



Charter Schools Accountability and Support  
2012-2013

**METROPOLITAN LIGHTHOUSE CHARTER SCHOOL  
ANNUAL COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW REPORT**

**2012-13 SCHOOL YEAR**

## Part 1: School Overview & History

### School Overview and History

Metropolitan Lighthouse Charter School (MetLCS) is an elementary school serving approximately 232 students<sup>1</sup> in grades K-4 during the 2012-13 school year. It opened in 2010-2011, and is under the terms of its first charter. The school's projected full grade span, if approved for renewal and continued expansion, is K-12, which it's expected to reach in 2020-21.<sup>2</sup> The school is located in public<sup>3</sup> facilities in the Bronx within CSD 8, at 1535 Story Avenue, but will be moving into private facilities at the start of the 2013-14 school year.<sup>4</sup>

The table below details the school's performance on the NYC DOE Progress Report.<sup>5</sup>

**Metropolitan Lighthouse Charter School Progress Report Results**

Progress Report Grade	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
Overall Grade				C
Student Progress				C
Student Performance				C
School Environment				B
Closing Achievement Gap Points				3.0

Metropolitan Lighthouse Charter School enrolls new students in grade K. There were 667 students on the waitlist after the Spring 2012 lottery.<sup>6</sup>

The average attendance rate for the 2012-13 school year to date is 95%.<sup>7</sup>

On the 2011-12 NYC DOE School Survey, the school scored Average on the Communication section and Below Average on the Academic Expectations and Engagement sections, and Well Below Average for the Safety & Respect section. Fifty-six percent of the school's parents and 100.0% of the school's teachers responded to the survey.<sup>8</sup>

The school's current principal, Courtney Russell, has served in this role since the school's founding.

Lighthouse Academies, a Charter Management Organization (CMO), provides business and academic services to Metropolitan Lighthouse Charter School, one of two charter schools in New York City the CMO manages, the other being Bronx Lighthouse Charter School, also in the Bronx. Services from the CMO are coordinated and/or provided by a Regional Director dedicated to the two schools the CMO manages in the Bronx. Lighthouse provides school leadership support and evaluation, back office support, payroll and HR, vendor management, and financial and accounting support. It also supports implementation of the Lighthouse education model, providing curriculum guides, supplemental resources to support Common Core instruction, and professional development. The annual budget is created in conjunction with the Board of Trustees of the school. The school currently pays a flat fee of \$150,000 in equal payments to Lighthouse throughout school year 2012-13.

<sup>1</sup> Enrollment based on ATS data from 3/8/13.

<sup>2</sup> NYC DOE internal data.

<sup>3</sup> NYC DOE internal data.

<sup>4</sup> NYC DOE Location Code Generating System database.

<sup>5</sup> NYC DOE Progress Report – <http://schools.nyc.gov/progressreport>

<sup>6</sup> Self-reported information from school-submitted Data Collection Form.

<sup>7</sup> Self-reported information from school-submitted Data Collection Form.

<sup>8</sup> NYC DOE School Survey – <http://schools.nyc.gov/survey>

## Part 2: Annual Review Process Overview

### Rating Framework

The New York City Department of Education (NYC DOE) Charter Schools Accountability & Support Team (CSAS) performs a comprehensive review of each DOE-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, CSAS 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 the 2012-2013 school-year. The report outlines evidence found during this review.

As per the school's monitoring plan, CSAS 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.

In addition, a school's charter goals are reviewed. The progress that a school has made towards achieving its goals at this particular point during its charter period is noted. However, as this is an interim review before the end of the charter term, progress towards goals is not used as part of this evaluation.

### Essential Questions

#### ***Is the school an academic success?***

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

- Overall New York City 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 and high school graduation rates compared to the city,
- 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**. If a school does not yet have a NYC Progress Report, it is rated as Not Yet Demonstrated.

#### ***Is the school a fiscally sound, viable organization?***

To assess whether a school is a fiscally sound, viable organization, CSAS 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 Framework<sup>9</sup>.

CSAS also 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 NY SED,
- NYC DOE School Survey,
- Data collection sheets provided by schools,
- Student, staff, and Board turnover,

---

<sup>9</sup> [http://www.qualitycharters.org/assets/files/images/stories/pdfs/publications/Performance\\_Framework\\_Fall\\_2012\\_Draft.pdf](http://www.qualitycharters.org/assets/files/images/stories/pdfs/publications/Performance_Framework_Fall_2012_Draft.pdf), page 38-59

- 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**. These ratings indicate whether there are concerns about the financial sustainability of the school.

