Office of Innovative School Models

Charter Schools

Renewal Report

School: Bronx Charter School for Children (BCSC)			
Date of Site-Visit:	September 23-24, 2010	**Members of Site-Visit Team:**	Jamal L. Young, Andrew McGrath, and Barbara Moscinski

1. CAN THE SCHOOL DEMONSTRATE THE ABILITY TO OPERATE IN AN EDUCATIONALLY SOUND MANNER?

MISSION OF THE SCHOOL	
Mission	The school is faithful to the mission, vision, and educational philosophy defined in the charter application and subsequent approved amendment(s), if applicable.

Vision: The Bronx Charter School for Children ("BCSC" or "the School") is a public elementary school that provides a rigorous academic curriculum supplemented with opportunities for enrichment, academic challenge, and support to all students.

Nurturing the potential of each child is our goal. We value the integration of literacy and math skills with all other content areas and encourage active inquiry.

We are an educational community of teachers and learners, working together to emphasize the highest standards and levels of achievement, promote positive leadership and healthy choices, and develop resourceful, responsible, and thoughtful citizens of tomorrow.

Mission: The Bronx Charter School for Children empowers children to meet and exceed high academic standards, develop a life-long passion for learning, make healthy choices, and become community leaders.

Evidence:

- BCSC provided evidence of fidelity to the mission, vision, and educational philosophy defined in the charter application through the implementation of key design elements. The key elements call for rigorous standards and benchmarks; research-based curriculum resources and instructional strategies; data-driven instruction; small class sizes (24 student maximum); comprehensive inclusion programs for students with disabilities (SWD) and English language learners (ELL); recruitment and retention of high-quality professionals; ongoing professional development with an emphasis on literacy; and, family involvement.
- The Trustees and administrative team expressed a shared commitment to the tenets of the BCSC mission. Trustee governance is consistent with the broad, but detailed, oversight envisioned in the charter. The staff is committed to creating a comprehensive planning environment to drive student achievement, including SWD and ELL.

- BCSC has sought Regents approval for revisions to the enrollment, academic program, and related operational matters since the inception of the school. Revision requests have been submitted on a timely basis.
    - In June 2010, the Board of Regents approved a request to increase the enrollment from 22 to 24 students per class, and the overall enrollment from 396 to 432 students.
    - In June 2005, the Board of Regents approved a request to increase the enrollment from 308 to 396 students.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM	
Academic Program	The school establishes an academic program, including pedagogical approach, curriculum, assessment, and other unique elements of the educational philosophy defined in the charter application or subsequent approved amendments.
Student Services	The school provides services for all students, including but not limited to those with special education, English Language Learner needs and those eligible for the federal free- and reduced-price lunch program, as defined in the charter application or approved amendments and as required by law.
Enrollment	The school's student recruitment and enrollment process is faithful to that intended in the charter and as defined by statute and regulation.

Evidence:

- BCSC provides coordinated academic programs for all students, including SWD and ELL. The school provides instruction for 190 days each year.
- The inclusion program manager and ESL coordinator work closely with classroom teachers to provide exemplars of high-quality instruction, curriculum resources, and extra-curricular support.
- An inclusion program manager collaborates with grade level learning specialists and classroom teachers to provide coordinated instructional program support for SWD in accordance with individualized education plans. Learning specialists "push into classrooms to provide mandated SETSS support and assist students determined to be at-risk."
- BCSC uses varied strategies to differentiate instruction for students. Direct instruction for large groups of students emphasizes establishing common knowledge and shared language, raising critical questions, and promoting student inquiry. Small groups are organized based on assessments and performance. Weekly differentiation meetings involve the inclusion program manager, a learning specialist, and grade level teachers. Learning specialists attend grade level meetings each Monday.
- The school supports English language acquisition in general education classes. ELL students are clustered in one or two classes per grade, as determined by the school leadership team.
- Instruction in literacy is a focus of the academic program. BCSC employs a literacy specialist to drive coherent integration across the curriculum. The 2010-2011 writing

program covers the writing process through an emphasis on grammar, revision, and editing. The new program also provides more modeling for students.

- Technology integration is another area of academic focus, according to the Prospective Renewal Application (*Research-based Curriculum Resources and Instructional Strategies,* pg. 16). There are two computers in each classroom. Teachers will require additional professional development to ensure effective technology integration across the curriculum.
- Students currently use technology for research in the upper school or for reading and math in the lower school. The school started a technology group to invite teachers to begin to discuss technology. Presently, BCSC owns 11 laptops, which are available to teachers, but not used in a coherent manner to implement the integration strategy. Instead, laptops are assigned exclusively by teacher request.
- A Technology Work Group (TWG) was scheduled to meet on September 29, 2010 and has scheduled meetings through November 24, with goals and homework for the group. The group consists of six staff members and a facilitator. The focus is to access technology and discuss technology-related needs of BCSC as well as to contribute to the strategic plan and implementation of new technology at BCSC.
- The TWG will create a timeline for the current year and a three-year plan. Areas of immediate concern include designing professional development for teachers; acquisition of new resources (Smart Boards, etc.); identifying a technology consultant to rationalize purchases and deployment; and, developing a revised technology budget.
- BCSC administers all assessments required by New York State. Further, Grade K-5 students take TerraNova assessments in English language arts and math. Grade K-1 students also take ECLAS assessments. Interim assessments developed by teachers are given throughout the year.
- School culture is shaped, in part, by small class sizes and low teacher to student ratios. All classes have 24 students or less. Kindergarten classes also employ assistant teachers to support instruction.
- As a participant in the Partnership for Innovation in Compensation for Charter Schools (PICCS), BCSC receives funding to implement four strategies:
    - providing financial incentives for teachers who improve student achievement;
    - building the capacity of school leaders to effectively assess teacher performance using the Charlotte Danielson Framework for Teaching;
    - developing a peer review and meeting protocol using research-based practices; and,
    - using a comprehensive data system for curriculum mapping, lesson planning and sharing, assessment, and instruction.
- Services for SWD are managed by the Inclusion Program manager, who is responsible for supervising six staff members.
- BCSC is piloting a co-teaching model in Grades 1 and 2. Kindergarten instruction is provided by a lead teacher and a teaching assistant. Lead teachers provide instruction in Grades 3 through 5 with support from learning specialists and content area coaches.
- The school participates in a special education services cooperative. Fifty-two enrolled students (11.8% of students) require services. Twenty-one students receive services for less than 20% of the school day. Thirty-one students receive services between 20 and 60% of the school day. The grade distribution is as follows: Grade K (8), Grade 1 (7), Grade 2 (11), Grade 3 (7), Grade 4 (11), and Grade 5 (8).

