



Charter School Renewal Report
Charter Schools Accountability and Support
2011-2012

**NEW YORK CENTER FOR AUTISM CHARTER SCHOOL
ANNUAL SITE VISIT REPORT**

JUNE 2012

Part 1: Executive Summary

School Overview and History:

The New York Center for Autism Charter School (NYCACS) serves 32 students ages 5 to 19 who lie at various points on the autism spectrum or who have other pervasive developmental disorders.¹ The school is in the second year of its first renewal term and, if approved for renewal, plans to expand its ages served to 21 during its next charter term.² It has not stated any plans for replication during its current or next charter term. NYCACS is currently co-located in an NYC DOE building in District 4. The school's student body includes 26.5% students eligible for Free or Reduced Price Lunch, 2.9% English Language Learners, and 100% special education students.³

The school has experienced 0% turnover over the course of the school year as of May 29, 2012.⁴ There are currently 65 students on its waitlist.⁵ The average attendance rate for school year 2011-12 was 96.5%.⁶

Due to its specialized focus, NYCACS uses alternate assessments to gauge the performance and progress of all students and consequently does not receive an NYC DOE Progress Report.

NYCACS received satisfaction scores on 2010-11 DOE School Survey well above average in all four categories of evaluation, Academic Expectations, Communication, Engagement, and Safety & Respect. Participation by parents was 96%, well above city-wide averages, and by teachers was 100%.

NYCACS is an independent charter school not associated with a charter management organization (CMO) or other parent organization.

Annual Review Process Overview:

The New York City Department of Education (NYC DOE) office of Charter Schools Accountability and Support (CSAS) conducts an annual site visit of charter schools authorized by the NYC DOE. The site visit is designed to address 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, we also ask about the school's plans for its next charter term. The visits are conducted by representatives of CSAS and last the duration of one school day. The annual site visit begins with a meeting with the school leadership team. Afterward, the reviewers visit classrooms and hold brief meetings with available administrators and teachers. Areas of evaluation include, but are not limited to: academic goals and mission; curriculum and instruction; school culture and learning environment; assessment utilization; parent engagement; government structures and organizational design; community support; special populations; and safety and security. The site visit is intended to provide a snapshot of the school and reflects what was observed at the time of the visit.

The following experts participated in the review of this school on June 12, 2012:

- Gabrielle Mosquera, Director of Oversight, NYC DOE CSAS
- Simeon Stolzberg, Consultant to NYC DOE CSAS
- Lynette Aqueron, Senior School Improvement Specialist, NYC DOE Division of Students with Disabilities and English Language Learners

¹ Self-reported on school's Annual Site Visit Data Collection Form (5/29/12)

² Self-reported on school's Annual Site Visit Self-Evaluation Form (May 2012)

³ NYC DOE ATS system, April 2012

⁴ Self-reported on school's Annual Site Visit Data Collection Form (5/29/12)

⁵ Self-reported on school's Annual Site Visit Data Collection Form (5/29/12)

⁶ Self-reported on school's Annual Site Visit Data Collection Form (5/29/12)

Part 2: Findings

Areas of Strength:

- The school has a coherent program designed to meet the needs of its unique student population.
 - The school program is based on Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA); staff members certified in ABA play an integral role in implementation of the program.
 - The staffing structure, which includes managers, head teachers, lead instructors, and instructors in the classroom, provides consistent support for students. Managers in observed classes consistently and immediately interacted with head teachers and instructors to address student behavior issues and provide support.
 - Staffer-student matching is based on individual skill sets (e.g., strength in sophisticated language acquisition or behavior modification), and are subject to change throughout the year depending on—among other factors—evaluation of staffer performance and the student's family needs (e.g., availability for home visits, ability to speak the family's native language). Similarly, student placement within cohorts is based the compatibility of student needs and abilities.
 - Staffers work with students one-on-one, in pairs and in small groups. Students receive individualized curriculum and instruction using a variety of tools (such as schedules and pictures) to ensure that the flow of activities is predictable and understandable.
 - Each student has a program book that establishes 15 to 30 skill acquisition programs with individual criteria for performance; these student program book guides instructional planning.
 - Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) are readily available and followed; behavior intervention plans (BIPs) are regularly updated and revised. A spot-check of these documents found that IEPs that not fully logged into the NYC DOE's Special Education Student Information System (SEGIS) were available on site in paper form.
 - Observed lessons were purposeful and engaging. Teachers effectively redirected student attention to specific tasks using positive tone and incentives.
 - The school provides a range of enrichment activities, including piano, therapy dogs, baseball, art, chess, swimming, theater (piloting at the time of the visit) and basketball (planned to pilot during the summer after the visit).
- The school has established a supportive and open professional environment that provides ample supervision to its staff and helps develops their skills.
 - The school has an experienced and specialized leadership team, including an Executive Director, Director of Education, Director of Transition and Community Outreach, and Quality Assurance Manager.
 - The Manager-Teacher-Instructor model provides ample opportunities for coaching and support within the classroom and during clinic meetings. Teachers and instructors reported frequent observation and feedback, including the analysis of videotape of their instruction. At the time of the visit the school intended to submit a charter revision that would eliminate Managers' instructional responsibilities so they may focus full-time on supervision and support.
 - The professional development program focuses on school-wide priorities as well as individual teacher's needs. New teachers receive one week of pre-service didactic training in the summer, three formal evaluations, and ongoing in-person support during the first year. More seasoned teachers can request to participate in off-site workshops and conferences to hone their skills. Teachers also receive tuition reimbursement and approximately two-thirds of teachers are using this to pursue relevant certification and/or advanced degrees.
 - Staffers interviewed consistently described the school as a learning environment for adults and cited this as the explanation for high staff retention. Several stated that this was their first job after college and has supported their development. Many others

