



**EXPLORE EMPOWER CHARTER SCHOOL
RENEWAL REPORT**

**2013 – 2014 SCHOOL YEAR
NOVEMBER 2013**

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Part 1: Summary of Renewal Recommendation

I. Charter School Overview:

Name of Charter School	Explore Empower Charter School
Current Board Chair(s)	Tim Taylor
School Leader	Brian Ferreira, Principal
Management Company (if applicable)	Explore Schools Inc.
Other Partner(s)	N/A
District(s) of Location	NYC Community School District 17
Physical Address	188 Rochester Ave., Brooklyn 11213
Facility	Public
School Opened For Instruction	2009
Current Charter Term Expiry Date	12/15/2013
Maximum Grade Levels / Authorized Enrollment at Expiry Date	K-6 / 372
Proposed Charter Term	3 years
Proposed Maximum Grade Levels / Authorized Enrollment at New Expiry Date	K-8/ 540

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	B
Student Progress	-	C	F	C
Student Performance	-	B	A	B
School Environment	-	A	A	B
Closing the Achievement Gap Points	-	1.0	1.0	2.2

Students scoring at or above Level 3, compared to CSD, NYC and State averages

% Proficient in English Language Arts				
	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013
Explore Empower Charter School	-	56.6%	47.9%	19.8%
CSD 17	-	43.3%	42.8%	18.4%
Difference from CSD 17	-	13.3	5.1	1.4
NYC	-	48.1%	50.6%	28.0%
Difference from NYC	-	8.5	-2.7	-8.2
New York State	-	55.9%	57.5%	30.5%
Difference from New York State	-	-1.9	-10	-10.5

% Proficient in Math				
	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013
Explore Empower Charter School	-	61.1%	73.1%	36.5%
CSD 17	-	48.8%	50.7%	21.2%
Difference from CSD 17	-	12.3	22.4	15.3
NYC	-	54.8%	61.3%	32.7%
Difference from NYC	-	6.3	11.8	3.8
New York State		59.6%	65.2%	33.5%
Difference from New York State		-0.6	7.8	3.5

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

Academic Goal Analysis (based on School's submission)					
	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	6	9	4	19
# Met	0	3	4	3	10
# Partially Met	0	0	1	0	1
# Not Met	0	3	4	1	8
% Met	N/A	50%	44.4%	75%	53%
% Partially Met	N/A	0%	11.2%	0%	5%
% Not Met	N/A	50%	44.4%	25%	42%

III. Rationale for Recommendation

A. Academic Performance

At the time of this school's renewal, Explore Empower Charter School (Explore Empower) has partially demonstrated academic achievement and progress.

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". Explore Empower is meeting both of these objectives.

The mission of Explore Empower is to provide students the academic skills and critical-thinking abilities they need to succeed in a college-preparatory high school. Explore Empower is a replication of Explore Charter School, a 500+ student kindergarten through eighth grade school. In grades kindergarten through five, Explore Empower employs a co-teacher model with two lead teachers per classroom designed to maintain a student to teacher ratio of 15 to 1.

The school entered its fifth year of operation with the start of the 2013-2014 academic year. Therefore, the New York City Department of Education (NYC DOE) has three years of New York State (NYS) assessment data to evaluate the academic achievement and progress of the students at Explore Empower. 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. Scores are based on comparing results from one school to a peer group of up to 40 schools with the most similar student population and to all schools citywide.

In the first year that the school was eligible for a graded progress report (2010-2011), the school earned an overall grade of B. In the most recent year (2012-2013), the school also earned an overall grade of B on the Progress Report, an improvement from an overall grade of a C in the 2011-2012 academic year. However, most notably, Explore Empower has not yet achieved higher than a C on the progress sub-section and in 2011-2012 received an F on the progress sub-section, the most heavily weighted section (60%) of the NYC DOE Progress Report.

The student progress sub-section of the progress report is calculated using student growth percentiles. In English, the school saw minimal improvement in its student growth percentiles, moving from ranking in the bottom 1% of schools citywide to the bottom 7% of schools in 2012-2013. Explore Empower has demonstrated growth with its students in math. Based on Explore Empower's median adjusted growth percentile in math, the school ranked in the bottom 2% of elementary schools citywide in 2011-2012.¹ This year, Explore Empower ranks in the top 14% of all elementary schools in the city, as it pertains to its median adjusted growth percentile in math. The school improved its student progress grade on the 2012-2013 NYC DOE Progress Report from an F to a C.

