



**Department of  
Education**

*Carmen Fariña, Chancellor*

**DEMOCRACY PREP CHARTER SCHOOL  
RENEWAL REPORT**

**2014 – 2015 SCHOOL YEAR  
MAY 2015**

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## Part 1: Summary of Renewal Recommendation

### I. Charter School Overview:

#### Background Information

Democracy Prep Charter School	
Board Chair(s)	Josh Pristaw
School Leader(s)	Tanya Nunez and Ajaka Roth (MS), Natasha Trivers (HS)
Charter Management Organization (if applicable)	Democracy Prep Public Schools
Other Partner(s)	N/A
District(s) of Location	NYC Community School District 5
Physical Address(es)	2230 Fifth Avenue, Manhattan (Grades 6-8)
	222 West 134 Street, Manhattan (Grades 9-12)
Facility Owner(s)	DOE
School Opened For Instruction	2006-2007
Current Charter Term Expiration Date	6/30/2015
Current Authorized Grade Span	K-12
Current Authorized Enrollment	1,061
Proposed New Charter Term	5 years [July 1, 2015 – June 30, 2020]
Proposed Authorized Grade Span for New Charter Term	K-12
Proposed Authorized Enrollment for New Charter Term	1,061
Proposed Sections per Grade for New Charter Term	Grades K-12: 3-4 sections per grade

## Overview of School-Specific Data

### School Evaluation of Academic Goals as stated in Annual Report to NYSED and Renewal Application to NYC DOE

Academic Goal Analysis					
	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	Cumulative Charter Term Total
Total Achievable Goals	23	23	23	23	92
# Met	7	12	11	11	41
# Partially Met	0	0	4	2	6
# Not Met	2	5	3	6	16
# Not Applicable *	14	6	5	4	29
% Met	30%	52%	48%	48%	45%
% Partially Met	0%	0%	17%	9%	7%
% Not Met	9%	22%	13%	26%	17%
% Not Applicable *	61%	26%	22%	17%	32%
% Met of All Applicable Goals	78%	71%	61%	58%	65%

\* Some goals may not be applicable in all years. For example, goals related to the NYC Progress Report are not applicable for the 2013-2014 school year as Progress Reports were not issued that year.

### ES/MS students scoring at or above Level 3 on NYS assessments, compared to CSD, NYC and State averages

% Proficient in English Language Arts				
	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
<b>Democracy Prep Charter School</b>	30.9%	38.5%	18.4%	25.1%
CSD 5	27.1%	28.2%	14.6%	16.4%
Difference from CSD 5 *	3.8	10.3	3.8	8.7
NYC	38.3%	42.5%	24.8%	27.0%
Difference from NYC *	-7.4	-4.0	-6.4	-1.9
New York State **	52.8%	55.1%	31.1%	30.6%
Difference from New York State	-21.9	-16.6	-12.7	-5.5

<b>% Proficient in Mathematics</b>				
	<b>2010-2011</b>	<b>2011-2012</b>	<b>2012-2013</b>	<b>2013-2014</b>
<b>Democracy Prep Charter School</b>	81.5%	81.7%	26.0%	48.9%
CSD 5	40.3%	38.8%	12.7%	13.0%
Difference from CSD 5 *	41.2	42.9	13.3	35.9
NYC	54.7%	57.3%	26.5%	28.9%
Difference from NYC *	26.8	24.4	-0.5	20.0
New York State **	63.3%	64.8%	31.1%	36.2%
Difference from New York State	18.2	16.9	-5.1	12.7

\* All comparisons to either the CSD or NYC take into account only grades the school itself served. CSD comparisons are particular to the CSD in which the school was sited each year.

\*\* New York State proficiency rates were taken from data.nysed.gov.

### Student improvement on the state tests compared to other students

<b>Median Adjusted Growth Percentile - English Language Arts</b>				
	<b>2010-2011</b>	<b>2011-2012</b>	<b>2012-2013</b>	<b>2013-2014</b>
<b>Democracy Prep Charter School – All Students</b>	<b>59.0%</b>	<b>59.0%</b>	<b>69.0%</b>	<b>69.0%</b>
Peer Percent of Range - All Students	22.1%	46.9%	66.7%	77.5%
City Percent of Range- All Students	15.7%	40.2%	64.9%	70.0%
<b>Democracy Prep Charter School – School's Lowest Third</b>	<b>72.0%</b>	<b>75.0%</b>	<b>81.0%</b>	<b>80.0%</b>
Peer Percent of Range - School's Lowest Third	36.0%	73.2%	53.0%	64.5%
City Percent of Range - School's Lowest Third	29.3%	59.2%	55.3%	61.8%

<b>Median Adjusted Growth Percentile - Mathematics</b>				
	<b>2010-2011</b>	<b>2011-2012</b>	<b>2012-2013</b>	<b>2013-2014</b>
<b>Democracy Prep Charter School – All Students</b>	<b>75.0%</b>	<b>71.0%</b>	<b>74.0%</b>	<b>84.0%</b>
Peer Percent of Range - All Students	78.3%	81.8%	72.6%	100.0%
City Percent of Range- All Students	74.1%	78.0%	81.0%	100.0%
<b>Democracy Prep Charter School – School's Lowest Third</b>	<b>80.5%</b>	<b>84.0%</b>	<b>81.0%</b>	<b>91.0%</b>
Peer Percent of Range - School's Lowest Third	82.7%	100.0%	62.1%	100.0%
City Percent of Range - School's Lowest Third	79.9%	97.4%	69.9%	100.0%

A comparison range consists of all possible results within two standard deviations of the average. A peer/city percent of range of 50% represents the position of the average and can be interpreted as a school outperforming 50% of its peer group/city.

## Closing the Achievement Gap

Percent in the 75th Growth Percentile - English Language Arts				
	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
Students with Disabilities *	44.1%	51.4%	72.9%	49.0%
English Language Learner Students	45.8%	23.1%	46.7%	50.0%
Students in the Lowest Third Citywide	43.8%	50.6%	59.8%	53.9%
Percent in the 75th Growth Percentile - Mathematics				
	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
Students with Disabilities *	58.8%	56.8%	66.7%	73.5%
English Language Learner Students	65.4%	36.7%	46.7%	82.8%
Students in the Lowest Third Citywide	62.3%	73.0%	75.4%	78.3%

\* Defined as students with a placement in Self-Contained, ICT, or SETSS.

## HS Performance Compared to Peer and NYC Averages

4-year Graduation Rate				
	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013 <sup>1</sup>	2013-2014
<b>Democracy Prep Charter School</b>	-	-	66.1%	72.7%
NYC *	-	-	66.0%	68.4%
Difference from NYC	-	-	0.1	4.3
College and Career Preparatory Course Index **				
	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
<b>Democracy Prep Charter School</b>	-	-	94.6%	89.1%
Peer Percent of Range	-	-	100.0%	89.5%
City Percent of Range	-	-	100.0%	100.0%

\* The New York State graduation rate calculation method was first adopted in NYC for the Cohort of 2001 (Class of 2005). The cohort consists of all students who first entered ninth grade in a given school year (e.g., the Cohort of 2005 entered ninth grade in the 2005-2006 school year). Graduates are defined as those students earning either a Local or Regents diploma and exclude those earning either a special education (IEP) diploma or GED.

\*\* The College and Career Preparatory Course Index score was not introduced until the 2010-2011 school year and peer and city percent of range scores were not available until the 2011-2012 school year. A comparison range consists of all possible results within two standard deviations of the average. A peer/city percent of range of 50% represents the position of the average and can be interpreted as a school outperforming 50% of its peer group/city.

<sup>1</sup> School year 2012-2013 was the first year in which Democracy Prep Charter School served twelfth grade students and, therefore, the first year in which the school had a graduating class.

## Weighted Regents Pass Rates

2014					
	English	Math	Science	Global History	U.S History
<b>Democracy Prep Charter School</b>	1.13	1.59	2.34	1.17	2.15
Peer Percent of Range	62.5%	89.4%	100.0%	80.3%	100.0%
City Percent of Range	73.9%	96.8%	100.0%	86.3%	100.0%
2013					
	English	Math	Science	Global History	U.S History
<b>Democracy Prep Charter School</b>	1.49	1.64	2.44	1.21	1.11
Peer Percent of Range	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	85.4%	64.5%
City Percent of Range	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	89.0%	69.0%
2012					
	English	Math	Science	Global History	U.S History
<b>Democracy Prep Charter School</b>	1.29	1.85	2.15	1.64	1.32
Peer Percent of Range	46.2%	78.0%	100.0%	62.9%	52.5%
City Percent of Range	54.5%	82.4%	94.2%	66.1%	59.1%
2011					
	English	Math	Science	Global History	U.S History
<b>Democracy Prep Charter School</b>	-	1.79	1.98	1.43	-
Peer Percent of Range	-	74.1%	100.0%	47.3%	-
City Percent of Range	-	80.2%	89.9%	59.5%	-

The Weighted Regents Pass Rate measures students' progress since the corresponding eighth grade test, with more weight given to students with lower proficiency based on eight grade test results.

