



Charter School Annual Site Visit Report
Charter School Office
2009-2010

HEBREW LANGUAGE ACADEMY
CHARTER SCHOOL
ANNUAL SITE VISIT REPORT

FEBRUARY 2010

Part 1: Executive Summary

School Overview and History:

Hebrew Language Charter School is an elementary school serving approximately 154 students from kindergarten through grade one in the 2009-2010 school year.¹ The school opened in 2009 with grades kindergarten through one. It has plans to grow to serve students grades Kindergarten through five.² It is currently housed in a privately leased site at 3340 Kings Highway, Brooklyn in Community School District 22.³

The school population in the 2009-2010 school year comprises 35.7% Black, 5.2% Hispanic, 57.1% White, and 0.0% Asian students. 67% of students are designated at Title I.⁴ The student body includes 5.8% English language learners and 22.2% special education students. Boys account for 50.6% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49.4%.⁵

The school is in good standing with state and federal accountability.⁶

Annual Site Visit Process Overview:

The NYC DOE Charter School Office conducts an annual site visit of New York City Department of Education authorized charter schools in order to assess three primary questions: is the school an academic success; is the school a viable organization; and is the school in compliance with applicable laws and regulations. The visits are conducted by representatives of the New York City Department of Education Charter School Office Accountability Team and last the duration of one school day. The annual site visit begins with a meeting with the principal and school leadership team. Subsequently, the reviewers visit classrooms and hold brief meetings with available administrators, teachers, and students. 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 following experts participated in the review of this school:

- Aaron Listhaus, Chief Academic Officer, Charter School Office
- Tyler Whittenberg, Analyst-Charter School Accountability, Charter School Office
- Robert Galli, Education Consultant

¹ NYC DOE ATS system

² NYC DOE ATS system and charter agreement

³ NYC DOE Location Code Generating System database

⁴ Demographic Data drawn from NYC DOE ATS System; Title I percentage from 2008 NY State Report Cards

⁵ Student Demographic data is inputted by school staff into the ATS enrollment database and summarized by NYC DOE staff.

⁶ New York State Education Department - www.nysed.gov

Part 2: Findings

What the school does well

- The school has high academic expectations and employs strategies for the full range of students served, including special needs and English Language Learners
 - Students are actively engaged in a dual-language program that exposes them to cultural, academic and social excellence
 - School maintains a comprehensive rapport with the local CSE to ensure that all services are provided for special needs students based upon IEP mandates
 - English Language Learners (ELLs) are provided full immersion in all subject areas with a wide variety of ancillary materials available to complement academic achievement

- The school fosters a safe and comfortable learning environment which encourages both student academic progress and teacher professional development
 - Exit and entry vestibules are monitored and staffed with security personnel who request appropriate identification for all visitors
 - Visitors display visible “guest tags” while in the building so students and staff can recognize new faces and feel secure
 - Teachers are provided with common planning time to prepare, plan and implement curriculum using whole immersion strategies, balanced literacy and components of the workshop model

- The school culture supports and sustains student learning and celebration of achievement
 - Classrooms display an abundance of student work indicating excellence, appreciation and goals achieved
 - A wide variety of multilevel texts and materials are available in all classrooms
 - Classrooms are structured to promote individual and group instruction
 - Daily agendas, timeframes, schedules and student friendly teaching tools are posted to keep students focused and on target
 - The principal addresses each student by name and provides positive comments to encourage successful classroom behaviors

- The school maintains a consistent connection to parents and community leaders
 - A weekly newsletter is distributed through e-mail and backpack strategies
 - School calendar is reconciled with neighborhood and DOE timelines and events
 - Principal attends monthly Board meetings
 - Parent organization meets monthly

- The school is in good financial condition and maintains appropriate internal controls
 - The school possesses \$772,062 in current assets and \$453,426 in current liabilities
 - The school has stable enrollment and a positive projected cash flow for June 2010
 - In collaboration with Charter School Business Management (CSBM), the school exercises appropriate internal controls on its financial systems

- The school board is providing adequate and balanced oversight
 - Despite difficulty in identifying a location for the school, the school is off to a good start and school board and management have worked hand in hand during the difficult period
 - HLA was included in the Federal PICCS grant (10 charter schools in NYC). The goal of the grant is to recognize the contributions of individual staff members to the instructional quality of the school.
 - Board gets adequate reporting and data to have meaningful dialogue at board meetings.