Contributing to the student performance grade of the progress report is the school's results on the NYS tests in English and math. This section represents 25% of a school's total progress report score. In 2012-2013, Explore Empower continued to outperform NYC Community School District (CSD) 17 in both English Language Arts (ELA) and math, and also outperformed the New York City average by a small margin in math. At Explore Empower, 20% of students are proficient in

¹ This 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 average 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.

ELA, which ranks Explore Empower in the top 31% of elementary schools in the district. Explore Empower's overall math proficiency is 15.3 percentage points higher than the CSD 17 average, which places the school in the top 6% of all elementary schools in the district.

Schools receive additional credit on the NYC DOE Progress Report for exceptional progress and performance of students with disabilities, English Language Learners, and students who start in the lowest third of proficiency citywide. On the 2012-2013 state assessments, 77% of the school's students in the lowest third citywide experienced growth in math that, with adjustments, matched or exceeded the growth of 75% or more of other students citywide with the same starting math scores. This level of math growth for students in the lowest third citywide ranks Explore Empower in the top 4% of elementary schools citywide.

Over the course of the charter term, the school achieved 53% of academic goals. In the most recent year that data is available, the school met 75% of its applicable charter goals.²

Over the course of its charter term, the NYC DOE conducted five site visits: Annual Visits in the Spring of 2010, 2011, and 2012, and as part of the renewal process, two additional visits in the Spring of 2013 and the Fall of 2013. During the visits, reviewers noted that the school has a comprehensive assessment system and used data to identify areas of improvement. The school uses internal assessments to measure the student progress. The assessments include Achievement Network (ANet), Journeys, Fountas & Pinnell for ELA, and Terra Nova for progress toward peers nation-wide. The school also uses interim assessments in math that are created internally by the Director of Curriculum and Instruction at Explore Schools Inc.

B. Governance, Operations & Finances

Explore Empower is a fiscally sound and viable organization.

Over the course of the school's charter term, the Board of Trustees has maintained a developed governance structure and organizational design. The Board currently has six members, which is more than the minimum number of five members delineated in the school's bylaws. In 2010-2011, the school's Board of Trustees moved to share board members with Explore Charter School, which allowed the Board to provide more effective oversight of school management. 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 Explore Schools, Inc., as established in their contract with the management organization.

Over the course of the school's charter term, the school has developed a stable school culture. As indicated in the Annual Site Visit report from March 2012, the school administration established a clear vision for the school and has established goals for academic expectations and priorities. The school continued to refine and make changes to the structure including the hiring of a new principal for the start of the 2013-2014 school year.

Explore Empower has maintained strong grades for all years in the Learning Environment section of the Progress Report. In 2012-2013, Explore Empower received a B, with As in both 2010-2011 and 2011-2012 on the Learning Environment section.

As it pertains to charter goals, Explore Empower met both attendance and enrollment goals as defined in its charter agreement. Explore Empower has an average attendance rate of 95%, which meets the average daily attendance rate goal of at least 95%. Further, Explore Empower currently

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.

serves 416 students, meaning that it is within 15% of its 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.

Overall, the school is in a strong position to meet near-term financial obligations and 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 Laws and Regulations

Over the charter term, Explore Empower has been compliant with applicable laws and regulations. The Board of Trustees for the school has been compliant with applicable laws, regulations, and provisions of the charter contract.

D. Plans for Next Charter Term

Explore Empower will continue to its full grade span, moving from serving grades kindergarten through six, to serving kindergarten through eight during its next charter term. The school will continue to add new students across all grades dependent upon seat availability.

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

Part 2: School Overview and History

Explore Empower Charter School is an elementary school serving approximately 416 students³ in kindergarten through sixth grades during the 2013-2014 school year. It opened in the 2009-2010 school year, with kindergarten and second grades and is under the terms of its first charter. The school's previously intended full grade span is kindergarten through six, which it is expected to reach during its current charter term expiring December 15, 2013.⁴ The school will continue to grow to eighth grade during the next charter term pending renewal. The school is located in a NYC DOE facility in District 17, in Brooklyn and is co-located with M.S. K394.⁵

The mission of Explore Empower Charter School is to provide students the academic skills and critical-thinking abilities they need to succeed in a college-preparatory high school. It is a replication of Explore Charter School, which currently enrolls 500+ kindergarten through eighth grade students. In grades kindergarten through five, Explore Empower uses a co-teacher model with two lead teachers per classroom with the goal of keeping student to teacher ratios at 15 to 1.