A comparison range consists of all possible results within two standard deviations of the average. A peer/city percent of range of 50% represents the position of the average and can be interpreted as a school outperforming 50% of its peer group/city.

## Credit Accumulation

% 1st-Year Students Earning 10+ Credits				
	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
<b>Democracy Prep Charter School</b>	80.7%	89.1%	73.9%	80.2%
Peer Percent of Range	26.1%	54.4%	28.3%	23.6%
City Percent of Range	64.6%	78.2%	42.4%	55.6%
% 2nd-Year Students Earning 10+ Credits				
	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
<b>Democracy Prep Charter School</b>	87.7%	89.2%	76.9%	86.7%
Peer Percent of Range	55.1%	60.0%	40.9%	57.8%
City Percent of Range	79.0%	80.1%	55.6%	75.0%
% 3rd-Year Students Earning 10+ Credits				
	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
<b>Democracy Prep Charter School</b>	-	89.6%	72.7%	78.6%
Peer Percent of Range	-	71.4%	33.8%	39.1%
City Percent of Range	-	82.2%	50.0%	62.1%

A comparison range consists of all possible results within two standard deviations of the average. A peer/city percent of range of 50% represents the position of the average and can be interpreted as a school outperforming 50% of its peer group/city.

## Closing the Achievement Gap

4-year Weighted Diploma Rate*				
	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
Students with Disabilities **	-	-	187.5%	200.0%
English Language Learner Students	-	-	-	-
Students in the Lowest Third Citywide	-	-	250.0%	-
College and Career Preparatory Course Index ***				
	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
Students in the Lowest Third Citywide	-	-	80.0%	-

\* The weighted diploma rate assigns a weight to each type of diploma based on the relative level of proficiency and college and career readiness indicated by the diploma type and based on certain student demographic characteristics.

\*\* Defined as students with a placement in Self-Contained, ICT, or SETSS.

\*\*\* The College and Career Preparatory Course Index score for Students in the Lowest Third Citywide was not introduced until the 2011-2012 school year.

## II. Renewal Recommendation and Rationale

Based on the evidence presented herein and detailed below in Part II, the NYC DOE recommends a 5 year full-term renewal with an operational/compliance condition.

The operational/compliance condition is as follows:

1. As part of its oversight of Democracy Prep Charter School in its next term, the NYC DOE will require the school to submit a corrective action plan to address the high rate of uncertified teachers employed by the school. This plan should include how the school will make significant progress in reducing the number of uncertified teachers by the start of the 2015-2016 school year, and how the school will be in compliance with the Charter Schools Act, which prohibits more than five staff members or more than 30% of the teaching staff from not being certified in accordance with requirements applicable to other public schools, by the end of the next charter term. A draft of the corrective action plan should be submitted to the NYC DOE no later than June 30, 2015.

### A. Academic Performance

At the time of this school's renewal, Democracy Prep Charter School has demonstrated academic success.

#### **New York Charter Schools Act**

The New York Charter Schools Act of 1998 establishes a system of charter schools throughout New York State, with objectives that include:

#### **§ 2850 (2)**

- (a) Improve student learning and achievement;
- (b) Increase learning opportunities for all students, with special emphasis on expanded learning experiences for students who are at-risk of academic failure;
- (c) Encourage the use of different and innovative teaching methods;
- (d) Create new professional opportunities for teachers, school administrators and other school personnel;
- (e) Provide parents and students with expanded choices in the types of educational opportunities that are available within the public school system; and
- (f) Provide schools with a method to change from rule-based to performance-based accountability systems by holding the schools established under this article accountable for meeting measurable student achievement results.

Data available for Democracy Prep Charter School indicates that the school has made progress towards meeting some of these objectives.

#### **Mission and Vision**

Democracy Prep Charter School's mission is to educate responsible citizen-scholars for success in the college of their choice and a life of active citizenship.

#### **School Specific Academic Performance**

The school entered its ninth year of operation with the 2014-2015 academic year. The school was last renewed in January 2011; as a result, the New York City Department of Education (NYC DOE) has four years of New York State (NYS) assessment data and four years of other academic indicator(s) to evaluate the academic achievement and progress of the students at Democracy Prep Charter School.

Annual aggregate English Language Arts (ELA) and math proficiency rates on NYS assessments for Democracy Prep Charter School students have consistently exceeded those of Community School District (CSD) 5 during the current charter term. While the school's aggregate ELA proficiency rates fell below the comparable citywide proficiency rates in every year of the

retrospective charter term, the school's math proficiency rates consistently met or exceeded those of New York City.<sup>2</sup>

Beginning with the 2012-2013 school year, NYS assessments were aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). As such, proficiency rates for school years prior to the 2012-2013 school year are not directly comparable.

In 2012-2013, 26.0% of Democracy Prep Charter School's students were proficient in math on NYS assessments. This level of math proficiency was higher than 69% of all middle schools citywide. When compared to middle schools with student populations most like its own (i.e. peer schools), Democracy Prep Charter School outperformed 92% of similar schools. In addition, when compared to CSD 5, the school's math proficiency was higher than that of 79% of middle schools. In 2012-2013, 18.4% of Democracy Prep Charter School's students demonstrated proficiency on NYS assessments in ELA. With this level of ELA proficiency, the school outperformed 62% of all middle schools citywide, 92% of its peer schools, and 86% of CSD 5 middle schools.

The following year, in 2013-2014, the percent of students at Democracy Prep Charter School who were proficient in math on NYS assessments rose significantly to 48.9%. For 2013-2014, Democracy Prep Charter School's math proficiency was higher than 82% of all middle schools citywide. Similarly, the school outperformed 95% of its peer schools and 87% of CSD 5 middle schools. In 2013-2014, the percent of students at Democracy Prep Charter School who demonstrated proficiency on NYS assessments in ELA also rose, to 25.1%. With this level of proficiency, Democracy Prep Charter School outperformed 71% of all middle schools citywide, 100% of its peer schools, and 93% of middle schools in CSD 5.

In 2013-2014, Democracy Prep Charter School's ELA median adjusted growth percentile on the NYS assessments was 69.0% with a City Percent of Range of 70.0%, placing the school in the 79<sup>th</sup> percentile of all middle schools citywide.<sup>3</sup> The school's peer and CSD percentiles were 88% and 80%, respectively. This means that fewer than 15% of other middle schools in Democracy Prep Charter School's peer group and only 20% of other middle schools in CSD 5 and the City had an ELA median adjusted growth percentile greater than Democracy Prep Charter School's ELA median adjusted growth percentile in 2013-2014.

In 2013-2014, Democracy Prep Charter School's math median adjusted growth percentile was 84.0% with a City Percent of Range of 100.0%, placing it in the 100<sup>th</sup> percentile of all middle schools citywide.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, the school's peer group and CSD percentiles were also both 100%. This means that all other middle schools in Democracy Prep Charter School's peer group, CSD 5, and the City had math median adjusted growth percentiles lower than Democracy Prep Charter School's math median adjusted growth percentile in 2013-2014.

For the 2013-2014 school year, Democracy Prep Charter School's four-year graduation rate was 72.7%. This rate was higher than the citywide average by only 4.3 percentage points and placed the school in the 51<sup>st</sup> percentile of all high schools citywide. However, when compared to high

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<sup>2</sup> The only year in which Democracy Prep Charter School did not exceed the citywide math proficiency rate on NYS assessments for the comparable grade span was 2012-2013, when the school's aggregate math proficiency rate was 0.5 percentage points below the New York City proficiency rate for the same grade levels.

<sup>3</sup> A comparison range consists of all possible results within two standard deviations of the average. A percentile rank provides the percentage of schools that score lower than the school under consideration. A City Percent of Range of 70.0% indicates that the school's ELA median adjusted growth percentile was above the citywide average but less than one standard deviation above the average (that 70.0% of the range around the average represented scores lower than that of Democracy Prep Charter School), while a citywide percentile of 79% indicates that Democracy Prep Charter School's ELA median adjusted growth percentile was higher than 79% of all middle schools citywide.

