



**Department of
Education**

Dennis M. Walcott, Chancellor

**Charter School Annual Site Visit Report
Charter Schools Office
2011-2012**

**THE RENAISSANCE CHARTER SCHOOL
ANNUAL SITE VISIT REPORT**

MARCH 2012

Part 1: Executive Summary

School Overview and History:

The Renaissance Charter School (TRCS) is an elementary, middle and high school hosting grades K-12. TRCS serves approximately 549 students in the 2011-2012 school year.¹ The school converted from a district school to a charter school in 2000. It is currently housed in CSD 30 in DOE space at 35-59 81 Street, Jackson Heights, NY 11372.

There were 1,554 students on the waitlist after the Spring 2011 lottery. The student body is comprised of 60% students who receive Free and Reduced Lunch, compared to 62% in the district; 12% students with disabilities, compared to the 12% in the district; and 6% English language learners (ELL), compared to the 21% in the district.² The school increased its NYC DOE's Overall Report Card Grade from a C (2010-2011) to a B (2011-2012). The average attendance rate for the school year 2011-2012 was 96.4%.³

The Renaissance Charter School scored Average on all sections of the NYC DOE School Survey in 2011-2012; Academic Expectations, Communication, Engagement and Safety & Respect. For each section, TRCS scored lower than citywide averages. Sixty-four percent of the school's parents, 99% of the school's students and 87% of the school's teachers responded to the survey.⁴

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 viable organization; and is the school in compliance with applicable laws and regulations? To ascertain matters of sustainability and strategic planning, we also ask about the school's plan for its next charter term. The visits are conducted by the representatives of the New York City Department of Education Charters Schools Office and last the duration of one school day. The annual site visit begins with a meeting with the principal and the school leadership team. Afterward, 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 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 22, 2012:

- Sonia Park, NYC DOE CSO
- Bertram Wyman, NYC DOE CSO
- Laurie Pendleton, NYC DOE CSO Consultant

¹ NYC DOE ATS system, 03 April 2012

² NYC DOE ATS system, 03 April 2012

³ The Renaissance Charter School self reported School Evaluation Visit Data Collection Form, 05 March 2012

⁴ NYC DOE School Survey – <http://schools.nyc.gov/survey>

Part 2: Findings

Areas of Strength:

- The TRCS culture is positive, inclusive of all stakeholders, and encourages teacher autonomy and collaboration.
 - On the day of the visit, morale amongst the teachers appeared to be very high as teachers shared such comments as, “Happy to work here.” And “Teaching here has been a positive experience.”
 - The teachers also appear to appreciate the level of autonomy they have in the classroom as evidenced by such comments as, “They trust me, I’m a professional.” “Teachers are delivering which makes the environment good for me and for the students.” And “I’m most proud of the academic freedom and the school supports me.”
 - The school’s Collaborative School Governance Committee which includes staff, parents, and students, has been working to create a new Comprehensive Education Plan designed to help the school meet more rigorous goals in literacy, math, technology, and school culture.

- The student learning environment was observed to be safe, orderly, and respectful on the day of the visit.
 - Classrooms were clean, safe, well-resourced, and cheerful and students were respectful of the materials and resources.
 - Classrooms observed had clear rules and expectations for student behavior posted and on the day of the visit there were few behavioral interruptions to learning.
 - The school reports that student attendance is up from 94.79% the previous year, to 95.42% at the point in school year during the visit. Additionally, the school reports that suspensions are down significantly from the previous school year.⁵

- TRCS is making strides towards using data effectively to group students and to meet individual needs.
 - A new position, Director of Data and Accountability, has been created to support the focus on data.
 - TRCS is providing Professional Development in the use of data and has begun to use data teams who are supporting the development and implementation of interim assessments. Teams are also analyzing the results of these assessments for curriculum implications.
 - The school is using this focus on data to analyze the college sustainability of their graduates. TRCS has created a “Where Are You Now” survey for alumni. Feedback thus far shows that students are struggling financially to stay in college. The school is working with outside organizations, (e.g. Taproot) to further define this project.
 - TRCS administered three mock assessments to the 7th and 8th graders and used the data from these assessments to group students and focus instruction in before school, after school, and Saturday Academies. TRCS is tracking students who are attending the afterschool program and school leaders report 80% of students have made progress according to internal assessments.

