



Charter School Annual Site Visit Report
Charter Schools Accountability and Support
2011-2012

**BRONX ACADEMY OF PROMISE CHARTER SCHOOL
ANNUAL SITE VISIT REPORT**

MARCH 2012

Part 1: Executive Summary

School Overview and History:

The Bronx Academy of Promise Charter School is an elementary school serving approximately 344 students in grades K-5 in the 2011-12 school year¹. The school is under the terms of its first charter, which expires on February 11, 2013, by which time the school will have expanded to serve students in grades K-6, with the intent of ultimately serving students K-8. The Bronx Academy of Promise Charter School is currently housed in a private facility at 1166 River Avenue in the Bronx, NY, 10452, in Community School District 9 but anticipates a move into a larger private facility.

The school reported that after the spring 2011 lottery², it had 488 students on its waitlist. The school enrolls new students at all grades to fill available seats. According to an ATS data pull in April 2012, the student body of Bronx Academy of Promise Charter School includes 93.3% of students receiving Free or Reduced Lunch, compared to 82.6% in the district, 11.4% special education students compared to 17.1% in the district, and 23.7% English Language Learner students compared to 24.3% in the district³. As of March 1, 2012, the school's average daily attendance rate was reported to be 96.5%⁴.

Bronx Academy of Promise had received two Progress Reports at the time of the Annual Site Visit. In 2009-10, the school received a B as an overall grade (an A in Progress, B in Performance, and A in School Environment). In 2010-11, the school received an overall F (an F in Progress, D in Performance, and A in Environment) when the school's overall Math and ELA scores declined from the previous year, from 63% of students earning a 3 or above in Math to 36%, and from 44% proficient in ELA to 26%.

Bronx Academy of Promise Charter School is an independent charter school. When the school opened it was partnered with a charter management organization (CMO), Imagine Schools, but severed its relationship with Imagine after the 2008-09 school year. Prior to the current school leader, Catherine Jackvony, who began serving as principal in March 2011, the school had several leadership changes.

Annual Review Process Overview:

The New York City Department of Education (NYC DOE) Charter Schools Accountability and Support (CSAS) office 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 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 March 21, 2012:

- Rick Larios, Senior Director, NYC DOE CSAS
- Angela Chubb, Consultant, NYC DOE CSAS

¹ Self-reported on school's ASV Data Collection Sheet, March 1, 2012.

² Self-reported on school's ASV Data Collection Sheet, March 1, 2012.

³ NYC DOE ATS system, data pulled April 2012. The school's self-reported numbers from March were similar except for special education. The FRL enrollment was 313 of 344 students (91.1%) and ELLs were 81 of 344 students (23.5%). The school reported 56 of 344 students (16.3%) as having either an IEP or 504. (DOE's ATS data pull does not include students with 504s.)

⁴ Self-reported on school's ASV Data Collection Sheet, March 1, 2012.

Part 2: Findings

Overview:

The Bronx Academy of Promise Charter School's original charter expires on February 11, 2013. The renewal process and decision therefore will occur in the fall of 2012. On the next to last Progress Report before its charter expires the school received an F as its overall grade and an F for Student Progress. This report resulted in the school being put on Early Engagement status by the NYC DOE's Charter School Accountability and Support office. The school is aware it must demonstrate significant improvement on its 2012 state assessments results in ELA and Math, as well as a much improved Progress Report grade if it is to be renewed.

Areas of Strength:

- The school administration and staff have developed a strong collaborative relationship and have established a single voice around academic expectations and school instructional priorities. There was consistency in what was reported in the Self-Evaluation, discussed in the leadership meeting and teacher interviews and observed in classrooms during the visit.
 - In all observed classrooms, a focus on non-fiction text and finding evidence in the text to support answers was evident through direct instruction, anchor posters and student work. Non-fiction resource texts and materials were also available and displayed in observed classrooms.
 - In all observed classrooms, the school's focus on increased use of small group instruction was also evident. Teachers used a variety of structures at all grade levels to organize students into small groups, sometimes organized around stations, sometimes around cooperative tasks or academic games or projects. The classroom teacher and the teaching assistant, as well as the special education, math and ELA Academic Intervention (AIS) teachers, or English Speakers of Other Language (ESOL) teachers who push-in support as appropriate, were providing guided instruction to small groups, typically of 4 to 6 students but sometimes smaller.
 - In all classrooms student writing displayed a focus on the Six-Trait Writing Process with rubrics and scored student work. The school also shared writing data collected each month on all students and grade levels and was able to document growth between writing performance tasks over time.
 - While variation in quality and efficiency remains, instruction in observed classrooms was more consistent, focused, and productive than observed during the previous year's visit with students consistently on task, improved pacing, and instruction more consistently linked to posted objectives.
 - Interviewed teachers reported that the principal is clear about the school's instructional focus and supports them in their classrooms. One teacher observed that "collaboration was 100% better" than last year. Weekly grade level meetings, involving Teacher Assistants in planning and delivering instruction, improved assessments and use of data, involving AIS, Special Education and ESOL teachers in grade level planning, and an improved professional culture led staff to be very optimistic about student achievement gains this school year.
- The introduction of instructional support staff, intervention program and small group instruction appear to be having a positive impact on instruction and beginning to meet the needs of all learners.
 - The school hired intervention teachers to work with students in the classroom at each grade level. In all observed classrooms the TA's were working with students and reported

- that they felt connected to the grade level teachers and were well informed about goals and objectives for their assigned grade level.
- The school has established a new after-school tutoring program for 3rd to 5th grade students and elected to stay open for two days during spring break to provide extra instruction.
 - The school also migrated from a mostly pull-out approach to academic interventions to as much push-in support as possible, with improved planning between intervention teachers and grade level teaching teams.
- The school learning environment on the day of the visit was respectful, orderly, positive and productive in observed classrooms.
 - In all observed classrooms, teachers used positive language to provide directions, guidance, and support behavioral expectations and support learning; the student-to-student interactions were respectful and on topic.
 - Students were on task in most instructional settings, actively engaged in many of the small group instructional activities and behavior overall was very good. Consistently on-task behavior allowed teachers to conduct small group guided instruction successfully while other small groups of students worked independently.
 - Classrooms and hallways were clean, brightly decorated, and displayed student work. Observed classrooms were print and resource rich.
 - Transitions within and outside of classrooms were smooth, orderly and efficient.
 - The school has overcome the operational leadership change from last year and appears to be on solid financial and operational grounds.
 - The school's founding director of finance left at the start of the school year and was not replaced. Instead Charter School Business Management (CSBM) stepped up its support, which began in 2010, and has worked with the school's business manager to ensure the school's financial health, rectify identified concerns from the most recent audit, and prepare the school for its upcoming facility move.
 - On the day of the visit, the professional climate appeared positive, collaborative, and focused on the needs of students. The school, through its small group instructional model, makes productive use of teaching assistants and support staff to support implementation a co-teaching model and to provide a range of Tier 2 Response to Intervention options that were not available the previous school year.
 - Interviewed teachers reported that they meet regularly and, as noted above, include all staff, i.e., special education, ELL and tutoring staff. Weekly grade level meetings, first Friday Professional Development meetings, and Data Team meetings were all cited by teachers as providing benefit, comparing it to the previous year one teacher stated, "last year I was left in the dust; this year I know what is expected." Another noted that the regularity of teacher collaboration "makes each of us each other's mentor."
 - Interviewed teachers reported that they feel respected and heard by the school principal and receive regular feedback that is specific and helpful in improving their practice.
 - Interviewed teachers reported that the principal has an open door policy and is very supportive. One teacher stated that "I've never been in a school where teachers have been heard so clearly." Another said that before Ms. Jackvony came on board "I was updating my resume. Nobody was happy. We weren't united. Now we are." A third teacher said, "It's not just a school anymore, [it's] a labor of love."
 - Teachers reported they are formally observed one time a year using the Danielson teacher rubric. Principal and instructional consultant, Dr. Jane Spielman, provide frequent informal observations and supportive feedback, with Dr. Spielman offering helpful demonstration lessons.

