NYC Department of
Education
Dennis M. Walcott, Chancellor

THE EQUITY PROJECT CHARTER SCHOOL
RENEWAL REPORT

2012-13 SCHOOL YEAR

Part 1: Executive Summary

School Overview and History:

TEP Charter School is a middle school that began operation, following a planning year, in 2009[1], and is in its first charter term, which expires on January 14, 2013. The school is located in the Washington Heights section of New York City, within CSD 6, currently housed in DOE annex trailers located in District 6 at 549 Audubon Avenue, New York, NY 10040. The school intends to move into a private facility during its next charter term. The student population is roughly 480 in grades 5-8[2]. The school's primary intake grade is grade 5 but fills available seats at grades 5-7; TEP received 318 5th grade applications for 124 available seats for its spring 2012 lottery[3]. Below are the school's 2012 Progress Report grade and overall assessment results and demographic data for the school and CSD.

During the 2011-12 school year, the average attendance at TEP was 96%[4]. The school received above average satisfaction scores in all four reported categories of the 2011-12 NYC DOE School Survey, with 95% of Parents, 100% of Teachers, and 97% of Students responding to the survey[5].

The Equity Project Charter School is an independent charter school not associated with a charter management organization (CMO) or other parent organization. The school has had one leader, Zeke Vanderhoek, since its inception.

	2011-12 PR overall grade	2012 ELA, 3+%	2012 Math, 3+%	FRL %	SWD %	ELL %
School[6]	A	33.6	56	85	21	21
CSD 6[7]		32.5	50.6	78	14	32

Renewal Recommendation:

In order for a charter school to be renewed it must demonstrate that it has earned renewal and is worthy of continuing the privilege of educating New York City students. While the academic

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[1] School website.

[2] Self-reported in Renewal Application Renewal Visit Data Collection Form (8/31/12)

[3] Self-reported in Renewal Application Renewal Visit Data Collection Form (8/31/12)

[4] Self-reported in Renewal Application Renewal Visit Data Collection Form (8/31/12)

[5] NYC DOE School Survey – http://schools.nyc.gov/survey

[6] Proficiency rates from http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/data/TestResults/ELAandMathTestResults. Demographics from ATS 11/20/12.

[7] CSD ELA and Math data from NYC DOE website and measures average performance of common grades only. Demographics from ATS 11/26/12 data pull.

performance of students is the foremost determining factor of a school's success, a school's ability to demonstrate an effective educational program, a financially and operationally viable organization, and a strong learning community with support from stakeholders are important factors that inform a renewal decision.

Based on the evaluation of the renewal application, renewal visit, historical annual reports and visits, performance on Progress Reports, comparisons to the CSD, and other factors, The New York City Department of Education Charter Schools Accountability & Support team (NYC DOE CSAS) recommends a **Full-Term Renewal** of the charter for The Equity Project Charter School.

Part 2: Renewal Decision and Findings

Renewal Framework:

The New York State Charter Schools Act ("the Act") states the following regarding the renewal of a school's charter:

§2851.4: Charters may be renewed, upon application, for a term of up to five years in accordance with the provisions of this article for the issuance of such charters pursuant to section twenty-eight hundred fifty-two of this article; provided, however, that a renewal application shall [also] include:

(a) A report of the progress of the charter school in achieving the educational objectives set forth in the charter.

(b) A detailed financial statement that discloses the cost of administration, instruction and other spending categories for the charter school that will allow a comparison of such costs to other schools, both public and private. Such statement shall be in a form prescribed by the Board of Regents.

(c) Copies of each of the annual reports of the charter school required by subdivision two of section twenty-eight hundred fifty-seven of this article, including the charter school report cards and the certified financial statements.

(d) Indications of parent and student satisfaction. Such renewal application shall be submitted to the charter entity no later than six months prior to the expiration of the charter; provided, however, that the charter entity may waive such deadline for good cause shown.

(e) The means by which the charter school will meet or exceed enrollment and retention targets as prescribed by the board of regents or the board of trustees of the state university of New York, as applicable, of students with disabilities, English language learners, and students who are eligible applicants for the free and reduced price lunch program which shall be considered by the charter entity prior to approving such charter school's application for renewal. When developing such targets, the board of regents and the board of trustees of the state university of New York shall ensure (1) that such enrollment targets are comparable to the enrollment figures of such categories of students attending the public schools within the school district, or in a city school district in a city having a population of one million or more inhabitants, the community

school district, in which the charter school is located; and (2) that such retention targets are comparable to the rate of retention of such categories of students attending the public schools within the school district, or in a city school district in a city having a population of one million or more inhabitants, the community school district, in which the proposed charter school would be located.

The Charter Schools Accountability and Support (CSAS) team may recommend four potential outcomes for charter schools applying for renewal: full-term renewal, renewal with conditions, short-term renewal, or non-renewal.

Full-Term Renewal

In cases where a school has demonstrated exceptional results with its students, a five-year renewal will be granted. A school must show that its program has yielded strong student performance and progress, has met the majority of its charter goals, has demonstrated financial stability, has attained sufficient board capacity, and has an educationally sound learning environment in order to gain this type of renewal.

Renewal with Conditions

In cases where a school has demonstrated mixed academic results or concerns about organizational viability, renewal is contingent upon changes to the prospective application or new charter, new performance measures, or both. These may include changes to curriculum, leadership, or board governance structure that are intended to yield improved academic outcomes during the next chartering period.

Short-Term Renewal

In cases where a school is up for renewal of its initial charter and has fewer than two years of state-assessment results, a renewal of three-years or fewer may be considered. In very limited circumstances, a school not in its initial charter or in its initial charter with more than three years of state assessment data, may be considered for a short-term renewal *if* the school's most recent year results are good (for example, an A or B on the NYC DOE Progress Report) while the previous year's results may have been poor (D or F).

Non-Renewal

Schools that have not demonstrated significant progress or high levels of student achievement and/or are in violation of their charter will not be renewed.

NYC DOE CSAS Renewal Recommendation:

Based on the evaluation of the renewal application, renewal visit, historical annual reports and visits, performance on Progress Reports, comparisons to the CSD, and other factors, The New York City Department of Education Charter Schools Accountability & Support team (NYC DOE CSAS) recommends a **Full-Term Renewal** of the charter for The Equity Project Charter School for reasons that include the following:

1. The first listed objective of charter schools, in accordance with the NY Charter Schools Act of 1998, is to improve student learning and achievement (Education Law Section 2850(2)(a)).
    TEP has demonstrated student progress and achievement for the following reasons:

    i. TEP has received two Progress Reports in its first charter term, scoring an overall B grade in 2011 and an A grade in 2012. In 2012 the school also scored an A on Student Progress, Student Performance, and Environment.[8]
    ii. The school has improved its overall proficiency rates (students scoring Level 3 and above) each year in both ELA (24.2 to 31 to 33.2%) and Math (37.1 to 48.8 to 56.1%).[9] Its Student Progress PR grades (B in 2011; A in 2012) indicate that TEP students made significant progress compared to their peers.[10]
    iii. In 2012, TEP students outperformed their district of location in grades 6 and 7 in ELA proficiency, but not grade 5; in Math, they outperformed the district in grade 7 by a wide margin but underperformed the district in grades 5 and 6.[11]
    iv. The school has not yet met the academic goals in its charter but has demonstrated consistent progress those goals.

2. In accordance with Education Law Section 2852(2)(b), a charter applicant must demonstrate the ability to operate the school in a educationally and fiscally sound manner.
    TEP has proven to be an effective and viable organization:

    i. The school is financially and organizationally sound. The school has had a balanced budget and each year has built a surplus, which it intends to use for a new facility and to enhance staffing.
    ii. The school is safe and orderly and DOE School Survey satisfaction results have been consistently above citywide averages in all evaluated categories.[12]
    iii. The school has consistently met the fiscal and operational goals in its charter.

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[8] 2011-12 Progress Report.
[9] 2009-2012 Progress Reports.
[10] 2010-11 and 11-12 Progress Reports.
[11] http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/data/TestResults/ELAandMathTestResults.
[12] 2009-12 NYC DOE School Surveys.

3. In accordance with Education Law Section 2853(1)(f), the board of trustees of the charter school shall have final authority for policy and operational decisions of the school.
   The board of TEP has proven to be effective for the following reasons:

   i. The school has stable leadership and an active and engaged board. The founding principal remains at the school and the school has expanded leadership capacity by promoting a founding teacher to the role of Assistant Principal.
   ii. The school has initiated a detailed plan to fund and build a new facility for the school, and is mid-way through fundraising the amounts necessary to begin construction.

4. In accordance with Education Law Section 2855(1)(b) and Education Law Section 2855(1)(c), a charter may be terminated or revoked in the event of serious violations of law, and/or material and substantial violations of the charter.
   The school is compliant with its charter and applicable laws and regulations.

5. In accordance with Education Law Section 2850(2)(b), a primary objective of charter schools is to increase learning opportunities for students who are at-risk of academic failure.
   TEP has successfully served at-risk students:

   i. The school earned 4.5 points for Closing the Achievement Gap on the 2011-12 Progress Report.
   ii. The school has a variety of programs and staff to meet the needs of at-risk students. The school has an ESL specialist who works with ELL students, doing both push-ins and pullouts as appropriate.
   iii. The school has enhanced the use of CTT classes, with one to two classes per grade.

6. As defined by Part 4 of the NYC DOE CSAS Accountability Framework, a school is to be assessed on its plan for its next charter term.
   TEP has demonstrated viable plans for its next term for the following reasons:

   i. School has a reasonable, achievable plan for improving academic results in its next charter term.
   ii. School has sound plan for monitoring for its eventual move into private space.

