



Charter Schools Accountability and Support  
2012-2013

**WILLIAMSBURG CHARTER HIGH SCHOOL  
ANNUAL COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW REPORT**

**2012 – 2013 SCHOOL YEAR**

## Part 1: School Overview & History

### School Overview and History:

Williamsburg Charter High School (WCHS) is a high school serving approximately 946 students<sup>1</sup> in grades 9-12 during the 2012-13 school year. It opened in 2004-2005, and is under the terms of its third charter. The school's is fully phased in as of 2007-2008, and serves students in grades 9-12.<sup>2</sup> The school is located in private<sup>3</sup> facilities in Brooklyn within CSD 14.<sup>4</sup>

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

Progress Report Grade	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
Overall	C	D	C	B
Student Progress	D	F	C	B
Student Performance	D	D	B	B
School Environment		B	C	B
Closing the Achievement Gap Points			4.0	4.4

Williamsburg Charter High School enrolls new students in grades 9. There were 30 students on the waitlist after the Spring 2013 lottery.<sup>6</sup>

The average attendance rate for the 2012-13 school year to date is 90%.<sup>7</sup>

On the 2011-12 NYC DOE School Survey, the school scored Above Average on the Safety & Respect section, Slightly Below Average on the Communication section, Average on the Engagement section, and Average on the Academic Expectations section. Thirty-three percent of the school's parents, 98.0% of the school's teachers, and 89.0% of the school's eligible students responded to the survey.<sup>8</sup>

The current school principal, Marsha Spampinato has been at the school for 2 years. In the 2013-2014 school year, Assistant Principal Kathleen Gaffney will assume Marsha Spampinato's role as principal.

Williamsburg Charter High School has been on probationary status since September 16, 2011 for operational and fiscal concerns and will remain on probation until August 31, 2013. The NYC DOE may extend or shorten the probationary period based on WCHS's compliance or non-compliance with its charter, applicable laws and regulations, and the school's 2012 Remedial Action Plan.

<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 NYC 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 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**. If a school does not yet have a NYC DOE 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 New York State Education Department (NYSED),
- NYC DOE School Survey,
- Data collection sheets provided by schools,

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<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

- Student, staff, and Board turnover,
- 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 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 and/or visited the school on May 20, 2013:

- Sonya Hooks, DOE
- Andrea McLean, DOE
- Keisha Womack, DOE
- Lily Haskins, DOE
- Laurie Pendleton, Consultant

## Part 3: Findings

### Summary of Findings

Based on CSAS review, the school:

- has partially demonstrated academic achievement and progress (p. 5-8).
- has a developed governance structure and organizational design (p. 9).
- has a partially developed a stable school culture (p. 9).
- is in a weak position to meet near-term financial obligations and there are concerns about the school's ability to be financially sustainable based on current practices (p. 10-11).
- is in compliance with applicable laws and regulations (p. 12).
- has plans to expand course offerings and make improvement to their facility to better maximize use (p. 13).

This review included a desk audit, a self-evaluation completed by the school, and a visit. CSAS visited the school on May 20, 2013.

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

The school has partially demonstrated academic progress and academic achievement.

- The school scored a “B” on Student Progress on the 2011-2012 NYC DOE Progress Report, and a “B” on Student Performance.
- The school’s graduation rate (74.7%, 4 year and 82.8%, 6 year) is higher than the city averages (71.9, 4 year and 77.0%, 6 year).
- The school scored a “C” in the College and Career Readiness Index, which measures how well students are prepared for life after high school on the basis of passing advanced courses, meeting English and math standards, and enrolling in post-secondary institutions.
- The school received 4.4 point for Closing the Achievement Gap on its NYC DOE Progress Report.
- As reported in its 2011-12 NYC DOE Progress Report, WCHS students took Regent exams in English, Math, Science and Social Studies with the following test-taker results:
  - Integrated Algebra, 60% passing
  - Geometry, 52% passing
  - Algebra 2/Trigonometry, 46% passing
  - Comprehensive English, 84% passing
  - U.S. History, 64% passing
  - Global History, 56% passing
  - Living Environment, 79% passing
  - Earth Science, 72% passing
  - Chemistry, 63% passing
  - Physics, 31% passing.
- According to the 2011-12 NYC DOE Progress Report, for Comprehensive English, 47% of the students taking the exam scored at or above the CUNY-determined college ready threshold for the exam. For Integrated Algebra 5% of the students scored at or above the college-ready threshold. For Geometry 7% of the students scored at the college-ready threshold. For Algebra 2/Trigonometry 21% of the students scored at the college-ready threshold.
- According to the 2011-12 NYC DOE Progress Report, 76%% of students in their first year, 75% of students in their second year, and 76.5% of students in their third year earned 10+ credits.
- According to the 2011-12 NYC DOE Progress Report, WCHS has shown progress in its performance over time (see page 1). In 2010, the school scored in the 6th percentile, in 2011 the school increased to the 30<sup>th</sup> percentile; its current score places the school in the 55<sup>th</sup> percentile.