- The school principal issues a Weekly Agenda each Sunday with the week's calendar and identified priorities. One interviewed teacher noted that the principal keeps us "focused on themes and priorities."
- The use of data to inform instruction has been a school priority since the previous spring with improved and focused assessment use, increased buy-in from staff, and more effective analysis of academic data.
 - The school began its data analysis with last year's state assessment results which helped launch a number of initiatives, from the curriculum switch from Saxon to EnVision math, emphasis on the Six-Trait Writing program, and the commitment to small group instruction.
 - In addition the school uses Development Reading Assessment (DRA) data, mock state assessments, EnVision Benchmark assessments, i-Ready assessments, writing assessments, teacher and curriculum based assessments, and homework to evaluate learning, help group students, and target instruction.
 - The school established grade level data teams that meet each month where performance is analyzed and SMART goals are set for students to be evaluated at next month's meeting. Data teams make plans for re-teaching, grouping and daily lesson planning.
 - In some observed classrooms teachers were using checklists and collecting anecdotal observations as part of the small group instruction.
 - All interviewed teachers were not only comfortable but enthusiastic in predicting significant improvements in student performance on state assessments this spring. "I see gains," said one teacher, "students are taking control of their learning," citing better targeting of instruction, student enthusiasm, confidence and pride, and the extra help provided through small group instruction, after school and other intervention opportunities as the reason for the gains.
- Parent support for the school is strongly positive.
 - According to the most recent DOE School Survey, 94% of parents who completed the survey approve of the education their children are getting at the school. The same percentage of parent respondents are satisfied with opportunities the school provides them to be involved in their children's education and with the school's communication with them.
 - Board meetings are regularly attended by parents who are actively engaged in the meeting discussion.

Areas of Growth:

- The school should continue its work on advancing instructional practice, improving efficiency and rigor, and improving differentiation of instruction to ensure it reverses the declines in ELA and Math proficiency (students scoring at Level 3 or higher on state assessments) from 2010 to 2011 and can sustain progress year to year.
 - Small group instructional initiative added both variety and more individualized attention between teacher and students but not all activities in rotation seemed as purposeful and linked to lesson objectives as others. In observed classrooms outside of reading, all students generally moved through the same rotation of instructional activities, which does provide attention and can individualize support, but differentiation of instruction, practice,

- and/or expectation could have been more specifically targeted to individuals or small groups, improving rigor and efficiency.
- Many observed classrooms had learning objectives or aims posted, some did not. Establishing a school-wide norm about posting lesson/unit learning objectives could benefit alignment efforts, support developing a common understanding about quality objectives, and provide a reference point for students and teachers to sustain focus during instruction.
 - Observed classrooms included a range in the quality and clarity of student questioning, with some very good examples of higher level discussion, with good follow-ups and effective student led discussions in response to a prompt, but also some examples where the questions were lower level, vague or failed to be effectively developed into a coherent discussion. School should consider ways to improve the overall quality and across classroom consistency of discussion and questioning strategies—improving wait time, using why and how do you know prompts, etc.
 - The school made structural changes to increase regular opportunities for grade level planning; on this foundation the school should look at ways to use these structures and others to provide additional opportunities for teacher collaboration to work cross-grade topics, including vertical alignment of all academic expectations and Common Core standards.
 - The school changed its math program and launched major instructional initiatives around use of non-fiction texts, small group instruction, six-trait writing, and changing its approach to interventions. It leadership, consultant support, and staff should continue to monitor the implementation of each of these initiatives to ensure continued progress in implementation and results for children.
- The school should continue to advance the use of data to inform instruction, improving the quality, timeliness, and specificity of its use.
 - Data teams meet regularly but discussion and analysis is largely driven by leadership. As staff grow more proficient in the use of data the school should look for teacher and teacher leaders to take more ownership of data and its analysis and sharing best practices in collecting, reviewing and responding to data.
 - The school uses a variety of assessments but is still tinkering with its overall assessment program (changing its use of TerraNova, for example, introducing mock assessments, and internally created writing assessments) and the tutoring program. As the school finalizes its assessment system and as data sources are examined and those that proved valuable this year accumulate over time the school should extend its use of data to longitudinal and predictive analyses.
 - The school featured lots of exemplary work in its classrooms and hallways but there was a range of what represented exemplary work, which in at least in one case at the bottom end of the range, included displayed research writing that appeared to be include cut and pasted text from its source. The school should look at ways through observation and feedback, grade level and cross grade level discussion to develop a consensus around rubric-based assessments at quality and improve inter-rater reliability.
 - The unanimous confidence of interviewed teachers that students would show significant academic improvement was impressive. Some teachers cited data as the source of their confidence but many talked more about emotion and effort, which are important contributors but not always indicators of success. As the school grows more sophisticated in its use of data it should look how performance on internal measures align with state assessment results (class grading, mock assessment performance, writing assessment results, DRA, etc.).
 - The school should continue to enact measures to be in full compliance with the 2010 amended New York State Charter Schools Act.