- Speech services are the highest need. Complications in the delivery of services to students have arisen due to the delayed release of Related Services Agreements (RSA) from the New York City Department of Education. Services commence when parents sign the RSA.
- The BCSC math coach and ESL team (ESL coordinator and ESL teacher) work closely with grade level learning specialists and classroom teachers. One instructional focal point is to strengthen the capacity of ELL, typically operating with a contrasting grammatical structure, to comprehend and solve word problems.
- Sixty enrolled students are identified as ELL. The grade distribution is as follows: Grade K (16), Grade 1 (14), Grade 2 (14), Grade 3 (9), Grade 4 (6), and Grade 5 (1).
- BCSC defines as "at-risk of educational failure" those students "likely to have difficulty with learning to read in the early grades." (Source: Prospective Renewal Application, pg. 28). Students are identified for additional services through a multi-dimensional qualitative and quantitative assessment process. The process, beginning in the third trimester of the school year, incorporates classroom reading levels, ECLAS assessment data, math assessments, and related teacher-developed benchmarks.
- Structural administrative supports for "at-risk" students include a director of support services, a full-time school counselor, a literacy specialist, and grade-level learning specialists.
- BCSC currently enrolls 425 students. The approved maximum enrollment is 432. Based on October 2010 enrollment involves, services are provided to 52 students with special needs (12.2%) and to 60 students indentified as ELL (14.1%).
- According to the 2008-2009 school report card, 26% of Community School District (CSD) 7 students in Grades 3 through 8 were SWD; 20% were ELL; and, 94% were eligible for free or reduced price lunch. According to BCSC, in Grades K through 5, significantly lower percentages of SWD and ELL students were educated in comparable classrooms across CSD 7.
- In 2008-2009, BCSC reported that 13.6% of students were SWD; 10.4% were ELL, and 84.1% were free or reduced price lunch eligible.
- In 2009-2010, BCSC reported that 13.13% of students were SWD; 11.6% were ELL, and 83.8% were free or reduced price lunch eligible.
- The increase in the ELL population is partly attributable to the enrollment of students from West African nations speaking Wolof, French, Pulaar, and other languages.
- Student recruitment consists of several strategies: placing flyers (in English and Spanish) in stores, restaurants, churches, and other locations throughout the community; advertising in selected local media; etc.
- BCSC is strongly encouraged to develop a detailed plan to increase enrollment percentages in these high-need categories to approximate those of the district of location.
- BCSC, when compared to CSD 7, enrolls approximately 46% as many SWD; 79% as many ELL; and, 81% as many free and reduced lunch eligible students.
- The school has established a strong administrative and instructional team to manage increases in specific populations.

STATE MANDATED ASSESSMENT	
NYS Testing Program	Students at the school demonstrate Proficiency, or progress toward meeting proficiency targets on state standards, as measured by the NYS Testing Program assessments in all subject areas and at all grade levels tested for accountability purposes.
Accountability Goals	The school meets, or shows progress toward meeting, NYS Testing Program goals.
AYP	The school makes Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in the aggregate and for all statistically significant sub-groups. The school is not identified for accountability purposes (not designated as in Needs Improvement, Corrective Action, or Restructuring).

Evidence:

- Absolute Goal 1: 75% of students who have been at BCSC for at least two years will be proficient on the NYS ELA exam. **None of the students in Grades 3 through 5 met this measure using 2009 or 2010 scale scores.**
  - Using 2009 scale scores, the cohort of Grade 3 students enrolled at BCSC for two years or more increased from 56% to 74% proficient. Using the 2010 scale scores, that same cohort measured at 46% proficient.
  - The Grade 4 cohort (again using 2009 scale scores) dipped from 92% to 64% proficient. Using the 2010 scale scores, only 28% of students in this cohort attained proficiency.
  - Grade 5 scores dropped from 80% to 70% on the ELA exam (2009 scale). Thirty-six percent of students were proficient using the 2010 measures.
  - Overall, proficiency fell five points from 75% to 70% based on 2009 scale scores. The same cohort measured at 36% on the 2010 measure.
- Goal 2: BCSC will reduce the gap in student achievement by half or improve each year.
  - BCSC only met this measure using the 2009 scale scores for students in Grade 3 taking the ELA.
- Goal 3: BCSC students will outperform students enrolled in CSD 7.
  - Using 2010 scale scores, BCSC significantly outperformed CSD 7 in two of three grades tested (Grade 3 and Grade 5). BCSC Grade 4 students outperformed the district by one percentage point (28% vs. 27%).
- Absolute Goal 1: 75% of students who have been at BCSC for at least two years will be proficient on the NYS Math exam. Students in Grades 3 through 5 failed to meet this goal using 2010 scale scores. Students in each grade attained this level using 2009 scale scores.
  - Using 2009 scale scores, students in Grades 3 through 5 scored at 100%, 92%, and 89%, respectively. Using 2010 scale scores, students in those grades scored at 60%, 38%, and 56%, respectively.
  - School-wide, 94% of students were proficient in math based on the 2009 scale scores; 51% were proficient using the 2010 scale scores.
  - BCSC students outperformed the district of location at every grade level.

- Using 2009 scale scores, two-year cohort students outperformed non-cohort students in Grade 3. Scores were equal in Grade 4, while non-cohort students outperformed the Grade 5 cohorts by 4 points (86% vs. 90%). The school reports, however, that using 2010 scale scores, the two-year cohort of Grade 5 students significantly outperformed the non-cohort group (56% to 31%).

- Goal 2: BCSC will reduce the gap in student achievement by half or improve each year.
  - The school met this performance goal. In 2010, 94% of students in the two-year cohort were proficient in math (based on 2009 scale scores). In 2009, 92% of students were proficient.

- Goal 3: BCSC students will outperform students enrolled in CSD 7.
  - BCSC students outperformed students in the district of location in Grades 3 through 5. Using 2010 scale scores, BCSC Grade 3 students exceeded the district by 24 points (60% to 36%); Grade 4 students topped the district by 1 point (38% to 37%); and, Grade 5 students surpassed the district by 15 points (56% to 41%).