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

- WCHS is meeting six of its ten academic performance goals in its charter.

Representatives of the CSAS visited the school on May 20, 2013. Based on discussion, document review, and observation, the following was noted:

- On the day of the visit, the team observed 14 classrooms including core classes, ICT and specials classes.
- In most rooms observed, the typical methods of lesson delivery were lecture, lead and monitor, and team teaching.
  - For example, an observed teacher in an art class provided individual modeling and feedback for students.
  - A number of classrooms used technology to introduce or review information.
- In most rooms the questioning was most often basic recall. In a few classes there was evidence of questioning at a higher level that asked students to analyze and apply the information being studied.
  - For example, in one classroom, the students were grappling with the question of whether or not President Truman should drop the atomic bomb and were asked to use evidence from a reading to support their decision.

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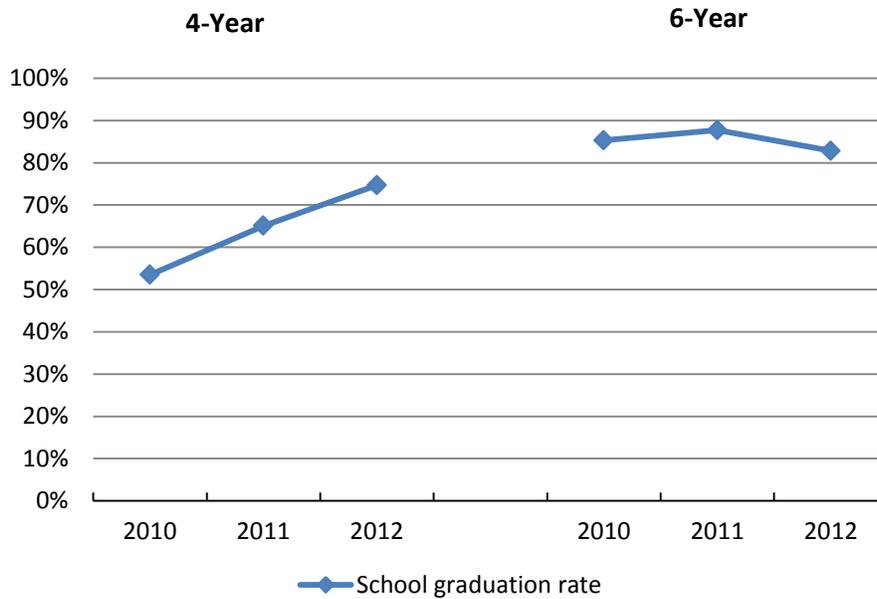
<sup>10</sup> Goal analysis is considered a neutral point and is not used as part of the evaluation.