- While its Free and Reduced Lunch and English Language Learner enrollment numbers are comparable to CSD 9 averages, its enrollment of students with IEPs is below CSD 9 averages with a special education population of 11.4% students with IEPs, compared to CSD 9's average of 17.1%⁵.
 - The school should continue to refine and document its outreach strategies in order to reach levels comparable to district CSD 9 for special education students and sustain its comparable percentages of FRL and ELL students.
- As the school continues to expand and leadership and staffing more established, the school should look at ways to develop capacity of staff, leveraging collaboration and teaming structures to provide opportunities for teacher-leaders to emerge and develop.
 - The school has a small leadership team and much of its work is directly led by the school leader and an educational consultant. The school, according to interviews of administration and staff, has successfully built a strong collaborative culture and the next step would be to develop opportunities for increased participation and ownership by staff in decision-making and problem-solving. It also builds capacity to ensure sustainability.
- The school should continue to monitor the progress of the new school facility to ensure the building is ready for the start of the school year and, if necessary, make timely plans for adjustments or alternate plans should the building not be ready in time.
- The school's parent and teacher satisfaction scores on the 2011 DOE School Survey are above average in most categories, however, participation levels for both groups of stakeholders were significantly below citywide averages.
 - Parent participation was 36% (compared to 52% citywide) and teacher participation was 41% (compared to 82% citywide). The school should implement its strategies to improve staff and parent participation in the DOE survey, aiming for above average participation, and monitor the success of those strategies to make further adjustments if necessary.
- The school has a small core group of Board members but is currently out of compliance around its required committees.
 - The board of directors needs to establish working committees not just to be in compliance but to ensure it has the capacity to provide ongoing oversight and to effectively address specific issues as they occur. The board's by-laws should provide guidance about what permanent standing committees should be operating. Needs-based committees or sub-committees should be based on a board self-assessment of school priorities—the board might include, for example, a committee on student recruitment and retention, with an emphasis on special education students or a committee on facilities and new building progress.

⁵ NYC DOE ATS system, data pulled April 2012

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 established in school charter
- Meet student progress goals established in school charter
- 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
- Parent association meeting agendas and minutes
- Participation at parent-teacher conferences, school advocacy events, participation in academic goal related programs
- Stakeholder (board, parents, staff, students, etc.) interviews

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
- Offer defined opportunities for remediation and acceleration
- Have effective strategies and quality instructional programs for addressing students with special needs and ELLs
- Have defined strategies that they can measure and monitor for closing the achievement gap
- 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
- Use a defined process for evaluating curricular tasks, programs and resources for effectiveness and fit with school mission and goals
- Have school calendars and day schedules that provide the time necessary to deliver on the school's mission and academic 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
- Special Education/ELL progress monitoring documentation
- Interim assessment results
- Student and teacher portfolios
- Data findings; adjusted lesson plans
- Self-assessment documentation
- Professional development plans and resources
- School calendar and daily schedules
- DOE School Surveys and internal school satisfaction surveys
- Instructional leader and staff interviews