Part 3: Charter School Goals

Below is the school's report on its progress toward meeting its charter goals.

Please note that information in this section is provided by the school, and may vary from data reported by the NYC DOE because, among other reasons, the NYC DOE reports on all students, while certain school goals may only apply to students falling under a given criteria. All data errors, discrepancies, or omissions in this section are not the responsibility of the NYC DOE.

GOAL	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
1. At least 75 percent of each cohort of TEP 8th graders will perform at or above Level 3 on the following exams: NYS English Language Arts (ELA) exam, NYS Mathematics exam, NYS Science exam, and a TEP-created Social Studies exam. The Social Studies exam will be created by TEP faculty and modeled on the phased-out New York State 8th Grade Social Studies exam. A cohort here is defined as a group of 8th graders who have been continuously enrolled at TEP for 4 years, beginning in 5th grade.	**N/A.** TEP had only a 5th grade cohort.	**N/A.** TEP had only 5th and 6th grade cohorts.	**N/A.** TEP had only 5th, 6th, and 7th grade cohorts. Result/Explanation: MATH: TEP is on track to meet this goal for the school's first 8th grade cohort in 2013. As 7th graders, this cohort *already* achieved **76%** proficiency on the 2012 NYS Math exam. ELA: As 7th graders, TEP's first cohort achieved 40% proficiency on the 2012 NYS ELA exam. This represents a significant increase from 5th grade, when this cohort achieved 24% proficiency. SCIENCE & SOCIAL STUDIES: These will be administered to TEP's first 8th grade cohort in 2013.
2. At least 75 percent of each cohort of TEP 8th graders will perform at or above the 50th percentile on the following subtests of the national, norm-referenced NWEA MAP exam (Northwest Education	**N/A.** TEP had only a 5th grade cohort.	**N/A.** TEP had only 5th and 6th grade cohorts.	**N/A.** TEP had only 5th, 6th, and 7th grade cohorts. Result/Explanation: MATH: As 7th graders in 2012, **50%** of

Association Measures of Academic Progress): Reading, Language, Mathematics, and Science. A cohort here is defined as a group of 8th graders who have been continuously enrolled at TEP for 4 years, beginning in 5th grade.

this cohort scored at or above the 50th percentile on the NWEA Map Math exam.

READING: As 7th graders in 2012, **48%** of this cohort scored at or above the 50th percentile on the NWEA Map Reading exam.

LANGUAGE: As 7th graders in 2012, **50%** of this cohort scored at or above the 50th percentile on the NWEA Map Language exam.

SCIENCE: As 7th graders in 2012, **22%** of this cohort scored at or above the 50th percentile on the NWEA Map General Science exam & **34%** scored at or above the 50th percentile on the NWEA Map Science Concepts & Processes Exam.

GOAL	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
3. Each cohort of TEP students will, beginning in 6th grade, reduce by at least one-half the gap between the percent at or above Level 3 on the previous year's New York State ELA & Mathematics Exams and 75 percent at or above Level 3 on the current year's exams. (If a grade-level cohort exceeds 75 percent at or above Level 3 in the	**N/A.** TEP had only a 5th grade cohort.	**Not Met.** While there were increases in proficiency in both Math & ELA, these did not *reduce the gap by half*. Results/Explanation For the 2010-11 school year, TEP had one cohort (the 2013 Cohort) for which this goal applies. The results were as follows:	**Mixed.** There were 3 proficiency increases (ELA and Math for the 2013 cohort, and ELA for the 2014 cohort) and 1 decrease (Math for the 2014 cohort). The goal of *reducing the gap by half* was met in Math for the 2013 cohort; this goal was not met in the other categories. Results/Explanation For the 2011-12 school year, TEP had two cohorts (2013 cohort and 2014 cohort) for which this goal applies. The results were as follows:

previous year, the cohort will show an increase in the current year.) This calculation will include only students who have been continuously enrolled at TEP starting in 5th grade.	*2013 Cohort:* • NYS Math Exam: **42%** were proficient, an **increase** from 37% the previous year. • NYS ELA Exam: **31%** were proficient, an **increase** from 24% the previous year.

2013 Cohort:

• NYS Math Exam: **76%** were proficient, an **increase** from 42% the previous year.

• NYS ELA Exam: **40%** were proficient, an **increase** from 31% the previous year.

2014 Cohort:

• NYS Math Exam: **48%** were proficient, a **decrease** from 56% the previous year.

• NYS ELA Exam: **37%** were proficient, an **increase** from 30% the previous year.

GOAL	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
4. Each cohort of TEP students will, beginning in 6th grade, reduce by at least one-half the gap between the percent at or above the 50th percentile on the previous year's Reading, Language, Mathematics, and Science subtests of the national norm-referenced NWEA MAP exam and 75 percent at or above the 50th percentile on the current year's	**N/A.** TEP had only a 5th grade cohort.	**Not Met.** While there were increases in proficiency in 3 of the 4 exams, these did not *reduce the gap by half*. Results/Explanation For the 2010-11 school year, TEP had one cohort (the 2013 Cohort) for which this goal applies. The results were as follows: *2013 Cohort:* • MATH: **20%** scored at/above 50th percentile, an **increase** from 17% the previous year	**Mixed.** The 2013 cohort had significant proficiency increases in Math, Reading, and Language and mixed results in Science. The 2014 cohort had significant proficiency increases in Reading and Language, a decrease in Math, and mixed results in Science. The goal of *reducing the gap by half* was met in Math and in Language for the 2013 cohort; this goal was not met in the other categories. Results/Explanation For the 2011-12 school year, TEP had two cohorts (the 2013 cohort and the 2014 cohort) for which this goal applies. The results were as follows: *2013 Cohort:*

subtests. (If a grade-level cohort exceeds 75 percent at or above the 50th percentile in the previous year, the cohort will show an increase in the current year.) This calculation will include only students who have been continuously enrolled at TEP starting in 5th grade.		- READING: **25%** scored at/above 50th percentile, an **increase** from 24% the previous year - LANGUAGE: **22%** scored at/above 50th percentile, a **decrease** from 25% the previous year - SCIENCE: On the General Science, exam, **25%** scored at/above 50th percentile, an **increase** from 22% the previous year. On the Concepts & Processes exam **27%** scored at/above 50th percentile, *no change* from the previous year	- MATH: **50%** scored at/above 50th percentile, an **increase** from 20% the previous year - READING: **48%** scored at/above 50th percentile, an **increase** from 25% the previous year - LANGUAGE: **50%** scored at/above 50th percentile, an **increase** from 22% the previous year - SCIENCE: On the General Science, exam, **22%** scored at/above 50th percentile, a **decrease** from 25% the previous year. On the Concepts & Processes exam **34%** scored at/above 50th percentile, an **increase** from 27% the previous year *2014 Cohort:* - MATH: **34%** scored at/above 50th percentile, a **decrease** from 41% the previous year - READING: **47%** scored at/above 50th percentile, an **increase** from 37% the previous year - LANGUAGE: **42%** scored at/above 50th percentile, an **increase** from 39% the previous year - SCIENCE: On the General Science, exam, **30%** scored at/above 50th percentile, a **decrease** from 36% the previous year. On the Concepts & Processes exam **42%** scored at/above 50th percentile, an **increase** from 25% the previous year

GOAL	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
5. The percent of TEP 7th and 8th grade cohorts performing at or above Level 3 on the New York State ELA and Mathematics exams will place TEP in the top quartile of all similar schools. The NYCDOE will determine "similar schools" based on characteristics, including but not limited to, geographic location and student ethnic, racial and low-income status.	**N/A.** TEP had only a 5th grade cohort.	**N/A.** TEP had only 5th and 6th grade cohorts.	**Likely Met, but TBD.** Results/Explanation For the 2011-12 school year, TEP had one cohort (the 2013 Cohort) for which this goal applies. The results were as follows: MATH: The 2013 Cohort achieved **76%** proficiency in math as 7th graders in 2012. This is **highly likely** to be in the top quartile of similar schools; this will be determined officially when TEP's NYC 2011-12 School Progress Report is published shortly. For comparison, 47% of 7th graders in Community School District 6 (TEP's host district) were proficient in math in 2012. ELA: The 2013 Cohort achieved **40%** proficiency in ELA as 7th graders in 2012. This is **likely** to be in the top quartile of similar schools; this will be determined officially when TEP's NYC 2011-12 School Progress Report is published shortly. For comparison, 28% of 7th graders in Community School District 6 (TEP's host district) were proficient in ELA in 2012.
6. Each year, TEP will make Adequate Yearly Progress in ELA, math, and science.	**Met.** Results/Explanation NY State School Report Card, 2009-10 Accountability &	**Met.** Results/Explanation NY State School Report Card, 2010-11 Accountability &	**TBD.**

	Overview Report	Overview Report	
7. Each year, TEP will have an average daily student attendance rate of at least 95 percent.	**Met.** Results/Explanation During the 2009-10 school year, TEP had an average daily student attendance rate of 96.5%.	**Met.** Results/Explanation During the 2010-11 school year, TEP had an average daily student attendance rate of 96.6%.	**Met.** Results/Explanation During the 2011-12 school year, TEP had an average daily student attendance rate of 96.5%.