- Goal 1: In the 2008-2009 school year, 70% of the Grade 4 two-year cohort will perform at or above Level 3 on the NYS science assessment.
  - All students in the Grade 4 two-year cohort performed at or above Level 3 on the NYS science assessment.
  - Student performance exceeded the district of location by 30 points.
- Test scores from the 2009-2010 science assessment were not available at the time of the renewal visit.

- Goal 1: In the 2009-2010 school year, 70% of the Grade 5 two-year cohort will perform at or above Level 3 on the NYS social studies assessment.
  - In 2008-2009, 83% of the Grade 5 two-year cohort performed at or above Level 3 on the NYS social studies assessment.
  - In 2009-2010, 84% of the Grade 5 two-year cohort performed at or above Level 3 on the NYS social studies assessment.
- Going forward, BCSC has established the goal that 75% of all students in the Grade 5 two-year cohort will attain Level 3 or better on this assessment.

- BCSC has as its goal to be “in good standing” each year. The school has been deemed “In Good Standing” in each year of the renewal period.

- BCSC has established the following goals:
  - An annual attendance rate of 95%.
  - An annual enrollment rate of 5%.
  - A student attrition rate of no more than 10%.

- The school has met the annual attendance goal in two of three years during the renewal term. In the current year, student attendance is 96%. Enrollment rates have exceeded the goal in each year of the renewal term. Student attrition rates have not exceeded 7% (2007-2008).
- On the day of the visit, BCSC attendance was approximately 97%.

- The school is showing mixed evidence of progress toward meeting each of the NYS testing program goals.

- For 2009-2010, 74% of Grade 3 students were proficient on the ELA examination. The rate increased 14% over the previous year. In Grade 4, proficiency dipped 22 points, from 89% to 67%. In Grade 5, proficiency fell, from 74% in 2008-2009, to 68%.
- In math, Grade 3 students improved from 91% in 2008-2009 to full proficiency in 2009-2010. Grade 5 students also improved from 80% to 89%. Grade 4 students, however, saw performance drop slightly from 99% to 92%.
- BCSC also conducted a *matched cohort analysis* (students taking an assessment for two consecutive years in progressive grades). For 2007-2008, *n*=47; for 2008-2009, *n*=58. In 2008, 27% of Grade 3 students taking the Grade 4 NYS ELA assessment improved proficiency levels (e.g., from Level 1 to Level 2 or from Level 2 to Level 3). Sixty-six percent of students did not progress to the next proficiency level; and, 7% of students moved from Level 3 to Level 2.
- In 2009, 53% of Grade 4 students did not improve to the next proficiency level. Eleven percent of students declined, with seven students falling from Level 4 to Level 3. Twenty-four percent of students improved, including 16 students who moved from Level 2 to Level 3.
- Also in 2009, a second matched cohort of 37 Grade 5 students performed as follows: 14% declined in performance, 57% remained at the proficiency level of the previous year, and 30% improved. Among the students who improved, 10 of 11 moved from Level 2 to Level 3.
- Of the 95 students in the two 2009 matched cohorts, one improved from Level 3 to Level 4, 26 improved from Level 2 to Level 3, 56 remained at the same proficiency level, and 13 students declined in performance.
- For 2007-2008, *n*=55; for 2008-2009, *n*=96. In 2008, 9% of Grade 3 students taking the Grade 4 NYS ELA assessment improved proficiency levels (e.g., from Level 1 to Level 2 or from Level 2 to Level 3). Seventy-five percent of students did not progress to the next proficiency level; and, 16% of students moved from Level 3 to Level 2.
- In 2009, 71% of Grade 4 students did not improve to the next proficiency level. Three percent of students declined as two students performance dipped from Level 4 to Level 3. Twenty-six percent of students improved, including 12 students who moved from Level 3 to Level 4.
- Also in 2009, a second matched cohort of 38 Grade 5 students performed as follows: 11% declined in performance, 74% remained at the proficiency level of the previous year, and 16% improved.
- Of the 96 students in the two 2009 matched cohorts, 13 improved from Level 3 to Level 4, 7 improved from Level 2 to Level 3, 69 remained at the same proficiency level, and six students declined in performance.
- BCSC has made adequate yearly progress in the aggregate and for each accountability sub-group. For 2008-2009, the school attained a Performance Index (PI) of 173 in ELA and 189 in math. In 2007-2008, the PI for ELA was 161 and 177 for math.
- In 2008-2009, BCSC did not test a sufficient number of SWD or ELL students to meet the minimum requirements for sub-group accountability. Data for the 2009-2010 school year is forthcoming.
- In 2009, BCSC conducted sub-group analyses for gender, SWD status, and ELL status. The ELA results were as follows:
    - BCSC girls outperformed boys in Grades 3 through 5. Significant disparities were identified in Grade 3 (70% proficiency vs. 47% proficiency) and in Grade 5 (79%

proficiency vs. 62% proficiency). Notably, students in Grade 4 were comparably proficient (girls – 90%; boys – 89%).
    - For Grade 3, the percentage of SWD performing at Level 3 on the NYS ELA assessment has increased from 8% to 20% to 38% over the past three years. For Grade 4, data is available for two years. Proficiency for SWD students increased from 45% (n=11) to 78% (n=9). In Grade 5, 63% of SWD performed at Level 3 or 4.
- BCSC provides strong evidence of growth in educating SWD. While the total numbers of students in the sub-group are small, an upward statistical trend is emerging.
- The math results were as follows:
    - BCSC boys outperformed girls in Grades 4 and 5. The greatest disparity in performance was in Grade 5, with boys at 85% proficiency, and girls at 76% proficiency.
    - For Grade 3, the percentage of SWD performing at Level 3 on the NYS ELA assessment has increased from 8% to 20% to 38% over the past three years. For Grade 4, data is available for two years. Proficiency for SWD students increased from 45% (n=11) to 78% (n=9). In Grade 5, 63% of SWD performed at Level 3 or 4.

OTHER ACHIEVEMENT, IMPROVEMENT, AND ASSESSMENT MEASURES	
Accountability Goals	The school meets, or shows progress toward meeting external assessment goals.
Internal Measures of Student Achievement	Students demonstrate progress on internal measurements linked with the school's promotion or exit standards.
Accountability Goals	The school meets, or shows progress toward meeting internal assessment goals.