1d. Learning Environment

Schools with successful learning environments have many of the characteristics below:

- Have a strong academic culture that creates high academic and behavioral expectations in a way that motivates students to consistently give their best efforts
- 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 plan with formal or informal structures or programs in place that provide students opportunities to develop as individuals and citizens (for example: a character education, citizenship, or community involvement or service program)

Evidence for successful learning environments may include, but not be limited to, many of the following:

- School mission and articulated values
- School calendar and class schedules
- Student management plan (code of conduct, school values, discipline policy, positive incentive system, etc.)
- Student attendance and retention rates
- Student discipline data (referral, suspension, expulsion)
- DOE School Survey student results
- DOE School Survey parent and teacher safety and respect results
- Parent complaint/concern information
- Internal 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:

- Have a clearly articulated governance structure, compliant with its charter and all applicable laws and regulations, with clear lines of accountability for the Board, school leadership and all staff
- Have a capable Board of Trustees with appropriate officers, committees, and a purposeful 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, and is fully compliant with its Board approved by-laws (number of meetings, quorum, posting of calendar, agenda and minutes)
- Have a defined process for Board reflection on effectiveness, assessing developing needs, and plan for professional growth
- 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 and, if and when necessary, makes timely adjustments to that structure with proper notice to and approval by its authorizer
- If applicable, school relationship with a charter management organization is identified in charter and supported by a management agreement that spells out services, responsibilities, accountability reporting, performance expectations, and fees
- Have timely and appropriate access to legal counsel
- Implements a process for recruiting, hiring, compensating, monitoring, and evaluating the effectiveness of the school's staff that is clearly defined in staff handbook
- Have instructional leadership staffing and support structures that holds staff accountable for student learning outcomes and provide regular feedback on instruction to teachers, including both formal and informal observations

Evidence for school governance and organizational design may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- School charter
- Board by-laws, roster, trustee resumes, calendar of meetings, meeting agenda and minutes
- Annual conflict of interest forms
- Board resources for evaluating school leadership and staff, including rubric/performance metrics
- Board resources for self-reflection and professional growth
- Board development plan
- Board interviews
- Staff roster, job descriptions, staff handbook, operations manual
- School calendar
- Professional development plan for leadership staff
- School leadership and staff interviews

2b. School Climate and Community Engagement

Schools with a sustaining school climate and engaged parent and community support have many of the characteristics below:

- Create and maintain a healthy professional school climate that is collaborative, student centered, and aligned with school mission and values
- Implement flexible, data-driven approach to professional development for all staff
- Encourage professional conversations about effective performance and quality instruction among staff, through, for example, such means as regular and periodic teaming (grade level teams, data days, etc.) and peer observations
- Have systems in place to evaluate professional development effectiveness and provide ongoing support for school-wide and individual initiatives
- Employ an effective means of measuring and monitoring core constituency satisfaction (parent, staff, and, when age appropriate, student), including, but not limited to, the DOE School Survey
- Have effective home-school communication practices and engagement strategies to ensure meaningful parent involvement in the learning of their children
- Engage parents actively in the life of the school, including advocacy, community engagement, and feedback on school policies and initiatives
- Develop strong community-based partnerships who support and advocate for the school
- Have a clear procedure for parents and staff to express concerns to school leadership and the Board, as appropriate, including a clearly articulated escalation path to authorizer

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
- Internal satisfaction surveys
- Staff handbook
- Student retention and wait list data
- Staff retention data
- School Professional Development Plan and staff feedback on professional development events
- Resources for evaluations and observations, scheduled opportunities for professional collaboration, staff feedback on professional development events
- Leadership, staff, parent, student interviews
- Student and staff attendance rates
- Parent/Student Handbook
- Parent attendance at parent-teacher conferences
- Parent association meeting calendar and minutes
- Community partnerships and sponsored programs
- Parent and community feedback via public hearings, renewal calls to parents, etc.
- Community outreach documents (newsletters, announcements, invitations, etc.)