<sup>4</sup> A City Percent of Range of 100.0% indicates that the school's math median adjusted growth percentile was two standard deviations above the citywide average. A percentile rank provides the percentage of schools that score the same or lower than the school under consideration. A citywide percentile of 100% indicates that Democracy Prep Charter School's math median adjusted growth percentile was higher than 100% of all middle schools citywide.

schools with student populations most like its own (i.e. peer schools) Democracy Prep Charter School outperformed only 3% of similar schools.

The school's credit accumulation rates<sup>5</sup> have generally been higher than the average credit accumulation rates of all high schools citywide over the charter term, though the school's credit accumulation rates have also been generally lower than those of its peer schools. The City Percent of Range for first-, second-, and third-year students has been above 50% in most years,<sup>6</sup> meaning that the school has outperformed the citywide average along each metric.<sup>7</sup> Conversely, the Peer Percent of Range was above 50% for first-, second-, and third-year students in only one year, meaning that the school generally did not outperform its peer group average in credit accumulation.

In the most recent school year, 2013-2014, 80.2% of first-year high school students at Democracy Prep Charter School earned 10 or more credits, placing the school in the bottom 3% of its peer group schools and in only the 41<sup>st</sup> percentile of all high schools citywide.<sup>8</sup> Conversely, 86.7% of second-year high school students at Democracy Prep Charter School earned 10 or more credits, placing the school in the 46<sup>th</sup> percentile of its peer group schools and in the 71<sup>st</sup> percentile of all high schools citywide. Finally, 78.6% of third-year high school students at Democracy Prep Charter School earned 10 or more credits; placing the school in only the 23<sup>rd</sup> percentile of its peer group schools but in the 59<sup>th</sup> percentile of all high schools citywide.

Weighted Regents pass rates in English, Math, Science, Global History, and U.S. History were above both the citywide averages and the averages for the school's peer group in most years during the retrospective charter term,<sup>9</sup> though the school's weighted Regents pass rates declined between 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 in four of the five subjects (the exception being U.S. History). In general, the school compares favorably against its peer group schools and all high schools citywide when analyzing weighted Regents pass rates over the course of the current charter term, though peer and citywide comparisons show that the school has historically performed less favorably in History and English. For Democracy Prep Charter School students who took Regents exams in 2013-2014, more than 90% of these students passed Regents exams in five subjects: Integrated Algebra (95.0%), Comprehensive English (93.9%), U.S. History (98.8%), Living Environment (98.3%) and Language Other than English (100%).

Over the four years that data is available for the retrospective charter term, Democracy Prep Charter School has met 65% of its academic charter goals. Democracy Prep Charter School met 11 of 19 applicable academic performance goals in its most recent year. Because of the move to Common Core Learning Standards in 2012-2013, the NYC DOE did not evaluate goals that measure a school's academic performance relative to 75% or greater absolute proficiency on the NYS ELA and math exams for the 2012-2013 school year. In addition, beginning with the 2013-2014 school year, due to a change in state regulation, the NYC DOE will not evaluate goals that are related to standardized assessments for students in grades kindergarten through two; further, due to the elimination of the accountability instrument, the DOE will not evaluate goals related to NYC DOE Progress Report grades beginning with the 2013-2014 school year. The school has demonstrated a trend of elevated but declining achievement of its stated charter goals over the four years of the charter term under review; in the most recent year, the school achieved its lowest percentage of academic goals (58%) during the retrospective charter term.

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<sup>5</sup> Credit accumulation is self-reported by charter schools to the NYC DOE.

<sup>6</sup> The only exception to this occurred in 2012-2013, when the school's percentage of first year students earning ten or more credits fell below 50.0% of the City Percent of Range.

<sup>7</sup> A comparison range consists of all possible results within two standard deviations of the average. A Percent of Range of 50.0% represents the average and indicates that the school's credit accumulation rate was equal to the average score for the comparison group.

<sup>8</sup> A percentile rank provides the percentage of schools that score lower than the school under consideration. A citywide percentile of 41%, for example, indicates that the school's first-year credit accumulation rate was above 41% of high schools citywide.

<sup>9</sup> The exceptions to this occurred in 2011-2012, when the school's weighted English Regents pass rate fell below its peer group average, and in 2010-2011, when the school's weighted Global History Regents pass rate fell below its peer group average.

On its 2012-2013 NYC DOE Middle School Progress Report, Democracy Prep Charter School received an Overall grade of A as well as an A grade in all sections except Student Performance, for which the school received a B grade. This ranked Democracy Prep Charter School in the 81<sup>st</sup> percentile of all middle schools citywide. On its 2011-2012 NYC DOE Middle School Progress Report, Democracy Prep Charter School received an A grade in all sections, including as its Overall grade. This ranked Democracy Prep Charter School in the 89<sup>th</sup> percentile of all middle schools citywide. As its Overall grade, the school also earned an A in 2010-2011.

On its 2012-2013 NYC DOE High School Progress Report, Democracy Prep Charter School received an Overall grade of A, as well as A grades for School Environment and College and Career Readiness, a B grade for Student Progress, and a C grade for Student Performance. This ranked Democracy Prep Charter School in the 70<sup>th</sup> percentile of all high schools citywide. School year 2012-2013 was the first year that Democracy Prep Charter School had a twelfth grade graduating class; as such, it was the first year that the school received an Overall grade on its high school Progress Report.

NYC DOE Progress Reports graded each school with an A, B, C, D, or F and were based on student progress, student performance, and school environment. Scores were based on comparing results from one school to a peer group of 40 schools with similar student populations and to all schools citywide. The Student Progress section of the NYC DOE Progress Report was the most heavily weighted of all sections; it constituted 60% of a school's grade. The grade in this section was primarily based on median adjusted growth percentiles,<sup>10</sup> which measure students' growth on state tests relative to other students with the same prior-year score. Although the NYC DOE Progress Report was discontinued beginning with the 2013-2014 school year, individual academic performance metrics from the former NYC DOE Progress Report are included in this renewal report for all years for which data was available in the current charter term.

### **Closing the Achievement Gap**

NYC DOE-authorized charter schools are also assessed based on their ability to close the achievement gap for specific student populations. In school years prior to the 2013-2014 school year, schools received additional credit on the NYC DOE Progress Report for progress and performance of students with disabilities, English Language Learners, and students who start in the lowest third of proficiency citywide. Beginning with the 2013-2014 school year, charter schools will be assessed on the actual performance as well as the academic growth of students in these populations compared with public school students in the CSD and throughout New York City.

On the 2013-2014 NYS assessments, 78.3% of Democracy Prep Charter School's students in the lowest third citywide experienced growth in math that, with adjustments, matched or exceeded the growth of 75% or more of other students citywide with the same starting math scores. This level of growth places Democracy Prep Charter School in the 97<sup>th</sup> percentile of all middle schools citywide. Conversely, only 53.9% of the school's students in the lowest third citywide experienced growth in ELA that, with adjustments, matched or exceeded the growth of 75% or more of other students citywide with the same starting ELA scores; this level of growth places Democracy Prep Charter School in the 63<sup>rd</sup> percentile of all middle schools citywide.

On the 2013-2014 NYS assessments, 73.5% of Democracy Prep Charter School's students with disabilities experienced growth in math that, with adjustments, matched or exceeded the growth of 75% or more of other students with disabilities citywide with the same starting math scores. This level of growth places Democracy Prep Charter School in the 98<sup>th</sup> percentile of all middle

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<sup>10</sup> A student's growth percentile compares his or her growth to the growth of all students in the City who started at the same level of proficiency the year before. To evaluate a school on its students' growth percentile, the NYC DOE uses an adjusted growth percentile. Growth percentile adjustments are based on students' demographic characteristics and reflect average differences in growth compared to students with the same starting proficiency level. The NYC DOE evaluates a school based on its median adjusted growth percentile, the adjusted growth percentile of the middle student when all students adjusted growth percentiles are listed from lowest to highest.

schools citywide. In the same year however, only 49.0% of the school's students with disabilities experienced growth in ELA that, with adjustments, matched or exceeded the growth of 75% or more of other students with disabilities citywide with the same starting ELA scores; this level of growth places Democracy Prep Charter School in only the 32<sup>nd</sup> percentile of all middle schools citywide.

On the 2013-2014 NYS assessments, 82.8% of Democracy Prep Charter School's English Language Learner students experienced growth in math that, with adjustments, matched or exceeded the growth of 75% or more of other English Language Learner students citywide with the same starting math scores. This level places Democracy Prep Charter School in the 100<sup>th</sup> percentile of middle schools citywide. In the same year, only 50.0% of the school's English Language Learner students experienced growth in ELA that, with adjustments, matched or exceeded the growth of 75% or more of other English Language Learner students citywide with the same starting ELA scores; however, this level of growth still places Democracy Prep Charter School in the 81<sup>st</sup> percentile of all middle schools citywide.

