroom and DD practices integrate social and academic learning. By fostering children's social and emotional competencies rather than prescribing punitive consequences, Brooklyn Ascend Charter School has seen significant reductions in suspensions and office referrals.
- At Brooklyn Ascend Charter School, high academic and behavioral expectations are important. Teachers employ strategies from Responsive Classroom and Origins Developmental Designs to establish clear procedures in the classroom. Expectations for behavior are set and reinforced through the use of so-called Positive Teacher Language (including Reminding Language, Redirection Language, and Reinforcing Language) in Responsive Classroom settings, and Empowering Language in the middle school. Students internalize the expectations. When mistakes are made, they are guided back to the agreed expectation. All students are held to high standards while staff understands that every student is different.
- Brooklyn Ascend Charter School uses 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. The philosophy of discipline is designed such that children develop internal self-control tools to manage their own behavior. When students make mistakes, logical consequences are utilized as teaching tools. Among the consequences are reparations, loss of certain privileges, and positive time-out.

NYC DOE School Visit

Representatives of the OSDCP team visited the school on May 19, 2014. Based on discussion, document review, and observation, the following was noted:

School Leadership

- During the 2014-2015 school year, Brooklyn Ascend experienced a number of transitions including a removal of the SABIS curriculum, a transition from a direct instruction model to an inquiry based approach, and the roll out of a Response to Intervention (RTI) program. Leadership spoke at length about the need for teachers to feel comfortable with the transition to the new curriculum as well as the new assessments and identified that transition as both a challenge and a success that the school faced this year.

Classroom Observations

- Nine classrooms across grades kindergarten through eight were observed with the school's Managing School Director and School Director.
- Class sizes ranged from 22 to 27 students, with two or more teachers in most classroom.
- In most classes observed, instruction was delivered using a lead and assist model with an inquiry based approach observed with limited frequency. Based on debriefs with the school leadership team after classroom visits, most classrooms had instruction that aligned with the instructional model and current academic goals of the school.

Teacher Interviews

- Some interviewed teachers reported that the new curriculum and assessments enable them to better understand what students need in order to demonstrate their knowledge when taking exams.
- Most interviewed teachers reported that they received professional development weekly. Some of the interviewed teachers reported that the weekly professional development also included time for a grade-level team meeting
- Most interviewed teachers mentioned receiving both formal and informal observations by the Deans of Instruction and occasionally the Dean of Students or the Principal, with feedback given during coaching meetings.

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

Governance Structure & Organizational Design

School Leadership Team (School Year 2014-2015)		
Title	Name	Number of Years With the School
1. Dean of Instruction	Lisamarie Reid	2
2. Dean of Instruction	Michele Bonna	5
3. Dean of Instruction	Elisa Capers	3
4. Dean of Instruction	Chrisheena Hill	1
5. Dean of Instruction	Kelli Tice	1
6. Dean of Students	Malik Sollas	2
7. Dean of Students	Sasha Robertson	6
8. Dean of Students	Joanna White	2
9. Dean of Students	Caleb Miller	1
10. Dean of Students	Jamila McGill	3
11. Dean of Students	Mia Dunlap	2
12. Managing School Director	Janna Genzlinger	4
13. Resident School Director	Marsha Gadsden	4
14. School Director	Johana Andujar	2
15. Special Education Coordinator	Catherine Prefontaine	2
16. Director of Operations	Keisha John	3
17. Director of Operations	Monique Bowie	1
18. Student Services Coordinator	Lawrence Wuorio	2
19. Student Services Coordinator	Liesl Hara	2

Board of Trustees (School Year 2014-2015)		
Board Member Name	Position - Committee(s)	Was all Documentation Submitted to OSDCP? Was Board Member Approved by OSDCP?
1. Stephanie Mauterstock	President- Executive, Finance, Nominating Committees	Yes
2. Amanda Craft	Secretary- Executive, Education/ Accountability, Hiring Committees	Yes
3. Lisa Smith	Executive, Education/ Accountability, Nominating Committees	Yes
4. Kathleen Quirk	Treasurer- Executive, Finance, Education/ Accountability, Hiring Committees	Yes
5. Christine Schlendorf	Executive, Finance Committees	Yes