GOAL	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
8. Each year, at least 95 percent of all 5th, 6th, and 7th graders enrolled at TEP for at least 150 days during that school year will enroll at TEP at the beginning of the subsequent school year. This calculation will take place on October 1 of the subsequent school year, and will include all students who were enrolled for at least 150 days during the prior school year and whose current home	**Met.** 99% re-enrollment rate. Results/Explanation During the 2009-10 school year, TEP had 123 students who were enrolled at TEP for 150 school days or more. 2 of these students (student initials: AM, DSB) re-located to a new address after the school year, leaving 121 students eligible for this calculation. As of October 1st 2010, **120 of these 121 students (99%)** re-enrolled at TEP for the 2010-11 school year. Only 1 student (student initials: AC) did not re-enroll at TEP.	**Met.** 98% re-enrollment rate. Results/Explanation During the 2010-11 school year, TEP had 124 students enrolled in Grade 5 for 150 school days or more. 1 of these students (student initials: VC) re-located to a new address after the school year, leaving 123 students eligible for this calculation. As of October 1st 2011, **119 of these 123 students (97%)** were enrolled at TEP for the 2011-12 school year while 4 students (student initials: NR, RR, DM AS) had withdrawn from TEP. During the 2010-11 school year, TEP had 123 students enrolled in Grade 6 for 150 school days or more. 3 of these students (student initials: AC, AO, KS) re-located to a new address after the school year, leaving 120 students eligible for this calculation. As of October 1st	**TBD.** Calculation will be made after October 1, 2012.

address has not changed from the prior school year.		2011, **119 of these 120 students (99%)** were enrolled at TEP for the 2011-12 school year while 1 student (student initials: NA) had withdrawn from TEP. [Note: 3 of the re-enrolled students are repeating Grade 6 at TEP during the 2011-12 school year.] In sum, **98% (238/243)** of students eligible for this calculation were enrolled at TEP as of October 1, 2011.	
9. Each year, at least 85% of full-time teachers who have taught at TEP for the majority of that school year and who are invited to continue teaching at TEP, will return to teach at TEP for the following school year.	**Met.** 100% return rate. Results/Explanation 8 teachers were employed at TEP for the majority of the 2009-10 school year. 6 of these teachers were invited to continue teaching at TEP for the 2010-11 school year. All 6 (100%) of these 6 teachers returned for the 2010-11 school year.	**Not Met.** 81% return rate. Although 9 of the 11 teachers who were invited back to TEP returned for the 2011-12 school year, this falls slightly short of the 85% target. Results/Explanation 15 teachers were employed at TEP for the majority of the 2010-11 school year. 11 of these teachers were invited to continue teaching at TEP for the 2011-12 school year. 9 **(81%)** of these 11 teachers returned to teach at TEP for the 2011-12 school year.	**Met.** 94% return rate. Results/Explanation 24 teachers were employed at TEP for the majority of the 2011-12 school year. 17 of these teachers were invited to continue teaching at TEP for the 2012-13 school year. 16 (94%) of these 17 teachers returned for the 2012-13 school year.

GOAL	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
10. Each year, the school will comply with all applicable laws, rules, regulations and contract terms including, but not limited to, the New York Charter Schools Act, the New York Freedom of Information Law, the New York Open Meetings Law, the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act.	**Met.** To the best of our knowledge, TEP has complied with all applicable laws, rules, regulations, and contract terms.	**Met.** To the best of our knowledge, TEP has complied with all applicable laws, rules, regulations, and contract terms	**Met.** To the best of our knowledge, TEP has complied with all applicable laws, rules, regulations, and contract terms
11. Each year, student enrollment will be within 15% of full enrollment as defined in the school's contract. This will be maintained on an ongoing basis and monitored bi-monthly.	**Met.** Results/Explanation Full enrollment for the 2009-10 school year as defined in TEP's charter is 120 students. TEP maintained an enrollment of between 123 and 126 students at all points during the 2009-10 school year. This is within 5% of TEP's full student enrollment.	**Met.** Results/Explanation Full enrollment for the 2010-11 school year as defined in TEP's charter is 240 students. TEP maintained an enrollment of between 240 and 248 students during the 2010-11 school year. This was within 5% of TEP's full student enrollment.	**Met.** Results/Explanation Full enrollment for the 2011-12 school year as defined in TEP's charter is 360 students. TEP maintained an enrollment of between 356 and 364 students during the 2011-12 school year. This was within 5% of TEP's full student enrollment.
12. Upon completion of the school's first year of operation and every year thereafter, the school will undergo an independent financial audit that will result in an unqualified opinion and no major findings. The	**Met.** Results/Explanation Fruchter, Rosen & Company, PC completed an audit of TEP for the period from	**Met.** Results/Explanation Fruchter, Rosen & Company, PC completed an audit of TEP for the period from	**TBD** Results/Explanation Audit for the period from July 1, 2011 to June 30, 2012 will be completed by Nov 1,

NYCDOE will determine a finding to be "major" if it indicates a deliberate act of wrongdoing, reckless conduct or causes a loss of confidence in the abilities or integrity of the school or seriously jeopardizes the continued operation of the school.	January 15, 2008 (inception) to June 30, 2010. This independent financial audit resulted in an unqualified opinion and no major findings.	July 1, 2010 to June 30, 2011. This independent financial audit resulted in an unqualified opinion and no major findings.	2012.

GOAL	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
13. Each year, the school will operate on a balanced budget and maintain a stable cash flow. A budget will be considered "balanced" if revenues equal or exceed expenditures for the fiscal year, as calculated on June 30, the final day of the fiscal year. The New York City Department of Education (NYC DOE) will monitor the school via quarterly financial statements (including statement of activities), liquidity, and liabilities accumulated by the school. A ratio analysis will be used by the NYC DOE to determine financial stability of the school. All financial elements, including cash flow, will be reviewed holistically by NYC DOE while making this determination. Specifically for cash flow, NYC DOE will review liquid assets the school has on hand versus short term liabilities, notes payable (short term), accounts payable and other dues (if funds due to NYC DOE) to determine if the school can continue being	**Met.** Results/Explanation As demonstrated by TEP's audited financial statements, TEP maintained a balanced budget and maintained a stable cash flow for the audited period from January 15, 2008 (inception) to June 30, 2010.	**Met.** Results/Explanation As demonstrated by TEP's audited financial statements, TEP maintained a balanced budget and maintained a stable cash flow for the audited period from July 1, 2010 to June 30, 2011.	**Met.** Results/Explanation TEP maintained a balanced budget and maintained a stable cash flow for the period from July 1, 2011 to June 30, 2012. This will be verified via audited financial statements, which will be available after November 1, 2012.

financially solvent.			
14. Each year, parents will express satisfaction with the school's program, based on the school's Parent Satisfaction Survey. Satisfaction will have been met if each survey item receives a positive response from at least 80% of all parents. All parents include those who do not respond to the survey. A positive response is defined as either of the two responses to the item that reflect most favorably on the school's learning environment. (For example, for the survey item "My child is safe at school," there are five possible responses: (1) strongly agree, (2) agree, (3) disagree, (4) strongly disagree, and (5) don't know. The responses "strongly agree" and "agree" are considered positive responses.) TEP will utilize an adapted version of the NYC DOE Learning Environment Survey to gage parent and student satisfaction. Please note that this survey is subject to change upon charter issuance and during operation.	**Met.** Results/Explanation 93% of TEP parents responded to The NYC DOE 2009-10 School Survey. Relative to all NYC middle schools, TEP rated in the highest of five levels in all 4 categories: Academic Expectations, Communication, Engagement, and Safety & Respect. Questions for all 4 major survey categories generated a positive response from at least 80% of the school's parents.	**Met.** Results/Explanation 99% of TEP parents responded to The NYC DOE 2010-11 School Survey. Relative to all NYC middle schools, TEP rated in the highest of five levels in all 4 categories: Academic Expectations, Communication, Engagement, and Safety & Respect. Questions for all 4 major survey categories generated a positive response from at least 80% of the school's parents.	**Met.** Results/Explanation 95% of TEP parents responded to The NYC DOE 2011-12 School Survey. Relative to all NYC middle schools, TEP rated in the second highest of five levels in all 4 categories: Academic Expectations, Communication, Engagement, and Safety & Respect. Questions for all 4 major survey categories generated a positive response from at least 80% of the school's parents.

Part 4: Charter School Performance Data

Percent of Students Scoring at or above Level 3 - Whole School[13]

ELA	2009	2010	2011	2012
The Equity Project Charter School		24.2	30.6	33.6
CSD 6*		33.2	33.5	32.5
NYC*		46.2	46.3	46.9
Math	**2009**	**2010**	**2011**	**2012**
The Equity Project Charter School		37.4	48.6	56.0
CSD 6*		48.9	48.2	50.6
NYC*		59.7	59.5	60.6

Percent of Students Scoring at or above Level 3 - By Grade

Grade 5

ELA	2009	2010	2011	2012
The Equity Project Charter School		24.2	31.1	24.8
CSD 6		33.2	38.4	37.6
NYC		46.2	49.0	52.2
Math	**2009**	**2010**	**2011**	**2012**
The Equity Project Charter School		37.4	55.6	45.5
CSD 6		123.0	124.0	121.0
NYC		59.7	62.9	65.2

Grade 6

ELA	2009	2010	2011	2012
The Equity Project Charter School			30.1	37.1
CSD 6			28.6	31.4
NYC			43.6	45.3
Math	**2009**	**2010**	**2011**	**2012**
The Equity Project Charter School			41.5	48.4
CSD 6			45.4	50.2
NYC			56.0	59.3

[13] All data from NYC DOE website.
http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/data/TestResults/ELAandMathTestResults.
*CSD and City data represent the average performance of the same testing grades of the school.