In 2013-2014, Democracy Prep Charter School did not serve the minimum number<sup>11</sup> of students in its graduating class designated as being in the lowest third citywide to receive data on the four-year weighted diploma rate or the College and Career Preparatory Course Index (CCPCI) for students in the lowest third citywide.

Students with disabilities at Democracy Prep Charter School had a four-year weighted diploma rate of 200.0% in 2013-2014. However, the school did not serve the minimum percentage of students designated as students with disabilities to receive Peer or City Percent of Range data for the weighted diploma rate in this year.<sup>12</sup>

In 2013-2014, Democracy Prep Charter School did not serve the minimum number<sup>13</sup> of English Language Learner students in its graduating class to receive data on the four-year weighted diploma rate for English Language Learner students.

## **B. Governance, Operations & Finances**

Democracy Prep Charter School is a partially operationally sound and fiscally viable organization. This assessment was made based on a review of the following indicators of operational and fiscal viability:

- Democracy Prep Charter School's FY11, FY12, FY13, and FY14 independent financial audits;
- Democracy Prep Charter School's FY15 budget and five-year projected budget;
- Democracy Prep Charter School's 2014-2015 staff handbook;
- Democracy Prep Charter School's 2014-2015 student/family handbook;
- On-site review of Democracy Prep Charter School's financial and operational records;
- Democracy Prep Charter School's self-reported staffing data;
- Democracy Prep Charter School's Board of Trustees meeting minutes;
- Democracy Prep Charter School's Board of Trustees bylaws; and
- Democracy Prep Charter School's financial disclosure forms.

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<sup>11</sup> The minimum number of students for each metric in the Closing the Achievement Gap section is five. Metrics are excluded for a school when student-sample-size criteria are not met because of confidentiality considerations and the unreliability of measurements based on small numbers.

<sup>12</sup> For a school to be included in the NYC DOE's calculation of peer and city averages for Closing the Achievement Gap metrics and, thus, for the school to receive Peer and City Percent of Range data for Closing the Achievement Gap metrics, the school's population percentage for the relevant special population must be at least 25% of the City Percent of Range. Students with disabilities made up 9.1% of the Democracy Prep Charter School student population in 2013-2014, which corresponded to a City Percent of Range of 23.7%.

<sup>13</sup> The minimum number of students for each metric in the Closing the Achievement Gap section is five. Metrics are excluded for a school when student-sample-size criteria are not met because of confidentiality considerations and the unreliability of measurements based on small numbers.

Over the course of the school's charter term, the Board of Trustees has maintained a partially developed governance structure and organizational design.

The Board currently has 11 active members, which is consistent with the minimum of five members and maximum of 15 members established in the Board's bylaws. The bylaws require four positions: Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer and Clerk. Only the Board Chair and Treasurer positions are currently filled; the Vice Chair and Clerk are currently vacant positions. Financial disclosure forms are only available for two of the 11 current board members.

The school's bylaws indicate that the Board is to hold 10 meetings a year, including an annual meeting in June. In all years of the charter term, the Board did not hold the required number of monthly meetings, as evidenced by school self-reported data and meeting minutes reviewed by the Office of School Design and Charter Partnerships (OSDCP). Required meetings are those which met quorum; the school's Board has consistently achieved quorum during the charter term as evidenced by the 31 meeting minutes reviewed.

The Board's bylaws reference the following standing committees: Executive Committee, Governance Committee, Finance Committee, Development Committee, Community and Family Communications Committee, and Academic Accountability Committee. Meeting minutes indicate that these committees are regularly active.

There are clear lines of accountability between the Board and school leadership team as evidenced by the school's organizational chart and school leadership's monthly updates on academic, financial, and operational performance to the Board and its committees, as recorded in the Board meeting minutes reviewed.

The founder of Democracy Prep Public Schools, a charter management organization (CMO), Seth Andrew, is no longer a member of the school's Board. Democracy Prep Charter School's Board of Trustees is led by Chair Josh Pristaw, who has served on the Board since 2011.

Over the course of the school's charter term, the school has partially developed a stable school culture.

Ajaka Roth, Co-Principal of the middle school, joined the middle school in 2011-2012 as a literacy specialist and transitioned to Co-Principal in 2013-2014. Tanya Nunez has been Co-Principal of the middle school since 2012-2013 and was formerly the middle school Assistant Principal. The high school is led by Principal Natasha Trivers, who has been in this role since 2013-2014 and was formerly the high school Assistant Principal for two years. The high school currently has two Assistant Principals, John Lindquist and Brian Martin, who have each been with the high school since 2011-2012. Democracy Prep Public Schools also has a Chief Executive Officer, Katie Duffy Stanton, who has been with the network since 2007-2008 and was formerly the CMO's Chief Operating Officer and Chief of Staff under the founder, Seth Andrew.

For the most recent period, instructional staff turnover was 17% of instructional staff not returning, either by choice or request, at the start of the 2014-2015 school year, which is the lowest staff turnover rate in the retrospective charter term. Instructional staff turnover ranged from this low of 17% to a high of 32% in 2011-2012 during the charter term.

The school has had challenges with retaining students. In every year of the retrospective charter term, student mobility was in excess of 20% of students leaving the school in each academic year.

To date, the school has met its charter goal of having an annual average student attendance rate of at least 95% in all four years of the retrospective charter term.

Overall, the school is in a neutral position to meet near-term financial obligations. According to the FY14 financial audit, the school only has \$634,725 of unrestricted cash on hand, or the equivalent of 20 days of operating expenses, to meet obligations; however, the school's current ratio of 1.59 indicated a strong ability to meet its current liabilities.

Overall, the school is financially sustainable based on its current practices. Based on the financial audits from FY11 to FY14, the school generated an aggregate surplus over these audited fiscal years, and in FY14 the school operated at a surplus.

There was no material weakness noted in the four independent financial audits.

### **C. Compliance with Charter, Applicable Law and Regulations**

Over the charter term, Democracy Prep Charter School has been compliant with some applicable laws and regulations, but not others.

Only two of the 11 current Board members have submitted conflict of interest and financial disclosure forms. The documents submitted, however, do not demonstrate conflicts of interest.<sup>14</sup> The school has not posted to its website its annual audit for each year of the charter term, as required in charter law. Democracy Prep Charter School has only posted its FY14 financial audit to its website.

The school's bylaws indicate that the Board is to hold 10 meetings a year, including an annual meeting in June. In all years of the charter term, the Board did not hold the required number of monthly meetings, as evidenced by posted meeting minutes. Required meetings are those which met quorum. The current Charter Schools Act requires that the Board hold monthly meetings over a period of 12 calendar months per year. The Board has not updated its bylaws to comply with this law.

The school has submitted its required immunization documentation and is in compliance with Department of Health standards of 99% for immunization.

The school has submitted appropriate insurance documents to the NYC DOE.

Over the course of the charter term, the school did consistently submit complete invoicing and reconciliation documents by the associated deadlines.

For the 2014-2015 school year, the school had an application deadline of April 2, 2014 and lottery date of April 10, 2014, adhering to charter law's requirement of accepting applications up to at least April 1. Over the course of the charter term, the school did consistently adhere to this requirement.

The school has provided the NYC DOE with a current and complete copy of its Student Discipline Policy for the 2014-2015 academic year. This policy was determined to be compliant with federal law.

All staff members do not have appropriate fingerprint clearance. Of the school's 62 teachers, one lacked fingerprint clearance.

The school has submitted required documentation for teacher certification and is not compliant with state requirements for teacher certification. The Charter Schools Act prohibits more than five staff members or more than 30% of the teaching staff from not being certified in accordance with requirements applicable to other public schools. Of the school's 62 teachers, 35 lack valid certification.

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<sup>14</sup> Source: New York State Education Department Annual Report

**D. Plans for Next Charter Term**

Democracy Prep Charter School was previously approved by the NYC DOE through a material revision to operate an elementary school (kindergarten through grade five), however the school chose to delay the implementation of these authorized grades. The school does not envision any significant alterations to its future plans at this time.