Evidence:

- While NYS charter schools do not have explicit Accountability Plans, BCSC has established academic and non-academic goals for performance. Additional goals, beyond the NYS testing program, are based on the annual administration of the TerraNova assessments to students in Grades K through 5.
- Goal: Each year, the gap between the NCE of student cohorts at each grade level and an NCE of 50 on the Reading Total subtest and Math subtest will be reduced by one-half when compared to the gap between the same students' NCE in the prior year and the NCE goal of 50. If a grade-level cohort exceeds an NCE of 50 in the previous year, the cohort is expected to show at least in increase in the current year. (Reference: BCSC Report on Goals and Objectives, pg. 22 and 24)
- Each spring, BCSC administers the TerraNova for reading and math. During the first administration of the test in May 2008, students in Grades K through 4 performed as follows (NCE scores):
    - Kindergarten: ELA 42.0; Math 42.2
    - First: ELA 41.6; Math 42.1

  - Second: ELA 39.0; Math 39.1
  - Third: ELA 49.4; Math 53.8
  - Fourth: ELA 46.3; Math 41.5
- On the second administration of the test, the results for students in grades K through 5 were as follows:
  - Kindergarten: ELA 47.0; Math 52.2
  - First: ELA 49.7; Math 39.4
  - Second: ELA 48.0; Math 55.7
  - Third: ELA 41.4; Math 48.7
  - Fourth: ELA 49.7; Math 54.5
  - Fifth: ELA 45.2; Math 49.1
- Student progress over time is mixed in ELA. Kindergarten and Grade 1 student performance improved significantly. Modest increases were made in Grades 2 and 3, while performance for Grade 4 declined.
- BCSC recorded significant gains in math performance. Only kindergarten students tested at the end of Grade 1 did not improve NCE scores.
- Test results from the third administration of the test in June 2010 were not available at the time of the visit.
- At the time of the visit, the school was preparing for the administration of Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA). This assessment will replace Rigby Running Records. Students will take the DRA three times annually. BCSC staff scheduled meetings for mid-October to develop action plans for the use of DRA assessment.
- According to the school leadership team, Rigby data was interpreted as indicating that students were "willing readers." Student performance, however, was not reflected in retelling, fluency, and comprehension. The school, then, opted for another assessment tool intended to strengthen assessments of these areas.
- BCSC conducted a curriculum audit, with a literacy specialist, to determine which standards were aligned to NYS assessments.
- BCSC is in the process of developing a comprehensive academic data collection system. Presently, the assessment coordinator gathers data for classroom teachers and administrators to support instructional modifications. BCSC uses instructional coaches and other resources to guide teachers on the interpretation and use of data.
- The system and quantitative experience level of teachers is insufficient for teachers to directly use assessment to modify instruction. BCSC does not use qualitative measures to assess student achievement.
- The instructional leadership team conducts regular meetings with classroom teachers and specialists to assess progress by students, classes, and across grades.

CURRICULUM	
Skills and Knowledge Expectations	The school's curriculum, as implemented in the classroom, consistently addresses the skills and concepts that all students must know and be able to do to meet NYS Learning Standards, and supports opportunities for all students to master these skills and concepts.
Diverse Learners	The school's curriculum articulates the skills and concepts that all students must know and be able to do, and supports opportunities for all students to master established skills and concepts. The school establishes and implements an accommodation plan that addresses the needs of diverse learners.
Program Evaluation	The school has systems and structures in place to regularly and systematically review the quality and effectiveness of the academic program.
Implementation of the Curriculum	The school's curriculum is documented, and teachers plan and deliver lessons directed by the school's curriculum guidelines.

Evidence:

- The school provided curriculum crosswalks for each grade and subject, which specify the skills and concepts that all students must know and be able to do to meet NYS Learning Standards.
- Opportunities to develop the skills and demonstrate the knowledge commensurate with the Learning Standards are provided to students through varying methods. BCSC provides instruction for 190 days each year. Students receive instruction that exceeds NYS daily requirements (5.5 hours/day). In addition, BCSC relies upon research-based curriculum to provide instruction in ELA and math.
- BCSC uses a balanced literacy approach to instruction. The Houghton Mifflin reading curriculum is supplemented with the *Write Source* program, which was selected to balance grammar with the writing process. Saxon Math is used for math instruction.
- The renewal review team observed lessons in Grades K through 1 emphasizing a number of learning standards, including but not limited to, phonological and phoneme awareness, print awareness, alphabet recognition, use of phonics, vocabulary development, incorporation of background knowledge, spelling, writing and composition.
- Lessons, based on a curriculum roadmap aligning instruction with core standards, reflected the principles of the balanced literacy program. Teachers expected students to use tools and techniques acquired in previous lessons; to incorporate background knowledge; and predict events and construct meaning; and to write responses to literature.
- These learning expectations were applied inconsistently throughout the school. The renewal visit team observed varying qualities of rigor in direct instruction, modeling, lesson preparation and classroom management. Instruction observed in the lower grades was largely coherent and reflective of the priority placed on building literacy throughout the curriculum.

- Students also receive instruction in music and art. Team members observed high quality instruction in these subjects. Observed lessons were punctuated by high student engagement; evidence of strong content knowledge by staff; positive, reinforcing communication to students; modeling of standards-based practice; and corrective feedback. BCSC displays an array of dynamic student art work and conducts an annual musical extravaganza in which students in all grades perform.
- The school has well-developed programs to meet the needs of SWD and ELL. Each program has a director who oversees instruction and assessment.
- The inclusion program manager monitors the progress of all SWD, consults with teachers, and provides parents and the CSE with reports on student progress. The IEP will determine accommodations for assessments. Special assessments are developed and administered under the supervision of the inclusion program manager.
- The school uses an instructional framework designed by educator Charlotte Danielson to assess teachers along four domains: planning and preparation; the classroom environment; instruction; and professional responsibilities. The framework is also used to *guide leadership, coach and provide peer support of growth in instructional practice.*
- In September, BCSC is focusing primarily within the second domain, the classroom environment. Subsets of this domain are:
    - Creating an environment of respect and support
    - Establishing a culture for learning
    - Managing classroom procedures
    - Managing student behavior
    - Organizing physical space
- At the time of the visit, the team observed teachers having varied levels of success with the tenets of this domain. In particular, as students were continuing to adjust to new routines, some teachers struggled to maintain focus and discipline. Occasionally, teachers regularly interrupted instruction in order to establish a requested "classroom volume level." High-performing teachers in this domain frequently anticipated and addressed potentially disruptive situations with instruction-based redirection and correction. These teachers remained focused on the lesson, rather than an emerging disruptive behavior.
- Additional domains will be addressed from October through December and again in the spring.
- Annual performance evaluation reviews are based, in part, on evaluation using the Danielson framework for teacher performance. Members of the BCSC instructional team meet regularly to discuss instructional quality. These meetings are informed by the Danielson framework.
- BCSC widely posts rubrics as a means of ensuring school-wide alignment on the nature of quality student work. The renewal visit team noted, however, several errors on bulletin boards in the grading of student work. Similarly, the team noted errors in work posted by adults (typographical errors, etc.).
- BCSC teachers complete an instructional roadmap, but have latitude to be creative within the curriculum. Teachers report that the curriculum is not overly prescriptive and allows for collaborations within grade levels and with content specialists.