The school is part of the Explore Schools network, a charter management organization (CMO). The CMO provides academic support and evaluation, leadership coaching, some back office support, curriculum assessment and student assessment data gathering, among other financial supportive services. Working with and through the network, Explore Empower manages student information via the NYC DOE's Automate the Schools (ATS) and Global Scholar, a student information system owned by Scantron. The annual budget is created by the Managing Director of Finance at Explore Schools and is approved by the Board of Trustees of the school. Explore Empower 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 12% management fee annually, based on the per pupil revenue.

The school typically enrolls new students across all grades it serves depending on seat availability, but holds its yearly lottery for kindergarten only. There were 179 students on the waitlist after the Spring 2013 kindergarten lottery. Since the school backfills its available seats in all grades, the total number of students on the waitlist for all grades is 1,084, as of May 1, 2013.⁶

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)	81.3%	85.7%	87.3%	87.1%
Students with Disabilities (SwD)	10.6%	13.0%	12.0%	17.4%
English Language Learners (ELL)	1.3%	1.3%	1.0%	2.8%

Explore Empower Charter School's Board of Trustees is led by Tim Taylor. The school's founder, Morty Ballen is a member of the school's Board; he recuses himself from any items related to the CMO. The school is currently led by Brian Ferreira, who joined the school at the start of the 2013 – 2014 academic year. The school was previously led by Beth Doyle, who served as principal since 2010.

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 dated 5/1/2013

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

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 law 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 June 18, 2013 and September 20, 2013:

- Daree Lewis, Senior Director, NYC DOE Charter Schools Accountability and Support
- Maria Campo, Director of Oversight, NYC DOE Charter Schools Accountability and Support
- Jorge Cruz, Director of Operations, NYC DOE Charter Schools Accountability and Support
- Lynette Aqueron, Senior School Improvement Specialist for Special Education, NYC DOE Division of Students with Disabilities and English Language Learners
- Jose Castro, National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) Fellow
- Stacey Coburn, Summer Fellow, Education Pioneers
- Simeon Stolzberg, Independent Consultant

⁸http://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 Explore Empower Charter School has partially demonstrated academic achievement and progress.

Academic Attainment and Improvement

The school has received three NYC DOE Progress Reports and has three 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	B
Student Progress	-	C	F	C
Student Performance	-	B	A	B
School Environment	-	A	A	B
Closing the Achievement Gap Points	-	1.0	1.0	2.2

Students scoring at or above Level 3, compared to CSD, NYC and State averages

% Proficient in English Language Arts				
	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013
Explore Empower Charter School	-	56.6%	47.9%	19.8%
CSD 17	-	43.3%	42.8%	18.4%
Difference from CSD 17	-	13.3	5.1	1.3
NYC	-	48.1%	50.6%	28.0%
Difference from NYC	-	8.5	-2.7	-8.2
New York State		55.9%	57.5%	30.5%
Difference from New York State		-1.9	-10	-10.5

% Proficient in Math				
	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013
Explore Empower Charter School	-	61.1%	73.1%	36.5%
CSD 17	-	48.8%	50.7%	21.2%
Difference from CSD 17	-	12.3	22.4	15.3
NYC	-	54.8%	61.3%	32.7%
Difference from NYC	-	6.3	11.8	3.8
New York State		59.6%	65.2%	33.5%
Difference from New York State		-0.6	7.8	3.5