Grade 7

ELA	2009	2010	2011	2012
The Equity Project Charter School				39.3
CSD 6				28.4
NYC				43.3
Math	2009	2010	2011	2012
The Equity Project Charter School				75.9
CSD 6				47.4
NYC				57.3

NYC DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Dennis M. Walcott, Chancellor

THE EQUITY PROJECT CHARTER SCHOOL
RENEWAL VISIT REPORT

OCTOBER 2012

Part A: Executive Summary

Renewal Review Process Overview:

The New York City Department of Education (NYC DOE) Charter Schools Accountability and Support (CSAS) team conducts renewal visits of charter schools authorized by the NYC DOE. The renewal visit is designed to address four questions: is the school an academic success; is the school a fiscally sound, viable organization; is the school in compliance with its charter and all applicable laws and regulations; and what are the school's plans for its next charter term? The visits are conducted by representatives of CSAS and may also include the district superintendent and other DOE staff or consultants. The visits last the duration of two to three school days. The renewal visit begins with a meeting with the school leadership team. Afterward, the reviewers visit classrooms and hold brief meetings with available administrators, teachers, and students. They also review academic and operational documents. Additionally, reviewers meet with one or more of the school's Board representatives and speak to a sampling of the school's parents. 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 renewal 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 October 11-12, 2012:

- Richard Larios, Senior Director, NYC DOE CSAS
- Gabrielle Mosquera, Director of Oversight, NYC DOE CSAS
- Kamilah O'Brien, Director of Operations, NYC DOE CSAS
- Simeon Stolzberg, Consultant to NYC DOE CSAS
- Lynnette Aqueron, NYC DOE Division of Students with Disabilities & ELLs

Part B: Renewal Visit Observations

Areas of Strength

The Equity Project (TEP) Charter School has demonstrated consistent academic progress to the limited degree possible during the three years for which it has received state assessment results during its initial charter term.

- The school has improved its overall proficiency rates (students scoring Level 3 and above) each year in both ELA (24.2 to 31 to 33.2%) and Math (37.1 to 48.8 to 56.1%).[14] For the two cohorts of students for which there is more than one year of data, the successive year results to the baseline year have shown increases in the proficiency levels in both ELA and Math in 5 of 6 instances. The school's first entering 5th grade cohort grew from 37% proficient in 2010 to 41.5% in 2011 as 6th graders to 76% proficiency as 7th graders on the NYS Math exams in 2012. Similarly, as 5th graders in 2010 24.2% were proficient in ELA, then 30.1% as 6th graders and 40% were proficient as 7th graders. The second cohort of students who began at TEP in the 5th grade in 2011, improved in ELA (31.1% to 37.1%) but not in Math in 2012.[15]

- The first cohort also outperformed its local school district in 2012 in both ELA and Math, by almost 28.5 percentage points in Math and 10.9 points in ELA, a reversal from when the students entered in 5th grade. Its 2012 7th grade Math proficiency level also exceeded city averages by 18.6 percentage points and met its charter goal target of 75% proficiency (though just for that grade).[16]

- The Equity Project Charter School received an overall grade of B in 2010-11 on the NYC Progress Report (PR), and improved to an A on the 2011-12 PR, earning As on each of the three elements, Student Progress, Student Performance and School Environment and earning 4.5 points for Closing the Achievement Gap.

- The school has made a commitment to hiring high-quality, content expert teachers in all subjects to teach a rich and challenging curriculum to historically under-served students.
  - Master teachers are recruited and held accountable for student performance.
  - Staff has worked to align curriculum and instruction with Common Core expectations with the intent of having incoming 5th grade students to achieve proficiency by the 7th or 8th grade.
  - Teachers develop student achievement reports (SARs) that establish specific and measurable goals for their classes that drive planning and evaluation.
  - The challenge level of text has been increased; one teacher described using an online system to get lexile scores in order to select appropriate challenging

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[14] 2009-2012 Progress Reports.
[15] Grade-level data from NYC DOE website.
[16] Grade-level data from NYC DOE website.

materials and 8th grade students were observed reading, discussing and writing about *The Old Man and the Sea*.

- o Additional time has been devoted to literacy and math instruction, including targeted instruction for students who need additional support and those preparing to take Regents exams in 8th grade.

- The literacy block is planned and used in different ways for individual grades as the school develops strategies for raising student achievement in ELA. In addition, some school-wide strategies are employed to meet the needs of English language learners, such as an emphasis on vocabulary development across subjects. This was evident in many classrooms with Word Walls and the deliberate use of subject-specific vocabulary.

- The school administers a range of useful assessments, including the NWEA MAP exams, Scholastic Reading Inventory, school-created interim assessments, and practice state tests, that inform instruction, program evaluation, and decision-making.

  - o The school's administration collects and analyzes data, including disaggregation of at-risk student groups' academic performance. For example, the school's renewal application examines results for all special education students, special education students coming to the school from self-contained classrooms, special education students receiving SETSS (Special Education Teacher Support Services), and Black & Hispanic males in the lowest third city-wide.

- Advanced students are enrolled in one or more of the following: 7th grade Honors High School Prep Class (which includes Math & ELA content), 8th grade Math Regents, and 8th grade Earth Science Regents.

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The school has developed a safe, orderly and positive learning environment that is conducive to learning.

- The school is safe and orderly. The entire school is housed in trailers requiring students to go outside between each class. Observed transitions were quiet, efficient and consistently monitored by staff. Interviewed students did not raise concerns about safety at the school, which is consistent with 2011-12 NYC School Survey findings where the vast majority of students indicated that they feel safe in their classes and in public spaces.

- Within observed classrooms students were well-behaved and respectful. Most teachers have established and instilled routines and procedures and students had internalized expectations and adapted to the unique challenges of their campus. For example, with relatively large classes in small spaces the norm, students entered, hung their bags on hooks and quickly found their seats with efficiency and consideration. Teachers used a variety of techniques to call students to attention, such as count downs, which allow

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- Within observed classrooms students were well-behaved and respectful. Most teachers have established and instilled routines and procedures and students had internalized expectations and adapted to the unique challenges of their campus. For example, with relatively large classes in small spaces the norm, students entered, hung their bags on hooks and quickly found their seats with efficiency and consideration. Teachers used a variety of techniques to call students to attention, such as count downs, which allow

them to quickly move on to the next step in their lesson. Interviewed students consistently reported that teachers are supportive and care about their learning.

- As the school does not have deans, teachers are expected to be proficient in classroom management and handle most discipline concerns within their classroom. The school believes that disciplinary consequences "should promote relationship-building and repair (e.g. between a pair of students or between a teacher and a student." Thus, teachers conduct lunch detention with their students and higher level infractions such as physical violence or disruptive insubordination result in in-school suspension or teacher shadow suspensions.

- To facilitate relationships between adults and students, the school has an Advisory program, which is used to teach the school values, and extended day clubs that allow teachers and students to participate in fun activities together. In an observed Advisory class students have opportunities to share what is on their minds followed by a goal-setting activity. Interviewed teachers and students were enthusiastic about the extended day programming, including, for students, the opportunities to have choices.

- The school has hired a social worker for each grade level who provides counseling, works with teachers on student behavioral plans, and has an advisory section. Each social worker has a project, such as sex education or a peer mentoring program, to enhance the school climate. They also contribute curriculum and ideas to the Advisory program. Social workers loop with their grade in order to maintain and deepen consistent relationships with students and parents.

- Parents and staff have indicated consistent satisfaction with the school on the NYC School Survey. Over the course of its first charter term satisfaction results have been well above or above average compared to other NYC middle schools. The school also conducts parent workshops to familiarize families with school goals and state testing expectations. The school reports an active parent association and participation in parent-teacher conferences.

The school has a variety of programs and staff to meet the needs of at-risk students.

- Teachers have access to their students' individualized education programs (IEPs), which they can use to inform instructional planning. According to teacher interviews, special education teachers discuss with general education teachers salient features of the IEPs, including strategies and specific accommodations for each student.

- The school has enhanced the use of CTT classes, with one to two classes per grade.

- Teachers plan together and develop a co-teaching contract in the summer to articulate expectations and roles and identify each other's strengths and weaknesses.

- The school has an ESL specialist who works with ELL students, doing both push-ins and pullouts as appropriate, and her whole school service role is coordinating ESL services and supports.
- Lunch coaches will take over lunch duty in November and free teachers to push into other classes and provide targeted support to students in need.
- The school has a tutoring program to provide students with additional support. Tutors are currently being sought for this year to work with students during or after school.
- Summer school was started last year and includes students whose promotion is in doubt.

The school has been fiscally sound through its first charter term, meeting its financial and operational goals set out in its charter.
- The school has creatively managed to operate its school in 15 trailers (30 classrooms) installed next to a traditional DOE school building. Despite having to go outside to move between classes and no formal cafeteria or auditorium, the school has built a sense of community.
- The school has had a balanced budget and each year has built a surplus, which it intends to use for a new facility and to enhance staffing.
- The academic program appears to be well-resourced. The use of technology was evident through the school, including whiteboards, electronic clickers and tablets. Teachers also receive a substantial discretionary classroom budget.
- The school has initiated a detailed plan to fund and build a new facility for the school and is mid-way in fund-raising the amounts necessary to begin construction.

The school serves a comparable at-risk population to the district.
- Free and Reduced-price Lunch (FRL) and Students With Disabilities (SWD) populations are equal to or greater than their respective averages in CSD 6—85% FRL to 78.4% in November 2012 ATS data pull and 21% SWD to 14%.
- English Language Learners (ELL) at the school are below the district (21% in November 2012 compared to 32.3%) and the school has been refining and monitoring its recruitment efforts to continue to reach more comparable averages of ELL students.