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

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

**Staff Representatives**

The following staff representatives participated in the review of this school's documents as detailed above:

- Richard Larios, DOE
- Gabrielle Mosquera, DOE
- Kamilah O'Brien, DOE

In addition, these representatives conducted a full monitoring visit to the school on June 4, 2013:

- Jared Kutner, DOE
- Bert Wyman, DOE
- Lynnette Aqueron, DOE
- Lauren Spillane, DOE

Gabrielle Mosquera and Kamilah O'Brien also attended a regular Board meeting of the school on June 6, 2013.

## Part 3: Findings

### Summary of Findings

Based on CSAS review, the following findings are made. To date the school:

- has partially demonstrated academic achievement and progress (p. 6-9).
- has a developed governance structure and organizational design (p. 10).
- has partially developed a stable school culture (p. 10-11).
- is in a strong position to meet near-term financial obligations and is financially sustainable based on current practices (p.12).
- is compliant with its charter and applicable laws and regulations (p. 13).
- plans in its next charter term include expansion to middle school grades and a move into a permanent private facility (p. 14).

This review included a desk audit, a visit to the school and to a Board meeting, and follow up communication via phone and email. CSAS visited the school on June 4, 2013 and visited the Board at its June 6, 2013 meeting.

## **Essential Question 1: Is the School an Academic Success?**

To date, MetLCS has partially demonstrated academic achievement and progress.

- As of this report, MetLCS has received one year of New York State assessment results for one tested grade (Grade 3) in 2011-12.
- In 2011-12, 28.3% of MetLCS tested students earned a Level 3 or 4 on the NY ELA state assessment; 53.3% of its students scored a Level 3 or better on the NY Math state assessment.
- MetLCS scored higher in overall proficiency (Level 3 or better) when compared to its district of location, CSD 8, in Math, 53.3% to 50.2%, but lower in overall proficiency than its district in ELA, 28.3% to 39.2% for the CSD.
- The school received an Overall grade of C on its first NYC DOE Progress Report (page 2), with a C in both Student Progress and Student Performance.
- The school earned 3 points for Closing the Achievement Gap on its 2011-12 NYC DOE Progress Report.

### Progress Toward Attainment of Academic Goals<sup>10</sup>

- According to its Annual Report to the New York State Education Department (NYSED), in 2011-12 MetLCS met one of five of its applicable academic performance goals in its charter, with a mixed result in one other (comparison to CSD performance where it surpassed the district in Math but not in ELA), and did not meet the other three applicable goals.<sup>11</sup>

Based on interviews and document review during the June 4, 2013 visit to the school, the following was noted:

- School leadership reported that in response to the school's 2011-12 test scores and interim assessments taken in 2012-13, leadership made several changes to the intervention approach over the course of the school year.
  - Beginning in January 2013, the school established a more targeted intervention approach for the groupings in its Grades 3 and 4 Power Hour, including weekly assessments from its Acuity program that were supplemented by self-created, Common Core-aligned questions, a specific focus on test question strategies, and class observations focused on the implementation of these strategies. The school also began a mandatory after school program in February that was held two-days a week and continuing through state assessments in April.
  - Beginning in December 2012, school leaders took over responsibility for unit planning and assessment generation across grades K-3 to ensure better alignment with Common Core standards.
  - The school began integrating its intervention team into grade-level meetings.
- School leadership reported that the school plans to implement several structural and organizational changes in 2013-14 to support as well as supplement its academic program.
  - The school redefined several positions on the leadership team: two Directors of Teacher Leadership, each of whom will manage, observe, and formally evaluate a cohort of teachers; one Director of Scholar Services, responsible for leader the school's Intervention Team; one Coordinator of Family and Community Partnerships; and one School Operations Manager.
  - School leadership reported that the school added the Associate Teacher position to its staffing model which will allow grade level teams to create flexible groups based on Interim Assessment and formative assessment data and provide targeted instruction based on scholar needs.
  - The school added a Special Education teacher to ensure adequate and appropriate staffing, based on the number of scholars with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), and also to ensure expenditures (such as staff salary) align with revenue for scholars with IEPs.

---

<sup>10</sup> Goal analysis is considered a neutral point for the purposes of this evaluation.

