



THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT / THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK / ALBANY,
NY 12234

TO: P-12 Education Committee

FROM: John B. King

SUBJECT: Charter Schools: Renewal of Charters Authorized by the
Chancellor of the New York City Department of Education
(NYCDOE)

DATE: June 9, 2011

AUTHORIZATION(S):

SUMMARY

I recommend that the Board of Regents approve the following proposed renewal charters as proposed by the Chancellor of the New York City Department of Education (NYC DOE) in his capacity as a charter school authorizer under Article 56 of the Education Law and that their charters be extended for a term up through and including the dates as indicated:

1. Beginning with Children Charter School – Term: 2nd Renewal: 09/01/11 – 06/30/16
2. Brooklyn Charter School – Term: 3rd Renewal: 07/01/11 - 06/30/16
3. Explore Charter School – Term: 2nd Renewal: 06/13/11 – 06/12/16
4. John V. Lindsay Wildcat Academy Charter School – Term: 4th Renewal: 09/01/11 – 06/30/16

The following tables outline information about each of these proposed charter schools. Additional information about each of the applications and the review of those applications is included in the attached Executive Summary and Findings from the NYC DOE's Renewal Reports for each school (Attachment).

Beginning with Children Charter School

Name of Charter School	Beginning with Children Charter School
Terms and Dates of Charter	1st Renewal: 09/01/06 – 09/01/11
Current Grades and Approved Enrollment	Kindergarten – grade 8: 450 students
Lead Applicant (s)	John Day, BoT President
Management Company	Beginning with Children Foundation
Other Partner(s)	N/A
Community School District of Location	NYC CSD # 14
New Material Term	2 nd Renewal: 09/01/11 – 06/30/16
Grade Levels	Kindergarten – grade 8 each year
Enrollment	2011-2012: 450 students 2012-2013: 450 students 2013-2014: 450 students 2014-2015: 450 students 2015-2016: 450 students

NYC DOE recommends that the Regents approve the application for renewal of the Beginning with Children Charter School with the following conditions:

1. The school must demonstrate improved student achievement by scoring in the 25th percentile or above of all schools on the NYC DOE Progress Report within one year after renewal, in the 50th percentile or above of all schools on the NYC DOE Progress Report within two years after renewal, and in the 75th percentile or above of all schools on the NYC DOE Progress Report in each of the 3rd, 4th, and 5th years after renewal.
2. The Board must demonstrate a plan for sound oversight and evaluation of school leadership and the Beginning with Children Foundation.
3. The school must demonstrate attainment of charter goals.

Brooklyn Charter School

Name of Charter School	Brooklyn Charter School
Terms and Dates of Charter	2 nd Renewal: 07/01/06 – 06/30/11
Current Grades and Approved Enrollment	Kindergarten – grade 5: 240 students
Lead Applicant (s)	Henry A. Lambert, BoT President
Management Company	N/A
Other Partner(s)	N/A
Community School District of Location	NYC CSD # 14
New Material Term	3 rd Renewal: 07/01/11 - 06/30/16
Grade Levels	Kindergarten – grade 5 each year
Enrollment	2011-2012: 240 students 2012-2013: 240 students 2013-2014: 240 students 2014-2015: 240 students 2015-2016: 240 students

NYC DOE recommends that the Regents approve the application for renewal of the Brooklyn Charter School with the following conditions:

1. The school must demonstrate improved student achievement by scoring in the 25th percentile or above of all schools on the NYC DOE Progress Report within one year after renewal, in the 50th percentile or above of all schools on the NYC DOE Progress Report within two years after renewal, and in the 75th percentile or above of all schools on the NYC DOE Progress Report in each of the 3rd, 4th, and 5th years after renewal.
2. The Board must demonstrate a plan for sound oversight and evaluation of school leadership.
3. The school must demonstrate attainment of charter goals each year.

Explore Charter School

Name of Charter School	Explore Charter School
Terms and Dates of Charter	1 st Renewal: 06/12/06 – 06/12/11
Current Grades and Approved Enrollment	Kindergarten – grade 8: 424 students
Lead Applicant (s)	Tim Taylor, BoT President
Management Company	Explore Schools, Inc.
Other Partner(s)	N/A
Community School District of Location	NYC CSD #17
New Material Term	2 nd Renewal: 06/13/11 – 06/12/16
Grade Levels	Kindergarten – grade 8 each year
Enrollment	2011-2012: 480 students 2012-2013: 489 students 2013-2014: 495 students 2014-2015: 499 students 2015-2016: 499 students

NYC DOE recommends that the Regents approve the application for renewal of the Explore Charter School without conditions.

John V. Lindsay Wildcat Academy Charter School

Name of Charter School	John V. Lindsay Wildcat Academy Charter School
Terms and Dates of Charter	3 rd Renewal: 09-01-08 – 08-31-11
Current Grades and Approved Enrollment	Grades 9-12: 500 students
Lead Applicant (s)	Harvey Newman, BoT President
Management Company	N/A
Other Partner(s)	N/A
Community School District of Location	NYC CSD # 2
New Material Term	4 th Renewal: 09/01/11 – 06/30/16
Grade Levels	Grades 9-12 each year
Enrollment	2011-2012: 500 students 2012-2013: 500 students 2013-2014: 505 students 2014-2015: 515 students 2015-2016: 525 students

NYC DOE recommends that the Regents approve the application for renewal of the John V. Lindsay Wildcat Academy Charter School with the following conditions:

1. The school must demonstrate improved student achievement by increasing graduation rates and student credit accumulation rates to score in the 50th percentile or above of all Transfer Schools on the Student Performance section of the NYC DOE Progress Report in each of the five years of the charter term. The school must continue to demonstrate student achievement by scoring in at least the 75th percentile of all Transfer Schools on the overall NYC DOE Progress Report.
2. The Board must demonstrate a plan for sound oversight and evaluation of school leadership.
3. The school must demonstrate attainment of charter goals.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

The proposed charter schools: (1) meet the requirements set out in Article 56 of the Education Law, and all other applicable laws, rules and regulations; (2) will operate in an educationally and fiscally sound manner; (3) are likely to improve student learning and achievement and materially further the purposes set out in subdivision two of section twenty-eight hundred fifty of Article 56 of the Education Law; and (4) will have a significant educational benefit to the students expected to attend the charter school.