The school has strong, stable leadership and an active and engaged board.
- The founding principal remains at the school and the school has expanded leadership capacity by promoting a founding teacher to the role of Assistant Principal last year. In addition, two teachers now serve as mentors to provide more support and feedback to teachers.

- The school has a strong board of trustees. The board is very focused on results and regularly reviews data, including student performance results. The board has also played a key role in supporting Common Core alignment.

The school has established a professional culture focused on achieving its mission.
- Teachers at TEP are provided with considerable autonomy with regards to curriculum and instruction, and work collaboratively to vertically align the academic program from grade to grade.
- The school's teacher partnership program creates regular opportunities for peer observation and feedback to foster continuous growth. One teacher said it holds her accountable because she "can't hide." Partners change quarterly, which allows teachers to interact with peers outside their grade and discipline. The school reports that the partnership program has become more structured and focused to emphasize school-wide priorities. For example, the observation protocol has been realigned to the Common Core with English language arts and Social Studies protocols focused on use of text and the math protocol in the process of being revised.
- All teachers have "whole school service roles" based on the identified needs of the school. For examples, some teachers are responsible for mentoring apprentice teachers and others in need to additional development. Another role is taking the lead on developing incentives for their grade to encourage positive student behavior. Another role is handing parent engagement.
- A number of classes are taught by two teachers who are required to develop a co-teaching contract that describes explicit expectations for roles. The expectation is that teachers will be act and be seen by students as equals.
- The school uses a variety of observation protocols, including one focused on use of text and a math protocol aligned to the Common Core, which has just been compiled. Reviewed observation documents focused on a range of topics, including quality of texts, questioning and student work and engagement.

Areas of Growth

The school should continue to develop and align curriculum to the Common Core Learning Standards and enhance the consistency of the rigor and engagement of instruction in all grades and subjects to ensure that TEPs' record of progress to date is sustained and accelerated where needed to reach its charter goals.
- Despite the growth TEP students have shown in ELA the school's grade level averages and overall averages are still low, below city averages and well below the charter's

absolute goals. The proficiency levels of the 2012 6th graders declined in Math from their results in 5th grade (55.6% to 48.4%)[17] and while 7th graders students attained the school's absolute academic goal set in TEP's charter, the 5th and 6th grades proficiency levels, while higher than ELA averages, are still significantly below the absolute goals of the charter.

- Though the school has clearly committed to a more challenging curriculum, the rigor of observed instruction varied across subjects and grades.
    o In some classes the teacher consistently challenged student to demonstrate higher order thinking skills, pressing them to explain their answers. In keeping with the school's emphasis on Common Core, students were often asked to support their answers with evidence from text. Some teachers instilled a sense of urgency and the pacing was appropriate. In other classes, the level of questioning remained basic, e.g., focused primarily on comprehension of plot points in a text rather than inferences about themes that required deeper analysis and understanding. Some teachers relied on leading questions and pushed students towards a desired answer rather than helping them explore text to figure it out for themselves. Overall rigor, pacing, and engagement were stronger in math classes than in ELA classes.
    o In addition, in some observed classes disproportionate amounts of lesson time was devoted to going over introductory activities, such as Do Nows and Warm Ups, leaving little time for addressing the lesson objective or providing independent practice.
    o Reviewed curriculum resources varied in format and depth: curriculum maps included combinations of standards, objectives, resources, and vocabulary. Some unit plans included essential questions, big ideas and concepts but these were not generally observed posted in classrooms or discussed in lessons during the days of the visit.
    o Groups of students interviewed during the visit felt they were not being challenged enough and cited minimal homework as an example.
- While students were generally attentive and compliant with teacher directions, on the days of the evaluation visit not all student were consistently engaged in learning activities.
    o Classes are typically large, some with over 30 students, and in some classes students were allowed to disengage from learning without redirection or consequences. For example, in one class a student in the back had a blank worksheet for the entire period, even after the teacher had gone over it with the class.
    o Several observed classes were whole group instruction and focused on going over problems together, which some students clearly already understood while others struggled, resulting in inconsistent focus from both sets of students.
    o In addition, many classes were teacher centered for the bulk of the period, leaving little opportunity for independent practice or peer interaction.

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[17] NYC DOE website data.

- Other than through grouping, there was limited evidence of differentiated instruction.
  - There were few instances of differentiated materials, pedagogical methods or pacing within classes. Leveled texts were present in many classes, but not seen in use during the evaluation visit. Some teachers indicated that they do modify assignments, provide choices and show multiple ways to solve problems. However, during observations students typically worked on the same assignment and in some classes some students finished a task such as brief Do Now quickly and then sat with nothing to do while others students continued to work.
  - The school has at least one collaborative team teaching (CTT) class on each grade level, but the use of multiple adults was not consistently maximized. For example, whole group lessons was the predominant mode of instruction and the two adult often followed the lead and assist model. In the same vein, the team teaching model has not always been effective. For example, in one class a teacher cut off the other teacher and moved on, allowing a misconception about the definition of a vocabulary word to remain.
  - The school has grouped some classes by skill level, e.g., honors classes, to meet the needs of more accelerated students.
- While teacher content knowledge appears consistently strong across subject areas, their skill in effective and efficient pedagogy varied.
- Classroom observations noted that use of checks for understanding routines varied in frequency and effectiveness. Cold calling was used frequently but some teachers also did quick confirming whole group assessment while many did not; teachers did circulate to observe student work, some with a method to ensure all student work was checked, others more randomly; and while the school does employ electronic clickers for quick assessments it was observed in a minority of classes—used very effectively in those classes to speed up processing of Do Now work or manage whole class debriefs.

The school should continue to develop systems and programs to ensure the needs of all students are met.
- Some teachers are leading support classes outside of their subject area expertise using curriculum and/or lesson plans developed by other teachers. While this approach provides opportunities for targeted instruction with smaller class sizes, school leaders noted the need to provide these teachers with additional content support and training.
- As noted, the school has implemented two collaborative team teaching (CTT) classes in some grades this year to meet the needs of its students with disabilities. Like other co-taught classes the school should continue to work at improving the quality of the co-teaching model, clarifying roles of co-teachers and paras, planning for more targeted differentiation to more effectively address the individual needs of students and accelerate the learning of all.
- Some students are not yet receiving the physical and occupational therapy mandated in IEPs. The school should work with its CSE to ensure that these services are supplied as required.

The school should continue to address the issue of sustainability in a school that delegates a great deal of responsibility to faculty.

- While overall results on the NYC DOE School Survey are very positive, teacher satisfaction results on the 2011-12 survey declined in all four categories between .9 and 1.3. School leaders have used internal surveys and other resources to develop responses (mentors, for example, but also see below) to improve this and they should monitor impact of such efforts and make adjustments as needed.
- The school has implemented a number of strategies to support teachers and make a challenging job more sustainable. For example, to combat burnout school leaders instituted Take Off Tuesdays, which they intend to implement again this year. The teacher partnership program is designed to provide teachers with ongoing feedback from diverse perspectives, though teachers indicated that the value varied. School leaders also indicated a desire to increase the faculty, but have not yet determined in what areas and when that will be feasible.
- A number of planned strategies have not been fully implemented because most teachers are not yet eligible, i.e., sabbaticals and bonuses, and the school still has work to do to determine the most effective way to implement these programs both operationally and financially.
- The school has a set an ambitious fundraising goal in order to implement its facility plan and realize the dream of being housed in a single building, which has the potential to distract leadership and governance from monitoring and holding faculty accountable for student achievement.
- While teachers do receive regular observation and feedback by administration and peers, historically, classroom observation have been more focused on struggling teachers, though the introduction of the Assistant Principal position and staff mentors is designed to increase the frequency of guidance and support for all teachers.
- Though reviewed evaluation documents was evidence-based and contained qualitative data and areas for improvement, the school has not clearly articulated expectations for teacher performance. The school continues to develop its evaluation system, with a goal of two formal evaluations per year by the Principal and Assistant Principal.
  - o Teachers are assessed on five primary domains, including professional expectations, adherence to norms, classroom management, and instructional planning and delivery, as well as six secondary domains, such as hallway transitions, class environment, whole school service, extended day leadership and teacher partnerships.
  - o Peer survey results were recently incorporated into the evaluation system and teachers were not completely clear on or comfortable with their role in evaluation.
  - o Some interviewed teachers felt the evaluation process did not focus enough on the quality of instruction. In addition, not all elements in the evaluation system have been monitored or scored. Nevertheless, the school does use this system

to determine which teachers will be retained each year and which will be let go, using the process to ensure staff members are a mission fit.

- Staff turnover is a challenge for grade level teams and departments to develop coherence. School leaders noted that the hiring process has improved, including the increased input of current faculty, which has resulted in stronger staff. The school has also begun to hire "apprentice" teachers who have lower expectations initially and time to develop into master teachers, generally one to two years, before retention decisions are made.