## Part 2: School Overview and History

Democracy Prep Charter School (Democracy Prep) is a middle/high school serving 737 students<sup>15</sup> in grades six through twelve during the 2014-2015 school year. It opened in the 2006-2007 school year with grade six and is under the terms of its second charter. The school's authorized full grade span is kindergarten through grade twelve, although the school has chosen to operate under its initially approved middle/high school model serving grades six through twelve, which it reached in the 2012-2013 school year during its current charter term. The school's current charter term expires on June 30, 2015.<sup>16</sup> The school does not currently offer a public universal Pre-Kindergarten program in New York City. The school is located in two New York City Department of Education<sup>17</sup>-operated facilities in Community School District 5 in Manhattan. The school's middle school grades are co-located with P.S. 197 John B. Russwurm and the school's high school grades are co-located with P.S. 92 Mary McLeod Bethune and St. Hope Leadership Academy Charter School.<sup>18</sup>

Democracy Prep Charter School is a middle and high school founded by Seth Andrew in 2006 and is located in the Harlem neighborhood of Manhattan. The school sets out to educate responsible citizen-scholars for success in the college of their choice and a life of active citizenship. Democracy Prep Charter School offers literature, writing, math, science, history, and Korean, and offers Advanced Placement courses in literature, calculus, foreign language, biology, and environmental science. Democracy Prep's academic program is supported by enrichment activities such as sports, Debate team, Spoken Word club, theater, and Math club. Additionally, Democracy Prep has a primary focus in civic education, which develops Democracy Prep students to become poised public speakers.

Democracy Prep Charter School is part of the Democracy Prep Public Schools network, a charter management organization (CMO). The CMO provides an overarching leadership team including a Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Superintendent, Chief Financial Officer and General Counsel, as well as back office support, instructional goals aligned to network goals, student assessment data, and other support services such as Human Resources, Recruitment, Development and Finance. Democracy Prep, working with and through the network, manages student information via the NYC DOE's Automate the Schools (ATS) system, orders equipment and supplies, and compiles its own financial reports (in conjunction with Democracy Prep Charter School's Board of Trustees Finance Committee). The fee structure for the services provided by the CMO is based on an initial 15% of public non-competitive revenues, which includes all per-pupil revenues for basic tuition, supplemental tuition and students with disabilities payments, with an annual reduction of 0.5%. In the 2014-2015 school year, the management fee paid to the CMO, after reduction, is 12%.

Democracy Prep Charter School's Board of Trustees is led by Chair Josh Pristaw, who joined the Board in 2011. The middle school is led by Co-Principals Ajaka Roth and Tanya Nunez. Ajaka Roth joined the middle school in 2011-2012 as a literacy specialist and transitioned to Co-Principal in 2013-2014 and Tanya Nunez has been Co-Principal of the middle school since 2012-2013. The high school is led by Principal Natasha Trivers and Assistant Principals John Lindquist and Brian Martin. Natasha Trivers, John Lindquist, and Brian Martin have each been with the high school since 2011-2012. Democracy Prep Public Schools also has a CEO, Katie Duffy Stanton, who has been with the network since 2007-2008 and was formerly the CMO's Chief Operating Officer and Chief of Staff under the founder, Seth Andrew.

Beginning in the 2012-2013 school year, the high school grades were permanently re-sited from private space and co-located with P.S. 92 Mary McLeod Bethune and St. Hope Leadership Academy Charter School in a DOE-operated facility. There was no impact to the school's services.

The school typically enrolls new students in all grades, though grades six and nine are considered the primary entry grades. There were 3,042 students on the waitlist after the Spring 2014 lottery; the school

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<sup>15</sup> ATS data as of October 31, 2014

<sup>16</sup> NYC DOE internal data

<sup>17</sup> NYC DOE internal data

<sup>18</sup> NYC DOE Location Code Generation and Management System

received 3,222 applications for the 2014-2015 school year. The school reports backfilling students from the waitlist during the school year across all grades.<sup>19</sup>

Over the charter term, the school enrolled and served students as follows with average class size and section count noted for the most recently completed school year, 2013-2014.

### Enrollment

Grade-Level Annual Enrollment *	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
Grade 6	112	116	118	123
Grade 7	107	114	118	109
Grade 8	121	129	115	115
Grade 9	90	122	122	124
Grade 10	65	74	113	123
Grade 11	-	52	60	80
Grade 12	-	-	48	48
Total Enrollment	495	607	694	722

\* Enrollment figures reflect ATS data as of October 31 for each school year with the exception of the 2012-2013 school year, which is as of October 26, 2012.

### Additional Enrollment Data

School Year 2013-2014 Information	Section Count	Average Class Size
Grade 6	4	31
Grade 7	4	27
Grade 8	4	29
Grade 9	4	31
Grade 10	4	31
Grade 11	4	20
Grade 12	2	24
Students Admitted Through The Lottery	150	

\* Lottery information is based on self-reported data from the 2013-2014 DOE Annual Charter School Survey. Section counts are based on self-reported information collected as part of the school's Renewal Application. Average Class Sizes were determined by dividing ATS enrollment as of October 31, 2013 by the appropriate grade-level section count.

Please see additional demographic data in Section 4 of this report for information regarding the enrollment of special populations at Democracy Prep Charter School. This information includes enrollment data for the percentage of students eligible for Free or Reduced Price Lunch, English Language Learners and students with disabilities as compared to the CSD and citywide averages, as well as targets recently finalized by the New York State Education Department (NYSED).<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Self-reported information collected through the 2014-2015 DOE Annual Charter School Survey

<sup>20</sup> Beginning with the 2014-2015 school year, Board of Regents authorized charter schools, including those authorized by NYC DOE, will be held accountable to enrollment targets established by NYSED for students with disabilities, English Language Learner students, and students qualifying for free or reduced price lunch. Please note that the recently finalized targets are currently based on enrollment in the 2010-2011 school year and may be updated in the future.

## Part 3: Renewal Report Overview

### Renewal Report

This report contains the findings and recommendations of the NYC DOE regarding the charter school's application for charter renewal. This report is based on a cumulative record of the school's progress during the current charter term, including but not limited to oversight visits, annual reports, and formal correspondence between the school and its authorizer, the NYC DOE, all of which are conducted in order to evaluate and monitor the charter school's academic, fiscal, and operational performance. Additionally, the NYC DOE incorporates into this report its findings from the renewal application process, which includes a written application, a report on student achievement data and a school visit by the Office of School Design and Charter Partnerships and other staff from the NYC DOE.

Upon review of all the relevant materials, a recommendation is made to the NYC DOE Chancellor. The Chancellor's determination, and the findings on which that decision is based, is then submitted to the New York State Board of Regents.

### Is the school an academic success?

To assess whether a school is an academic success, the NYC DOE considers performance measures, including, but not limited to the following (as appropriate for grades served):

- New York State ELA and math assessment absolute results;
- New York State Regents exams passage rates;
- Comparative proficiency for elementary and middle schools, including growth rates for ELA and math proficiency;
- Comparative graduation rates and Regents completion rates for high schools;
- Closing the achievement gap performance relative to CSD or New York City public schools;
- New York State Alternate Assessment (NYSAA) or other approved alternate assessments; and
- Performance data pertaining to college and career readiness.

Academic success is rated as **Demonstrated**, **Partially Demonstrated**, or **Not Yet Demonstrated**.

### Is the school a fiscally and operationally sound, viable organization?

To assess whether a school is a fiscally and operationally sound, viable organization, OSDCP focuses on three areas: Governance Structure & Organizational Design, School Climate & Community Engagement, and Financial Health. This includes an analysis of the school's audited financial statements, based on the National Association of Charter School Authorizer's Core Performance Framework.<sup>21</sup>

The NYC DOE considers a variety of supporting materials and data, including but not limited to the following:

- Board of Trustee bylaws;
- Board of Trustee meeting minutes;
- Annual Reports submitted by schools to New York State Education Department;
- NYC DOE School Surveys;
- Data collection sheets provided by schools;
- Student, staff, and Board turnover rates;
- Audits of authorized enrollment numbers; and
- Annual financial audits.

A school's Governance Structure & Organizational Design and Climate & Community Engagement are rated as **Developed**, **Partially Developed**, or **Not Yet Developed**. A school's Financial Health is rated to indicate whether there are concerns about the near-term financial obligations and the financial sustainability of the school.

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<sup>21</sup> Please refer to the following website for more information:  
[http://nacsa.mycrowdwisdom.com/diweb/catalog/item/id/126547/q/%20q=performance\\*20framework&c=82](http://nacsa.mycrowdwisdom.com/diweb/catalog/item/id/126547/q/%20q=performance*20framework&c=82)

**Is the school compliant with its charter and all applicable law and regulations?**

As it pertains to compliance, the NYC DOE identifies areas of compliance and noncompliance with relevant laws and regulations as identified in the NYC DOE OSDCP Accountability Framework.