- Classes within a single grade provided similar lessons to students. The specific content and manner of delivery varied, but classes were largely aligned. The leadership team of the school noted that considerable time was dedicated to pacing prior to the beginning of the 2010-2011 school year.
- In 2009, student performance in Grade 3 classrooms varied as much as 25 points in ELA and eleven points in math on NYS assessments.
- Lesson planning by teachers is done collaboratively and with the support of a grade level learning specialists, the ESL coordinator, and the inclusion program manager.

TEACHING AND LEARNING	
Instruction	School-wide instructional practice is aligned with the school design and student learning objectives, is consistently and effectively delivered, and conveys clear expectations to students. Teachers are purposeful in their lessons and students are engaged in meaningful learning.
Effective Teaching	There is evidence of rigor, relevance, pacing, alignment of curriculum to State Standards, and student engagement.
Assessment and Instructional Decision-Making	Teachers and school leaders use qualitative and quantitative evidence to inform and guide instructional planning and practice.

Evidence:

- The curriculum is driven by teacher-developed lesson plans which are aligned to the NYS Learning Standards in collaboration with the instructional leaders of the school.
- Throughout the school, teachers wrote lesson objectives and referred to them throughout each lesson. Instructional pacing was largely consistent within grades. Evidence of extensive preparation, however, was mixed. Further, transitions between classes and between floors were not consistently fluid. In some instances, the distribution of materials to students was inefficient.
- Evidence of high-quality instruction included modeling by teachers in the early grades. Teachers demonstrated a positive attitude toward students; sought to engage them on tasks; solicited feedback; and provided clear instructions. Teachers and assistant teachers brought energy and enthusiasm to reading lessons and used creative means to build teamwork with students. In one class, students displayed as much interest in devising creative cheers as they did in mastering the core content of the lesson. Importantly, those students were clear that mastery of the content was a prerequisite for cheering.
- The review team, however, did not find school-wide evidence of academic rigor. This may be due to a number of factors. At BCSC, several systems of assessment are being changed or modified within short time frames. For example, teacher evaluation will center

on domain two of the Danielson framework (the classroom environment). The essential practices that define academic rigor, however, are elements of domain one and three.

- Critical changes to the Danielson Framework for Teaching were made to domains one and three (Reference: http://www.danielsongroup.org/theframeteach.htm and http://www.danielsongroup.org/RevisionsToTheFramework.pps). For example, in domain one, the principle of *Assessing Student Learning* was replaced with *Designing Student Assessment*. BCSC has not made these changes and continues to use the framework adopted years ago. Nonetheless, these items should be addressed under the existing framework to some degree over the course of the year.
- At present, BCSC does not use teacher-designed interim assessments as a means of driving instruction. BCSC issues the DRA three times annually; Houghton Mifflin Integrated Theme tests; Saxon Math assessments; and spring assessments (TerraNova).
- Within domain three, the principle *Providing Feedback to Students* was replaced with *Using Assessment in Instruction.* The review team noted that BCSC teachers do provide feedback to students.
- Additional changes include:
    - A new writing program. *Write Source* was selected to provide students with clearer, structured support in building grammar and overall writing.
    - New assessments. The DRA is intended to provide teachers with stronger assessments of student reading accuracy, fluency and comprehension. Running records will no longer be used.
    - New science instruction. BCSC added a new teacher and a new classroom for science.
    - New instructional support for math instruction. BCSC introduced a math coach to optimize the quality of instruction using Saxon Math. The school is focused on problem solving skills and building literacy connections, particularly for ELL.
- The renewal visit team did not emerge from interviews with the school leadership team or the Trustees with a clear sense of *what works well at BCSC.* Literacy integration is a key design element. BCSC has built comprehensive for support for such integration throughout the curriculum, but student performance data suggest significant challenges remain.
- A clear majority of observed lessons were teacher-led. In the upper grades, the review team did not observe small group or project-based instruction. Small group instruction was observed in Kindergarten and Grade 1. Teachers interviewed by the team stated that upper grade classes were focusing on establishing school culture through large group instruction.
- Instruction was often purposeful in classrooms, across grades and across subjects. Notable exceptions were in those classrooms where discipline and management were challenges. The renewal visit team noted that teachers with more experience at BCSC demonstrated the capacity to stay on task and drive instruction.
- In one ESL class taught by a substitute teacher, the review team noted strong classroom management; clear communication to students; extensive modeling for instruction in writing; opportunities for guided practice; corrective feedback and verification of work by the teacher and assistant.
- The team also noted that several students appear to have an accelerated comprehension of and capacity to complete the assigned tasks. Upon the completion of assigned tasks, those students were not provided supplemental activities to sustain their engagement in the lesson or to build new skills.

- Students who found assignments more challenging received intensive small group support from the lead teacher. The assistant led the larger group through the writing phase of the lesson.
- The team observed one class with limited evidence of sound preparation by the teacher (anticipating the movement of students, configuring the classroom, preparing materials, etc.), complicated instructions, insufficient modeling, and poor classroom management.
- In music class, students demonstrated high levels of engagement. The objectives of the lessons were clear. Students demonstrated understanding of the objectives and a joy for learning. The teacher provided instruction that addressed career development and occupational studies indicators of the NYS Learning Standards in addition to those related expressly to music.
- The review team noted that word walls were not used extensively. In particular, some word walls included only one or two words. The school, however, affirms that integrating literacy across all subjects to build mastery is a priority.
- Data analysis, for purposes of improving instruction, was described by staff as being "in its infancy." A number of systems at the school are new or in a state of modification. The writing program has been changed due to the absence of a scope and sequence in the previous program.