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: 3 of 6 applicable charter goals were achieved in the second year of the charter, 4 of 9 were met and 1 of 9 partially met in the third year, 3 of 4 were met in the fourth year.⁹ (None of the school's goals were applicable in its first year 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 3rd-6th graders who have been enrolled at the school on BEDS day for at least two consecutive years will perform at or above Level 3 on the New York State ELA examination.	N/A	No	No	N/A
2) Each year, 75 percent of 3rd-6th graders who have been enrolled at the school on BEDS day for at least two consecutive years will perform at or above Level 3 on the New York State Math examination	N/A	No	Yes	N/A
3) Each year, 75 percent of 4th graders who have been enrolled at the school on BEDS day for at least two consecutive years will perform at or above Level 3 on the New York State Science examination.	N/A	N/A	Yes	N/A
4) Each year, 75 percent of 4th graders who have been enrolled at the school on BEDS day for at least two consecutive years will perform at or above Level 3 on the New York State Social Studies examination.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
5) For years 2 through 5 of the proposed charter, each grade-level cohort of the same students (i.e. students who are in the school for two years in a row) will reduce by one-half the gap between the percent at or above Level 3 on the previous year's State ELA exam (baseline) and 75% at or above Level 3 on the current year's State ELA exam. For schools in which the number of students scoring above proficiency in a grade level cohort exceeded 75 percent on the previous year's ELA exam, the school is expected to demonstrate some growth (above 75%) in the current year (relevant for schools serving grades 3-8).	N/A	N/A	No	N/A
6) For years 2 through 5 of the proposed charter, each grade-level cohort of the same students (i.e. students who are in the school for two years in a row) will reduce by one-half the gap between the percent at or above Level 3 on the previous year's State math exam (baseline) and 75% at or above Level 3 on the current year's State math exam. For schools in which the number of students scoring above proficiency in a grade level cohort exceeded 75 percent on the previous year's math exam, the school is expected to demonstrate some growth (above 75%) in the current year (relevant for schools serving grades 3-8).	N/A	N/A	No	N/A

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.

7) Each year, the percent of students performing at or above Level 3 on the State ELA exam in each tested grade will, in the majority of grades, exceed the average performance of students tested in the same grades of the Community School District in which the school is located. This will be measured by an analysis of performance compared to CSDs conducted by NYC DOE.	N/A	Yes	Partial	No
8) Each year, the percent of students performing at or above Level 3 on the State Math exam in each tested grade will, in the majority of grades, exceed the average performance of students tested in the same grades of the Community School District in which the school is located. This will be measure by an analysis of performance compared to CSDs conducted by NYC DOE.	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes
9) From years 2-4, the school will receive a "B" or higher on the student Progress section of the NYC DOE Progress Report.	N/A	No	No	Yes
10) Each year, the school will be deemed "In Good Standing" on the NYS Report Card	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes

Responsive Education Program

As part of the renewal review process, representatives of the NYC DOE visited the school on June 18, 2013 and September 20, 2013. Based on discussion, document review, and observation, the following was noted:

- Alignment with Common Core
 - In 2011-2012, school leadership began using the Investigations and Journeys curricula to better align with the demands of the Common Core Learning Standards.
 - According to the school leadership, professional development has also shifted to focus on curriculum as a way to develop teachers' content knowledge in the Common Core Learning Standards.
- Addressing the Needs of All Learners
 - To meet the needs of at-risk learners, the school increased the capacity of its Support Services Team.
 - Over the course of the charter term, the school has added one full-time Learning Specialist, two full-time Learning Specialists/Support Service Coordinators, and two Counselors. The school also has one full-time Speech Therapist, one part-time Speech Therapist, and one part-time Occupational Therapist, who are employed by an external related-service provider agency.
- Instructional Model and Classroom Instruction
 - The instructional leadership team has been expanded and now includes a Principal and two Academic Directors.
 - All of these individuals implement coaching cycles that provide six to eight weeks of targeted support and instructional development to individual teachers.
 - School leadership reported that the primary focus is now on ensuring that teachers are strong at execution of lessons.
 - The school has developed professional learning communities (PLCs) by grade level. These PLCs meet weekly to further develop teachers' content knowledge and instructional practice.
 - Professional development provided to staff includes developing teachers' ability to use data to inform instruction.
 - During the visit, thirty-four classrooms, grades K-6, were observed with the school's instructional leadership and the following was noted:

- At Explore Empower, classrooms serving students in kindergarten through fifth grade employ a co-teaching model. For these classrooms, the method of instruction varied between parallel teaching, lead and assist, lead and monitor, and lecture.
- On the days of the renewal visits, class-sizes ranged from 19 to 29 students in size, with two teachers in all classrooms.
- Forms of questioning during the classroom observations included basic fact recall and challenging students to demonstrate understanding by explaining or restating. Two observed classrooms challenged students to analyze and apply information.
- In most rooms, checks for understanding including questioning, class work, teacher observation, peer review in the form of turn-and-talk, were observed.
- 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 two classrooms observed in which teachers had challenges keeping students engaged and on-task.
- In all observed classes, students were mostly on task though many classrooms had four or five students who were off-task.
- Based on debriefs with the school's instructional leaders after classroom visits, all classrooms had instruction that aligned with the instructional model and current academic goals of the school. During the debriefs, school leaders mentioned instances where teachers needed more development around student management and clarity around team teaching roles.