RECOMMENDATION

VOTED: That the Board of Regents approves and issues the second renewal charter of the Beginning with Children Charter School as proposed by the Chancellor of the City School District of the City of New York, and that its provisional charter be extended for a term up through and including June 30, 2016.

VOTED: That the Board of Regents approves and issues the third renewal charter of the Brooklyn Charter School as proposed by the Chancellor of the City School District of the City of New York, and that its provisional charter be extended for a term up through and including June 30, 2016.

VOTED: That the Board of Regents approves and issues the second renewal charter of the Explore Charter School as proposed by the Chancellor of the City School District of the City of New York, and that its provisional charter be extended for a term up through and including June 12, 2016.

VOTED: That the Board of Regents approves and issues the fourth renewal charter of the John V. Lindsay Wildcat Academy Charter School as proposed by the Chancellor of the City School District of the City of New York, and that its provisional charter be extended for a term up through and including June 30, 2016.

Attachment



Charter School Renewal Report
Charter Schools Office
2010-2011

**BEGINNING WITH CHILDREN CHARTER SCHOOL
RENEWAL REPORT**

APRIL 2011

Part 1: Executive Summary

School Overview and History:

The Beginning with Children Charter School is an elementary/middle school serving approximately 450 students from kindergarten through eighth grade in the 2010-2011 school year.¹ The school converted to become a charter school in 2001 with grades K-8, making it one of the oldest charter schools in the City and among the few charter conversions. It has no plans for further expansion.² The lower school is currently housed in a DOE-leased facility in District 14, and the middle school is co-located with PS 373.³ The student body includes 9.0% English language learners and 16.0% special education students.

The school has experienced low student attrition with 6% turnover in 2008-2009, 8% turnover in 2009-2010, and 4% turnover as of March 2011. There are currently 2,655 students on the waitlist.

The school earned a C on its progress report in 2009-2010, a B in 2008-2009, a B in 2007-2008, and a B in 2006-2007. The school has outperformed its Community School District in ELA and Math for each of the past four years, and outperformed the city averages in three of the four past years. The average attendance rate for the school year 2009 - 2010 was 93.5%.⁴ The school is in good standing with state and federal accountability.⁵

Renewal Review Process Overview:

The NYC DOE Charter Schools Office (CSO) conducted a thorough review of this school's Retrospective Renewal Report; annual reporting documents; surveys, student achievement data; and state, local and federal accountability metrics as well as a detailed audit of the school's finance, operations and governance practices. In addition, the CSO conducted a detailed site visit on the following dates: March 16 and 17, 2011.

The following experts participated in the review of this school:

- Nancy Meakem, Director of Evaluation, NYC DOE CSO
- Richard Larios, Senior Director, NYC DOE CSO
- Sonia Park, Senior Director, NYC DOE CSO
- Jessica Fredston-Hermann, Analyst, NYC DOE CSO
- Bertram Wyman, Analyst, NYC DOE CSO
- Lynnette Aqueron, Senior School Improvement Specialist, NYC DOE Division of Students with Disabilities and English Language Learners

Renewal Recommendation:

NYC DOE CSO recommends that the State Board of Regents approve the application for renewal of the Beginning with Children Charter School for a period of 5 years consistent with the terms of the renewal application. The School will be offered this renewal with the following conditions:

4. The school must demonstrate improved student achievement by scoring in the 25th percentile or above of all schools on the NYC DOE Progress Report within one year after renewal, in the 50th percentile or above of all schools on the NYC DOE Progress Report within two years after renewal, and in the 75th percentile or above of all schools on the NYC DOE Progress Report in each of the 3rd, 4th, and 5th years after renewal.
5. The Board must demonstrate a plan for sound oversight and evaluation of school leadership and the Beginning with Children Foundation.

¹ NYC DOE ATS system

² NYC DOE ATS system and charter agreement

³ NYC DOE Location Code Generating System database

⁴ 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.

⁵ New York State Education Department - www.nysed.gov

6. The school must demonstrate attainment of charter goals.

The NYC DOE CSO has found Beginning with Children Charter School to be an academically successful school that is organizationally viable and in compliance with applicable laws and regulations pertaining to its current charter. Based on the findings delineated below, Beginning with Children Charter School is an educationally and fiscally sound organization, is likely to improve student learning and achievement, and meets the requirements of the Charter Schools Act and applicable law.

Part 2: Findings

What the school does well

- The school maintains an orderly, positive, friendly school environment that is conducive to student learning, and has engaged many members of the community in supporting the school.
 - Students interviewed in both the lower school and the middle school described the school as a “family” and a “community.” Students note that the school is a safe place where they feel comfortable taking risks.
 - Interactions among all members of the school community (teachers, students, administrators) were observed to be positive.
 - The school benefits from the low cohort size and high teacher retention. Teachers stated that they appreciate being able to get advice about strategies for specific students from colleagues who taught their current students the previous year.
 - Structures in the school such as the Advisory program in the middle school and the Morning Meeting in the elementary school sustain and support the school’s values, and provide students with an opportunity to build stronger relationships with staff members and with each other.
 - The school has an active Parent-Teacher Association that meets monthly, and which has begun organizing events such as family field trips. The school also offers workshops for parents, invites parents to Family Nights, and reported close to 90% participation rates in parent-teacher conferences.
 - The school enjoys wide support from families and the community. For example, over 150 parents, teachers, and students attended the school’s renewal hearing to express their support.
- The school evidences a well-developed spirit of trust between the school leadership and staff, and has developed a leadership pipeline through which staff are retained and take on more authority over time.
 - The school’s Principal has effectively negotiated with teachers around the UFT contract, particularly around the length of the school day, and has arranged for numerous additional professional development opportunities for teachers to opt into.
 - Teacher retention has been high. Only three new teachers were hired for the 2010-2011 school year.
 - The school makes a concerted effort to retain and develop its talent. The school has promoted key leadership from within its schools in order to retain strong staff in the organization. Likewise, the school works with assistant teachers and new staff to develop and grow into more senior roles.
- The school provides numerous interventions for low-performing students, as well as a wide variety of extracurricular options after school.
 - Low-performing students benefit from targeted small-group instruction as well as intervention groups in math and ELA and additional tutoring before school, after school, and/or during Saturday Academy. Likewise, the school effectively uses Special Education instructors to meet the needs of students with IEPs.
 - Extracurricular activities include a variety of sports, debate, chess, sewing, student government, and other clubs. Students interviewed expressed excitement about the opportunity to participate in these activities.