SCHOOL LEADERSHIP	
Effective Leadership	The school leader has the experience and skills needed to successfully implement the school's charter.
Leadership Development	School leaders receive appropriate and timely professional development. Mentoring or coaching programs are in place and effective.
Building Level Leadership Team	The school is utilizing its Building Leadership Team to implement school improvement.
Instructional leadership	School leaders provide teachers with feedback and guidance that leads to improved instructional practice and student achievement.

Evidence:

- The evidence of effective leadership is mixed. The administrative team has a number of new persons in new roles. Significant systems of instruction, teacher evaluation and assessment are being newly implemented. Further, a number of systems have yet to be created which are critical to the key design elements of the charter.
- Members of the school leadership team have developed a new technology work plan. However, the work of technology integration into the curriculum, combined with professional development for teachers, may not be achieved in the short term.
- BCSC hired eight new teachers this year. The leadership team is rightly focused, at least in part, on the classroom environment, but there are trade-offs. As noted previously, the team noted limited evidence of academic rigor, particularly in the upper grades.
- Experiential learning is another key design element of the instructional program. During interviews with the trustees and instructional team, this aspect of the program was also

defined as "evolving." Highlights provided by staff included the new community garden developed by the school, trips to local parks, and visits to local libraries.

- BCSC presented limited evidence of deep cultural competence in building what might constitute a rich, Bronx-based experiential learning platform for teachers or students. The absence of substantive partnerships with local educational and cultural institutions is noted as an area for growth.
- At the time of the visit, the school was preparing for a new interim acting Executive Director. The Trustees affirmed that a thorough search was conducted to identify a high-quality instructional leader. There are, of course, no guarantees that any instructional leader will provide equivalent or superior oversight, guidance and management to improve student performance and teacher retention. The Trustees, however, developed a clear, rigorous process intended to provide BCSC with operational and instructional continuity.
- The school has sought to promote highly effective teachers and staff members with opportunities to serve as school leaders. In addition, the Trustees (in close collaboration with the Executive Director) modified the staffing plan to meet the dynamic and growing needs of special populations of students.
- The Charlotte Danielson Framework for Teaching is used to assess teacher performance two times each year. In addition, teachers can receive support from a number of specialists, coaches, and administrators on all aspects of teaching.
- "School directors" (upper and lower) conduct grade level meetings with teachers each week. These meetings are also attended by specialists. BCSC convenes a Child Study Team to address the instructional and behavioral supports for special needs children.
- Lesson plans and weekly reports are read on a weekly basis by the school's instructional team to provide ongoing feedback and guidance to strengthen instruction.
- The Danielson framework refers to seven common themes in building a learning community (See *Enhancing Professional Practice, 2nd Edition, pg. 38)*. BCSC provided limited evidence for three of these themes: cultural competence, appropriate use of technology and student assumption of responsibility.

SCHOOL CLIMATE	
Environment is Conducive to Learning	The classroom and school environment is orderly and supports the goal of student understanding and mastery of skills and is consistent with the school's mission. Supervision is sufficient, respectful, and consistent.
Collaboration	Administrators, teachers and staff communicate openly, positively and effectively. Professional learning communities exist and affect improvement efforts.

Evidence:

- BCSC provided strong evidence of an orderly and organized school wide learning culture. Aspects of the BCSC environment that are conducive to learning and the implementation of the school's mission include: explicit, consistent school-wide behavioral expectations;

coherent messaging from staff about academic and behavioral standards; student ownership of those standards; endorsements of disciplinary practices; and, ongoing professional development for teachers.

- BCSC has the feel of an institution in a state of change. Only a handful of people have been there since the last renewal period. Many of the administrators have been with the school for three years or less. BCSC has eight new teachers. The school hired fourteen new people in 2009-2010.
- In addition to the significant personnel changes, the systems driving instruction, assessment, data collection and analysis, hiring, instructional leadership, are either wholly new or substantially different.
- At BCSC, the Executive Director meets regularly with the instructional team and the operations team.
- The instructional team includes directors of the upper school and lower school, the dean of students and families, the inclusion program manager, the ESL coordinator, and the director of student support services.
- The operations team includes the director of finance, the director of operations, and the director of development.
- Trustees, administrators and teachers report that meetings are conducted in a collegial manner designed to develop the best solutions for students.

PARENT AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT	
Parent Involvement	Strategies are being implemented to increase the involvement and contributions of parents.
External/Community-Based Partners	Strategies are being implemented to increase the involvement and contributions of community partners.

Evidence:

- Parent involvement at BCSC is structured to facilitate volunteering and home-school communication. It has an entity, the Family Staff Association (FSA), which has been charged with disseminating information, facilitating home-school communication, informing parents about school-based resources, and increasing parent volunteerism within the school.
- The BCSC parental involvement approach is largely school-centered and does not extend beyond the borders of the school.
- Proposed school-based activities include fitness (pilates, etc.), nutrition classes, etc.
- The Board of Trustees appoints a parent representative to the Board. Historically, this role has been filled by the president of the FSA. The parent representative is a voting member of the Board.
- BCSC provides extensive bilingual support for parents whose first language is not English. Translation services are available at meetings. Flyers and meeting notices are posted in English and Spanish.

- The Executive Director has taken significant steps to create meaningful parental involvement at the school. Creative new measures were implemented to solicit a clear, consistent, and authentic parent voice. At present, the outcomes are mixed.
- Based on interviews with parents and Trustees, the school has limited formal partnerships with existing community-based organizations. The renewal visit team noted that BCSC, providing instruction since 2004, might benefit from formalizing efforts to connect the school to the larger community.
- Trustees noted that BCSC would be reaching out to certain community organizations, but did not provide significant details on strategies or timelines under which this might occur.