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 student enrollment and retention targets
- Maintain annual budgets that meet all short- and long-term financial responsibilities with available revenues
- Provide rigorous oversight of financial and operational responsibilities, as school leadership and Board levels, in a manner that keeps the school's mission and academic goals central to short- and long-term decision-making
- Have clearly established policies and procedures for overall fiscal and operational health of the school (onboarding of all new staff, record-keeping, processing requests of HR services, application and enrollment calls, visitors, volunteers, etc.)
- Maintain effective internal controls of finances to ensure integrity of financial management and a proactive approach to mitigating risk
- Receive consistently clean financial audits
- If applicable, have strong, accountable partnerships with management organizations and other partners and significant vendors to support delivery of charter school design and academic program
- Ensure a safe, clean and appropriately resourced educational facility with all appropriate services specified in charter and mandated by appropriate law and regulations
- Have appropriate insurance coverage

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
- Financial leader(s) job description, resume and accountability documents
- Financial and operational organizational chart
- Financial audits
- Contracts or Memos of Understanding (MOUs) for significant partnerships and vendor relationships
- Operational policies and procedures, including training resources
- Staff turnover and retention records
- Secure storage areas for student and staff records
- Policies/protocols for maintaining secure records
- Required facility documents (lease, certificate of occupancy, fire and safety inspections, etc.)
- School safety plan
- Appropriate insurance documents

3. Is the School in Compliance with its Charter and All Applicable Laws 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, if appropriate, 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 up-to-date charter is available on request 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
- Annual Site Visit reports
- Board meetings, agendas and minutes
- Leadership, Board, staff and community interviews
- Public hearings (renewal or material revision hearings)

3b. Applicable Federal and State Law

Schools in substantial compliance with federal and state law:

- Meet all legal requirements for Title I and IDEA regulations and reporting
- Meet or exceed enrollment and retention targets for FRL, ELL and Special Education students to those of their district of location⁶ or are making documented good faith efforts to reach comparable percentages for enrollment and retention
- Implement 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
- Conduct an independently verified fair and open lottery and manage with integrity enrollment process and annual waiting lists
- Employ instructional staff with appropriate security clearances and certification requirements

⁶ School-specific targets for enrollment and retention are to come from NY State Education Department

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
- Family/Student handbook
- Student discipline records
- Parent complaint/grievance records
- Lottery policy, resources, and records; enrollment procedures and records
- Demographic data (school, district, and other as appropriate)
- Staff roster, fingerprint clearance for all staff, certification status of all instructional staff

3c. Applicable Regulations

Schools in substantial compliance with applicable regulations have:

- Safe and secure facilities with no significant compliance concerns with applicable regulations
- Consistently clean annual audits, up-to-date escrow accounts, and have completed all other financial reporting as required
- Boards that meet requirements for size, meeting frequency, public notice, applicable open-meeting and conflict of interest regulations, as well as complying with NYC DOE CSAS's requirements for reporting changes in board membership and securing approval for new board members.
- Informed NYC DOE CSAS, and where required, received CSAS approval for changes in significant partnerships, such as dropping/replacing a management organization
- Effectively engaged parent associations

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

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

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:

- Renewal application narrative, including performance results and analyses of the current charter term
- Renewal application revised charter submission, including mission, program description, governance, organization, budget, etc. for new term
- Charter (replication) Application
- 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:

- Renewal application narrative, including performance results and analyses of the current charter term
- Renewal application revised charter submission, including mission, program description, governance, organization, budget, etc. for new term
- 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:

- Renewal application narrative, including performance results and analyses of the current charter term
- Renewal application revised charter submission, including mission, program description, governance, organization, budget, etc. for new term
- Leadership and board interviews
- Contracts or Memos of Understanding (MOUs) with partners or important vendors