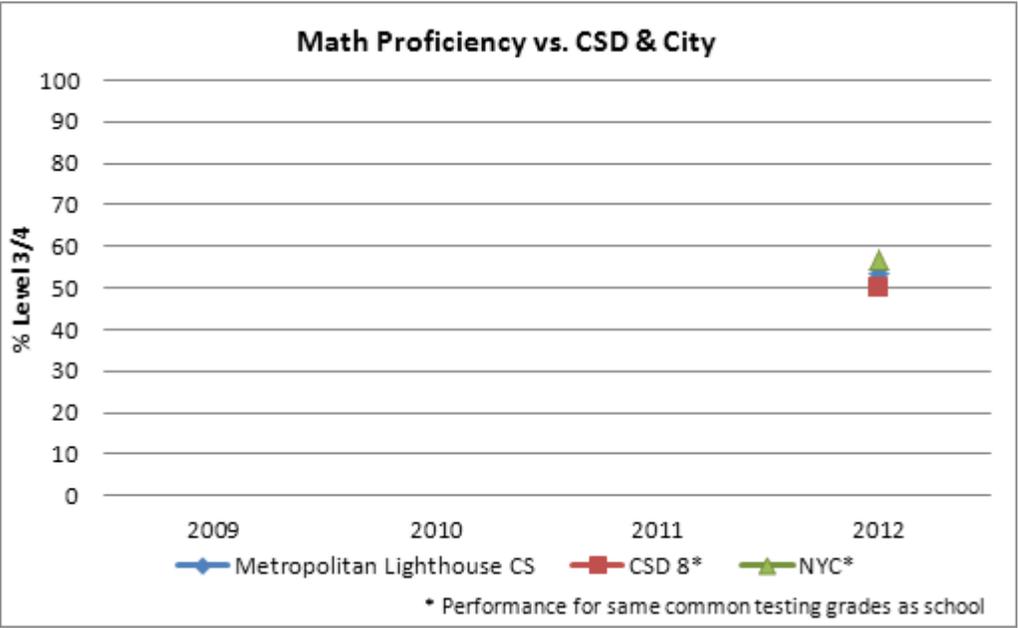
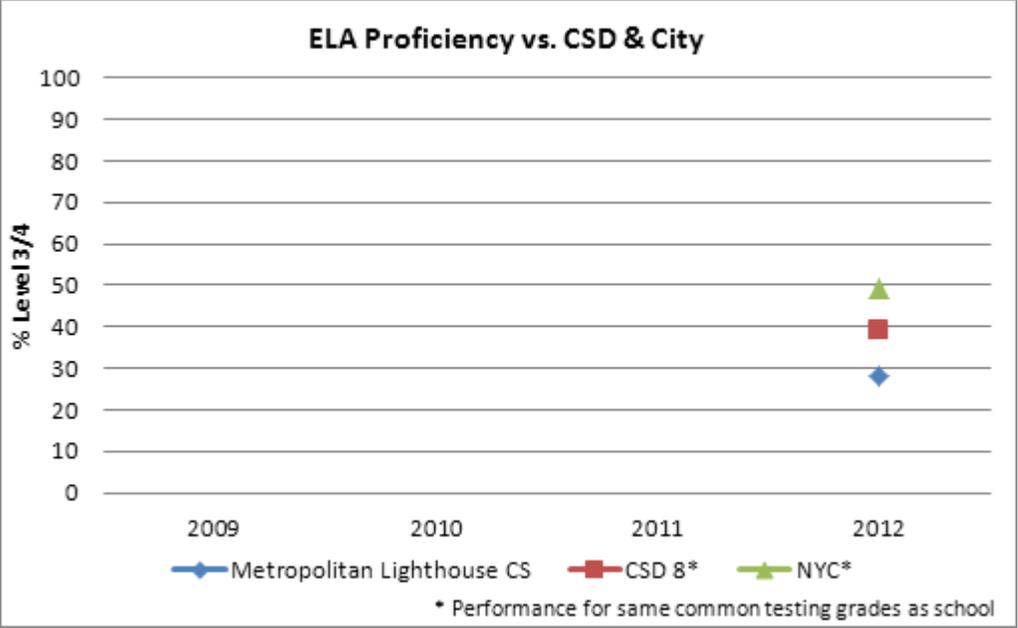
- School leadership created the role of grade team leaders who will be responsible for leading grade team meetings and analyzing grade-level data.
- School leaders reported that interim assessments showed progress in ELA and Math for Grades 3 and 4 over three administrations and based on New York State 2011-12 cut scores, with average proficiency in Math at approximately 65% and average proficiency in ELA at approximately 50% after third administration.
- School leaders and several testing grade teachers interviewed spoke in alignment regarding increased expectations around rigor in lesson planning.
- Ten classrooms were observed with the school's Principal, Director of Instruction, and SpEd Coordinator, and the following was noted:
  - In all observed classes but one, students were on-task and responsive to teacher directions and instruction.
  - A variety of instructional techniques were seen in the observed classrooms: lecture, partner or small group independent practice, modeling, and guided practice.
  - Most questioning observed was basic comprehension or fact recall, with only a couple of instances of higher level thinking or probing questions were observed.
  - Aims/Objectives and agenda were posted in some observed classrooms but not in others. Quality of stated Aim/Objective varied and in at least two instances the connection between the stated Aim/Objective and observed instruction was unclear.
  - Reviewers observed little evidence of instructional differentiation beyond station grouping during the school's Power Hour.
- The following was noted regarding special education and ELL program implementation:
  - Students in Academic Intervention Services (AIS) groups are provided instruction using a variety of strategies and tools, including the Wilson Reading System, and guided reading strategies. Students appeared to remain in their AIS groups throughout the year.
  - The school's special education program and services are provided by appropriately certified, licensed teachers and within the timelines required by students' IEPs. Parents are informed of students' progress toward IEP goals on a quarterly basis.
  - The school has 32 students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), 17 students with health-related 504 plans, and 35 ELL students. One student with disabilities was decertified this year. All of the school's annual IEP reviews are up to date and all initial IEPs are in compliance with applicable regulations. All teachers have copies of the students' IEPs.
  - Three of the school's students with disabilities have not yet received the physical therapy services mandated on their IEPs, although the school had provided parents information on related services providers.
  - The school reported that copies of the health-related 504 plans are held only by the building nurse and were not shared with teachers or reviewed on a yearly basis.
  - The school has a systematic structure to communicate with the CSE regarding all annual IEP reviews, three-year mandated reviews, initial evaluations, and reevaluations.
  - The school implements Manifestation Determination Hearings (MDRs) for students with 504 plans and IEPs.
  - An apparent lack of collaboration between Special Education teachers and classroom teachers was noted regarding specific accommodations for students with IEPs during lessons within the general education classroom.