- The school also provides several options for higher-performing students, including an optional Morning Math session before the school day to prepare for the high school SHSAT, and Enrichment classes during the school day.
- The school is focused on improving learning through a common curricular approach in ELA and Math and an increased use of data and assessment.
 - The school is in its third year of adopting a Balanced Literacy approach for ELA. They are in the second year of implementing the Teachers College curriculum for Readers and Writers workshop. They are also in the second year of implementation of the TERC or Investigations Mathematics program.
 - The school has begun administering Interim Assessments using questions from state tests in grades 3-8. The Beginning with Children Foundation assists with data support and creating spreadsheets to assess students' performance based on different standards and performance indicators. Teachers also administer running records and baseline writing assessments three times a year to assess students' growth in reading and writing.
 - The school planned two Professional Development days in September focused on individual meetings with teachers to review state testing data and talk about goals and planning.
 - Reviewers observed targeted review in a number of classrooms as teachers assigned students Do Now questions which reviewed prior material. Students noted that the Do Now questions usually go over material with which they struggled.
 - Multiple classrooms observed utilized small-group instruction to engage students and provide more individualized attention.
 - The school uses its instructional resources effectively to involve students and drive student learning, including SmartBoards in every classroom and a school library.
- The school's Board of Trustees has functioned effectively in furthering the school's mission and vision, and maintains sound finances and internal controls.
 - Early in this term of the charter the Board underwent a major transformation to a skills-based board to improve its capacity to direct the school in making necessary change. This transformation in the Board has allowed the school to make leadership changes three years ago and more recently increase the role of the Beginning with Children Foundation from a more back-office support role to a more traditional charter management relationship.
 - The school continues to maintain an appropriate degree of segregation of functions and proper internal controls at all levels. All processes were found intact and evidence shows that the school is following its adopted financial and human resource policies. The financial statements of Beginning with Children Charter School were prepared on the accrual basis of accounting in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) acceptable in the United States of America.
 - According to the school's audited financial statements for the year ended June 30, 2010, the school possessed totaling \$2,760,227 and total liabilities of \$1,079,680. All but \$10,000 of the school's net assets of \$1,680,547 remain unrestricted for use purposes. Beginning with Children Charter School has \$559,509 in liquid assets that could be converted to cash within a 90 day period. The school remains in good financial condition to meet its obligations.
 - The Board's initiatives for the coming years are to improve teacher capacity through an articulated professional development program, to continue to revise school-wide assessment process, to continue the refinement of the cross-grade level curricula articulation in ELA, Math, Science and Social Studies, and to further enrich the school's extra-curricular programming.

What the school needs to improve

- The Board should work to clarify the role of the Beginning with Children Foundation in all aspects of the schools operations and should ensure that the clearly defined responsibilities and the reporting structure for all staff and leadership positions is understood by school staff.

- Reviewers noted some confusion amongst school staff and school leadership regarding the role of the Beginning with Children Foundation.
 - At the time of the renewal review, the school and foundation were working under a Memorandum of Understanding that some key staff referred to as an outdated document.
- The school should continue efforts to develop and enhance systems to collect and analyze student performance data.
 - While the school has begun administering Interim Assessments using past state test questions, it was unclear the extent to which teachers were using these results to plan their instruction.
 - Some classrooms visited lacked evidence of wrap-ups, check-lists, assessments or other checks for understanding that would allow teachers to gauge students' learning and pinpoint misunderstandings.
 - The school has started implementing a comprehensive data system and has invested significant time and resources in an enhanced system that it plans to launch this summer. This will include systems for student data, assessment reporting, grade books, standards-aligned interim assessment creation and scoring, and academic improvement plans. The school plans to have student performance reports, including longitudinal and subgroup analysis, much more readily available to teachers in the new system
 - When probed by the Board on school progress in terms of student learning and professional growth of staff, responses were anecdotal. The school's internal assessment system and professional growth efforts should include usable measures (interim assessments results that can show learning gains from one administration to the next, for example, and percentage of classrooms observed successfully implementing a professional development initiative). To fulfill its oversight responsibilities the Board in future will need more evidence-based responses to such questions (as they already get in regards financial and operational progress.)
- The school should continue to train teachers to use data to inform their instruction to ensure that all students receive the support they need to perform at high levels and make progress.
 - While most teachers interviewed noted the importance of using data to differentiate instruction, in some classrooms observed it wasn't clear to what extent teachers were using data to plan or modify their lessons to meet individual or small group needs.
 - Reviewers did not note examples of data charts, graded student work, or rubrics being used in classrooms to engage students in the learning process and support them in creating higher-quality work. The school provides teachers with item analysis reports broken down by performance standards and skills. However, lessons and lesson plans that were observed did not show evidence that teachers were using this data to target specific needs within the class, rather than larger school-wide or grade level concerns.
 - The school earned a C in Student Progress (24.5 out of 60) and a D in Student Performance (5 out of 25) on the 2009-2010 Progress Report. The school's score for math proficiency was especially low compared to its peer horizon schools.
- The school should continue to formalize its structures for goal-setting for teachers, students, and the whole school.
 - While most students interviewed were able to state their current reading levels, students were not able to articulate other goals for their academic development.
 - The leadership team articulated a set of goals and "areas of focus" that were not all reflected in the classrooms observed. These areas of focus include differentiation, questioning, checks for understanding, the use of data, and the effective use of co-teachers.
- The school should deepen its focus on increasing rigor and should continue its efforts to support teachers' work in unit and differentiated lesson planning.
 - Students who finished their work quickly were rarely challenged to move on to more challenging work. Students interviewed stated that in some classes, when they finish their work early, they are instructed to sit quietly and put their heads down on the desk.