Part 6: Background on the Charter Renewal Process

I. PROCESS BACKGROUND

A. Statutory Basis for Renewal

The Charter Schools Act of 1998 ("the Act") authorizes the creation of charter schools to provide opportunities for teachers, parents, and community members to establish and maintain schools that operate independently of existing schools and school districts in order to accomplish the following objectives:

- Improve student learning and achievement;

- Increase learning opportunities for all students, with special emphasis on expanded learning experiences for students who are at-risk of academic failure;

- Provide parents and students with expanded choices in the types of educational opportunities that are available within the public school system;

- Create new professional opportunities for teachers, school administrators and other school personnel;

- Encourage the use of different and innovative teaching methods;

- Provide schools with a method to change from rule-based to performance based accountability systems by holding the schools accountable for meeting measurable student achievement results.[18]

When granted, a charter is valid for up to five years. For a school chartered under the Act to operate beyond the initial charter term, the school must seek and obtain renewal of its charter.[19]

A school seeking renewal of its charter must submit a renewal application to the charter entity to which the original charter application was submitted. [20] As one such charter entity, the New York City Department of Education ("NYCDOE") institutes a renewal application process that adheres to the Act's renewal standards:

- A report of the progress of the charter school in achieving the educational objectives set forth in its charter;

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[18] See § 2850 of the Charter Schools Act of 1998.
[19] See §§ 2851(4) and 2852 of the Act.
[20] See generally §§ 2851(3) and 2851(4).

- A detailed financial statement that discloses the cost of administration, instruction and other spending categories for the charter school that will allow a comparison of such costs to other schools, both public and private;
- Copies of each of the annual reports of the charter school including the charter school report cards and certified financial statements;
- Indications of parent and student satisfaction.

Where the NYCDOE approves a renewal application, it is required under the Act to submit the application and a proposed charter to the Board of Regents for its review and approval.[21]

B. NYCDOE's Charter Renewal Process

The expiration of charters and their renewal based on a compelling record of success is the linchpin of charter school accountability. The NYCDOE's processes and procedures reflect this philosophy and therefore meet the objectives of the Act.[22]

In the final year of its charter, a Chancellor-authorized charter school seeking renewal must demonstrate its success during the initial charter term and establish goals and objectives for the next charter term. Ultimately, the renewal process offers an opportunity for the school community to reflect on its experiences during its first term, to make a compelling, evidence-based case that it has earned the privilege of an additional charter term, and, if renewed, to build an ambitious plan for the future.

Consistent with the requirements of § 2851(4) of the Act, a school applying for renewal of its charter must use data and other credible evidence to prove its success, a case that can be organized into three questions:

1. Has your school been an academic success?
2. Has your school been a viable organization?
3. Has your school complied with applicable laws and regulations?

A school will answer these overarching questions by demonstrating that its students have made significant academic progress and that the school has met the goals and objectives pledged in its initial charter. In addition, the school will describe challenges it has faced during its charter term, the strategies that were used to address those challenges, and the lessons learned.

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[21] § 2852(5)
[22] The NYCDOE charter renewal application is available on the Office of Charter Schools website at http://schools.nyc.gov/community/planning/charters/default.htm

This report contains the findings and recommendations of the NYCDOE regarding a school's application for charter renewal. This report is based on a cumulative record of the school's progress during its charter term, including but not limited to oversight visits, annual reports, and formal correspondence between the school and its authorizing entities, all of which are conducted in order to identify areas of weakness and to help the school to address them. Additionally, the NYCDOE incorporates into this report its findings from the renewal application process, which includes a written application, completion of student achievement data templates, and a school visit by the Charter Schools Accountability and Support team of the NYCDOE ("NYCDOE CSAS").

The NYCDOE CSAS then prepares a draft report and provides a copy to the school for its review and comment. The draft contains the findings, discussion, and the evidence base for those findings. Upon receiving a school's comment, the NYCDOE CSAS reviews its draft, makes any appropriate changes, and reviews the amended findings to make a recommendation to the Chancellor. The Chancellor's final decision, and the findings on which that decision is based, is submitted to the Board of Regents for a final decision.

Part 7: The CSAS Accountability Framework

Throughout the Renewal Process and the life of each school's charter, the NYCDOE Charter Schools Office uses the following Accountability Framework to monitor Charter School success:

To help NYC DOE authorized charter schools better understand what we mean by success for charter schools, the CSAS team has developed an Accountability Framework built 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 laws and regulations?
4. What are the school's plans for its next charter term?

There is no strict, number-driven point scale for applying the framework to a school's overall performance record. Although academic performance is primary, the NYC DOE takes into account a wide variety of factors (as indicated by the framework strands and available evidence detail) when evaluating a school.

What follows is a framework that outlines strands, indicators, and potential evidence for each of the four essential questions. The framework identifies what CSAS looks at in determining whether a school is successful enough to earn a new charter term, with or without conditions. As schools use the Accountability Framework, they should remember that charter schools exist to deliver improved student achievement for the students they serve, particularly at-risk students, so they can be high-quality choices for families. This reminder should help a school apply this framework to its own performance analysis, underscoring the state and city's commitment to superior academic performance as the most important factor in a school's performance.

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 location[23] *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

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

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

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

Part 8: NYC DOE School Progress Reports

[KAMILAH TO VERIFY CORRECT FORMAT FOR THESE AND INSERT]

Please see the attached progress reports for this school.

Please see below the historical annual site visit reports for this school.

THE EQUITY PROJECT CHARTER SCHOOL

ANNUAL SITE VISIT REPORT

MARCH 2012

School Overview and History:

The Equity Project Charter School (TEP) is a middle school serving approximately 358 students from fifth through seventh grade in the 2011-12 school year.[24] The school is in the fourth year of its first charter term, although it took a planning year in 2008-09. It plans to expand to eighth grade during its current charter term (ending in 2013), at which point it will be operating at its full capacity of grades offered.[25] It has not stated any plans for further grade expansion or replication during its current or, if approved for renewal, next charter term.TEP is currently housed in annex trailers in District 6. The school's student body includes 89.1% students eligible for Free or Reduced Price Lunch, 25.1% English Language Learners, and 20.4% special education students.[26]

The school has experienced low student attrition over the past two years, with 1.6% turnover in 2010-11 and 3.4% turnover as of March 15, 2012.[27] As of March 2012, there were 224 students on TEP's waitlist.[28] The average attendance rate for school year 2011-12 was 97% at the time of the visit.[29]

TEP earned a B on its first NYC DOE Progress Report (in 2010-2011).[30] The school's scores on the NYC DOE School Survey in 2010-11 were well above average in all categories (Academic Expectations, Communication, Engagement, Safety and Respect) with 99% of parents and 100% of teachers and students participating.[31] The school is in good standing with state and federal accountability measures.[32]

The Equity Project Charter School is an independent charter school not associated with a charter management organization (CMO) or other parent organization. The school has had one leader, Zeke Vanderhoek, since its inception.

Annual Review Process Overview:

The New York City Department of Education (NYC DOE) office of Charter Schools Accountability and Support (CSAS) conducts an annual site visit of charter schools authorized by the NYC DOE. The site

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[24] Self-reported on school's Annual Site Visit Data Collection Form (3/15/12)

[25] NYC DOE ATS system and charter agreement

[26] NYC DOE ATS system, April 2012; the school's self-reported numbers (3/15/12) are nearly identical to those from the ATS system pull: 88.8% students eligible for Free or Reduced Price Lunch (318 out of 358); 25.1% students who are English Language Learners (90 out of 358); and 20.4% special education students (73 out of 358).

[27] Self-reported on school's Annual Site Visit Data Collection Forms (6/7/2011 and 3/15/12)

[28] Self-reported on school's Annual Site Visit Data Collection Form (3/15/12)

[29] Self-reported on school's Annual Site Visit Data Collection Form (3/15/12)

[30] NYC DOE Progress Report webpage: http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/tools/report/default.htm

[31] NYC DOE website: http://schools.nyc.gov/OA/SchoolReports/2010-11/Survey_2011_M388.pdf

[32] New York State Education Department - www.nysed.gov

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 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 28, 2012:

- Gabrielle Mosquera, Director of Oversight, NYC DOE CSAS
- Simeon Stolzberg, Consultant to NYC DOE CSAS

Part 2: Findings

Areas of Strength:

- Classroom instruction observed on the day of the visit was always purposeful, often engaging and sometimes rigorous.
    - o Observed lessons appeared purposeful and organized. Teachers had clear agendas and prepared materials. With state tests imminent, many lessons were designed to prepare students for the format and content of those exams. For example, an English teacher provided students with exemplars of different levels from a state test open-response question.
    - o Students were consistently engaged in learning activities. Pacing was typically appropriate for the type of lessons, though some lessons seemed constrained by the 45-minute periods. Most teachers had effective classroom management techniques with clear procedures in place.
    - o There was evidence that teachers are checking for understanding, including questioning, observation, and evaluation of student work. In a number of classes teachers explained that they were focusing on particular skills or topics because they had noticed a number of students struggling with them.
    - o Some differentiation was observed, including use of leveled texts and challenge problems. A CTT class used parallel teaching to focus on the same material with different pacing and scaffolding. A 7th grade honors class has been formed that participates in a special high school prep program to prepare for the selective high school exams.

- TEP has established a safe and orderly environment that is conducive to learning.
    - o On the day of the visit most students in observed classrooms were well-behaved and on task. Observed teachers had clear classroom management procedures in place (e.g., norms and routines for hand signals, selecting independent reading books, working collaboratively) that most students appeared to have internalized. Although the school being housed in trailers forces transitions between classes to be held outside, these were

shown to be efficient, with silent lines enforced in the 5th and 6th grade while 7th grade students were permitted to talk quietly. Within observed classrooms students were respectful and attentive.

- o The school has refined its discipline system to include an in-school suspension program that is described by staff as more redemptive than punitive. Students are provided work and monitored by one of the school's social workers; all of the suspended student's teachers are expected to check in during the day and students complete a reflection assignment.
- o The school evidences a clear focus on character development. Many teachers observed on the day of the visit used praise to reinforce desired behaviors. The school holds weekly assemblies to celebrate student successes, and honor roll students receive special uniform shirts.