- In most rooms teachers were observed using a variety of methods to check for student understanding including questioning, exit tickets, and monitoring class work.
- While the school has represented that differentiation is a focus of the curriculum, the team did not observe differentiation during the visit. In some observed classes teacher discussion and transitions took several minutes, leading to decreased time of student's active engagement in the tasks.
- The feedback given by school leaders indicated that initial evidence of learning was predicated on students appearing to be engaged (i.e. students did not have their heads on their desks).
- In most observed classrooms, students were compliant and well behaved.
- In most observed classrooms, there appeared to be a lack of authentic student engagement in many lessons.
  - Directions were often unclear and the work appeared to lack rigor. In one classroom, students were expected to identify quotes that supported a theme from a common reading text. Observations of the work the students produced indicated they were not able to complete this task on their own.
  - In another observed class, students were asked to prepare a skit regarding inhalants but were given very little guidance or support materials to make this into a rigorous learning activity. Students exhibited little enthusiasm around the task.

On the day of the visit, the team met with eight teachers.

- All teachers reported the use of data and assessments in lesson planning and for identifying areas in need of re-teaching and felt they have multiple data points available through the Blackbaud System.
- All teachers reported both formal and informal evaluations, observations, walk-throughs, and post-observation meetings with leadership. Although the leadership team mentioned the use of the Danielson Framework as a method for organizing observations, teachers interviewed did not reference it by name.
- Teachers overall reported that they feel as though they are highly supported in their job. Teachers reported that the weekly professional development meetings are meaningful and that the Leadership Team staff make themselves available at any opportunity to provide support or insight, wherever needed. Teachers are provided with meaningful feedback on their lesson plans.
- Teachers contend that staff culture and morale is very strong and reported that students and teachers alike love being in the school. However, they also reported that they are concerned with the high rate of staff turnover and its impact on building a common culture.
- Interviewed teaching staff were not aware of the charter's overall goals.
- The Leadership team reported that school is in the process of aligning the English Language Arts curriculum to the Common Core State Standards. On the day of the visit, the team observed one lesson in which students were looking for textual evidence in alignment with the Common Core.

### Graduation Rate, 2010-2012



2011-2012 High School Regents Performance Results			
Williamsburg Charter High School			
Regents Exams	Average Score	% Passing	% at college ready threshold
Mathematics			
Integrated Algebra	64	60%	5%
Geometry	63	52%	7%
Algebra 2/Trig	62	46%	21%
ELA			
English	72	84%	47%
Social Studies			
US History	66	64%	
Global History	64	56%	
Science			
Chemistry	64	63%	
Physics	56	31%	
Earth Science	69	72%	
Living Environment	71	79%	
Languages			
Languages Other Than English	.	.	

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

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

The board of trustees has developed governance structure.

- The Board has 7 voting board members, which is in accordance with the bylaws.
- The Board has experienced 50% turnover since the last school year. According to the school's Self-Evaluation, "In the last year, three voting Board members have either been removed or resigned and three board members have been seated. In addition, two non-voting members representing two key groups of the School community – teachers and parents – were seated."
- The Board votes and meets consistently and demonstrates quorum in its meetings, as recorded in the minutes, the board is on pace to meet 12 times.
- Reporting requirements are submitted to CSAS in a timely manner.
- The school has clear lines of accountability from Board to school leadership to school staff, as evidenced by the school leadership reports monthly to the Board on academic progress and the school's financial outlook.
- The Board has appropriate and timely access to legal counsel as evidenced by meeting minutes.
- The Board has established subcommittees designed to support the governance of the school as evidenced by meeting minutes.

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

The school has partially developed a stable school culture.

- Turnover at the school leadership level is below 25%, and the school has established a line of succession.
- As a result of the uncertainty around the school's charter, in 2011-2012, 58% of instructional staff from the prior year did not return.
- The school had 136 students (15%) who chose not to return from last year<sup>11</sup>.
- On the 2011-12 NYC DOE School Survey, the school scored Above Average on the Safety & Respect section, Slightly Below Average on the Communication section, Average on the Engagement section, and Average on the Academic Expectations section.
- Participation in the NYC DOE School Survey was lower than citywide averages for Parents (33% to 53%) but higher than citywide averages for Students (89% to 82%) and Teachers (98% to 82%).
- Staff response rates on the 2011-2012 NYC DOE School Survey increased from 51% in 2011 to 98% in 2012. Parent response rate on the 2012 survey was at 33%, showing a slight increase from the 30% in 2011.

