

BRONX COMMUNITY  
CHARTER SCHOOL  
ANNUAL SITE VISIT REPORT

APRIL 2010

DRAFT

# Part 1: Executive Summary

## **School Overview and History:**

Bronx Community Charter School is an elementary school serving approximately 150 students from kindergarten through grade 2 in the 2009-2010 school year.<sup>1</sup> The school opened in 2008 with kindergarten and grade 1 and plans to grow to serve students in kindergarten through grade 5.<sup>2</sup> It is currently housed in a private facility in District 10.<sup>3</sup>

The school population comprises 29% Black, 54% Hispanic, 5% White, and 2% Asian students. 77% of students are designated as Title I.<sup>4</sup> The student body includes 5% English language learners and 7% special education students. Boys account for 46% of the students enrolled and girls account for 54%.<sup>5</sup>

The school has not yet received a DOE Progress Report. The average attendance rate for the school year 2008 - 2009 was 90%.<sup>6</sup> The school is in good standing with state and federal accountability.<sup>7</sup>

## **Annual Review Process Overview:**

The NYC DOE Charter School Office conducts an annual site visit of New York City Department of Education authorized charter schools in order to assess three primary questions: is the school an academic success; is the school a viable organization; and is the school in compliance with applicable laws and regulations. The visits are conducted by representatives of the New York City Department of Education Charter School Office Accountability Team and last the duration of one school day. The annual site visit begins with a meeting with the principal and school leadership team. Subsequently, the reviewers visit classrooms and hold brief meetings with available administrators, teachers, and students. Areas of evaluation include, but are not limited to: academic goals and mission; curriculum and instruction; school culture and learning environment; assessment utilization; parent engagement; government structures and organizational design; community support; special populations; and safety and security.

The following experts participated in the review of this school:

- Sylvia Rabiner, Education Consultant

---

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

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

<sup>3</sup> NYC DOE Location Code Generating System database

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

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

<sup>6</sup> NYC DOE School Progress Report. This document is posted on the NYC DOE website at <http://www.schools.nyc.gov> and is also included in Part 7 of this report.

<sup>7</sup> New York State Education Department - [www.nysed.gov](http://www.nysed.gov)

## Part 2: Findings

### What the school does well

- The school has high academic expectations and employs strategies for the full range of students served, including special needs and English Language Learners.
  - The school has an inquiry project based approach to instruction as stated in the school mission.
  - Courses supporting this approach are Reading and Writing Workshop, TERC mathematics, project based Social Studies and FOSS science.
  - Examples of the project-based approach were observed in the Kindergarten Engineering Project, the Kindergarten Family Study, and the second grade Neighborhood Study.
  - The inquiry approach with an emphasis on critical thinking and problem solving was observed in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade Reading Workshop where students analyzed the behavior of characters in stories, in 1<sup>st</sup> grade math where students solved math problems using manipulatives and in Kindergarten Reading Workshop where students were figuring out how to pronounce words.
- The school utilizes differentiated instruction and an integrated curriculum to promote content proficiency and actively engage students.
  - Every class is taught by two teachers. In addition, the literacy and math specialists frequently visit classes to provide additional support.
  - Students were actively engaged in small group instruction, pairs or individual instruction in all classes observed.
  - Students in need of academic intervention are provided with additional small group or individual instruction provided by the Special Education teachers.
  - A wide variety of multilevel texts and materials are available in all classroom libraries.
- The school fosters a safe and comfortable learning environment which encourages both student academic progress and teacher professional development.
  - Teachers are provided with common planning time; one and a half hours weekly to plan, prepare and implement curriculum. In addition, the full staff meets from 2-4pm every Friday to work with a consultant on a variety of school issues. There is a two week planning block in the summer prior to the opening of school.
  - Once a month grade teams meet with the counselor, math and literacy specialists and the directors for an in depth child study.
  - Expectations for student behavior are consistent and evident across the school. A social curriculum is implemented in all classes by the school counselor. There is a lunch group for students who need additional support with behavior. Targeted students are also given a daily report card linked to their academic progress which is shared with their families.
  - Student voice and direct action are encouraged by writing letters to members of the school and wider community on issues of importance.
  - Classrooms are clean, attractive and well-organized with an abundance of student friendly teaching tools, timeframes, and agendas to keep students focused and on task.
- The school employs an effective assessment system and data tracking tools to monitor student performance and inform teaching and learning.
  - The school employs the Developmental Reading Assessment which is given twice a year to Kindergarten students and three times a year to 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> graders to monitor reading progress.