- Some classes observed lacked effective pacing and plans for instruction. Reviewers observed that some teachers were not able to cover the entire lesson in the allotted time period, and that they had to push the assessment/debrief until the following day.
 - Some classes observed lacked a check for understanding or evidence that every student was engaged and learning. In some lessons observed, the work that students completed was not aligned with the stated objective.
- Reviewers noted inconsistent quality in teaching of lessons observed, and inconsistent evidence of high expectations for quality student work. The school should continue to support its teachers and staff developers in setting and maintaining high expectations for all classrooms.
 - While the review team did see examples of co-teachers effectively working with individual students or small groups, they also noted that the majority of observed co-teachers were utilized primarily for individual student support and additional classroom management.
 - Many classrooms did not display high-quality student work. Only a few teachers were observed describing or clarifying their expectations for successful student work, and as a result the work completed during independent practice was of mixed quality.



**BROOKLYN CHARTER SCHOOL
RENEWAL REPORT**

APRIL 2011

BROOKLYN CHARTER SCHOOL

Part 1: Executive Summary

Brooklyn Charter School is an elementary school serving approximately 242 students from kindergarten through fifth grade in the 2010-2011 school year.⁶ The school opened in 2000 with kindergarten through first grade. It is currently operating at scale.⁷ The school is currently co-located at K023 in District 14.⁸ The student body includes 1.8% English language learners and 10.6% special education students.

The school has experienced low student attrition with 4.3% turnover in 2008-2009, 3.9% in 2007-2008, 5.2% in 2006-2007, and 11.3% in 2005-2006. There are currently 227 students on the waitlist.

The school earned a D on its progress report in 2009-2010, a C in 2008-2009, and an A in 2007-2008. The school has outperformed its Community School District and the city averages in ELA and Math for three of the past four years. The average attendance rate for the school year 2009 - 2010 was 93.7%.⁹ The school is in good standing with state and federal accountability.¹⁰

Renewal Review Process Overview:

The NYC DOE Charter Schools Office (CSO) conducted a thorough review of this school's Retrospective Renewal Report; annual reporting documents; surveys, student achievement data; and state, local and federal accountability metrics as well as a detailed audit of the school's finances, operations and governance practices. In addition, the CSO conducted a detailed site visit on the following dates: January 11 and 12, 2011.

The following experts participated in the review of this school:

- Recy Dunn, Executive Director, NYC DOE CSO
- Nancy Meakem, Director of Evaluation, NYC DOE CSO
- Jaclyn Leffel, Director of Oversight and Finance, NYC DOE CSO
- Jessica Fredston-Hermann, Accountability Analyst, NYC DOE CSO
- Natasha Howard, Director of Human Capital, NYC DOE Division of Portfolio Planning
- Lynette Aqueron, Senior School Improvement Specialist, NYC DOE Division of Students with Disabilities and English Language Learners
- James Arcala, Operations Manager, NYC DOE Division of Portfolio Planning

Renewal Recommendation:

NYC DOE CSO recommends that the State Board of Regents approve the application for renewal of the Brooklyn Charter School for a period of 5 years consistent with the terms of the renewal application. The School will be offered this renewal with the following conditions:

7. The school must demonstrate improved student achievement by scoring in the 25th percentile or above of all schools on the NYC DOE Progress Report within one year after renewal, in the 50th percentile or above of all schools on the NYC DOE Progress Report within two years after renewal, and in the 75th percentile or above of all schools on the NYC DOE Progress Report in each of the 3rd, 4th, and 5th years after renewal.
8. The Board must demonstrate a plan for sound oversight and evaluation of school leadership.
9. The school must demonstrate attainment of charter goals each year.

⁶ NYC DOE ATS system

⁷ NYC DOE ATS system and charter agreement

⁸ NYC DOE Location Code Generating System database

⁹ 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.

¹⁰ New York State Education Department - www.nysed.gov

The NYC DOE CSO has found Brooklyn Charter School to be an academically successful school that is organizationally viable and in compliance with applicable laws and regulations pertaining to its current charter. Based on the findings delineated below, Brooklyn Charter School is an educationally and fiscally sound organization, is likely to improve student learning and achievement, and meets the requirements of the Charter Schools Act and applicable law.

Part 2: Findings

What the school does well

- The school is reflective and has worked strategically to monitor and revise practices based on feedback and data, and has begun to develop new systems and structures to address areas of need.
 - The school earned poor scores on the DOE Progress Report in 2008-2009 and 2009-2010, scoring in the 1st and 11th percentiles respectively. Following these scores the school hired consultants to help assess key areas of need and developed a strategic plan for school improvement. Evidence of this turn-around plan was visible in emerging practices in data management and analysis, a more strategic and data-driven approach to programming, and a more targeted approach to instruction.
 - Examples of new systems and structures based on this strategic plan include the re-instatement of the extended day program and the development of a 9 week Saturday academy; the addition of teaching assistants in the 3rd and 4th grade; the re-configuration of the 5th grade into 3 sections rather than 2 based on individual student need; the addition of literacy and math coaches to support teachers in using data to drive instruction; the implementation of more rigorous curriculum, lesson planning and assessment systems in ELA and math; and the implementation of a new benchmark assessment system every two months.
 - Based on feedback, the school created more clearly defined roles for administrators to give targeted support to teachers. Multiple support systems are in place for teachers, such as coaching and grade team meetings along with formal and informal feedback from administrators.
- The school has adopted an individualized approach to student learning to ensure that students, especially those who are struggling, receive tailored support.
 - Co-teachers are employed to provide remediation and small group instruction for struggling students. Students note that classes usually have a second teacher. In one third grade class visited one teacher sat with a group of 13 students conducting a lesson on non-fiction texts while a second group of 7 students worked with a different teacher on the same content, using a lower level text.
 - The school provides additional opportunities for student support in an after-school remediation program along with after-school activities in athletics and the arts. As one student noted, “We have a lot of after school like vocal, literacy, math, drawing...”
- The school promotes an open door policy in which parents are viewed as active partners in their children’s education and are included in student learning.
 - Parents expressed a high level of satisfaction with the school in letters of support and at the school’s public hearing. Parents note that the school provides a safe and caring environment that feels like a family. There is an active Parent Association / Family Action Committee that meets regularly and helps coordinate school activities. Parents note that the school has gone above and beyond to help their children be successful in academics and in social-emotional development. All parents sign the covenant for families, and parents are encouraged to volunteer at the school and participate in regularly scheduled celebrations, information sessions and learning opportunities.