Board of Trustees Committees (School Year 2014-2015)		
Committee Name	Is This an Active Committee?	Evidence of Committee Activity (Roster, Committee Meeting Minutes, etc.)
1. Executive	Yes	Yes
2. Finance	Yes	Yes
3. Education / Accountability	Yes	Yes
4. Hiring	No	No
5. Nominating	Yes	Yes

School Climate & Community Engagement

Brooklyn Ascend Charter School	
Instructional Staff Turnover (School Year 2013-2014)*	28.0%
Instructional Staff Turnover (School Year 2014-2015)**	9.5%
Number of Instructional Staff Members Not Returning from the Previous Academic Year*	8
Does the School have a Parent Organization?	Yes
• If Yes, how many times did it meet (School Year 2013-2014)?	11
• If Yes, how many parents attended these meetings?	10
Average Daily Attendance Rate (School Year 2013-2014)***	95.7%

* Reflects 2013-2014 instructional staff who did not return to the school, either by choice or request, at the start of the 2014-2015 school year or who left the school during the 2013-2014 school year.

** Reflects 2014-2015 instructional staff left the school between July 1, 2014 and April 1, 2015.

*** Attendance was taken from ATS.

NYC School Survey Results

Percent of Respondents that Agree or Strongly Agree				
Survey Question		Brooklyn Ascend Charter School		Citywide Average
		2012-2013	2013-2014	2013-2014
Students*	Most of my teachers make me excited about learning.**	26%	44%	62%
	Most students at my school treat each other with respect.	30%	35%	60%
	I feel safe in the hallways, bathrooms, locker room, cafeteria, etc.	57%	73%	79%
Parents	I feel satisfied with the education my child has received this year.	95%	93%	95%
	My child's school makes it easy for parents to attend meetings.	94%	95%	94%
	I feel satisfied with the response I get when I contact my child's school.	94%	96%	95%
Teachers	Order and discipline are maintained at my school.	82%	86%	80%
	The principal at my school communicates a clear vision for our school.	88%	93%	88%
	School leaders place a high priority on the quality of teaching.	81%	98%	92%
	I would recommend my school to parents.	49%	61%	81%

* Students in grades kindergarten through five do not participate in the NYC School Survey.

** This question was phrased as "My teachers inspire me to learn" in the 2012-2013 School Survey.

NYC School Survey Response Rates			
		2012-2013	2013-2014
Students*	Brooklyn Ascend Charter School *	100%	99%
	NYC	83%	83%
Parents	Brooklyn Ascend Charter School	40%	70%
	NYC	54%	53%
Teachers	Brooklyn Ascend Charter School	90%	98%
	NYC	83%	81%

* Students in grades kindergarten through five do not participate in the NYC School Survey.

Financial Health

Short-Term Financial Health				
	Indicator	Benchmark	School's Measure	Status
Cash Position	Number of days of operating expenses the school can cover without an infusion of cash	60 days (2 months)	11 days	Weak
Liabilities	School's position to meet liabilities expected over the next 12 months	Current assets sufficient to cover current liabilities (ratio should be greater than or equal to 1.00)	0.36	Weak
Projected Revenues	Actual enrollment for 2014-2015 is compared to projected enrollment for 2014-2015 to allow for accounts receivable of budgeted per pupil revenues	Actual enrollment within 15% of authorized enrollment (ratio should be greater than or equal to 0.85)	0.99	Strong
Debt Management	School debts as provided in audited financial statements, as well as payments on those debts	School is meeting all current debt obligations	Not in Default	Strong

Long-Term Financial Sustainability				
	Indicator	Benchmark	School's Measure	Status
Total Margin	Did the school operate at a surplus or deficit during the previous fiscal years?	Value should be greater than 0.00	-0.12	Weak
	Did the school operate at a surplus or deficit during the past three fiscal years?	Value should be greater than 0.00	-0.39	Weak
Ratios	Debt to Asset Ratio	Ratio should be less than 1.00	2.53	Weak
	Debt Service Coverage Ratio	Ratio should be greater than 1.00	N/A	Strong
Cash Flow	Most recent fiscal year's cash flow	Value should be greater than 0.00	\$93,301	Strong
	Trend of cash flow over the past three fiscal years	Value should be greater than 0.00	\$252,286	Strong

An independent audit performed for fiscal year 2014 (FY14) showed no material findings.