**Metropolitan Lighthouse Charter School**

<b>Percent of Students Scoring at or above Level 3 - Whole School</b>				
<b><u>ELA</u></b>	<b><u>2009</u></b>	<b><u>2010</u></b>	<b><u>2011</u></b>	<b><u>2012</u></b>
Metropolitan Lighthouse Charter School				28.3
CSD 8*				39.2
<b><u>Math</u></b>	<b><u>2009</u></b>	<b><u>2010</u></b>	<b><u>2011</u></b>	<b><u>2012</u></b>
Metropolitan Lighthouse Charter School				53.3
CSD 8*				50.2

\*CSD data represents only common testing grades, for all years presented

<b>Percent of Students Scoring at or above Level 3 - By Grade</b>				
Grade 3				
<b><u>ELA</u></b>	<b><u>2009</u></b>	<b><u>2010</u></b>	<b><u>2011</u></b>	<b><u>2012</u></b>
Metropolitan Lighthouse Charter School				28.3
CSD 8*				39.2
<b><u>Math</u></b>	<b><u>2009</u></b>	<b><u>2010</u></b>	<b><u>2011</u></b>	<b><u>2012</u></b>
Metropolitan Lighthouse Charter School				53.3
CSD 8*				50.2



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

### **Governance Structure & Organizational Design**

To date, the school has a developed governance structure and organizational design.

- While several Board members resigned in 2012-13 due to personal reasons, new members were added to replace them as well as to improve capacity. There are ten current voting Board members, including a parent representative and the regional vice president of Lighthouse Academies, the school's CMO.
- The Board meets monthly, except in August according to its approved calendar, and met with a quorum from July 2012 through the time of the visit, as recorded in meeting minutes, with the exception of September 2012 and January 2013.
- The Board's agenda, minutes and meeting materials have been posted for inspection by the public.
- The officer positions outlined in the Board's bylaws are filled, as recorded in meeting minutes and in the Board roster.
- There are clear lines of accountability between Board, the school's CMO, school leadership and school staff 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 committees outlined in the Board's bylaws are active.

Based on interviews and document review during the June 4, 2013 visit to the school and June 6, 2013 Board visit, the following was noted:

- The school plans to make several organizational design changes below the level of Principal, (noted on page 6), to improve instructional focus and rigor, supervision and support for teachers, and student support services. There will be two Directors of Teacher Leadership, one of which replaces the Director of Instruction position, a Director of Scholar Services, a Coordinator of Family and Community Partnerships, and a School Operations Manager.