- The school provides an orientation for all parents and provides home visits, phone calls, mailings and regular progress reports to communicate with parents. The school provides workshops and training sessions to support parents in best supporting students.
- The school maintains a positive and productive co-location with PS 23 which resides downstairs from the Brooklyn Charter School. This positive relationship fosters a spirit of camaraderie and an efficient use of resources in support of student achievement.
 - PS 23 and the Brooklyn Charter School effectively share the cafeteria, auditorium, nurses' station and other community spaces to maximize student access to resources.
 - The two schools also share certain staff and will provide support for each other based on student needs. For instance, Brooklyn Charter School has worked with the ELL teacher and other specialized instructors at PS 23 to ensure that all students are receiving mandated services and needed support.
- The school's Board of Trustees has functioned effectively in furthering the school's mission and vision, and maintains sound finances and internal controls.
 - The school continues to maintain an appropriate degree of segregation of functions and proper internal controls at all levels. All processes were found intact and evidence shows that the school is following its adopted financial and human resource policies. The financial statements of Brooklyn Charter School were prepared on the accrual basis of accounting in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) acceptable in the United States of America.
 - According to the school's audited financial statements for year ended June 30, 2010, the school possessed assets totaling \$2,482,481 and total liabilities of \$470,604. All of the school's net assets totaling \$2,011,877 remain unrestricted for use purposes. Brooklyn Charter School has over \$2.1 million dollars in liquid assets that could be converted to cash within a 90 day period. The school remains in good financial condition to meet its obligations.
 - The Board's stated initiatives for the coming years are to increase their academic results, strengthen their data systems, and to adopt a strong rubric to evaluate their leadership.

What the school needs to improve

- The school should continue to develop systems and capacity in data collection and analysis to effectively gauge each student's individual learning needs.
 - The school has begun to focus more on assessment and data analysis but noted that the ability to easily track student progress over time or to look at longitudinal reports on performance of sub-groups is still in development.
 - The school has hired key staff members to manage data and support grade teams in collecting data and using data to inform their instruction, but these practices are still emerging.
 - The school has implemented real-time assessment systems such as check-lists and exits tickets, but in some classes observed these practices not evident.
 - Initial indicators suggest that the school's newly implemented interim assessment system is providing useful data for teachers. This program should be continued to ensure that teachers can consistently collect data and use it to plan instruction.
- The school should continue to support teachers in developing the ability to analyze data and use data to plan differentiated lessons that target the individual learning needs of students to ensure that all students receive the support they need to make progress.
 - While many teachers talked about the importance of data, and the goal of using data to differentiate instruction, some teachers were not yet comfortable using the data systems. Likewise, some lessons observed involved whole group instruction with uniform materials and pacing.
 - Some teachers discussed using data to inform which lessons they would re-teach and acknowledged that the next step in their own development would be to use assessment

- The school should continue to develop formalized systems for goal-setting and growth for students and teachers.
 - In response to data, the school has implemented a robust coaching and support model for teachers, and all teachers meet in grade teams at least once per week. This fall school leadership and staff conducted a needs assessment to determine professional development goals for the year. However, some teachers interviewed had difficulty articulating their individualized professional development goals and noted the need for continued support and individualized professional development.
 - Most students interviewed knew their reading level on the Fountas and Pannell spectrum. However, students could not identify key areas of focus or learning goals beyond moving through this spectrum.

- The school leadership should continue to put structures in place that define roles and responsibilities more clearly.
 - Based on feedback from external consultants and internal staff, the school recently implemented a structure in which the Principal manages the lower grades (K-2) and the Assistant Principal manages the upper grades (3-5). The school staff expressed satisfaction with this structure and noted that it brings more clarity to support and accountability.

- The school should continue attempts to recruit a student population that reflects the neighboring community, including students with disabilities and English Language Learners.
 - Currently the school enrolls English Language Learners at a rate significantly below the district average. The school has posted advertisements in translation in local newspapers and has conducted outreach to community groups and centers. These efforts should continue to ensure that the school attracts a diverse population that reflects the community.



**EXPLORE CHARTER SCHOOL
RENEWAL REPORT**

MARCH 2011

EXPLORE CHARTER SCHOOL

Part 1: Executive Summary

School Overview and History:

Explore Charter School is an elementary/middle school serving approximately 475 students from kindergarten through eighth grade in the 2010-2011 school year.¹¹ The school opened in 2002 with grades Kindergarten through 3rd grade. It has no further growth plans.¹² It is currently housed in a DOE leased facility in District 17.¹³ The student body includes 1.7% English language learners and 13.9% special education students. The school is supported by the Explore Network Charter Management Organization (CMO).

The school has experienced low student attrition with 6.2% turnover in 2006-2007, 5.1% turnover in 2007-2008, and 5.7% turnover in 2008-2009. There are currently 2,433 students on the waitlist.

The school earned a B on its progress report in 2009-2010, an A in 2008-2009, an A in 2007-2008, and a B in 2006-2007. The average attendance rate for the school year 2009 - 2010 was 95.5%¹⁴. The school is in good standing with state and federal accountability.¹⁵

Renewal Review Process Overview:

The NYC DOE Charter Schools Office conducted a thorough review of this school's Retrospective Renewal Report; annual reporting documents; surveys, student achievement data; and state, local and federal accountability metrics as well as a detailed audit of the school's finances, operations and governance practices. In addition, the CSO conducted a detailed site visit on the following dates: January 25 and 26, 2011.