- praised the availability of PD opportunities both in and outside of the school, as well as the value of being able to observe other classes.
- Lead instructors and instructors receive weekly informal evaluations from head teachers, and two formal evaluations each year from head teachers and/or the Executive Director. The formal evaluations use an explicit template with clear expectations for performance. The evaluation focuses on a variety of topics, including relationship building, behavior intervention procedures, teaching skills, home and community consultation and professionalism. Review of a sample evaluation indicated relevant, detailed and specific feedback and recommendations to teachers. The school continues to refine its evaluation process to ensure objectivity and intends to develop rubrics to specify levels of performance. School leadership reported that this has become increasingly important as more staffers seek promotions.
 - Staffers receive the opportunity to evaluate the Executive Director, and these ratings comprise part of her evaluation by the school's Board.
- The school uses a variety of assessment tools to monitor student performance and growth.
 - Two standardized assessments, the Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales and the Verbal Milestones Assessment and Placement Program (VB-MAPP), are administered as pre and post assessments; at the time of the visit post-tests were being administered to gauge growth. The school also utilizes New York State Alternate Assessments in core subject areas for all eligible students. While at the time of the visit data for 3 students' data was not yet available from NYSED, all of the 19 students for whom data was available had scored at Level 4 in ELA, Math, and Science.
 - The school continually monitors students' performance against their IEP goals. At the time of the visit (approximately halfway during the school year), school leaders estimated that more than half of its students were close to mastering the target percentage (85%) of IEP objectives; 28% of students had already reached this target; and 25% of students were 3 objectives away from reaching this target.
 - Teachers also track achievement of each student's skill objectives 3 to 5 times per week, manually collecting the data and graphing results. Instructors carry data sheets with them throughout the school day as a reference.
 - Student books are reviewed regularly to evaluate overall progress.
 - The school brings in a Human Rights Committee (HRC) to review BIPs twice per year to determine if they are ethical and involve parents. The HRC team is comprised of an attorney, a doctor, a member of the media, and the parent of an autistic student who does not attend the school. School leadership stated that as of mid-year the committee had reviewed 10 BIPs and recommended their continuation with only minor revisions, all of which had been carried out by the staff by the time of the visit.
 - The school has robust resources to support implementation of its program.
 - A variety of visual, tangible, and aural manipulatives were evident in observed classrooms.
 - Students use iTouch and iPad technology to communicate, learn skills, and regulate behaviors. Electronic hip motivators and point counters are used to maintain student engagement.
 - The school uses its space to effectively meet the needs of students; for example, break-out and quiet rooms have been constructed, and student bathrooms have been renovated to better enable the acquisition of self-care skills.
 - The school has developed effective partnerships with several outside organizations with the aims of helping students acquire skills as well as extending the school's educational practices.
 - The school works with other local schools to provide inclusion opportunities for some of its students; at the time of the visit, three students were attending gym classes at DREAM Charter School, and one was attending ELA classes there as well. A peer mentoring program has been created with its co-located school (PS 50).