- The school has developed a professional culture that focuses on teacher responsibility, encourages collaboration (with an emphasis in the 2011-12 school year on teacher partnership), and is receptive to teacher input.
  - o While the school had added to its administration team with the addition of an assistant principal position, part of each teacher's job description is "whole school service." Teachers also have significant input into the direction of the school; for example, results of teacher surveys were used to determine the school-wide focus on teacher partnership work. Additionally, teachers interviewed reported that they could create their own discipline incentives this year. As one teacher interviewed stated, "Leaders are open to initiatives. You need to run it past them, and it may or may not work, but people aren't afraid to try."
  - o While the school has very high expectations for teachers, new teachers noted significant orientation and ongoing support to help them thrive. Similarly, and partly in response to significant turnover midway through the previous school year, school leaders have refined their hiring practices and increased their focus on candidates who can demonstrate commitment for teaching in urban schools.
    - ▪ The school's current hiring process emphasizes commitment-based evidence such as the teacher's previous attendance record over its previous emphasis on self-reflective essays. This shift is supported by current staff. Said one interviewed teacher, "A TEP teacher need not be a genius, but does need to be able to stick it out."
    - ▪ Additionally, the hiring process now involves TEP teachers more directly than it had in previous years. All teachers are now invited to observe demo lessons by teacher candidates as well as participate in roundtable discussions with candidates to help determine fit. School leaders reported that approximately 8 teachers came to one candidate's demo lesson earlier in the year.
  - o Professional development is driven primarily through teacher partnerships. Each quarter teachers are paired; partners observe each other twice per week and meet afterward to provide constructive feedback. This year the school has adopted school-wide foci for partnerships, including vocabulary development and listening skills.
    - ▪ Teachers interviewed praised the partnership model. Several special subject teachers stated that it positively challenged them to learn to teach outside of their content areas. Another teacher stated that the partnerships "force you out of the isolation of teaching."
  - o Regular meetings to address teaching and learning issues are held for faculty, grade teams and departments.
  - o Formal evaluations are conducted at least twice per year and focus on five domains. Teachers interviewed appreciated the feedback garnered from these and described it as focused and actionable. Informal feedback was similarly praised. One teacher interviewed stated that while it was initially startling to have so many people coming in and out of the classroom, "It never feels judgmental. Zeke always points out things that are concise and actionable." Another teacher stated that school leaders encouraged him to "make a lot of small fixes, but it adds up."

- o Teachers interviewed praised the school's level of administrative support and resources as well as the efficiency and professionalism of its operations team. Classroom libraries and technology were evident throughout the school.

- The school collects a significant amount of assessment data and regularly analyzes results to identify students in need of remediation and skills and topics for re-teaching.
  - o The school administers four "cycle" exams modeled on previous state tests, amending these this year to better reflect the stamina needed for students taking the state exams. According to school leaders, after each cycle learning specialists target students who scored in the 60- to 70-percent range (which the school forecasts as the equivalent of high 2s to low 3s), and are responsible for analyzing this data and using it to modify instructional practices.
  - o TEP introduced a new literacy assessment, Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI), which is administered quarterly and used to track student progress.
  - o An explicit goal-setting process is in place for teachers and used as part of professional development and evaluation. Some goals are set by individual teachers and others are school-wide.

- The school has strong support from its key stakeholders, as evidenced by several measures including (but not limited to) the NYC DOE School Survey.
  - o The school's 2009-10 and 2010-11 NYC DOE School Survey participation rates were extremely high among parents, students, and teachers. In 2009-10, 93 percent of parents and 100 percent of teachers participated (students were not eligible to participate as 5th graders), and the 2010-11 survey had 99 percent parent participation, 100 percent teacher participation, and 100 percent student participation. Scores across all four survey areas (Academic Expectations, Communication, Engagement, and Safety & Respect) were also very high, with an 8.1 (out of a possible 10) being the lowest score in an individual category across both years.
  - o Teachers and other staff members interviewed on the day of the visit consistently voiced support for the school, not only with regard to the professional development and attention they receive but also for the school's mission and initiatives.
  - o School leaders report that TEP's Parent Association has been instrumental this year in helping resolve school community issues such as securing enough MTA buses to transport students to and from school.

- TEP serves a comparable at-risk population to CSD 6: the school's percentages of special education and Free or Reduced Price Lunch students exceed those of the district. TEP's student body has 20.4% special education students compared to 13.9%, and it has 89.1% Free or Reduced Price Lunch students compared to the district average of 80.2%. Its ELL population is high (25.1%) but below the district's (33.4%)[33].
  - o TEP should continue to should its efforts to be in full compliance with the 2010 amended Charter Schools Act as it relates to recruitment and retention of Special Education students, students eligible for Free and Reduced Price Lunch, and ELL students. School leaders stated an intention to add a lottery carve-out for ELLs during its next charter term, and its current recruitment and lottery materials are translated into Spanish. The school is encouraged to continue documenting both its outreach to new ELL students as well as the academic progress made among current ELLs.

Areas of Growth:

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[33] NYC DOE ATS System, April 2012

- The school should continue its efforts to improve the level and consistency of instructional rigor across classrooms and to develop and align its curriculum program across grades in order to continue to improve its academic results and make progress in meeting its charter goals.
  - TEP's overall NYS Math and ELA increased from 2010 to 2011 but were mixed in comparison with CSD 6, above CSD 6 in Grade 5 Math and ELA but below in Grade 6 Math and ELA. Both grade levels in both subjects were below citywide 5th and 6th grade proficiency averages.
  - The level of instructional rigor in observed classrooms ranged from adequate to strong. Some teachers had very effective questioning techniques, asking students to clarify or explain their answers, cite text, or make connections. A few teachers were particularly good at using wait time and guiding questions to help students develop answers, while other teachers moved quickly to other students when one struggled to answer.
  - Teachers continue to be responsible for curriculum development in their grade and subject. As the school has expanded into new grades the subject area departments are becoming more organized with regular meetings and opportunities to vertically align curriculum. However, teacher turnover has limited the departments' ability to cohere and staff acknowledged that curriculum alignment is a work in progress. The school is considering identifying teacher leaders to provide more direction to departments in their development of curriculum and instruction.
  - The school has focused considerable attention this year on developing reading instruction across the curriculum, but acknowledged that a coherent writing program is not yet in place.
  - There is some evidence of curriculum integration across subject areas, but beyond the reading across the curriculum initiative it appears to be informal. For example, the 6th grade has a two-block integrated humanities (English and social studies) class, but it is a function of individual staffing preference rather than a school-wide design feature.

- While the school devotes resources to meeting the needs of at-risk students, it should consider more explicitly monitoring the performance of sub-groups and targeting interventions for them.
  - The school has recently developed reading and mathematics support classes for students performing in the bottom 20 percent according to state test results. A large number of staff members, regardless of subject area, are participating in these classes, allowing for small student-to-teacher ratios. However, it was unclear how the progress of this group was being gauged throughout the year, or to what degree the needs of students within this group were being differentiated.
  - The school had collaborative team teaching (CTT) at each grade in mathematics and English language arts. Some other general education teachers noted their own limited experience in working with at-risk students and stated that they would benefit from additional training in this area.
  - While the school is piloting a tutoring program for very low performing students and is about to launch an online tutoring program, the structure for these initiatives as well as their integration into the school's overall academic supports are still developing.
  - The school has a large of population of English language learners, but strategies employed to reach them within the general education classroom appear to be limited. While different level ELL students are grouped in reading support classes, it was not evident that this supplemental instruction was specifically designed to meet their needs or support their success in the regular classroom. The school is examining the curriculum of its reading support program and considering alternatives. The school should continue this work and carefully monitor the results of different interventions so that the needs of these students are effectively addressed.

- The school should consider strategies for enhancing its analysis of student performance data as well as its role in driving programmatic decisions.
    - Although considerable analysis of student performance data is evident, disaggregation by sub-group does not appear to be driving implementation, evaluation and modification of programs and services for at-risk students.
    - At the time of the visit there was limited evidence of the school examining the predictive power of its assessment data with regards to external accountability measures. As more results from the school's modified and new assessments become available the school should continue to use them to evaluate teachers, programs, and interventions.

Part 3: Essential Questions and Accountability Framework

The CSAS 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 Accountability and Support team (CSAS) has developed an Accountability Framework build around four essential questions for charter school renewal:

5. Is the school an academic success?
6. Is the school a fiscally sound, viable organization?
7. Is the school compliant with its charter and all applicable law and regulations?
8. 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 location[34] *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

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

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

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

THE EQUITY PROJECT CHARTER SCHOOL

ANNUAL SITE VISIT REPORT

JUNE 2011

Part 1: Executive Summary

School Overview and History:

The Equity Project Charter School is a middle school serving 247 students from grade five through grade six in the 2010-2011 school year.[35] The school opened in 2009 with grade five. It has plans to grow to serve students grades five through eight.[36]   It is currently housed in DOE space in District 6.[37]

The school population comprises 8.5% Black, 90.3% Hispanic, 0.4% White, and 0.4% Asian students.[38] 81.4% of students are designated as Title I, compared to the district average of 83.5%.[39] The student body includes 26.3% English language learners (ELL) and 19.0% special education (SPED) students, compared to the district averages of 36.2% ELL and 13.8% SPED.[40]

The school is in its second year and has not yet earned a Progress Report grade or state/federal accountability designation.[41] The average attendance rate for the school year 2009 - 2010 was 96.5%[42].