The following experts participated in the review of this school:

- Recy Dunn, Executive Director, NYC DOE CSO
- Nancy Meakem, Director of Evaluation, NYC DOE CSO
- Jaclyn Leffel, Director of Finance and Oversight, NYC DOE CSO
- Jessica Fredston-Hermann, Accountability Analyst, NYC DOE CSO
- Lynnette Aqueron, Senior School Improvement Specialist, NYC DOE Division of Students with Disabilities and English Language Learners
- Matt Snyder, Operations Manager, NYC DOE Division of Portfolio Planning
- Jaclyn Lee, Office of Family Information and Advocacy

Renewal Recommendation:

NYC DOE CSO recommends that the State Board of Regents approve the application for renewal of Explore Charter School for a period of 5 years consistent with the terms of the renewal application.

The NYC DOE CSO has found Explore Charter School to be an academically successful school that is organizationally viable and in compliance with applicable laws and regulations pertaining to its current charter. Based on the findings delineated below, Explore Charter School is an educationally and fiscally sound organization, is likely to improve student learning and achievement, and meets the requirements of the Charter Schools Act and applicable law.

¹¹ NYC DOE ATS system

¹² NYC DOE ATS system and charter agreement

¹³ NYC DOE Location Code Generating System database

¹⁴ 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.

¹⁵ New York State Education Department - www.nysed.gov

Part 2: Findings

What the school does well

- The school has a strong, consistent culture based on shared values which is evident at all levels of school operations.
 - Students note that the school is a safe place where they are happy and feel comfortable taking risks, showing vulnerability and striving to achieve at high levels.
 - Staff and students note that they feel supported and that they have clear processes in place for getting extra help or seeking assistance.
 - Systems and structures in the school such as a weekly community circle, a clear behavior tracking merit / demerit system, and consistent self-reflection support the school's values.
- The school promotes a collaborative open door policy in which all community members including parents are empowered to share feedback and participate in goal setting and enhancing the life of the school.
 - The Parent-Teacher Association supports and encourages parents to get involved. The president of the PTA and an additional parent serve on the Board for a total of two parents on the Board.
 - The school provides regular detailed communications to families along with regularly scheduled meetings, workshops and activities to engage the community in support of increased student learning.
 - The school provides all teachers with cell phones and promotes the expectation that teachers and staff are readily accessible to parents.
 - Teachers collaborate across subject areas and grade levels to share best practices, support each other, and promote consistency in academics.
 - The school Leadership Team, CMO and Board collaborate to develop short-term and long-term goals for school improvement with input from parents and community members.
- The school has established systems to train and support staff and has developed a leadership pipeline through which staff are retained and empowered to take on more authority over time.
 - The school has promoted key leadership from within its schools and the CMO to promote and retain strong leaders in the organization. Likewise, the school works with assistant teachers and new staff to develop and grow into more senior roles.
 - Teachers benefit from coaching, inter-visitation, team meetings, formal and informal observations, and regular professional development sessions. A variety of school leaders and instructional specialists are on hand to support teachers, including Upper School and Lower School Academic Directors, grade-level deans, Learning Specialists, Math Coordinators, and Literacy Coordinators.
- The school is reflective and uses a data-driven approach to set goals and create plans for the future growth and increased student achievement.
 - The school has worked over time to develop and refine its data systems. Regular working groups meet to reflect on the efficacy of data and assessment tools, and training is provided to support best practices in using data to drive instruction. Recently, after reviewing past test scores and a perceived weakness in the area of targeted ELA instruction, the school decided to contract with a vendor to develop rigorous and consistent tools that better enable teachers to assess student learning and plan targeted lessons to address students' individual needs.
 - The school administers interim assessments in ELA and Math to students in grades 3 through 8 every 6-8 weeks. The network assists with data analysis, and teachers create action plans based on areas of strength and weakness. The leadership team stated that they prioritize observing targeted lessons in which teachers re-teach a concept that students struggled with previously (as determined by testing results), and provide

- feedback using rubrics from Achievement Network. Teachers noted that they frequently analyze re-teaching plans and re-assessments during data meetings.
- The school leadership team develops a Priority Plan each year based on student achievement results, Progress Report grades, results from parent satisfaction surveys, and a number of other metrics. The school leaders revisit this document quarterly and choose specific areas to focus on for the upcoming period.
 - Students, staff and administrators note that the school is constantly trying to improve and has adopted a “solution oriented” approach to problem solving at all levels.
- The school promotes rigorous instruction and holds high expectations for academic success for all students.
 - Students, staff, administrators and parents all note that the school is committed to preparing students for success in high school and college.
 - Classes observed involved rigorous and engaging lessons that challenged students to perform at or above grade level. For example, in a middle school English class students engaged in a sophisticated conversation about literature then quickly transitioned to a review of the writing process then a group “write-around” in which teams of students completed academic essays.
 - All students interviewed were able to state their current reading levels. Middle school students stated that they read every single night for ELA.
 - The school recruits and retains a talented staff of educators and provides professional pathways for strong educators to develop and advance in the Explore network.
 - The school recently engaged in succession planning for new leadership and executed a transition that all community members refer to as seamless.
 - Assistant teachers, teachers, administrators and CMO staff are supported in their own professional growth and encouraged to take on more responsibility over time. As such, the school has been effective in retaining and promoting its top talent.
 - The school’s Board of Trustees has functioned effectively in furthering the school’s mission and vision, and maintains sound finances and internal controls.
 - The school continues to maintain an appropriate degree of segregation of functions and proper internal controls at all levels. All processes were found intact and evidence shows that the school is following its adopted financial and human resource policies. The financial statements of Explore Charter School were prepared on the accrual basis of accounting in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) acceptable in the United States of America.
 - According to the school’s audited financial statements for the year ended June 30, 2010, the school possessed assets totaling \$1,790,526 and total liabilities of \$816,732. All of the school’s net assets totaling \$928,951 remain unrestricted for use purposes. Explore Charter School has over \$1.2 million dollars in liquid assets that could be converted to cash within a 90 day period. The school remains in good financial condition to meet its obligations.
 - The Board’s initiatives for the coming years are to make larger investments in technology and to increase their philanthropic efforts.

