



Charter School Renewal Report  
Charter Schools Office  
2011-2012

# **BRONX GLOBAL LEARNING INSTITUTE FOR GIRLS CHARTER SCHOOL ANNUAL SITE VISIT REPORT**

**MARCH 2012**

## Part 1: Executive Summary

### **School Overview and History:**

The Bronx Global Learning Institute for Girls (BGLIG) Charter School is an elementary school serving approximately 246 students from kindergarten through fourth grade in the 2011-2012 school year.<sup>1</sup> The school opened in 2008 with grades K-1. The school is under the terms of its first charter and is projected to expand to its full grade span, K-5, during its current term, which expires February 11, 2013.<sup>2</sup> The school is currently housed in a Department of Education (DOE) facility in District 7, and is co-located with P.S. 156.<sup>3</sup>

The school typically enrolls new students in grades K-1, but in the 2011-2012 school year, a student was enrolled from the school's waitlist in fourth grade. There were 187 students on the waitlist after the Spring 2011 lottery.<sup>4</sup> The student body includes 84.9% Free and Reduced Lunch students, compared to 86.8% in the district; 6.1% special education students, compared to 19.8% in the district; and 9.4% English language learners (ELL), compared to 18.1% in the district.<sup>5</sup> The average attendance rate for the school year 2011-2012 to date was 95%.<sup>6</sup> The school scored Average on the Academic Expectations, Communication, Engagement, and Safety & Respect sections of the NYC DOE School Survey in 2010-2011; 75% of the school's parents responded to the survey, and 86% of the school's teachers.<sup>7</sup>

The school earned a C on its NYC DOE Progress Report in 2010-2011, its first year of receiving a Progress Report grade.<sup>8</sup> The school outperformed its Community School District in ELA and Math, and the school outperformed the city average in Math in the 2010-2011 school year.<sup>9</sup> The school is in good standing with state and federal accountability.<sup>10</sup>

Bronx Global Learning Institute for Girls Charter School is partnered with Victory Education Partners, an education management organization (EMO). The EMO provides academic support and evaluation, back office support, curriculum assessment and student assessment data gathering, among other financial supportive services. Working with and through the network, BGLIG manages student information via the DOE's Automate the Schools (ATS) and invoices through DOE. The annual budget is created by the Board of Trustees of the school. BGLIG is solely responsible for complying with all requirements of grants for the School, the School's governing charter, and all applicable laws.

### **Annual Review Process Overview:**

The New York City Department of Education (NYC DOE) Charter Schools Office (CSO) 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 the CSO 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

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<sup>1</sup> Self-reported by school on Annual Site Visit Data Collection Form dated 2/27/2012

<sup>2</sup> NYC DOE ATS system and charter agreement

<sup>3</sup> NYC DOE Location Code Generating System database

<sup>4</sup> Self-reported by school on Annual Site Visit Data Collection Form dated 2/27/2012

<sup>5</sup> NYC DOE ATS system as of 4/3/2012

<sup>6</sup> Self-reported by school on Annual Site Visit Data Collection Form dated 2/27/2012

<sup>7</sup> NYC DOE School Survey – <http://schools.nyc.gov/survey>

<sup>8</sup> NYC DOE Progress Report – <http://schools.nyc.gov/progressreport>

<sup>9</sup> NYC DOE website – <http://schools.nyc.gov/> (search: test results); District and city averages are for the grade levels corresponding to the school's testing grades in specified years

<sup>10</sup> New York State Education Department - [www.nysed.gov](http://www.nysed.gov)

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 March 1, 2012:

- Daree Lewis, Director of Oversight, NYC DOE CSO
- Laurie Price, Director of Oversight, NYC DOE CSO
- Laurie Pendleton, Consultant

