

# **THE ETHICAL COMMUNITY CHARTER SCHOOL**

ANNUAL SITE VISIT REPORT

JUNE 2011

# Part 1: Executive Summary

## **School Overview and History:**

The Ethical Community Charter School (TECCS) is an elementary school serving approximately 157 students from kindergarten through grade two in the 2010-2011 school year.<sup>1</sup> It has plans to grow to serve students kindergarten through grade 5 during its first charter period.<sup>2</sup> The school plans to ultimately grow through to grade 12. It is currently housed in a New York City Department of Education (NYC DOE) facility at 700 Park Avenue in Brooklyn in CSD 14.

The school population comprises 50% Black, 42% Hispanic, .5% White, 7.5% Other students. Eighty-four percent of students are designated as Title I.<sup>3</sup> The student body, as reported on the school data collection form completed by the school, includes 9.5% English language learners and 11.5% special education students.

The school is in its second year and has not yet earned a Progress Report grade or state/federal accountability designation.<sup>4</sup> The average attendance rate for the school year 2010–2011 was reported by the school as 92.3%, as of May 31, 2011.

## **Annual Review Process Overview:**

The NYC DOE Charter Schools 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 Schools Office 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 on June 1, 2011:

- Sonia Park, NYC DOE CSO, Senior Director
- Karen Drezner, Consultant

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<sup>1</sup> NYC DOE ATS system

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

<sup>3</sup> Demographic Data drawn from NYC DOE ATS System; data pulled June 2011 ; Title I percentage from 2008 NY State Report Cards

<sup>4</sup> New York State Education Department - [www.nysed.gov](http://www.nysed.gov)

## Part 2: Findings

### Areas of Strength

- TECCS demonstrated an atmosphere which promotes learning and student achievement.
  - On the day of observation, classrooms were safe and orderly. Students appeared to feel comfortable with teachers and school leadership.
  - The school seemed to have a common culture, set of norms, and observed teachers maintained consistent behavioral expectations.
  - The use of common language such as “friends” and “problem-solving” was evident across campus.
  - On the day of the visit responsive classroom strategies were being actively employed by students (e.g., “take a break chair”).
  
- Strong foundational support systems were in place to support and develop teachers.
  - The Director of Curriculum & Assessment and the Director of School Culture provided frequent observations and feedback to teachers throughout the day of the visit.
  - According to school leadership, a LitLife consultant provides literacy instructional support to teachers every other week.
  - On the day of the visit, reviewers observed several peer observations, lesson studies and modeling activities. In addition, school leadership and an outside consultant observe classrooms twice a month.
  - Professional development was provided during a Summer Institute and throughout the year by consultants (LitLife, Ackerman Family Institute, Wireless Generation, VTS, and Relay Graduation School of Education).
  - Interviewed teachers reported feeling well supported and appeared to have positive working relationships with leadership team members. TECCS is also supporting two assistant teachers in their Master’s Program through Hunter University’s Relay program.
  
- Overall, students were engaged in classroom instruction.
  - On the day of the visit, teachers delivered well-planned, enthusiastic and engaging lessons.
  - Both independent and collaborative work was observed during instruction.
  - The reviewers observed small, literacy groups that were well managed and purposeful.
  - A range of supports appeared to be in place for at-risk students including teaching assistants, social workers, and interventionists.
  
- TECCS is self-reflective in terms of its operations management and has a conservative budgeting approach.
  - The school anticipates a budget surplus. The Ethical Community Charter School Foundation is conducting a capital campaign for a future school site. The school received a donation of \$1,000,000 from the school foundation over the first three years to support the successful start-up of the school.
  - The Family Teachers Association plans fundraisers to enhance the learning environments and enrichment activities.)
  - The school leader and a financial consultant work with the Finance Committee of the Board of Trustees and report regularly to the Board.
  
- The school uses a range of practices to involve and communicate with parents.
  - School-wide events such as social teas, movie nights, and spirit week have been well attended.

- The school's formalized Family Teachers Association (FTA) meets regularly and has established by-laws, elected officers, and holds weekly office hours at the school.

## Areas of Growth

- TECCS should continue to enact corrective measures in order to be in full compliance with the 2010 amended Charter School Act. Areas of concern regard meeting target rates for enrollment and retention for ELL students and special education students. TECCS is encouraged to continue to market throughout District 14 and adjoining neighborhoods to attract a diverse community of students.
  - The school should continue to refine and document its outreach strategies for recruitment and retention of ELLs in order to be comparable to the district, CSD 14. The school reported using a variety of recruitment strategies such as targeted day care and head-start programs and notices placed in Spanish newspapers. TECCS has a population of 9.5%<sup>5</sup> ELLs, which is lower than CSD 14's ELL rate of 12.9%<sup>6</sup>.
  - TECCS should continue to refine and document its outreach strategies for recruitment and retention of special education students in order to be comparable to the CSD 14. The school reported using a variety of recruitment strategies. TECCS has a special education population of 11.5%<sup>7</sup>, which is lower than CSD 14's rate of 17.3%<sup>8</sup>.
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- The school is encouraged to increase academic rigor across all areas of instruction.
  - School leaders are encouraged to continue motivating teachers and all instructional staff to elevate the level of instruction to superior levels.
  - Authentic student work, particularly writing should be motivated to reflect a high level of rigor.
  - The school may increase the transparency of grading and assessment by posting checklists and rubrics alongside posted work. Grade level expectations for work products should be established and made clear to students, staff and families.
  - The school is encouraged to deepen instructional planning and strategies.
- TECCS should continue to formalize school-wide assessment protocol and targeted interventions.
  - The school reviews academic data and uses information to guide interventions along 6-week cycles and has made progress in utilizing DIBELS and STEP program data. TECCS is encouraged to formalize data usage, analysis and target interventions.
- The school is encouraged to continue to refine and improve the school's strategy for preventing and addressing disruptive behavior.
  - TECCS utilizes the Responsive Classroom approach yet implementation was not consistent across classrooms.
  - Teachers reported that the newly designed "behavior matrix" has been useful, they also expressed concerns about students who are in the "what now?" category.

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<sup>5</sup> TECCS self reported School Evaluation Visit Data Collection Form (5/31/11)

<sup>6</sup> ATS data, (June 30, 2011)

<sup>7</sup> TECCS self reported School Evaluation Visit Data Collection Form (5/31/11)

<sup>8</sup> ATS data, (June 30, 2011)

- TECCS should school clarify its Child Study Team and policies for Promotion in Doubt.
  - Special education staff reported that they were not always included in formal decision-making processes and discussions for Child Study Team and student promotion decisions.
  - TECCS should strengthen communication alignment of the leadership team and staff.
    - The school is encouraged to consider ways to increase formalized transparency of decision-making processes. Teachers spoke of informal meetings and hallway conversations. Regular meetings have been calendared but are not always held because of scheduling conflicts.
- The school is encouraged to continue support and developing teachers.
  - TECCS should develop a more formal, evidence-based protocol for teacher evaluation and support plans. It appeared that individual goals were established for teachers, but it was unclear how often these are revisited or if goals were established for leadership team members.
  - Though professional development was offered to staff, trainings that was focused on math and technology was not evident.

## Part 3: Framing Questions

### FRAMING QUESTIONS:

Throughout the Renewal Process and the life of each school's charter, the NYCDOE Charter Schools 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