### **School Climate & Community Engagement**

To date, the school has partially developed a stable school culture.

- The school has had stable school leadership through its first three years of operation, with the founding Principal and Director of Instruction in their roles into the 2012-13 school year.
- According to the school's ACR Data Collection Form, the 2012-13 average daily student attendance rate as of February 2013 was 95%.
- Parent and Teacher participation on the NYC DOE School Survey was above citywide averages for both constituencies, 56% of MLCS parents compared to 53% citywide and 100% of MetLCS teachers compared to 82%. The satisfaction results for Communication were Average for MetLCS compared to other Early Childhood Schools in the city, Below Average for Academic Expectations and Engagement, and Well Below Average for Safety & Respect.

Progress Toward Attainment of Accountability Goals<sup>12</sup>

- The school's student retention rate in 2011-12 was 95.1%, as stated in its Annual Report to NYSED, representing a met charter organizational performance goal.
- The school's student attendance rate in 2011-12 as 96.6%, as stated in its Annual Report to NYSED, representing a met charter organizational performance goal. (See above for 2012-13 attendance to date.)

---

<sup>12</sup> Goal analysis is considered to be a neutral point and is not used as part of the evaluation.

- As stated in its Annual Report to NYSED, instructional staff turnover from 2011-12 to the start of the current school year was at 41% (7 of 17 instructional staff not returning to MetLCS),<sup>13</sup> representing an unmet charter organizational performance goal.

Based on document review and interviews during the visit to the school, the following was noted:

- School leadership reported that its Director of Instruction was leaving at the end of the school year but the new Directors of Teacher Leadership had been identified, both individuals currently working with the school, one as Director of School Culture and the other a consultant who has been working in support of teachers from the Teach For America program.
- School leadership reported that they expect similar rate of instructional staff turnover this year due to changes implemented during the school year.
  - In response to this, they also reported several changes to their recruitment process, including screening candidates earlier in the year and incorporating feedback and re-teaching into the demonstration lesson portion of selection.
  - Leadership also plans to provide more clarity regarding administrative roles and areas of responsibility, which several interviewed teachers stated was a challenge this year.
  - In addition, the school's proposed organizational changes are expected to improve support, clarity, and opportunities for leadership for teachers in 2013-14.
- Teachers interviewed on the day of the visit reported mixed views on the effectiveness of the school's Reflection Room, with some teachers voicing support while others stating that it was ineffective. However, all teachers interviewed stated that overall student behavior had improved over the course of the year.
- School leadership reported that it had implemented several culture-related initiatives this year, including: the addition of a Director of School Culture position to its leadership team; Scholar Dollars; use of a Reflection Room; monthly Town Hall meetings; and staff appreciation luncheons and awards ceremonies. There was no observed use of the school's Scholar Dollars program in the 10 classrooms observed on the day of the visit.
- School leadership reported a significant increase in parent participation, to 87%, on the 2012-13 NYC DOE School Survey.

---

<sup>13</sup> Reported on school's ACR Data Collection Form

## Financial Health

To date, the school is in a strong position to meet near-term financial obligations and is financially sustainable based on current practices.

- MetLCS received a clean financial audit with no material findings.
- The school is in a strong position to meet all of its liabilities in the next 12 months.
- The school is in a position to cover all its future expenses for the foreseeable future without an infusion of cash.
- The school is meeting its enrollment target, indicating stable revenue for budgeting.
- The school is meeting its debt obligations.
- The school is operating at a surplus of almost 30%, indicating an ability to create a strong reserve to support ongoing growth.
- The school has continuously maintained a good debt to asset ratio, which has steadily declined.
- The school has a strong cash flow that has trended upward.
- The school is in a strong position to meet its obligations.
- The school has a fully funded escrow account.

Based on interviews on the day of the school visit, the following was noted.

- The school will be moving into a temporary private facility in July 2013 on 500 Courtlandt Street in the Bronx. The location is a former parochial school that is under renovations that are expected and on schedule to be completed prior to the July 15 move-in date.

### **Essential Question 3: Compliance with Charter and All Applicable Laws and Regulations**

To date, the school is compliant with its charter and applicable laws and regulations.

- To date, the Board is in compliance with:
  - The Board's membership size falls within the range outlined in the school's charter and in the Board's bylaws.
  - The Board has held the number of board meetings outlined in its charter and required by state charter law.
  - All Board members have submitted conflict of interest and financial disclosure forms and do not demonstrate conflicts of interest.
  