**Staff Representatives**

The following experts participated in the review of this school, including the renewal visit to the school on March 9 and March 10, 2015:

- Sonya Hooks, Senior Director, NYC DOE Office of School Design and Charter Partnerships
- Meera Jain, Director of Evaluation and Policy, NYC DOE Office of School Design and Charter Partnerships
- Kim Wong, Director of Operations, NYC DOE Office of School Design and Charter Partnerships
- Caitlin Robisch, Director of Analytics, NYC DOE Office of School Design and Charter Partnerships
- Paul Yen, Data Analyst, NYC DOE Office of School Design and Charter Partnerships
- Jamal Young, Independent Consultant

## Part 4: Findings

### Essential Question 1: Is the School an Academic Success?

At the time of this school's renewal Democracy Prep Charter School has demonstrated academic achievement and progress.

#### High Academic Attainment and Improvement

- The school has four years of academic performance data and four years of NYS assessment data at the time of this report. For detailed information on grade-level data on NYS assessments, please see Appendix A.

NOTE: The 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 ELA and math proficiency percentages should not be compared directly with prior-year results. Unlike prior years, proficiency on the NYS assessments for ELA and math in 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 were based on the Common Core Learning Standards – a more demanding set of knowledge and skills necessary for 21<sup>st</sup> century college and career readiness.

#### ES/MS students scoring at or above Level 3 on NYS assessments, compared to CSD, NYC and State averages

% Proficient in English Language Arts				
	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
<b>Democracy Prep Charter School</b>	30.9%	38.5%	18.4%	25.1%
CSD 5	27.1%	28.2%	14.6%	16.4%
Difference from CSD 5 *	3.8	10.3	3.8	8.7
NYC	38.3%	42.5%	24.8%	27.0%
Difference from NYC *	-7.4	-4.0	-6.4	-1.9
New York State **	52.8%	55.1%	31.1%	30.6%
Difference from New York State	-21.9	-16.6	-12.7	-5.5

% Proficient in Mathematics				
	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
<b>Democracy Prep Charter School</b>	81.5%	81.7%	26.0%	48.9%
CSD 5	40.3%	38.8%	12.7%	13.0%
Difference from CSD 5 *	41.2	42.9	13.3	35.9
NYC	54.7%	57.3%	26.5%	28.9%
Difference from NYC *	26.8	24.4	-0.5	20.0
New York State **	63.3%	64.8%	31.1%	36.2%
Difference from New York State	18.2	16.9	-5.1	12.7

\* All comparisons to either the CSD or NYC take into account only grades the school itself served. CSD comparisons are particular to the CSD in which the school was sited each year.

\*\* New York State proficiency rates were taken from data.nysed.gov.

### Performance on the NYC Progress Report

Middle School Progress Report Grades	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
Overall Grade	A	A	A	Progress Reports were discontinued beginning with the 2013-2014 school year.
Student Progress	B	A	A	
Student Performance	B	A	B	
School Environment	A	A	A	

### HS Performance Compared to Peer and NYC Averages

4-year Graduation Rate				
	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013 <sup>22</sup>	2013-2014
<b>Democracy Prep Charter School</b>	-	-	66.1%	72.7%
NYC *	-	-	66.0%	68.4%
Difference from NYC	-	-	0.1	4.3
College and Career Preparatory Course Index **				
	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
<b>Democracy Prep Charter School</b>	-	-	94.6%	89.1%
Peer Percent of Range	-	-	100.0%	89.5%
City Percent of Range	-	-	100.0%	100.0%

\* The New York State graduation rate calculation method was first adopted in NYC for the Cohort of 2001 (Class of 2005). The cohort consists of all students who first entered ninth grade in a given school year (e.g., the Cohort of 2005 entered ninth grade in the 2005-2006 school year). Graduates are defined as those students earning either a Local or Regents diploma and exclude those earning either a special education (IEP) diploma or GED.

\*\* The College and Career Preparatory Course Index score was not introduced until the 2010-2011 school year and peer and city percent of range scores were not available until the 2011-2012 school year. A comparison range consists of all possible results within two standard deviations of the average. A peer/city percent of range of 50% represents the position of the average and can be interpreted as a school outperforming 50% of its peer group/city.

### Performance on the NYC Progress Report

High School Progress Report Grades	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
Overall Grade	-	-	A	Progress Reports were discontinued beginning with the 2013-2014 school year.
Student Progress	-	-	B	
Student Performance	-	-	C	
School Environment	-	-	A	
College and Career Readiness *	-	-	A	

\* The College and Career Readiness grade was not introduced until the 2011-2012 school year.

<sup>22</sup> School year 2012-2013 was the first year in which Democracy Prep Charter School served twelfth grade students and, therefore, the first year in which the school had a graduating class.

## Mission and Academic Goals

According to the Renewal Application submitted to the NYC DOE by Democracy Prep Charter School, as well as annual reports submitted to the New York State Education Department, over each of the four years in the retrospective charter term the school achieved/met academic goals as follows:

- 7 of 9 applicable academic charter goals in the first year of the charter,
- 12 of 17 in the second year,
- 11 of 18 in the third year,<sup>23</sup> and
- 11 of 19 in the fourth year.

### Progress Towards Academic Charter Goals \*

Academic Goals	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
1. Each year, 75% of sixth through eighth grade students who have been at the School on BEDS day for at least two consecutive years will perform at or above level 3 on the New York State ELA Exam.	Not Met	Not Met	N/A	Not Met
2. Each year, 75% of sixth through eighth grade students who have been at the School on BEDS day for at least two consecutive years will perform at or above level 3 on the New York State Math Exam.	Met	Met	N/A	Not Met
3. Each year, 75% of sixth through eighth grade students who have been at the School on BEDS day for at least two consecutive years will perform at or above level 3 on the New York State Science Exam.	N/A	Met	Met	Met
4. Each year, 75% of sixth through eighth grade students who have been at the School on BEDS day for at least two consecutive years will perform at or above level 3 on the New York State Social Studies Exam.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
5. Each year, the percent of students performing at or above level 3 on the New York State ELA exam in each tested grade will, in the majority of grades, exceed the average performance of students tested in the same grades of Community School District 5.	Met	Met	Met	Met
6. Each year, the percent of students performing at or above level 3 on the New York State math exam in each tested grade will, in the majority of grades, exceed the average performance of students tested in the same grades of Community School District 5.	Met	Met	Met	Met

<sup>23</sup> It should be noted that because of the move to Common Core Learning Standards in 2012-2013, the NYC DOE did not include goals that measure a school's actual performance relative to 75% or greater absolute proficiency on the NYS ELA and math exams or goals that measure reducing the performance gap of a cohort in ELA and math assessments in its analysis of progress towards goals for the 2012-2013 school year. Goals that refer to comparative academic performance of the school (e.g. to the Community School District) were included in the analysis. In addition, beginning with the 2013-2014 school year, the NYC DOE will not include goals that are related to NYC DOE Progress Report Grades or, due to a change in state regulation, goals that are related to standardized assessments for students in grades kindergarten through two in its analysis of progress towards goals.

Academic Goals	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
7. For years two through five, grade-level cohorts of the same students (i.e. students who are in the school for two years in a row) will reduce by one-half the gap between the percent at or above Level 3 on the previous year's State ELA exam and 75% at or above Level 3 on the current year's State ELA exam.	Not Met	Not Met	N/A	Not Met
8. Each year, 75% of students who have not yet attained the 75th normal curve equivalent (NCE) will improve by five NCEs each year on the Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) Math test or a comparable assessment.	N/A	Not Met	Not Met	Not Met
9. Each year, 75% of students who have not yet attained the 75th normal curve equivalent (NCE) will improve by five NCEs each year on the Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) Reading test or a comparable assessment.	N/A	Not Met	Not Met	Not Met
10. Each year, 75% of students who have not yet attained the 75th normal curve equivalent (NCE) will improve by five NCEs each year on the Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) Language Usage test or a comparable assessment.	N/A	Not Met	Not Met	Not Met
11. By the end of year two of the second term of the charter, 75% of the first cohort will have scored at least 65 on the New York State Regents examinations in ELA.	N/A	Met	Met	Met
12. By the end of year two of the second term of the charter, 75% of the first cohort will have scored at least 65 on the New York State Regents examinations in Math.	N/A	Met	Met	Met
13. By the end of year two of the second term of the charter, 75% of the first cohort will have scored at least 65 on the New York State Regents examinations in Science (Living Environment, Chemistry, or other).	N/A	Met	Met	Met
14. By the end of year two of the second term of the charter, 75% of the first cohort will have scored at least 65 on the New York State Regents examinations in History (Global Studies or U.S. History).	N/A	Met	Met	Met
15. Each year, the average performance of students in the tenth grade will exceed the state average on the PSAT tests in Critical Reading and Mathematics. It is expected that the participation rate for this test will be 75% or greater.	N/A	N/A	Partially Met	Partially Met
16. Each year, the average performance of students in the twelfth grade will exceed the state average on the SAT or ACT tests in Reading and Mathematics. It is expected that the participation rate for this test will be 75% or greater.	N/A	N/A	Partially Met	Partially Met

Academic Goals		2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
17.	Each year, 75% of students enrolled in grades nine through twelve will accumulate 10 or more credits towards graduation.	Met	Met	Partially Met	Met
18.	Each year, 75% of students who graduate within five years will graduate with an Advanced Regents Diploma.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
19.	Students in grade twelve will be required to pass the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services Exam with a minimum score of 80% — along with an internally developed comprehensive Civics exam — in order to receive a high school diploma.	N/A	N/A	Met	Met
20.	The school will prepare students for success in college and citizenship, measured by academic metrics, earned visits to colleges, and a College Preparation Portfolio (CPP).	N/A	N/A	Met	Met
21.	The school will maintain an average student daily attendance rate of 95% or better.	Met	Met	Met	Met
22.	The school will be deemed “In Good Standing” each year for annual yearly progress.	Met	Met	Met	N/A
23.	Each year, the school will earn a score sufficient to place it in the 75th percentile of all schools on the NYC DOE Progress Report.	Met	Met	Partially Met <sup>24</sup>	N/A

\* Goals were self-reported by the school in the school's Renewal Application submitted to NYC DOE and 2013-2014 Annual Report documentation submitted to NYSED.