Learning Environment

NYC DOE representatives conducted one-on-one interviews with 34 members of the instructional staff including the principal, the academic directors and 12 teachers.

- All 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 indicated that the professional development sessions cover a wide range of topics, including behavior management, collaborative problem solving, grading and writing. In more than one instance, teachers noted that there has been a shift away from behavior management strategies toward content development.
- On the September 20, 2013 visit, teachers reported that the newly implemented PLCs were helpful and that the coaching makes them feel successful.
- Some of the interviewed teachers discussed the use of formal and informal observations for receiving feedback from the coaches.
- Teachers reported that they use data in the classrooms through both formal (i.e. Achievement Network, NYS Assessments, report card data) and informal assessments (i.e. observational notes, exit slips assessments, skills checklists) for groupings and lesson planning. One teacher noted that these assessments are broken down by Common Core Learning Standards to gauge knowledge acquisition.

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 maintained a developed governance structure and organizational design.

On September 30, 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 eight active members. The Board has experienced minimal turnover throughout its charter term, with the most turnover the Board experienced taking place in the 2010-2011 school year with five members leaving. The high turnover for that year was due to Explore Empower's Board moving to share Board members with Explore Charter School. The Board has kept membership within the minimum of five members and maximum of sixteen members, as established in the Board's bylaws. Tim Taylor has been the Board Chair since the 2010-2011 school year.
- The Board has consistently achieved quorum, as recorded in meeting minutes.
- The Principal updates the Board on academic progress and operations at the school, as recorded in meeting minutes. Additionally representatives from the CMO, Explore Schools, Inc., including the Chief Executive Officer, the Chief Academic Officer, the Managing Director of Finance, 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 a Finance Committee, Contract Committee, Principal Compensation Committee, Program Committee, and Discipline Committee, as recorded in meeting minutes.
- The school's founder, Morty Ballen, is a voting member of the school's Board. He recuses himself from any items related to the CMO. The elementary school is led by Brian Ferreira, who joined the school at the beginning of the 2013-2014 school year. The school was previously led by Beth Doyle, who served as principal since 2010.

School Climate & Community Engagement

Over the course of the school's charter term, the school has 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%.¹⁰

Average Daily Attendance	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
	95%	95%	95%	95%

- As the school staff has grown over the course of its charter, from 15 instructional staff members in 2009-2010 to 32 instructional staff members in 2012-2013, staff turnover has been below 20%. From 2009-2010 to 2011-2012, the instructional staff turnover was 13%, 9%, and 19%, each respective year. Instructional staff turnover was at its highest in 2012-2013 with 53% of instructional staff not returning, by choice or request, which corresponded with a 100% turnover of the leadership team.¹¹
- Over the course of the charter term, the NYC School Survey results and response rates were:

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

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

Explore Empower Charter School NYC School Survey Results

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

Explore Empower Charter School Response Rates Compared to Citywide Average

	Parents	Citywide	Teachers	Citywide	Students ¹²	Citywide
2009-10	63%	49%	50%	76%	–	–
2010-11	83%	52%	95%	82%	–	–
2011-12	88%	53%	100%	82%	–	–
2012-13	78%	54%	94%	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:

- The school employs a Culture Team, comprised of a Dean of Culture, two Deans of Students, School Counselors, and Enrichment Teachers. The Deans provide support to the teachers, assist in implementing the school-wide behavior system, and act as a resource and point of communication for the parents.
- For the 2012-2013 school year, the Principal introduced a monthly event, called Principal's Tea, to encourage parent communication with the Principal. The school also holds events, such as Family Game night and talent shows to engage families.
- The school's Parent Teacher Organization meets monthly, featuring presentations on such topics as Preparation for State Exams, Testing Anxiety, and Bullying, in an effort to increase attendance and participation.
- In addition to the Parent Teacher Organization, the school has a Parent Steering Committee, which consists of parent representatives from each grade. They meet with the Principal monthly to talk about school goals and how parents can support the school in meeting those goals.
- The NYC DOE conducted a public renewal hearing for the school in an effort to elicit public comments. Nineteen participants attended the hearing, seven speaking in support of the school and none speaking in opposition.
- 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 five and six, a group of nine and eight students, respectively, were interviewed. Based on student interviews conducted on the September 20th visit to the school, the following was noted:

- Students interviewed reported that the school had a college-bound culture and that all teachers and staff had college-bound expectations for the students.
- Students interviewed reported that parent communication from teachers could be for either positive or negative reasons, such as going above and beyond in class spirit, doing well on a test, disobeying a teacher, or notifying the parent of any health concerns about the student.

¹² Student Response Rates on the NYC School Survey have not been applicable for this school over the course of the current charter term.

Financial Health

Overall, the school is in a strong position to meet near-term financial obligations.

- Based on Fiscal Year (FY) 2013 financial statements, the school's current ratio indicated a strong ability to meet its current liabilities.
- Based on FY13 financial statements, the school had sufficient unrestricted cash to cover its operating expenses for more than two months without an infusion of cash.
- A comparison of the enrollment projections for the 2013-2014 budget to the actual enrollment as of September of 2013 revealed that the school was meeting its enrollment target, supporting its projected revenue.
- As of the FY13 financial statements, the school had met its debt obligations.

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

- Based on the financial statements 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 FY13 financial statement the school's debt-to-asset ratio indicated that the school had more total assets than it had total liabilities.
- Based on the financial statements 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.

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

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

Over the charter term, Explore Empower Charter School has been compliant with applicable laws and regulations.

The Board of Trustees is in compliance with:

- The required number of monthly meetings: The Board has consistently had a membership size that falls within the range of five to sixteen 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 ten times in the school's first year of operations and six times annually after that. The Board complied with its bylaws with 11 meetings in 2009-10, and 8 meetings in each subsequent year: 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 all required documents: All current Board members have submitted conflict of interest and financial disclosure forms and do not demonstrate conflicts of interest.¹³
- Submission of minutes and agendas: 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.
- Submission of all accountability documents: The Board has provided timely submissions of accountability documents to the NYC DOE.

The school is in compliance with:

- Submission of all required 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 the required fingerprint clearance. All staff is required to complete the fingerprinting clearing process before they begin working with Explore Empower.
- 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 for the school years 2012-2013 and 2013-2014, Empower has six uncertified teachers, however, the school ensures that they are highly qualified teachers.
- Insurance requirements: The school has all appropriate insurance documents.

¹³ 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 will continue to expand to its proposed full grade span, moving from serving grades kindergarten through six, to serving kindergarten through eight.
- The school's focus for the next charter term will be on growing and improving its human talent. The school will do this by developing and improving its teacher coaching, and by providing teachers with the curricular resources needed to deliver rigorous, Common Core-aligned instruction.
- 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, Explore Empower amended its lottery procedures to include a set-aside preference for English language learners in their kindergarten lottery to attract and retain that population.

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.¹⁴

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.¹⁵

A school seeking renewal of its charter must submit a renewal application to the charter entity to which the original charter application was submitted.¹⁶ As one such charter entity, the New York City Department of Education 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.¹⁷

¹⁴ See § 2850 of the Charter Schools Act of 1998.

¹⁵ See §§ 2851(4) and 2852 of the Act.

¹⁶ See §§ 2851(3) and 2851(4) of the Act.

¹⁷ 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 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: <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 Law and Regulations?