- A portion of the school's enrichment activities are provided by outside partners, including the Good Dog Foundation (therapy dogs), Rosie's Theater Kids (theater program), and the Carter Burden Center for the Aging (art).
- A number of students have been placed in voluntary jobs at partner organizations to help them develop job and social skills. Examples include preparing meals at the Carter Burden Center for the Aging and at All Souls Church, work at White Castle, filing work at Children's Aid Society, and cleaning and clerical tasks at the Harlem RBI organization.
- The school has a manual for its community partners that establishes protocols and ground rules for including students in their programs. The school also provides training to partners to explain student goals, and its Director of Transition and Community Outreach visits job sites once a month to ensure that protocols are being applied and to make any necessary revisions.
- The school has opened its summer professional development sessions to other schools, and at the time of the visit had conducted five open houses/professional observation sessions. Additionally, the school has hosted visits from schools out of state and this year utilized interns at high school, undergraduate, and doctoral level in its classrooms.
- The school provides multiple opportunities for parents to participate in their child's education and development.
 - The school invites parents to its monthly clinics to help evaluate each child's performance and growth, and solicits their input regarding skill foci and enrichment activities. One clinic each year is devoted to long-term planning, which intensifies once a student turns 12.
 - Staff members conduct home visits and provide parents with 10 hours of consulting each year. Parents are also invited to some staff development trainings and are welcome to observe their child's classroom as well as visit their child during their volunteer opportunities.
 - The school hosts school-wide events such as concerts and breakfasts to involve parents.
 - The school's parent participation on the NYC DOE Learning Environment Survey was 96%, and the vast majority of parents ranked the school highly in all survey areas.
- The school has demonstrated stability across its Board, as well as its leadership and instructional staffs.
 - The school has achieved a stable faculty with limited turnover: 96% instructor retention from the previous year, and 100% teacher and manager retention.⁷
 - Similarly, the school has retained all members of its leadership team since the fourth year of its initial charter period and retained all of its Trustees from the previous year.⁸
 - While the school anticipates that three Instructors will leave the school this fall due to personal reasons, overall staff retention is expected to stay limited to this. Staff retention during school year 2011-12 was similarly limited to two instructional staffers.

Areas of Growth:

- The school should continue to develop transition plans for students who age out of its program or move to less restrictive environments.
 - School leaders acknowledge that their programs for older students are less developed than those for younger ones; they are working on adjustments and enhancements to meet these students' needs and plan to revise their charter so the school can work with students up to age 21 (from the current 19 in the school's charter). Additionally, the school's Board has made this an area of focus for its summer retreat.
 - The school continues to seek out and develop partnership opportunities for older students to gain real-world experience and same-age interactions. Some teachers

⁷ Self-reported on school's Annual Site Visit Self-Evaluation Form (May 2012)

⁸ Self-reported on school's Annual Site Visit Self-Evaluation Form (May 2012)

interviewed noted the need for clearer guidelines, protocols and assessments for older students participating in community-based programs. The school's Director of Transition and Community Outreach similarly acknowledged that more formal processes were needed to both evaluate the physical appropriateness of community-based opportunity sites (e.g., bathroom, sound, and lighting considerations), as well as to solicit feedback from community partners regarding what they need from the school.

- The school should continue exploring organizational adjustments that meet the needs of both students and staff.
 - The school is currently considering adding a paraprofessional role to its staffing model in order to provide an extra layer of physical support for behavioral incidents involving older students as they arise. It is also exploring options for exposing adolescent students to age-appropriate peers as well as providing alternative teaching arrangements (such as off-site satellite classes).
 - As outlined above, the school's staff retention rate in recent years been fairly high and teachers interviewed expressed enthusiasm for the school and plans to stay there. However, the school's size and current staffing model affords only limited room for upward mobility (for example, seven staffers applied for only three Lead Instructor openings this past year) and could contribute to future staff attrition. The school's Board recently approved an enhanced performance-based bonus allocation and is considering similar incentives.

- The school should continue to develop and streamline systems to manage the collection, analysis and reporting of student performance data.
 - Teachers currently collect an immense amount of data in binders and graph results by hand. The school has not yet found a technology solution that is adapts well to the fluidity of students' goals and goal progress; a technology committee has been established to explore solutions.
 - However, the school should be mindful of teacher needs when evaluating solutions, as several teachers interviewed expressed a preference for handwritten notation tools, citing their tangibility as an effective quality. As one Instructor stated, "you can really feel a drop or plateau," when noting progress in a handwritten data book.
 - Some teachers interviewed raised concerns about the appropriateness of existing assessment instruments and tools for older and non-verbal students.
 - At the time of the visit, the school had recently been given access to SESIS and was not yet familiar with the full range of areas it could access within the program. The school should continue, with the help of its CSE representative and the NYC DOE CSAS, to explore the program and leverage its capacity to streamline IEP record-keeping.

- **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) 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