### Responsive Education Program

The school administers Common Core Learning Standards aligned school-created interim assessments. The following was noted:

- Democracy Prep students have demonstrated progress on the interim assessments during the current 2014-2015 school year. Grade six students earned an average trimester exam score of 62% (which includes reading, writing, math, science, and history), a pass rate of 70%. The average trimester exam score for grade seven students across all subjects was 57%, but by grade eight, students' average trimester exam scores increased to an average of 78%.

As part of the renewal review process, representatives for the NYC DOE visited the school on March 9 and 10, 2015. Based on discussion, document review, and observation, the following was noted:

<sup>24</sup> This goal was considered partially met because the school met the goal for its middle school grades, but did not meet the goal for its high school grades.

- **Alignment with Common Core:**

- School leadership reported that in response to the 2012-2013 NYS assessment results, Democracy Prep now uses a curriculum that is fully aligned to the CCLS across all grades six through twelve, and has refined its scope and sequence documents, particularly for Reading Comprehension, Textual Analysis, and Writing, to align class work and instruction with the Common Core Learning Standards.
- School leadership at Democracy Prep also redesigned internal assessments and did not share them with teachers in advance in order to mirror the testing experience with the students.
- A major focus for professional development and instructional practice at Democracy Prep is building knowledge in a cohesive and coherent way, drawing from the Core Knowledge framework.
- Instead of focusing solely on strategies using unrelated reading passages, Democracy Prep now uses Knowledge Domain specific readings, aligned to scientific and history content knowledge, built over time and taught to a standard.
- In writing, Democracy Prep has shifted from more narrative-based, inward-focused writing to expository, opinion-based assignments and skills.

- **Addressing the Needs of All Learners:**

- Democracy Prep implements an inclusive, heterogeneous educational model that serves all students. Democracy Prep incorporates supports for all students struggling academically, not just those identified as having a disability.
- The academic program at Democracy Prep avoids remediation “pull-out” from core courses whenever possible and uses a curriculum that meets each student where he or she is and, using extra time and supports, accelerates students academically to master CCLS at a faster rate than in traditional schools.
- To serve all schools affiliated with the CMO, Democracy Prep Public Schools utilizes a universally designed curriculum to provide access for a broad range of diverse student disabilities and needs. This approach guides the full inclusion of students with disabilities, from the facilities, to the differentiated curriculum, to the routines and rituals of daily life.
  - Specifically, this approach includes a design of materials and activities that are attainable by individuals with wide differences in their abilities to see, hear, speak, move, read, write, understand, organize, engage, and remember.
  - An essential aspect of universal design at Democracy Prep Public Schools is the creation of a structured, disciplined, and predictable school culture. Chaotic environments are especially detrimental to those students with disabilities including autism, Asperger’s Syndrome, ADD/ADHD, Downs Syndrome, and others. The creation of uniform behavioral expectations across the entire school, in every classroom, hallway, bathroom, and office means that students will know exactly what to expect and what is expected of them at all times.
- To provide all Individualized Education Program (IEP) and Section 504 (Rehabilitation Act) services, Democracy Prep has designed a flexible model. Democracy Prep shares two full-time ACT (Academic Collaboration Team) specialists through the Democracy Prep Public Schools network and an ACT Manager is present at each fully-grown campus, along with at least one full-time ACT teacher, certified in special education, for students with mild and moderate special needs at each grade level.
  - These individuals are responsible for implementing classroom-based IEP services and ensuring access to the general curriculum for all students with IEPs.
  - The ACT Manager works directly with the Committee on Special Education (CSE) and also serves as the school’s Section 504 Officer.
  - If, through the lottery process, a student is admitted who has profound or severe disabilities, Democracy Prep will ensure that the student has the appropriately certified aides and teachers working with him or her to provide necessary services in an inclusive Collaborative Team Teaching (CTT) environment.

- Additionally, full-time social workers provide counseling services to all students who have counseling mandates on each campus, and speech therapists provided (and paid for) by the NYC DOE come to the campus to provide speech and language services to students on-site.
- Democracy Prep is committed to serving students most at risk of academic failure as well as having an instructional program that provides sufficient differentiation to accommodate the needs of those who enter above grade level in reading and mathematics.
  - Democracy Prep Public Schools' mastery-based curriculum, myriad enrichment opportunities, and Advanced Placement course offerings at the high school level enable all students — including accelerated learners — to enjoy a learning experience tailored to their specific needs.
  - For example, in Guided Reading, students are grouped by ability level. Consequently, students who are above grade level will be grouped with the other highest performing students in their class during reading blocks and will be assigned more complex tests by their teachers. In math, accelerated learners have an opportunity to tackle “challenge work” during their daily problem-solving block.
- Democracy Prep serves any and all students who are classified as ELLs through a structured English immersion (SEI) program that provides them with the extra supports needed to achieve proficiency in English.
  - This SEI model does not segregate ELLs from their English speaking peers.
  - Through Democracy Prep's extended school day and extended school year, ELL students benefit from dramatically increased exposure to English speaking, listening, reading, and writing, which speeds the acquisition of English language.
  - Students who have been identified as ELLs are assessed annually using the Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Language Learners (ACCESS for ELLs) Test as well as nationally normed standardized tests, teacher-created exams, and informal teacher observation in the classroom to determine improvement in English proficiency.
  - Students who score above the established cutoff point for ELL designation and are no longer deemed an ELL, like all general education students at Democracy Prep, maintain access to language and academic support and services from the ACT Team.

- **Instructional Model and Classroom Instruction:**

- During the renewal visit, 39 classrooms across grades six through twelve were observed with the school's Campus Directors, a network superintendent and other network staff.
  - In some observed classes, teachers were following the school's co-teaching model, including team teaching, parallel teaching, one teach and one assist, and/or alternative teaching.
  - Class-sizes observed ranged from 25 to 30 students, with one to two teachers in all classrooms.
  - The forms of questioning most frequently identified during the classroom observations were either challenging students to demonstrate understanding or to analyze and apply understanding.
  - In most classrooms, checks for understanding methods observed included questioning, polling, classwork, teacher observation, and frequent use of student turn and talk.
  - In some observed classrooms, differentiation of materials, tasks, and products, through small group instruction or independent practice, was observed. These were consistent with the school model.
  - In all observed classes, students were responsive to teacher directions and instruction.
  - In most observed classes, students were either fully on task or mostly on task. Off-task students were off task for a short duration.