Essential Question 3: Is the school in compliance with its charter and all applicable laws and regulations?

Board Compliance

Board of Trustee Compliance*	
Total Number of Board Members as of April 1, 2015	5
Number of Board Members Required per the Bylaws	5
Number of Board Members Who Either Did Not Return Following the 2013-2014 School Year or Who Left During the 2014-2015 School Year:	0
Number of Board Members Who Joined the Board Prior to or During the 2014-2015 School Year	0
Board Meeting Minutes From Most Recent Meeting Posted on the School's Website?	Yes
Number of Board Meetings in the 2014-2015 School Year with a Quorum of Board Members Present / Number Meetings Required per Bylaws**	7/12

* All data presented above is as of April 1, 2015.

** Section 2851(2)(c) of the NYS Charter School Act states that charter schools shall have a "procedure for conducting and publicizing monthly board of trustee meetings at each charter school..."

School Compliance

Based on a document review and based on information provided elsewhere in this report, the school is in compliance with:

Compliance Area	Compliance
Teacher Certification ⁴	No
Employee Fingerprinting	Yes
Safety Plan/Emergency Drill	Yes
Immunization Record ⁵	Yes
Insurance	Yes
Lottery	Yes
Annual Report Submitted to SED 2013-2014	Yes
Financial Audit Posted 2013-2014	No

⁴ The Charter Schools Act prohibits more than five staff members or more than 30% of the teaching staff from not being certified in accordance with requirements applicable to other public schools.

⁵ The Department of Health standards require an immunization rate of 99%.

Teachers (School Year 2014-2015)						
Number of Teachers:	Number of NYS Uncertified Teachers:	Percent NYS Uncertified Teachers:	Number of Highly Qualified Teachers:	Percent Highly Qualified Teachers:	Number of Teachers without Fingerprint Clearance:	Percent of Teachers Not Fingerprinted:
84	41	48.8%	71	84.5%	0	0.0%

Student Discipline

Based on a document review, the school's discipline policy contains written rules and procedures for:

Compliance Area	Evidence Submitted?	Language of Compliance Evident in the Documents Submitted?
Disciplining students	Yes	Yes
Removing students (i.e., suspending)	Yes	Yes
Procedures for expelling students	Yes	Yes
Notice and opportunities to be heard for Short Term Removals (10 days or fewer)	Yes	Yes
Notice and opportunities to be heard for Long Term Removals (more than 10 days)	Yes	Yes
Appropriate procedures for providing alternative education to students when students are removed (i.e., suspended)	Yes	Yes
Specifically addresses student discipline policy for students with disabilities	Yes	Yes
Does the school distribute the student discipline policy to all students and/or their families?	Yes	Yes
Number and percentage of students suspended in 2014-2015	In-School Suspensions: 54 (4%) Out-of-School Suspensions: 74 (5%)	

Enrollment and Retention Targets⁶

New York State (NYS) charter schools are required to demonstrate the means by which they will meet or exceed enrollment and retention targets for students with disabilities (SWDs), English Language Learners (ELLs), and students who are eligible for Free or Reduced Price Lunch (FRPL). As per the NYS Charter Schools Act, enrollment and retention targets have been finalized by the Board of Regents (BoR) and the board of trustees of the State University of New York (SUNY). These targets are meant to be comparable to the enrollment figures of such categories of the Community School District (CSD) in which the charter school is located.

⁶ State enrollment and retention targets were generated by a calculator developed by the State Education Department (SED). The NYC DOE used the calculator posted on the SED website as of April 1, 2015. Once a school's CSD, total enrollment and grade span are entered, the calculator generates a school-specific target. The CSD for a multi-district school is the primary CSD as determined by each school. The enrollment is determined by the total number of students enrolled as of October 1 for each school year. Any school with an unusual grade configuration (i.e. K, 6-9) should use an available grade configuration provided by SED that is most aligned as determined by the DOE, otherwise a school's actual grade span is used. For more information regarding SED's methodology behind the calculation of charter school enrollment and retention targets, please refer to the memo at <http://www.regents.nysed.gov/meetings/2012Meetings/July2012/712brca11.pdf>.