- To date, the school is in compliance with:
  - The school has provided timely submissions of accountability reporting documents to the CSAS team.
  - The school has submitted required documentation for staff-fingerprint clearance, and all staff members have appropriate fingerprint clearance.
  - The school has submitted required documentation for teacher certification and is compliant with state requirements for teacher certification.
  - The school has the required number of staff with AED-CPR certification.
  - The school has submitted appropriate insurance documents.
  - The school's enrollment is currently at its authorized charter projection.
  - The school has submitted the required documentation for a non-material charter revision to expand the school's FY 14 enrollment.
  - The school submitted its required immunization documentation and is in compliance with Department of Health standards of 98.8% for immunization.

Based on interviews and document review during the visits to the school and Board, the following was noted:

- The school's Parent Association is currently re-forming after not having been formalized throughout the school year. A president has been elected, and meetings and activities are being scheduled for the 2013-14 school year.

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

As reported by school leadership, the following was noted:

- The school intends to move into a permanent private facility space for the 2014-15 school year.
- The school also intends to begin its expansion to middle school grades in 2014-15, the final year of its first charter, and complete the expansion to K-8 in its second charter term, should its application for renewal and continued expansion be approved.

## Part 4: Essential Questions and Accountability Framework

### 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 and Support (CSAS) team has developed an Accountability Framework build around four essential questions for charter school renewal:

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

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

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

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

- Meet absolute performance goals
- 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:

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

##### 1b. Mission and Academic Goals

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

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

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

- Mission statement, charter, external documents (parent and family handbooks, school website, etc.)
- Annual reports, school improvement plans, leadership board reports
- Board agendas and minutes
- Parent, student, and teacher satisfaction surveys
- 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**

Schools in substantial compliance with applicable regulations have:

- 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

Evidence for compliance with applicable regulations may include, but not be limited to, the following:

- School or building safety plan; appropriate inspection documents
- Annual audits, escrow accounts, other financial reporting documents
- Board roster, calendar, agenda and minutes, conflict of interest documents, notification of changes/approval of new member request documents
- Charter revision requests, revised or new contracts
- Parent association calendar of meetings, identified officers, parent association agenda and minutes, parent satisfaction survey results
- Interviews

## **4. What Are the School's Plans for its Next Charter Term?**

### **4a. School Expansion or Model Replication**

In anticipation of a new charter term schools may be considering various growth options: replication, expansion to new grades or increased enrollment or altering their model in some significant way.

Successful schools generally have processes for:

- Conducting needs/opportunity assessments
- Forming Board and leadership committees or subcommittees to investigate options, develop action plans, ensure capacity and resources are aligned, etc.
- Engaging school community in articulating charter revisions (or a new charter in cases of replication) to address the proposed growth plans
- Ensuring that the final proposal is ambitious but realistic in its plans
- Creating a well-reasoned and documented prospective for the school's new charter term and, if applicable, a new charter proposal (for replication)

Evidence for likely success in planning for school growth in a new charter term may include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Application Part I: Retroactive Analysis, including performance results and analyses of the current charter term
- Application Part II: Prospective Analysis, including mission, program description, governance, organization, budget, etc. for new term
- Leadership and Board interviews

#### **4b. Organizational Sustainability**

Successful schools consistently perform despite change. While there is no single path for ensuring sustainability, successful schools often have the following features:

- School anticipates organizational opportunities/needs and plans for resource development (human resource policies for growing your own talent, for example, or fundraising or budget management to take care of anticipated capital needs and to mitigate risks for the unexpected, or board development to bring new talent or specific needs-based expertise to the school)

Evidence for organizational sustainability may include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Board roster and resumes
- Board committees and minutes
- School organization chart
- Staff rosters
- Staff handbook
- Leadership and staff interviews
- Budget

#### **4c. School or Model Improvements**

Successful schools are thoughtful about the continued appropriateness of school design features and elements of their models. They:

- Review performance carefully and even if they don't make major changes through expansion or replication, they are careful to adjust elements to ensure continued and improved success.
- Develop plans to improve the school learning environment, including improving their facilities to expand program offerings and/or developing new partnerships to further the school's mission.

Evidence for successful improvements to a school's program or model may include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Application Part I: Retroactive Analysis, including performance results and analyses of the current charter term
- Application Part II: Prospective Analysis, including mission, program description, governance, organization, budget, etc. for new term
- Leadership and board interviews
- MOUs or contracts with partners