PROGRAM PLANNING AND EVALUATION	
Organizational Needs	The school has realistic plans for program improvement, possible future expansion, and adequate facilities based on evaluation and analysis of data, if applicable.
Academic Program Needs	The school evaluates the impact of its academic programs on student achievement and modifies its programs to ensure improvement.
Teacher Evaluations	Teacher evaluations linked to student performance have been put into place. The system and data used must be consistent with State APPR system.

Evidence:

- At the time of the visit, it was difficult for the renewal team to discern what works well with respect to program planning and evaluation at BCSC. In a follow-up response, the school noted that student performance data on ethnicity was provided in a binder at the time of the visit. That *data* consisted of two bullets noting that Latino students outperformed Black students in ELA and math. No interpretation or analysis of the data was provided. To the extent that this potentially significant data point may escape closer scrutiny, BCSC may be served by modifying its processes to identify, review, and dissect such data.
- The school collects comprehensive data which is disaggregated by gender and SWD status for purposes of improving instructional quality and service delivery.
- The academic program may be best-served by the new hiring process (slated to begin two months earlier than in previous years) and improved teacher retention. BCSC reports that a higher percentage of teachers are seeking to remain at the school.
- The revised daily schedule and newly-devised career path may increase the retention rate, as well.
- The school did not provide disaggregated data on the performance of students by ethnicity. Transparency of data here may provide added clues to inform instruction, overall school design, and teacher evaluation. Similar actions were initiated subsequent to reviews of gender and classroom level performance data.
- An extensive system of teacher evaluation has been established. Teachers are evaluated along a comprehensive array of indicators to determine how they meet standards set by the Board of Trustees and the school leadership team.

2. CAN THE SCHOOL DEMONSTRATE THE ABILITY TO OPERATE IN A FISCALLY SOUND MANNER?

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT	
Solvency and Stability	The school develops budgets that are realistic and in support of student academic achievement. The school demonstrates a history of positive net assets, adequate cash flow to sustain operations and support the academic program, and consistently operates within budget. The school develops a budget that can be sustained by its enrollment.
Fiscal oversight	The Board of Trustees and school leadership implement effective structures and systems to enable responsible fiscal oversight of the school. The Board of Trustees has an external company complete a yearly audit. The Board of Trustees demonstrates long-term fiscal oversight through appropriate planning processes.
Internal controls	The school implements an effective system of internal controls over revenues, expenses, and fixed assets, and exercises good business practices.

Evidence:

- BCSC is fiscally stable. Auditors reported cash and cash equivalents of approximately $1.76M for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2009.
- BCSC has had a positive cash balance for each year of the renewal period and retains sufficient funds to implement the academic plan outlined in the charter.
- While BCSC sought modest increases to enrollment in June 2010, the request was driven by community demand, rather than fiscal constraints. The school continues to operate on a sound fiscal basis.
- Fiscal oversight is conducted on a regular basis by the Board of Trustees. The chair of the Board's finance committee is a certified public accountant. Members of the finance committee conduct ongoing conference calls with the Director of Finance. Financial reports are prepared by the Director of Finance, approved by the Executive Director, and presented for approval to the Trustees at regular monthly meetings.
- The finance committee also serves as an audit with responsibilities for approving financial controls, reviewing monthly financial reports, reviewing draft audit reports, liaising with the

independent auditor, reporting to the entire Board, and approving the final audit report. The members of this committee will also be involved in a Comprehensive Benefit Review.

- The Trustees, for the past six years, have retained the services of a single auditor, Lederer, Levine & Associates, LLC. The Internal Revenue Service has previously provided guidance to not-for-profit organizations recommending that firms retain new auditors at least every five years. In a follow-up response, the school notes that the IRS has removed this guidance from the Form 990. Audit organizations, nonetheless, are advised under GAGAS to avoid all appearances of impairments of independence. NYSED notes that the Government Auditing Standards do not take a position on firm rotation. Historically, charter schools have been advised, as a matter of guidance, to rotate firms on a regular basis (typically every three to five years). No formal rules have been adopted by the Board of Regents mandating firm rotation. NYSED may request that the school request that its auditor, in alignment with provision 3.08 a, b, c, e, and f of GAGAS, provide information on how impairments to independence have been avoided during its service to BCSC.
- BCSC has developed a projected budget through the 2015-2016 school year. There are, however, a number of outstanding questions concerning this budget. Areas of inquiry include significantly reduced revenue projections for special education funding; high revenue projections based on fundraising; and the omission of information on contractual services expenditures.
- The proposed budget does not appear to be closely aligned to the prospective instructional plan. Specifically, the prospective budget does not appear to include significant funds for technology or media centers planned for the school. The budget does, however, include traditional expenditures for the BCSC instructional plan.
- Trustees indicated that a new process has been created in which instructional leaders review and sign off on proposed annual budgets.
- BCSC staff and the Board of Trustees are working to update the policies and procedures for fiscal management. The Trustees review the document annually.
- The school has no long-term debt.

3. CAN THE SCHOOL DEMONSTRATE ADEQUATE LEVELS OF PARENT AND STUDENT SATISFACTION?

PARENT AND STUDENT SATISFACTION	
Family Satisfaction	Through the use of parent and student (where appropriate) surveys, the school demonstrates that families are satisfied with the school's program
Student Retention	The school can document the numbers and reasons for student attrition.

Evidence:

- The school has met all of its parent/guardian satisfaction and involvement goals for two of the past three years.

- In 2009-2010, the school's annual parent survey generated an 85% response rate. 96% of respondents expressed satisfaction with the school. In addition, 99% of all parents/guardians attended parent-teacher conferences.
- Since 2007-2008, the student retention rate has increased from 93% to 97% to 98% each year.
- BCSC self-reported data tracks student departures, the district the student relocated to, as well as a general reason such as parental choice or geographic. There is no identification for ELL students. There is identification for Special Education students.
- Student interviews revealed satisfaction with the safety of the school; ability to reach out to teachers; and, the Executive Director and other adults. Grade 5 students could articulate the writing process in terms of writing a story; revising it; using a rubric to grade themselves; writing a final draft; and, then having it put on a bulletin board.

4. CAN THE SCHOOL DEMONSTRATE THAT IT IS A VIABLE ORGANIZATION?

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE	
Leadership/ Governance	The Board of Trustees implements the governance and leadership structure as defined in the charter application or subsequent approved amendment(s), if applicable.
Board Accountability	The Board of Trustees is responsible to the school community it serves.
Decision Making and Communication	The school has a clear understanding of decision-making and communication that result in a common sense of purpose for all school constituencies.
Contractual Relationships (if applicable)	The Board of Trustees and school leadership establish effective working relationships with their management company. Changes in the school's relationship with its management company comply with required charter amendment procedures.
Roles and Responsibilities	The school defines and delineates clear roles and responsibilities among board and staff.