Annual Review Process Overview:

The NYC DOE Charter Schools Office (CSO) 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 7, 2011:

- Jessica Fredston-Hermann, Analyst, NYC DOE CSO
- Simeon Stolzberg, Consultant

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[35] NYC DOE ATS system
[36] NYC DOE ATS system and charter agreement
[37] NYC DOE Location Code Generating System database
[38] Demographic Data drawn from NYC DOE ATS System
[39] NYC DOE ATS system; data pulled on June 30, 2011
[40] NYC DOE ATS system; data pulled on June 30, 2011
[41] New York State Education Department - www.nysed.gov
[42] NYC DOE School Progress Report

Part 2: Findings

Areas of Strength

- Teachers have developed organized, outcome-driven curricula for each subject. Reviewers noted clear evidence of comprehensive unit and lesson planning.
    - Teachers stated that they use the six-week summer institute to develop curriculum maps with clear objectives for every subject, including physical education and music. Some objectives are assigned to teachers in other subjects to encourage interdisciplinary collaboration; for example, the mathematics objective related to measurement is addressed by the science curriculum and non-fictional text is addressed in social studies and science.
    - Teachers also develop Student Achievement Reports (SARs) that identify key outcomes for each subject.
    - Teachers have substantial autonomy in selecting instructional materials and many develop their own. Teachers interviewed indicated they have adequate resources.
    - On the day of the visit, observed lessons were organized and purposeful.
    - The school has expanded reading and math instruction this year through the addition of a daily Morning Block that includes questions from past state assessments and is intended to foster sustained practice over the course of the week.

- The school administers a range of assessments and uses data to drive instruction and decision-making.
    - The school administers the Rigby Reads test, NWEA MAP computer adaptive tests, pre- and post-unit tests, six-week mini-assessments based on past state exams, writing portfolios, and other teacher-developed formative assessments. Reviewed SARs indicated the use of summative projects as well.
    - The SARs contain mastery and/or growth measures for evaluating student performance in each subject. Data spreadsheets are used to track these measures throughout the year. This year state tests are included as a measure in the SARs.
    - Each grade has a teacher designated as the grade level assessment coordinator who supports administration of assessments and collection and analysis of data.
    - Teachers described using grade and department meetings to evaluate student work together and review assessment results.

- The school provides numerous supports for at-risk students.
    - The school provides a collaborative team teaching (CTT) class in each grade and co-teachers reported planning together and modifying lessons to meet their students' needs.
    - Students also receive pull-out services akin to SETTS during the morning block.
    - The school has a relatively high percentage of Special Education students (SPED). At the time of the visit 46 out of 247 students (18.6%) received SPED services, which is higher than the district average of 13.8%.[43]
    - The school uses a structured immersion approach for English language learners with targeted assistance provided during the Latin period.
    - Low-performing students also receive supplemental reading instruction during the period other students study Latin. The school is using Intervention by Design and Earobics programs for literacy intervention.
    - The Morning Block period also provides opportunities for co-teachers to target instruction to small groups of students.

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[43] NYC DOE ATS system; data pulled on June 30, 2011

- o The school provides support and enrichment classes in the afternoon two days per week.
- o The school has hired a social worker for each grade who loops with students each year. The social worker also coordinates special education administration with the Committee on Special Education (CSE).

- The school has established a professional work environment and provides ongoing support and evaluation to teachers.
  - o Teachers establish professional goals and are expected to provide deliverables such as video clips or observation forms that demonstrate growth.
  - o Quarterly-rotating peer partnerships are used to focus peer observation and interdisciplinary work. Partners are expected to observe (and sometimes film) each other twice per week, and document and share their observations. Post-partnership reflections are included in teacher portfolios that are used as part of formal evaluations. Interviewed teachers stated that it was "really nice" to have time built into the schedule for targeted peer observations and that they appreciated the feedback.
  - o The school has developed a rigorous formal evaluation system that includes SAR data, teacher growth (particularly pertaining to the peer partnerships), and school-wide leadership roles (all teachers are responsible for taking on a role outside the classroom, such as Deans or Assessment Coordinators). In addition, the principal evaluates teacher performance in a range of domains, including professionalism, classroom management, assessment, instruction and parent engagement.
  - o In interviews, teachers described setting their own growth goals and receiving very specific and useful feedback regarding their teaching practice from school leadership as well as their peers.
  - o School leadership is self-reflective and responsive to teachers' requests and concerns. For example, the school Principal decided to bring in outside substitute teachers in the second semester in response to a request to reduce teacher workload. Teachers stated during interviews that they feel comfortable giving the school Principal feedback and making suggestions to improve the school.

- The school has established a culture focused on learning in which teachers and school leadership maintain high expectations for student behavior.
  - o On the day of the visit students were orderly and respectful in classrooms and public spaces. The school has implemented silent transitions between trailers and almost all observed students complied with this expectation.
  - o In observed classrooms most students were engaged in learning activities and appeared to have internalized routines and procedures.
  - o The school is intentional about its discipline practices: school leadership stated that they do not believe in out-of-school suspensions and for most infractions prefer to keep students at school to sustain learning. For minor infractions, students are assigned to "practice" during extended learning block.
  - o The school implemented TIGER values this year and references to these values were observed on classroom posters.
  - o A class challenge chart travels with each class throughout the day and provides incentives for positive behavior.
  - o The school newsletter described the creation of a student anti-bullying leadership council.
  - o Teachers described a collaborative process for reviewing and revising school policies and procedures, such as dismissal and recess.

- The school communicates regularly with families to increase parent engagement.
  - o The school has an active parent association with officers that meets on a semi- monthly basis. The school plans to pay for training to enhance the organization.
  - o The school hosts monthly breakfasts or lemonades for staff to meet with parents.
  - o Parent-teacher conferences are held twice per year, and report cards are provided to parents each quarter.

- o According to school leaders, a number of parents volunteer to assist with events, enrollment outreach, and mailings.
- o The school publishes a regular newsletter in English and Spanish to connect with Spanish-speaking families.

Areas of Growth

- The school should continue to focus on developing curricular coherence across subjects and grades.
  - o Teachers have substantial autonomy in developing their own curriculum. Efforts to vertically integrate the curriculum across grades were described by teachers as informal. The school is encouraged to formalize these efforts to increase vertical coherence across grade levels.
  - o School leaders indicated that the school had implemented the morning block this year to increase coherence across subjects. The school should continue to evaluate this program's impact and make any necessary adjustments based on student results.
  - o The school has begun to emphasize reading and writing across the curriculum; teachers have reportedly developed common rubrics and begun to examine work together to norm expectations. The school should monitor its progress in achieving inter-rater reliability and make adjustments as needed.

- The school should continue to expand opportunities for meeting the needs of all students.
  - o Missed opportunities wherein more advanced students could have been provided with more challenging work were observed in some classes and noted by school leaders. Teachers noted during interviews that there are robust supports in place for at-risk students but that there is currently less focus on the needs of more advanced students. School should identify strategies to improve its instructional differentiation to better meet the needs of all learners.

- The school should continue to focus on recruiting and retaining teachers in an effort to reduce teacher attrition.
  - o The departure of some teachers mid-year has required unexpected changes to the instructional program, such as replacing Latin with a second period of Math for sixth-graders. Teachers and administrators initially covered empty positions until the school decided to hire full-time substitutes to lighten the load. Next year the school intends to overstaff to ensure adequate support in all subjects. The school has also developed apprenticeship positions for the upcoming school year which will provide more leeway in recruiting hard-to-fill positions such as middle school Latin. The school should continue to monitor these solutions and budget appropriately to ensure sustainability of practices.

- The school should continue to refine its outreach strategies for recruitment of ELL students and document its efforts for ongoing monitoring of effectiveness in reaching comparable percentages with its CSD.
  - o The school's student population currently includes 25.9% ELL students (64 out of 247), which is lower than the district average of 36.2%.[44]

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[44] NYC DOE ATS system; data pulled on June 30, 2011

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. <u>Has the School Been an Academic Success?</u>
- 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

- o Develops educational goals and performance metrics that are SMART – Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Reflect the Mission and Time-Specific
  - o Develops assessments that are appropriately aligned with curriculum, instruction, and adopted standards
  - o Provides evidence of how data will influence instruction, professional development and curricular adjustments
- Parent Engagement
  - o Parent engagement strategies that integrate and mobilize parents within the school community as conduits for student success
  - o Capacity to communicate effectively with parents and families
  - o 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
  - o School has articulated appropriate roles, responsibilities, and decision-making structure for school community members (including Board of Trustees and school leadership)
  - o An accountability structure that provides effective oversight of the educational program and fiscal components of the school is in place and utilized
  - o Board regularly reviews a data dashboard of student achievement and fiscal management that forms the basis for Board discussions and decisions
  - o Board has diverse skill set that lends itself to strong educational / operational oversight
  - o Board has an articulated process for ongoing policy development, Board member development and self-evaluation
  - o Organizational charts are aligned with mission; roles and responsibilities are clearly defined
  - o Board has developed essential strategic partnerships with organizations that support the mission of the school
- Community Support
  - o School Leadership demonstrated responsiveness to the unique needs and interests of the community to be served
  - o 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
  - o Well-defined plan and sufficient capacity to service the learning needs of Special Education students, English Language Learners
  - o 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
  - o There is a coherent plan for meeting the non-academic needs of students with disabilities, students with interrupted formal education, and other populations
  - o School employs a process to identify students at risk of not meeting expectations and creates intervention plans and follow up
  - o School demonstrates a comprehensive recruitment, enrollment and retention approach that is sensitive to the diverse needs of students
  - o 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
  - o School is well maintained
  - o Transitions and student gatherings are orderly and well supervised
  - o Expectations for student behavior or 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