Charter schools are also required to demonstrate “good faith efforts” to attract and retain a comparable or greater enrollment of SWDs, ELLs, and students eligible for FRPL.

As a consideration of renewal, charter schools are required to “to meet or exceed enrollment and retention targets” for SWDs, ELLs, and students who are eligible for FRPL. The amendments further indicate “Repeated failure to comply with the requirement” as a cause for revocation or termination of the charter.

- In school year 2014-2015, Brooklyn Ascend Charter School served:
 - a higher percentage of students qualifying for Free or Reduced Price Lunch compared to its SED-derived enrollment target for students qualifying for Free or Reduced Price Lunch;
 - a lower percentage of English Language Learner students compared to its SED-derived enrollment target for English Language Learner students; and
 - a lower percentage of students with disabilities than its SED-derived enrollment target for students with disabilities.
- From October 1, 2013 through September 30, 2014, Brooklyn Ascend Charter School retained:
 - a higher percentage of students qualifying for Free or Reduced Price Lunch compared to its SED-derived retention target for students qualifying for free or reduced price lunch;
 - a higher percentage of English Language Learner students compared to its SED-derived retention target for English Language Learner students; and
 - a higher percentage of students with disabilities than its SED-derived retention target for students with disabilities.

Enrollment of Special Populations

Special Population		2013-2014	2014-2015
Free and Reduced Price Lunch (FRPL)	Brooklyn Ascend Charter School	91.6%	89.7%
	Effective Target*	88.3%	88.1%
	Difference from Effective Target	+3.3	+1.6
Students with Disabilities (SWD)	Brooklyn Ascend Charter School	11.6%	12.5%
	Effective Target*	12.7%	12.9%
	Difference from Effective Target	-1.1	-0.4
English Language Learners (ELL)	Brooklyn Ascend Charter School	0.7%	0.7%
	Effective Target*	4.7%	5.0%
	Difference from Effective Target	-4.0	-4.3

Retention of Special Populations

Special Population		2013-2014	2014-2015
Free and Reduced Price Lunch (FRPL)	Brooklyn Ascend Charter School	85.0%	N/A
	Effective Target*	80.2%	-
	Difference from Effective Target	+4.8	-
Students with Disabilities (SWD)	Brooklyn Ascend Charter School	83.5%	N/A
	Effective Target*	73.3%	-
	Difference from Effective Target	+10.2	-
English Language Learners (ELL)	Brooklyn Ascend Charter School	83.3%	N/A
	Effective Target*	49.2%	-
	Difference from Effective Target	+34.1	-

* Brooklyn Ascend Charter School is located in two Community School Districts. Targets were calculated for each CSD in which the school is located based on total grades served and total enrollment; the figures shown above reflect the lower of the two CSD targets for each special population.

Enrollment Information Used to Generate Targets		
	2013-2014	2014-2015
Grades Served	K-7	K-8
Enrollment	837	973
CSD(s)	18 and 17	18 and 17

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:

- Brooklyn Ascend Charter School served students in grades kindergarten through eight in school year 2014-2015. During school year 2015-2016 the school will serve students in grades kindergarten through nine. The school will continue to add a grade each year until the school grows to scale as a K-12 school in 2018-2019. Please note that the school is currently only authorized to serve grades kindergarten through eleven, though the school has indicated that it plans to apply to serve students in all grades kindergarten through twelve as part of its 2017-2018 renewal application.
- Brooklyn Ascend Charter School will begin serving ninth grade students in fall 2015 at a site located at 1501 Pitkin Avenue in Brooklyn. The school refers to this site as Brooklyn Ascend High School.

Please note that the school's identification of future plans as presented above does not construe application by the school or approval by the NYC DOE of any associated revision. The information presented above is for informational purposes only; it reflects proposed, not approved, future plans of the school. A formal non-material or material charter revision request would need to be submitted as appropriate, consistent with the NYC DOE's timelines and requirements, as the charter authorizing entity.