Board Oversight	The Board of Trustees regularly and systematically assesses the performance of school administrators against school-wide goals and makes effective and timely use of the evaluations. The Board of Trustees operates with a clear set of goals for the school and has developed a set of tools for understanding progress toward meeting those goals including those outlined in the school's Accountability Plan.
Board Development	Board members receive appropriate and timely professional development.
Personnel	The Board of Trustees employs leadership who demonstrate effective leadership of the school's programs. The school's leadership establishes an appropriate professional climate, resulting in a purposeful learning environment, reasonable rates of retention for effective school leadership, staff, and teachers, and manageable levels of overall staff turnover.

Evidence:

- BCSC Trustees implement the governance and leadership structure as outlined in the charter and in subsequent amendments.
- Trustees are accountable to the school community. While parent involvement on the Board is limited to a single appointee and no staff members serve on the Board, meetings are held at the school and are accessible to the public.
- The school provided evidence that the meetings, minutes, and resolutions of the Trustees are in compliance with the charter, bylaws and Open Meetings Law of New York State.
- No written complaints have been received or addressed by the Board of Trustees in the past year. Complaints received and reviewed by the Trustees during the current renewal period were addressed in accordance with the school's parent complaint policy and Section 2855 (4) of the charter law.
- Trustees review the performance of the Executive Director annually. The annual assessment tool is aligned to the instructional program of the school. The assessment tool, however, includes oversight of the financial management of the school. The Board Treasurer and finance committee chair traditionally handle this function.
- BCSC does not have a management company.
- Trustees reported receiving comprehensive, accurate, and timely information from school staff.
- However, did not report receiving ongoing professional development.
- Members of the academic committee of the Board meet on a monthly basis with the Executive Director, upper and lower school directors, and the inclusion program manager. The Board is also involved in the implementation and oversight of the PICCS grant.

- Academic priorities identified for the 2010-2011 school year include addressing the high number of Level 2 students; providing comprehensive services to ELL; implementing the DRA; building vocabulary, inferential reading and other skills through the *Write Source* program; and meeting the needs of SWD through the new pilot program, serving students in Grades 1 and 2.
- The school, in operation since 2004, has historically been challenged by a high *teacher turnover rate*. While the school reports a modest overall *staff turnover rate* (14%), instructional attrition remains a concern.
- In 2009-2010, BCSC had a teacher attrition rate of 20% (5 departures). In 2008-2009, the school had a rate of 25% (6 departures). In 2007-2008, BCSC had a rate of 18% (4 departures).
- Teacher retention, still significantly lower than the goals set by the school, has improved. In the 2009 Annual Report, BCSC reported a *staff turnover rate* of 38% (14 departures – 26 classroom teachers and 11 specialists). In 2007-2008, the rate was 43% (13 departures – 22 classroom teachers and 8 specialists).
- Among the 18 classroom teachers currently employed at BCSC, only one has been with the school for more than three years.
- Four administrators are entering their second year of service: the Director of Social Services, Inclusion Program Manager, Director of Development, and Director of Finance.
- The Executive Director, ESL Coordinator, and Director of Operations have been with the school since its inception.
- The academic directors of the upper (Grades 3 through 5) and lower (Grades K through 2) "schools" are in their third year with BCSC. The lower school director is in her first year as such. Formerly, she held the position of Assessment Coordinator. That position has also been filled by a new hire.

COMPLIANCE	
Safety	The school establishes and maintains a physically safe environment for students and staff. The school establishes a healthy environment ensuring civil rights for all.
Facilities	The school provides facilities that meet applicable state and federal requirements, are suited to its programs, and are sufficient to serve diverse student needs.
Staff Qualifications	Staff employed by the school meets all applicable state and federal qualifications and standards.
Implementation of Strategies to Recruit, Place, and Retain Qualified Staff	Activities are funded to recruit, place, and/or retain highly qualified staff.

Evidence:

- BCSC maintains a physically safe environment for students and staff. A safety plan, approved by the Board of Trustees, has been filed with NYSED annually. The plan meets NYSED requirements.
- The facility meets applicable state and federal requirements. The building is accessible by wheelchair. An elevator provides service to each floor of the facility. Hallways are wide and spacious. Doorways are sufficiently wide to permit access. Further, common areas such as the cafeteria are wheelchair accessible and located on the first floor.
- Classrooms are large, clean, and well lit. Most classrooms have sufficient space for instructional materials, closets, and related resources to support the instructional program.
- BCSC students have access to a multi-purpose room for physical exercise each day.
- The school, however, has faced recurring issues with water in the basement and roof leaks. The facility has been one of the highest priority concerns for the board of trustees.
- The school is in two of a ten-year lease. The lease includes an option to buy.
- BCSC staff meets the applicable state and federal qualifications and standards.
- BCSC welcomed eight new teachers to the school this year. The distribution of new teachers is as follows:
    - Grade K: 2 of 3
    - Grade 1: 1 or 3
    - Grade 2: 1 of 3
    - Grade 4: 1 of 3
    - Grade 5: 2 of 3
    - Science (newly-created position)
    - Physical Education
    - Lower School Learning Specialist (newly-created position)
- Two of current Grade 3 teachers were hired in 2009-2010. One of the other Grade 4 teachers was hired in 2009-2010. Two Grade 5 teachers in 2009-2010 are currently teaching Grade 3. One Grade K and one Grade 2 teacher in 2009-2010 are currently teaching Grade 1.
- BCSC participates in the PICCS grant (see above) to provide financial incentives for teachers.
- The Trustees worked closely with the Executive Director to modify and strengthen hiring practices to improve teacher retention rates.
- BCSC uses the Charlotte Danielson framework for teaching to inform, guide, and evaluate instruction. The current emphasis is on Danielson's domain two (classroom environment).
- BCSC will use videotaped recordings of lessons as part of a new peer review and coaching process. A launch date has not been established.

DISSEMINATION	
Dissemination of Best Practices (If applicable)	The school has provided models for replication and best practices.

Evidence: N/A