What the school needs to improve

- The school should continue to develop curriculum and support teachers to ensure that instruction is sufficiently rigorous across all grade levels and subject areas.
 - The level of rigor in instruction observed was not consistent. While some classes were effectively teaching students to do work far above grade level, other classes observed lacked clear objectives and were providing students with work that was unclear or below grade level.
 - Two interviewed students expressed a desire for more advanced math classes. An Integrated Algebra class does exist for selected eighth-graders, but students stated that they would have liked more preparation so that they were all able to master the math in time to qualify for the advanced class.

- The school should continue to train teachers to incorporate frequent and consistent checks for understanding to ensure that all students are meeting learning goals.
 - While many classes employed “exit tickets”, effective questioning, and engaging performance tasks, some lessons observed lacked a check for understanding or evidence that every student was engaged and learning.
 - The school has invested in developing high quality benchmark assessments in ELA. Preliminary indicators suggest that this work will be effective in diagnosing student learning needs and growth over time.

- The school should continue to enhance data systems and implement strategies to train teachers to use data to differentiate their instruction.
 - The school is involved in a reflective process to develop and improve systems for data collection and analysis. Currently the school uses a diverse group of tools and systems to collect and analyze data, but does not have one universal data analysis tool to enable teachers to easily look at trends and to conduct longitudinal analysis.
 - While all teachers interviewed noted the importance of using data to differentiate instruction, many classrooms observed lacked evidence of data-driven instruction or differentiation, particularly for high-performing students.



**JOHN V. LINDSAY WILDCAT ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOL
RENEWAL REPORT**

APRIL 2011

JOHN V. LINDSAY WILDCAT ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOL

Part 1: Executive Summary

School Overview and History:

John V. Lindsay Wildcat Academy Charter School is a transfer high school serving approximately 476 students from grade 9 through grade 12 in the 2010-2011 school year.¹⁶ The school opened in 1992 and converted to become a charter school in 2000. It has no plans for further growth.¹⁷ It is currently housed in a private facility in District 2 as well as a private facility in the Bronx.¹⁸ The student body currently includes 4.2% English language learners and 27.5% special education students.

On average, the school receives approximately 450 applications each year for an average of 360 available seats. The school's student attrition rate in 2009-2010 was 14.5%, with a total of 76 students who transferred, moved, or were discharged. In 2008-2009, the student attrition rate was 21%, with a total of 121 students who transferred, moved, or were discharged.

The school earned an A on the Transfer School progress report in 2009-2010, a B in 2008-2009, and a B in 2007-2008¹⁹. The average attendance rate for the school year 2009 - 2010 was 59.2%.²⁰ The school is in good standing with state accountability.²¹

Renewal Review Process Overview:

The NYC DOE Charter Schools Office conducted a thorough review of this school's Retrospective Renewal Report; annual reporting documents; surveys, student achievement data; and state, local and federal accountability metrics as well as a detailed audit of the school's finances, operations and governance practices. In addition, the CSO conducted a detailed site visit on the following dates: February 15 and 16, 2011.

The following experts participated in the review of this school:

- Recy Dunn, Executive Director, NYC DOE CSO
- Nancy Meakem, Director of Evaluation, NYC DOE CSO
- Jaclyn Leffel, Director of Oversight and Finance, NYC DOE CSO
- Daria Rigney, Community Superintendent, NYC DOE District 2
- Elizabeth Iadavaia, Director of School Improvement, NYC DOE Office of Portfolio Planning
- Lynette Aqueron, Senior School Improvement Specialist, NYC DOE Division of Students with Disabilities and English Language Learners
- John Duval, Chief of Staff, NYC DOE Office of Post-Secondary Readiness
- Jessica Kaplan, Director of Portfolio, NYC DOE Office of School Programs and Partnerships
- Jocelyn Alter, Data Manager, NYC DOE Office of Early Childhood Education

Renewal Recommendation:

NYC DOE CSO recommends that the State Board of Regents approve the application for renewal of the John V. Lindsay Wildcat Academy Charter School for a period of 5 years consistent with the terms of the renewal application. The School will be offered this renewal with the following conditions:

¹⁶ NYC DOE ATS system

¹⁷ NYC DOE ATS system and charter agreement

¹⁸ NYC DOE Location Code Generating System database

¹⁹ 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.

²⁰ Attendance rate taken from charter school annual reports.

²¹ New York State Education Department - www.nysed.gov

10. The school must demonstrate improved student achievement by increasing graduation rates and student credit accumulation rates to score in the 50th percentile or above of all Transfer Schools on the Student Performance section of the NYC DOE Progress Report in each of the five years of the charter term. The school must continue to demonstrate student achievement by scoring in at least the 75th percentile of all Transfer Schools on the overall NYC DOE Progress Report.
11. The Board must demonstrate a plan for sound oversight and evaluation of school leadership.
12. The school must demonstrate attainment of charter goals.

The NYC DOE CSO has found John V. Lindsay Wildcat Academy Charter School to be an academically successful school that is organizationally viable and in compliance with applicable laws and regulations pertaining to its current charter. Based on the findings delineated below, John V. Lindsay Wildcat Academy Charter School is an educationally and fiscally sound organization, is likely to improve student learning and achievement, and meets the requirements of the Charter Schools Act and applicable law.