- Math Assessments are embedded in the TERC math curriculum to monitor student progress.
  - A writing sample aligned with New York State standards is given twice a year to assess student writing progress.
  - A sight word inventory is given periodically over the course of the year.
  - The Terra Nova Assessment is given in math and reading in the fall and spring.
  - Multiple data sources, including teacher-developed assessments, are used to place students in flexible guided reading groups, math groups, and to identify students in need of further academic intervention.
- The school maintains a consistent connection to parents and mobilizes parents within the school community as conduits for student success.
    - The school conducts a curriculum night once a year for parents to meet with teachers.
    - The directors send a monthly newsletter to families.
    - Teachers send a weekly newsletter to families.
    - The school provides monthly family workshops on a variety of topics of interest to parents.
    - The PTA is an integral part of the Community Council.
    - The school holds academic progress conferences with parents and children.
    - School activities are designed to engage family members, for example, the opening school parade and Winter Arts Festival.

### **What the school needs to improve**

- The school should explore efficient global systems for tracking school data to insure continued attention to overall school trends and individual student progress.
- The school is encouraged to incorporate more professional development to support co-teaching as all classes are taught by two teachers.
- The school is encouraged to continue its collaborative work in curriculum planning and cross grade conversations to articulate the content of the additional grades they will serve.

## Part 3: Framing Questions

### FRAMING QUESTIONS:

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

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

### Annual Site Visit Rubric:

1. Has the School Been an Academic Success?
  - Academic Goals and Mission
    - School components and curriculum align together and holistically support the mission.
    - School has high academic expectations and employs strategies for the full range of students served by the school, including those at risk and those with special needs.
  - Curriculum and Instruction
    - The educational plan is flexible and is adjusted to meet the performance levels and learning needs of all enrolled students.
    - School implements programming to address the needs of students with disabilities and ELLs.
    - Teachers demonstrate the use of differentiated instructional techniques to support the varying ways by which students learn.
    - School has implemented programming for students who need remediation or acceleration.
  - School Culture
    - The culture is strong, intentional, supportive and sustainable and promotes student learning.
    - The school motivates all students and respects the diversity of learners and cultures in the community.
    - School offers programs, activities or support services beyond academics to address students' social and emotional needs.
    - School calendar and day are set to provide extra supports to ensure that students are able to meet and exceed academic goals.
    - Schedule for communication to parents/students is timely and allows for due process, includes strategies to prepare students for transitions and strategies for those students who are not on schedule, presents a clear and fair system that complies with students' due process rights.
    - Structures that foster the development of authentic, sustained, caring, respectful relationships among all stakeholders within school.
    - Behavioral expectations and social supports that reflect the school's mission and comply with all applicable laws and regulations.
  - Assessment
    - Establishes a culture of continuous improvement and accountability for student learning.
    - Develops assessments that shape and inform instruction on an ongoing basis and develop data that's used to gauge student, teacher and school progress through formative and summative assessment.
    - Student learning measured with multiple forms of assessments/metrics.
    - Develops educational goals and performance metrics that are SMART – Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Reflect the Mission and Time-Specific.
    - Develops assessments that are appropriately aligned with curriculum, instruction, and adopted standards.

- Provides evidence of how data will influence instruction, professional development and curricular adjustments.
  - Parent Engagement
    - Parent engagement strategies that integrate and mobilize parents within the school community as conduits for student success.
    - Capacity to communicate effectively with parents and families.
    - Parent engagement strategies that integrate and mobilize parents within the school community as conduits for student success.
2. Is the School a Viable Organization
- Governance Structures and Organizational Design
    - School has articulated appropriate roles, responsibilities, and decision-making structure for school community members (including Board of Trustees and school leadership).
    - An accountability structure that provides effective oversight of the educational program and fiscal components of the school is in place and utilized.
    - Board regularly reviews a data dashboard of student achievement and fiscal management that forms the basis for Board discussions and decisions.
    - Board has diverse skill set that lends itself to strong educational / operational oversight.
    - Board has an articulated process for ongoing policy development, Board member development and self-evaluation.
    - Organizational charts are aligned with mission; roles and responsibilities are clearly defined.
    - Board has developed essential strategic partnerships with organizations that support the mission of the school.
  - Community Support
    - School Leadership demonstrated responsiveness to the unique needs and interests of the community to be served.
    - School has established a presence in the community and has buy in from community members.
3. Is the School in Compliance with Applicable Laws and Regulations
- Special Populations
    - Well-defined plan and sufficient capacity to service the learning needs of Special Education students, English Language Learners.
    - School adequately addresses the academic and non academic needs of students in need of remediation, students with disabilities, students with interrupted formal education, and gifted students.
    - There is a coherent plan for meeting the non-academic needs of students with disabilities, students with interrupted formal education, and other populations.
    - School employs a process to identify students at risk of not meeting expectations and creates intervention plans and follows up.
    - School demonstrates a comprehensive recruitment, enrollment and retention approach that is sensitive to the diverse needs of students.
    - School admission policy and lottery preferences serve to create a student body that reflects community demographics and give a preference to community school district residents.
  - Safety and Security
    - School is well maintained.
    - Transitions and student gatherings are orderly and well supervised.
    - Expectations for student behavior are well known and are enforced fairly.
    - School is current with all safety recruitments and drills.
    - AED machines are in operation and school staff is trained in CPR.