Progress Toward Attainment of Academic Goals<sup>12</sup>:

- The school's attendance rate is 90%, which represents an achieved charter goal.

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<sup>11</sup> ACR Data Collection Form, 2/15/13

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

## Financial Health

Overall, the school is in a weak position to meet near-term financial obligations and there are concerns about the financial sustainability of the school based on current practices.

- The school is within 98% of its enrollment target.<sup>13</sup>
- A review of the audited financials from the 2011-2012 school year indicated the school was not meeting near-term financial obligations. Review of the Fiscal Year (FY) 2011 and FY12 audited financials showed the school's current ratio (which measures whether or not an organization has enough resources to pay its debt) dropped from 0.25 to 0.12, which is considered below standard.
- The school, at the end of FY12, had \$162,386 of unrestricted cash - less than a week's worth of unrestricted cash. The school, at the end of FY13, had \$1.7 million of unrestricted cash.
- The Board of Trustees acknowledges the school's financial issues and has initiated steps in an attempt to address the school's financial issues. The school remains on probation due to financial concerns.
- During the 2012-2013 school year, all of Williamsburg Charter High School's debt obligations have been restructured except for the federal grant upon which the school remained in discussions with the New York State Department of Education.
  - Non-profit Finance Fund – The school is currently making payments of \$34,264.40 per month. According to the board, payments have been made on time. The current agreement extends beyond the school's current charter but the agreement can still be renegotiated.
  - ISS (Security and Custodial Vendor) - The debt was originally \$556,226. The Board settled with the company for approximately \$155,000. The settlement was executed on March 26, 2013 and has been finalized through the courts.
  - Work Well Partners (Student and administration furniture) – This debt has been paid in full.
  - Varet Street Corporation (Landlord) – The Board states that the school is current with the rent and in the process of paying back the \$1.5M security deposit. As of May 20<sup>th</sup>, the school still owes \$1.1M, which will be paid over the course of the next three years with annual payments of approximately \$375K. This repayment extends beyond the school's current charter.
  - Federal Grant – The Board is awaiting a decision as to the amount, if any, that will need to be repaid. The Board will factor in the \$807,854, which may possibly be owed, in their FY14 budget. On August 13, 2013, the School received a letter dated July 31, 2013 from the Office of Audit Services of the New York State Education Department requesting \$416,765.
- For Fiscal Year 2014, the Board reports that the budget will be based on a more attainable enrollment and authorizer approved number. The board used current FY13 enrollment trends to arrive at their target enrollment number.
- The board has begun to restructure staff salaries. For FY13, five school leaders, with salaries over \$100K per year, took 10% pay cuts. For the upcoming school year, all staff salaries will be re-evaluated to ensure wage fairness.
- The Board now has co-treasurers which, according to the board, allows for more financial oversight for the school, including consistent re-evaluation of the school's fiscal policies.
- In the FY12 audited financial report, the auditors did not identify any deficiencies in internal control over financial reporting that were considered to be material weakness. However, the auditors identified certain deficiencies in internal control over financial reporting that were considered to be a significant. A significant deficiency is defined as a deficiency, or a combination of deficiencies, in internal control that is less severe than a material weakness, yet important

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<sup>13</sup> ACR Data Collection Form, 2/15/13

enough to merit attention by those charged with governance. The significant deficiency is noted as follows:

- Revenue Recognition Related to Government Grants and Contracts: The auditor stated that ineffective monitoring of grants and contracts resulted in misstatement of revenue on interim financial statements. In the audited financials, the auditor recommended the school review, on a monthly basis, expenses allocated to specific grants along with corresponding revenue, grants receivable, and refundable advances accounts for accuracy.
  - The school responded to the auditor's findings by stating that accounting and financial functions were managed by the Believe Network during most of the 2012 fiscal year. Management stated that the Believe Network did not perform the proper accounting for recognizing revenue for state and local funding on an accrual basis but instead recognized the revenue on a cash basis. According to the School, Believe Network was relieved of their accounting responsibilities and duties on February 1, 2012. In May of 2012, a Financial Officer was hired to manage the financial and accounting function for the school. School management also stated that although the cash basis of accounting was used throughout most of the fiscal year, the actual results and reporting of revenue as of June 30, 2012 is reflective of accrual basis accounting.
- During the 2011-2012 audit, the auditors noted that the school did not prepare certain schedules and general ledger account analysis on a timely basis during the fiscal year ended June 30, 2012. Schedules not being prepared to start of field work delayed the completion of the audit. The auditors stated that certain areas that needed improvement as evidenced by the following:
  - Opening balance in net assets did not tie into the prior year audit.
  - One bank account was not reconciled to the general ledger.
  - Balances tied to affiliates were not reconciled.
  - Fixed assets schedule was not reconciled to the general ledger.
- The Board of Trustees represents that during the 2012-2013 fiscal year, all of these items have been corrected.
- The school management responded to these concerns in the audit by stating that the Believe Network was relieved of its duties and responsibilities over the accounting and financial reporting during the 2011-2012 fiscal year. A Financial Officer was hired to manage the financial and accounting function for the school with the financial assistance of a non-profit organization that provides financial assistance to charter schools. According to the management statement, as of June 30, 2012, all of the accounts have been analyzed and reconciled. The accounts are reconciled and analyzed, on a monthly basis, by the Financial Officer.

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

To date, the school is in compliance with applicable laws and regulations.

The Board is compliance with:

- Board membership size falls within the range outlined in the school's charter and in the Board's bylaws.
- The Board has held the required number of board meetings.
- Board minutes and agenda items have been posted for inspection by the public.
- Board/school has provided timely submission of accountability reporting documents.
- All Board members have submitted conflict of interest and financial disclosure forms and do not demonstrate conflicts of interest.
- The Board has appropriate liability insurance for officers.

To date, the school is in compliance with the below:

- The school has submitted required documentation for staff-fingerprint clearance and all staff members have appropriate fingerprint clearance.
- The school submitted required documentation and proof of teacher certification.
- The school has submitted appropriate insurance documents.
- The school has submitted a school safety plan which has been shared with the entire school community.
- The school is in compliance with NYS Section 917 law in regards to AED/ CPR certification.
- The school's immunization rate is above the 98.8% threshold established by the NYC Department of Health.

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

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

### Expanded Course Offerings

- WCHS is in the process of introducing a ten course sequence in the arts in order to provide students with the opportunity to earn an Arts-Endorsed Regents diploma. Planned courses will include studio art, dance, instrumental music, theatre and others.
- WCHS will add the offerings of AP World History and AP U.S. History in the 2013-2013 school year.
- Based on student interest in current electives such as Criminal Justice, Holocaust Studies, Global Literature, and Audio/Video production, WCHS seeks to expand its offering of elective courses in order to diversify students' skill sets and broaden their perspectives.
- WCHS seeks to introduce another foreign language in addition to Latin in order to provide varied language options to students. Additionally, certified Latin teachers have been difficult to staff historically.

### Facilities

- Library Media Center: Over the coming months, WCHS looks to revive a sense of community that was part of the initial mission of the School. To this end, it is considering a creation of Library Media Center which students, parents, teachers and post-graduates could use as a resource center. In addition to being used a resource for teachers for enhancing curriculum by boosting exposure to literacy and teaching research skills, WCHS is considering using the Library Media Center to host the Alumni Tracking and Resource Center, which would be used to track and provide continued support to the School's ever-increasing alumni population. While WCHS recognizes that it is now required to collect and maintain data on graduates, the task poses certain challenges requiring WCHS to create a system and put a procedure in place to accurately and systematically collect the relevant information.
- Classroom: The initial design of WCHS contemplated flexible classrooms, which are currently sectioned off using movable partitions. The School is evaluating the safety aspects and educational usefulness of these partitions and is developing a plan that will fully enclose the classrooms in order to decrease distractions and support increased levels of student achieve.

## Part 3: Essential Questions and Accountability Framework

### The CSO Accountability Framework

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

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

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

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

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

- Meet absolute performance goals
- 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 CSO's requirements for reporting changes in board membership and securing approval for new board members.
- Informed NYCDOE CSO, and where required, received CSO 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