3a. Approved Charter and Agreement

Schools in substantial compliance with their charter and agreement have:

- Implemented the key features of their charter as described in the original charter and as modified in approved revisions to their charter, including but not limited to mission, academic program, school organization, grade configuration, enrollment, goals, etc.
- Ensure that update-to-date charter is publicly available to staff, parents, and school community
- Implemented comprehensive academic, behavioral, oversight, management, and operational policies and procedures that are substantially aligned with the charter and the school's stated mission and vision

Evidence for a school's compliance with the terms of its charter and charter agreement may include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Authorized charter and signed agreement
- Charter revision request approval and documentation
- School mission
- School policies and procedures
- Site visits
- Board meetings, agendas and minutes
- Leadership/board interviews

3b. Applicable Federal and State Law

Schools in substantial compliance with federal and state law have:

- Met all legal requirements for Title I and IDEA regulations and reporting
- Comparable enrollment of FRL, ELL and Special Education students to those of their district of location or are making documented good faith efforts to reach comparable percentages
- Implemented school policies related to student discipline and promotion and retention that are fully compliant with laws and regulations related to students with disabilities and due process regulations
- Conducted independently verified fair and open lottery and manage with integrity enrollment process and annual waiting lists
- Employed instructional staff with appropriate security clearances and certification requirements

Evidence for compliance with applicable federal and state law may include, but not be limited to, the following:

- School reporting documents
- School's Annual Report
- Student recruitment plan and resources
- Student management policies and promotion and retention policies
- Student discipline records
- Lottery policy, resources, and records; enrollment procedures and records
- Staff roster, fingerprint clearance for all staff, certification status of all instructional staff

3c. Applicable Regulations

<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

<p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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)
<p>Evidence for likely success in planning for school growth in a new charter term may include, but not be limited to, the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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

<p>Successful schools consistently perform despite change. While there is no single path for ensuring sustainability, successful schools often have the following features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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

Students scoring at or above Level 3, compared to CSD and NYC averages

% Proficient in English Language Arts				
	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013
Explore Empower Charter School	-	56.6%	47.9%	19.8%
CSD 17	-	43.3%	42.8%	18.4%
Difference from CSD 17	-	13.3	5.1	1.4
NYC	-	48.1%	50.6%	28.0%
Difference from NYC	-	8.5	-2.7	-8.2

% Proficient in Math				
	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013
Explore Empower Charter School	-	61.1%	73.1%	36.5%
CSD 17	-	48.8%	50.7%	21.2%
Difference from CSD 17	-	12.3	22.4	15.3
NYC	-	54.8%	61.3%	32.7%
Difference from NYC	-	6.3	11.8	3.8

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

% of Third Graders Proficient in English Language Arts				
	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013
Explore Empower Charter School	-	56.6%	55.0%	16.9%
CSD 17	41.9%	43.3%	42.5%	17.7%
Difference from CSD 17	-	13.3	12.5	-0.8
NYC	46.5%	48.1%	49.0%	28.1%
Difference from NYC	-	8.5	6.0	-11.2

% of Third Graders Proficient in Math				
	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013
Explore Empower Charter School	-	61.1%	83.3%	25.4%
CSD 17	49.0%	48.8%	46.9%	21.7%
Difference from CSD 17	-	12.3	36.4	3.7
NYC	54.3%	54.8%	57.0%	33.1%
Difference from NYC	-	6.3	26.3	-7.7

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
Explore Empower Charter School	-	-	40.7%	30.5%
CSD 17	35.8%	43.6%	43.1%	18.0%
Difference from CSD 17	-	-	-2.4	12.5
NYC	45.6%	51.0%	52.4%	27.2%
Difference from NYC	-	-	-11.7	3.3

% of Fourth Graders Proficient in Math				
	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013
Explore Empower Charter School	-	-	62.7%	55.9%
CSD 17	45.5%	49.5%	54.5%	25.1%
Difference from CSD 17	-	-	8.2	30.8
NYC	58.4%	62.3%	65.7%	35.2%
Difference from NYC	-	-	-3.0	20.7

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

% of Fifth Graders Proficient in English Language Arts				
	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013
Explore Empower Charter School	-	-	-	11.9%
CSD 17	38.7%	39.8%	42.1%	19.6%
Difference from CSD 17	-	-	-	-7.7
NYC	46.2%	49.0%	52.2%	28.7%
Difference from NYC	-	-	-	-16.8

% of Fifth Graders Proficient in Math				
	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013
Explore Empower Charter School	-	-	-	28.3%
CSD 17	47.9%	51.0%	55.1%	16.5%
Difference from CSD 17	-	-	-	11.8
NYC	59.7%	62.9%	65.2%	29.6%
Difference from NYC	-	-	-	-1.3

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](#)

[2010 – 2011 Academic Year](#)

NYC DOE Accountability Reports

The school did not get an Annual Site Visit in 2011-2012

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

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