Part 2: Findings

What the school does well

- Wildcat Charter School is a Transfer High School that accepts all applicants regardless of their age and academic level on entry, and helps provide students the support they need to earn credits and make progress towards graduation.
- The school provides a warm and supportive environment in which students are encouraged to take risks and improve their skills for academic, personal and professional success.
 - Students and staff note that the school provides a “family” environment for students. Interactions amongst all members of the school community were observed to be positive.
 - Social-emotional supports for students were available through a team of social workers, counselors and deans as well as through a devoted teaching and administrative staff.
- A professional internship program with monetary incentives is available for students who meet credit and disciplinary requirements. This program provides engaging, real-life work experience for students and supports them in developing skills for post-secondary success.
 - Students noted that the internship program helps prepare them for their futures and helps them develop “soft skills” such as resume writing, interviewing techniques, timeliness and professional etiquette. Students also noted that the internships provide them with the opportunity to explore different careers and develop professional interests.
- The school is developing a focus on using data to inform instruction to better meet the academic needs of individual students.
 - The school has joined the PICCs consortium to develop sustainable data systems, train staff, and build a data-driven school culture.
 - The school has developed a data warehouse to manage key data points and has begun to use new technologies to enable school staff to perform item analysis, look at trends in student achievement, and run detailed reports.
 - The school recently implemented a common assessment program to provide more rigor and consistency in assessment and instruction.
- The school has begun to implement a more rigorous approach to self-reflection, self-monitoring and revision in order to ensure that the school is most effectively meeting the needs of students.
 - Last year the school hired an external evaluator to assess the school’s quality and has already begun to reflect on the key findings and implement many of the structural changes that were recommended.
- The school’s Board of Trustees has functioned effectively in furthering the school’s mission and vision, and maintains sound finances and internal controls.

- The school continues to maintain an appropriate degree of segregation of functions and proper internal controls at all levels. All processes were found intact and evidence shows that the school is following its adopted financial and human resource policies. The financial statements of JLV Wildcat were prepared on the accrual basis of accounting in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) acceptable in the United States of America.
- According to the school's audited financial statements for year ended June 30, 2010, the school possessed assets totaling \$3,683,095 and total liabilities of \$1,542,714. All of the school's net assets totaling \$2,117,681 remain unrestricted for use purposes. JLV Wildcat has over \$800,000 dollars in liquid assets that could be converted to cash within a 90 day period. The school remains in good financial condition to meet its obligations.
- The board notes that areas of growth include academic outcomes and student attendance rates. In the past three years the board has worked to strengthen its practices and move to total compliance on all matters. The board also feels that the separation from Wildcat and the development of the Chief Financial Officer gives the school more autonomy and the ability to handle their financial affairs more effectively.
- In the next five years the Boards aims to collect and use data more effectively plan and differentiate instruction and increase rigor in the classroom. Likewise, they aim to improve attendance rates especially in the Bronx campus and are implementing individualized learning plans for all students. The board aims to offer more college level coursework and more college readiness activities for students.

What the school should improve

- The school should continue to improve academic achievement, student retention rates and graduation rates for all students, especially those who enter the school with less than 11 credits.
 - According to the NYC DOE 2009-2010 Progress Report, the six-year graduation rate for the school is 25.8%. The weighted diploma rate is 71.3%. The average graduation rate and weighted diploma rate in their peer group are 42.3% and 109.1%, respectively.
 - The school's graduation rate for students who enter with less than 11 credits is 13.0%, which is below the peer average of 22.5%.
- The school should continue to formalize systems for collecting data including the expansion of rigorous, ongoing formative assessments to help establish the individual learning needs of all students.
 - On entry, the school administers the Scantron assessment along with a series of teacher-generated writing and reading assessments to establish student reading and math levels. Recently, the school moved to develop a common assessment in ELA and Math to be administered at the end of each semester. However, the school does not yet use regular common benchmarks or regular norm-based assessments to establish a detailed map of student learning needs during the course of a semester.
 - In its retrospective report the school discussed its attempts to foster a more data-driven school culture and to encourage teachers to use real-time data in their classrooms. At the time of the renewal visit teachers and administrators discussed efforts to establish better data systems, but much of this work was still in development.
- The school should continue to support teachers to use data to inform their instruction to ensure that every student's individual learning needs are met.
 - Teachers and administrators discussed the importance of differentiating instruction to meet the unique needs of each individual student, but the majority of classrooms observed involved non-differentiated full-group instruction.
 - Real-time assessments such as exit tickets and teacher checklists were only evident in two classes observed.
 - The school has developed plans to train key staff in using the data systems to track and analyze student data, then turn-key this training to other staff. However, this work has not yet been fully implemented.
 - The school should continue to increase the rigor of classroom instruction, improve the quality of tasks for students, and infuse academic vocabulary into classroom discussions and assignments. Reviewers noted that in many classrooms observed, students were

engaged in work and/or conversation that was below grade level. Plans to push students to accelerate their learning were not evident.

- The school should continue to formalize systems for individualized student support and goal-setting to ensure that all students get the support they need to graduate prepared for post-secondary success, and no students slip between the cracks.
 - Some students who were interviewed were not aware of the number of credits they had earned or the specific action steps necessary to graduate. Likewise, students interviewed could not articulate specific academic, professional or personal goals.
 - Mechanisms to support students in establishing links between the work completed in internships, classroom instruction and/or the larger life of the school was observed to be emerging with minimal consistent, formal structures in place for student reflection and synthesis. The school recently changed the mechanism by which students check in to reflect on their internship and hand in their reflection journal to involve a whole group meeting every Friday.
 - The school has experimented with providing seniors and students with IEPs opportunities to participate in counseling “group work” in small groups. Given that low-credited students are most at risk of dropping out, the school might consider extending this practice to new students or low-credited students as a student engagement strategy.
 - Student supports such as one-on-one check-ins with counselors happen formally at the beginning of each term then informally throughout the year. This structure could be tightened to ensure that students receive more individualized attention to increase student engagement and support students in establishing and meeting individualized goals.
- The school should continue to formalize structures for teacher support, professional development and accountability to ensure that all teachers make progress towards professional goals and increase student achievement.
 - During the charter term the school has begun to implement individualized teacher growth plans. This school is encourage to continue and develop this work in the future.
 - The school holds a weekly professional development session on Friday afternoons. This time is used for whole group professional development and case conferencing on individual students.
 - Teachers noted that they collaborate informally but do not have common planning time.
 - Goal setting for teacher development was observed to be focused on teacher practice but not linked to student performance.