⁵ Annual Site Visit Data Collection Form, 05 March 2012.

- TRCS is reported to have established data systems to support and drive instruction. The school receives support from PICCS, a comprehensive program designed to develop quality teachers and school leaders at charter schools. TRCS's professional development in TERC Data through PICCS participation establishes data teams and data action plans. The school reports they will continue to be supported by TERC & PICCS.
 - The school has begun to use Fountas and Pinnell leveled reading to better assess student literacy on a regular basis. The school reports this has also provided a means to communicate literacy expectations to parents. Teachers interviewed reported that they identify student reading levels three or four times a year and they have found it helpful.
 - The teachers interviewed appear to be receptive to this increased focus on data. A teacher described the process used to determine areas of weakness based on 4th grade test results and the action plan they created to address these needs. Another teacher shared they felt that the focus on data has been effective and that administration gives support by finding ways to organize the multiple data points collected.
- TRCS is working to increase the level of rigor in the school.
 - The school has reinstated the Junior Great Books program at grades K-8 to better help students analyze nonfiction text. The school has employed the services of a consultant to help with this work and the teachers report this support to be "very helpful." On the day of the visit, a second grade class was observed studying a nonfiction text about penguins. The instruction included references to student-created glossaries, an analysis of the text features of the book, and student fact-checking of information learned.
 - The school has increased the number of 8th graders taking and passing the Regents exam in Integrated Algebra I. In addition, the school has expanded their AP offerings in the high school.
 - On the day of the visit, 12th grade students were observed engaged in a challenging and rigorous discussion during a Writer's Workshop class. The class was divided into three small groups, each lead by teacher, allowing for meaningful engagement of all students.
- TRCS's leadership is reflective and focused on improvement.
 - On the day of the visit, the school's leader, Stacey Gauthier, shared the challenges of helping the school move through a change in thinking to achieve academic success. She clearly demonstrates an understanding of the need to balance project-based learning and teacher autonomy with an increased focus on meeting high academic goals while maintaining the positive, happy environment.
 - Teachers recognize the sense of urgency and agree with the school's leader that the initiatives have been overwhelming at times. One teacher interviewed said, "Unclear expectations make it hard to plan so we need to have constant dialog to make sure expectations are clear". Leadership team recognizes this need and has established a variety of methods for open communication. Teachers interviewed report that they feel very supported and know they can talk to the school leadership at any time.
- TRCS is operationally viable.
 - The school has been in operation for a number of years and is a stable organization. There is a long wait list for students and low attrition rates for both teachers and students.

- The school has a balanced budget with funds in reserve and they are not reliant on external fund raising to meet budget.

Areas of Growth:

- On the day of the visit, inconsistencies in instruction were observed.
 - The work in some classes appeared to be of a lower level and the pacing was slow resulting in students who appeared to be unengaged. The level of questioning was also at a relatively low level in some classrooms with an emphasis on fill-in-the-blank or recall of facts as opposed to higher order questioning.
 - In some classes observed, students quickly completed the independent work assigned; it was observed that the extension activity was not connected to the lesson and lacked rigor.
 - Not all classrooms observed had evidence of effective differentiation. The quality of instruction is varied, with some teachers effectively differentiating their lessons for all learners and providing challenging work, while others did not provide a rigorous environment that engaged all types of learners.
 - In classes visited, there was no evidence of vertical alignment to the school's curriculum. The school is continuing to work on the Common Core with the PICCS consortium to ensure a more consistent approach to educational programming.
- TRCS is encouraged to continue to focus on building a data culture.
 - As shared by the school's leadership, a K-12 school generates much data which can lead to a capacity issue with both gathering and using the data. The leadership team also shared the strategies they are using to overcome philosophical differences some staff members have with the focus on data. Some teachers reported that the school is spending too much time on data while others see it as a useful tool.
- TRCS procedures for providing feedback to teachers on the effectiveness of their instruction are inconsistent.
 - Teachers provide and receive feedback through a peer observation system. A teacher interviewed explained they have not received training in this process but rather rely on their own experience with the process. Based on teacher interviews, the lack of communicated expectations could lead to different approaches being used.
 - The school is encouraged to continue the use of the Charlotte Danielson Framework for Teaching to provide a common language to describe good teaching, making it more effective to discuss, observe, and provide feedback on quality instruction.

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 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, 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

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

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

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