## Part 2: Findings

### Areas of Strength:

- The school environment is safe, nurturing, and supportive and communicates high expectations for both behavior and academics.
  - On the day of the visit, the school presented Perfect Attendance Awards during a school-wide assembly. Also during the assembly, the students participated in rituals such as saying the school pledge, singing the National Anthem, and identifying colleges they plan to attend.
  - There is a display of “Good Attitude” awards outside the school counselor’s office. The school has a “Student of the Week” program celebrating those students who exemplify the attributes of a BGLIG girl. An honor roll program celebrates academic excellence.
  - There is evidence of a school-wide discipline policy that is implemented consistently by all teachers. On the day of the visit, students were seen following routines and procedures with little guidance from teachers, and teachers rarely had to redirect student behavior. A teacher stated there are no real discipline issues because everyone has high expectations for the students, and behavior is consistent across all grade levels and subject areas.
  - On the day of the visit, students were involved in violin, ballet, and cello lessons. They were very proud to share their talents with the visitors.
  - Student work is posted throughout the building and there are multiple pictures of girls participating in school activities as well as recognition for both behavioral and academic success.
  - On the day of the visit, Kindergarten students were engaged in rigorous, project-based activities that reflected the backgrounds and interests of the students. In the Spanish Kindergarten classroom, students were using the SMART board to create bar charts based on students' favorite colors. In another Kindergarten classroom, students were using magazine cut-outs to create charts comparing living and nonliving things. When asked, the majority of students could explain how they determined if an item was living or nonliving. The students enthusiastically and articulately shared their thoughts and opinions with the visitors.
- The school curriculum has been adapted to meet the needs of the learners.
  - The school has increased the number of English Language Arts blocks by including a period during the Spanish instructional day. This change has resulted in students receiving an additional two to three hours of ELA instruction per week.
  - The school has focused on vocabulary development by using cognates to reinforce language acquisition. On the day of the visit, students were engaged in vocabulary instruction in a number of classrooms. The school has continued the Million Dollar Word vocabulary activity to celebrate vocabulary development. On the day of the visit, a number of students shared their Million Dollar words, and the print environment reflects this program.
- The school has organized itself to provide meaningful support to students who are most in need.
  - On the day of the visit, intervention teachers were observed working both in pull-out and push-in situations, providing parallel support to students.
  - There are four and half academic intervention teachers who work closely with the teachers to provide support to students who are shown to be below benchmark on DIBELS and other classroom-based assessments. The school also provides early intervention in reading through two Reading Recovery Teachers. Grades three and four receive support from both Special Education and Title 1 teachers in Reading and Math.
  - Teachers reported that they use data from classroom assessments to create flexible groups for students and then work closely with staff developers from Victory schools to design interventions.

- The school reports the use of a Saturday Academy to support Title 1 students.
- Teachers and leadership agreed on their focus on retaining students with special needs and are proud of their success with mainstreaming students. The teachers stated they felt the school maintained careful monitoring of these students and encouraged frequent communication with parents.
- The school maintains two teachers in each classroom to provide more opportunities for small group instruction.
- The school staff uses data received from a wide range of assessments to inform instructional grouping.
  - The teachers stated they use the DIBELS interim assessments to group students for instruction. A third grade teacher clearly described the process of using data provided by Victory Education Partners to build lessons and meet individual needs. Teachers shared their data binders with the visitation team.
  - Grade level teams meet weekly to discuss their data and plan lessons with input from the Staff Developers from Victory. Teachers stated they find this practice very helpful.
- The school maintains meaningful involvement of parents.
  - Teachers and leadership both reported strong relationships with parents, and the Parent Teacher Organization is very active in support of the school.
  - Report cards for grades three and four have been refined to provide more meaningful information for parents.
- The school has made efforts to increase the participation of both special education and ELL students in the school.
  - The school has implemented an ELL preference for the lottery. The school leadership also indicated they have put ads in papers, gone to community fairs, and provided information to Head Start programs. The school also reports a strong relationship with parents and the community that provides positive word of mouth.

#### **Areas of Growth:**

- The school should continue to improve the instructional program by bringing clarity to the dual language program, providing timely professional development, focusing on standards-based instruction, and developing more thoughtful use of data.
  - Teachers reported they feel the current Spanish language curricular materials were designed for native speakers, not for language acquisition, and need to be supplemented. The school is encouraged to evaluate current curricular programs and resources to ensure that student learning needs are addressed.
  - On the day of the visit, all teachers interviewed also shared a desire to receive more professional development in dual language instruction. Spanish teachers in particular shared a desire to receive professional development and support in Spanish language acquisition.
  - Teachers shared they felt the Scott Foresman reading materials are not rigorous enough. Based on teacher feedback, the reading and writing curriculum may not be well articulated and may need to be reviewed. The school may also consider the need to vertically align all curricular areas.
  - Although the school has begun to consider the Common Core State Standards, the teachers felt they could benefit from more focused professional development on the use of standards in planning instruction and assessing students.
  - Although the teachers used data from interim assessments to create instructional groupings, it was unclear they understood how to analyze data from common assessments to inform instruction and to meet individual needs. Teachers shared their data binders but did not describe a process for using this information to inform instructional needs. The school should continue to focus on providing training and

resources for teachers in data analysis so that all teachers are able to use available data to provide intentional instruction and advance student learning.

- The school should continue to build their Peer Observation program to provide additional opportunities to provide real-time feedback to teachers.
  - The principal currently reviews and comments on lesson plans and observes and provides feedback at least twice a year to teachers with a goal of providing feedback four times each year. Teachers also receive feedback from the reading and math coaches from Victory and maintain a portfolio. As the school grows, it may be necessary to increase the capacity of other school leaders to provide timely feedback to teachers. One teacher shared that he is working to develop a peer observation system for the school. Other teachers indicated they would welcome this opportunity to receive more feedback on their teaching.
- The school leadership should continue to find ways to distribute leadership throughout the teaching staff.
  - The principal reported being responsible for the weekly task of reviewing and commenting on lessons plans for all teachers. As the staff grows, this may not be able to be maintained. The principal is also currently responsible for doing all observations. Again, with the expected growth this model may not be able to be maintained. The principal shared the possibility of adding an Assistant Principal position next year. The school leadership is encouraged to determine the distribution of roles and collaboration of building leadership so that these and other leadership tasks are distributed. The principal is encouraged to continue to use the ELF program to build the leadership capacity of teachers.

## 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