What the school needs to improve

- The school lacks a common language of instruction and learning among all teachers.
 - Hebrew language teachers were unable to articulate consistent language when describing how they approached the immersion process.
 - General studies teachers were unable to articulate consistent language when describing the implementation of the balanced literacy and workshop models.
- The level of productive student engagement in classroom instruction is inconsistent.
 - Some students positioned near the perimeter of instructional circles were not actively engaged in the learning exercises.
 - In one classroom, there was evidence of teacher attempting to engage students who were not participating. This practice needs to be implemented school-wide to ensure that all students are engaged in the learning activities in their classroom.

Part 3: Framing Questions

FRAMING QUESTIONS:

Throughout the life of each school's charter, the NYCDOE Charter School Office uses the following framing questions to monitor Charter School success:

1. Has the School Been an Academic Success?
2. Has the School Been a Viable Organization?
3. Has the School Been in Compliance with All Applicable Laws and Regulations?

Annual Site Visit Rubric:

1. Has the School Been an Academic Success?
 - Academic Goals and Mission
 - School components and curriculum align together and holistically support the mission
 - School has high academic expectations and employs strategies for the full range of students served by the school, including those at risk and those with special needs
 - Curriculum and Instruction
 - The educational plan is flexible and is adjusted to meet the performance levels and learning needs of all enrolled students
 - School implements programming to address the needs of students with disabilities and ELLs
 - Teachers demonstrate the use of differentiated instructional techniques to support the varying ways by which students learn
 - School has implemented programming for students who need remediation or acceleration
 - School Culture
 - The culture is strong, intentional, supportive and sustainable and promotes student learning
 - The school motivates all students and respects the diversity of learners and cultures in the community
 - School offers programs, activities or support services beyond academics to address students' social and emotional needs
 - School calendar and day are set to provide extra supports to ensure that students are able to meet and exceed academic goals

- Schedule for communication to parents/students is timely and allows for due process, includes strategies to prepare students for transitions and strategies for those students who are not on schedule, presents a clear and fair system that complies with students' due process rights
- Structures that foster the development of authentic, sustained, caring, respectful relationships among all stakeholders within school
- Behavioral expectations and social supports that reflect the school's mission and comply with all applicable laws and regulations
- **Assessment**
 - Establishes a culture of continuous improvement and accountability for student learning
 - Develops assessments that shape and inform instruction on an ongoing basis and develop data that's used to gauge student, teacher and school progress through formative and summative assessment
 - Student learning measured with multiple forms of assessments/metrics
 - Develops educational goals and performance metrics that are SMART – Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Reflect the Mission and Time-Specific
 - Develops assessments that are appropriately aligned with curriculum, instruction, and adopted standards
 - Provides evidence of how data will influence instruction, professional development and curricular adjustments
- **Parent Engagement**
 - Parent engagement strategies that integrate and mobilize parents within the school community as conduits for student success
 - Capacity to communicate effectively with parents and families
 - Parent engagement strategies that integrate and mobilize parents within the school community as conduits for student success

2. Is the School a Viable Organization

- **Governance Structures and Organizational Design**
 - School has articulated appropriate roles, responsibilities, and decision-making structure for school community members (including Board of Trustees and school leadership)
 - An accountability structure that provides effective oversight of the educational program and fiscal components of the school is in place and utilized
 - Board regularly reviews a data dashboard of student achievement and fiscal management that forms the basis for Board discussions and decisions
 - Board has diverse skill set that lends itself to strong educational / operational oversight
 - Board has an articulated process for ongoing policy development, Board member development and self-evaluation
 - Organizational charts are aligned with mission; roles and responsibilities are clearly defined
 - Board has developed essential strategic partnerships with organizations that support the mission of the school
- **Community Support**
 - School Leadership demonstrated responsiveness to the unique needs and interests of the community to be served
 - School has established a presence in the community and has buy in from community members

3. Is the School in Compliance with Applicable Laws and Regulations

- **Special Populations**
 - Well-defined plan and sufficient capacity to service the learning needs of Special Education students, English Language Learners
 - School adequately addresses the academic and non academic needs of students in need of remediation, students with disabilities, students with interrupted formal education, and gifted students

- There is a coherent plan for meeting the non-academic needs of students with disabilities, students with interrupted formal education, and other populations
- School employs a process to identify students at risk of not meeting expectations and creates intervention plans and follow up
- School demonstrates a comprehensive recruitment, enrollment and retention approach that is sensitive to the diverse needs of students
- School admission policy and lottery preferences serve to create a student body that reflects community demographics and give a preference to community school district residents
- Safety and Security
 - School is well maintained
 - Transitions and student gatherings are orderly and well supervised
 - Expectations for student behavior are well known and are enforced fairly
 - School is current with all safety recruitments and drills.
 - AED machines are in operation and school staff is trained in CPR