- Based on debriefs with the school’s leadership team members after classroom visits, all classrooms had instruction that aligned with the instructional model and current academic goals of the school.
- As reported by the school, all Democracy Prep Public Schools utilize a student behavior code based on a “no excuses” model and feature five common elements: rigorous college-prep academics, more time to learn, data-driven decision-making, safe and supportive school culture, and exemplary talent.
  - **Rigorous college-prep academics.** Democracy Prep characterizes its school campuses as academically rigorous and college preparatory. The school’s curriculum is based on an accelerated introduction to the Common Core Learning Standards. Students are challenged to do their best academically, regardless of language proficiency, special education status, or the academic level at which they enter the school. The school’s academic program includes the core subjects, as well as engaging electives such as art, music, and fitness.
  - **More time to learn.** Democracy Prep students attend school Monday through Thursday from 7:45 a.m. to 3:45 or 5:15 p.m. (depending on grade level), and until at least 1:30 p.m. on Fridays, as well as one Saturday each month. The school year includes approximately 191 days of instruction, and students in need of additional individual support or required remediation receive after-dismissal tutoring and attend school on additional Saturdays and during some school breaks. Students who have not yet mastered the grade’s content expectations by the end of the year attend a mandatory Summer Academy.
  - **Data-driven decision-making.** Democracy Prep Public Schools network utilizes a feedback loop of frequent data collection and analysis including a network-wide dashboard tool, interim assessments, and comparative academic measures to drive effective instruction at the student, class, teacher, grade, school, and network levels. Assessments include absolute measures, value-added measures, and both internally and externally validated trimester and comprehensive exams.
  - **Safe and supportive school culture.** Democracy Prep Public Schools was founded on the belief that a safe, structured, and supportive school community is essential to ensure dramatic academic gains for all students. Democracy Prep adheres to a “broken windows” approach to school discipline and a “tipping point” approach to school culture. School culture is based on the “DREAM Values”, according to which all staff and students live: Discipline, Respect, Enthusiasm, Accountability, and Maturity
  - **Exemplary talent.** Democracy Prep Public Schools has a selective staff application process; fewer than the top 1% of applicants are hired. All staff members undergo extensive performance reviews and receive weekly professional development (PD) during the school year and three weeks of intensive PD in the summer.

## Learning Environment

NYC DOE representatives conducted one-on-one interviews with 19 teachers. The following was noted:

- All interviewed teachers reported that they received school-based professional development both in the summer and weekly during the school year, with the administration providing resources. They also reported being encouraged by the administration to get further professional development outside of the school.
- All of the interviewed teachers mentioned being observed regularly and receiving frequent and useful feedback to improve their teaching craft.
- All interviewed teachers reported that they use data in the classrooms through both formal and informal assessments for groupings and lesson planning.

NYC DOE representatives conducted group interviews with students across all grades served in the 2014-2015 school year (grades six through twelve). The following was noted:

- Most students commented that going to college was seen as an end goal after leaving Democracy Prep.
- Most students commented that teachers were supportive and helpful.

According to the 2013-2014 NYC School Survey, 96% of parents agree or strongly agree “that the school has teachers who are interested and attentive when they discuss [their] child” and 98% of parents who responded to the survey agree or strongly agree “that the school has high expectations for [their] child.”<sup>25</sup>

According to the 2013-2014 NYC School Survey 98% of teachers agree or strongly agree that “order and discipline are maintained at the school” though only 87% disagree or strongly disagree with the statement that “at my school students are often harassed or bullied in school.”<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> According to the 2013-2014 NYC School Survey, 59% of parent respondents strongly agree that Democracy Prep Charter School has teachers who are interested and attentive when they discuss their child; another 37% agree with the statement. Similarly, 69% of parent respondents strongly agree that Democracy Prep Charter School has high expectations for their child; another 29% agree with the statement.

<sup>26</sup> According to the 2013-2014 NYC School Survey, 75% of teacher respondents strongly agree that order and discipline are maintained at Democracy Prep Charter School; another 23% agree with the statement. Of teacher respondents, 29% strongly disagree that students are often harassed or bullied in the school; 58% of teacher respondents disagree with the statement; 9% agree with the statement; and 3% strongly agree with the statement.

## **Essential Question 2: Is the School a Fiscally and Operationally Sound, Viable Organization?**

### **Governance Structure & Organizational Design**

Over the course of the school's charter term, the Board of Trustees has partially developed its governance structure and organizational design.

On March 9, 2015 as part of the renewal review process, representatives for the NYC DOE met with a representation of the school's Board of Trustees independent of the school leadership team. Based on document review and observation, the following was noted:

- The Board currently has 11 active members. This level of membership is consistent within the minimum of five members and maximum of 15 members established in the Board's bylaws.
- The Board Chair and Treasurer, specified positions in the bylaws, are currently filled with no vacancies; however, the Board Vice Chair and Clerk, also specified positions in the bylaws, are currently vacant.
- The Board has consistently achieved quorum, as recorded in 31 meeting minutes reviewed over the retrospective charter term.
- The CMO Superintendent updates the Board on academic progress and operations; the Board Treasurer, Chief Financial Officer, and Director of Finance provide financial updates, as recorded in 31 meeting minutes reviewed.
- There are clear lines of accountability between the Board and school leadership as evidenced by the school's organizational chart and school leadership's monthly updates on academic, financial, and operational performance to the Board and its committees, as recorded in Board meeting minutes.
- The Board has active and functioning committees, as required by its bylaws, including an Executive Committee, Governance Committee, Finance Committee, Development Committee, Community and Family Communications Committee, and Academic Accountability Committee, as recorded in meeting minutes reviewed.
- The founder of Democracy Prep Public Schools, Seth Andrew, is no longer a member of the school's Board. However, the current CEO, Katie Duffy Stanton, has been with the Democracy Prep Public Schools CMO since 2007-2008 and was formerly the organization's Chief Operating Officer and Chief of Staff as well as the Executive Director of Harlem Prep Charter School, another school in the Democracy Prep Public School network.
- The current Board Chair, Josh Pristaw, has been with the Board since 2011.

### **School Climate & Community Engagement**

Over the course of the school's charter term, the school has partially developed a stable school culture.

- To date, the school has met its charter goal of having an annual average student attendance rate of at least 95% in all four years of the retrospective charter term. Average daily attendance for students over the course of the charter term is provided in the table below.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> The table reflects average daily attendance data taken from the NYC DOE's Automate the Schools (ATS) system for school years 2010-2011 through 2013-2014. Please note that the school self-reported different attendance rates in its Renewal Application than those recorded in ATS for all school years. The school self-reported attendance rates of 97.1%, 96.1%, 94.7% and 94.6% for school years 2010-2011, 2011-2012, 2012-2013 and 2013-2014, respectively.

## Average Attendance

Elementary and Middle School Attendance				
	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
<b>Democracy Prep Charter School*</b>	<b>97.9%</b>	<b>97.0%</b>	<b>94.3%</b>	<b>94.7%</b>
NYC**	93.2%	93.9%	93.6%	93.2%
Difference from NYC	4.7	3.1	0.7	1.5
High School Attendance				
	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
<b>Democracy Prep Charter School*</b>	<b>97.8%</b>	<b>96.6%</b>	<b>95.4%</b>	<b>96.4%</b>
NYC**	85.5%	86.2%	86.1%	86.5%
Difference from NYC	12.3	10.4	9.3	9.9

\* Attendance figures reflect average attendance as recorded in ATS.

\*\* NYC attendance figures reflect average attendance across all general education district schools as reflected in ATS.

- Instructional staff turnover has been relatively consistent over the charter term, with the exception of the 2011-2012 school year. In 2010-2011, 2011-2012, 2012-2013, and 2013-2014, the percentage of instructional staff who did not return, either by choice or request, at the start of the following school year was 18%, 32%, 18%, and 17%, respectively. For the most recent period, the 17% instructional staff turnover rate corresponded to 11 instructional staff who did not return to the school at the start of the 2014-2015 school year, either by choice or request.<sup>28</sup>
- Student mobility is presented below for the charter term without comparison to other schools, the CSD, or NYC as final student retention goals were not yet finalized by the New York State Education Department for the retrospective charter term at the time of the creation of this report. Based on the NYC DOE's evaluation and not in comparison to any other school, the CSD, or NYC averages, the school has had challenges with retaining students, as student mobility has been in excess of 20% in each year of the retrospective charter term.
- In the two most recent years of the charter term, the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 school years, the school had in-school and out-of-school suspension rates that were significantly higher than in prior years. In 2013-2014, the school reported 683 incidents of in-school suspension for 223 students and 694 incidents of out-of-school suspension for 231 students. The school has been asked to provide a response to the increased use of in- and out-of-school suspension, which it has submitted.

## Mobility

Student Mobility out of Democracy Prep Charter School *				
	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
Number of Students who Left the School	100	128	130	141
Percent of Students who Left the School	20.2%	21.1%	20.1%	20.9%

\* Figures are based on student enrollment as of October 31 for each respective school year with the exception of the 2012-2013 school year, which is as of October 26, 2012. Students in terminal grades are not included.

<sup>28</sup> Self-reported information from school-submitted data collection form in December 2014

- The NYC DOE has made changes to the NYC School Survey during the entirety of the retrospective charter term. Questions asked have been altered, added, or deleted from year to year. Also, beginning with the 2013-2014 NYC School Survey, survey categories will not be measured in total points out of 10 possible points. To allow for consistency during the evaluated charter term, selected questions, consistent with the NYC DOE OSDCP Accountability Framework were identified as relevant for charter schools. These are presented below for the duration of the retrospective charter term. In the most recent year of survey results, 2013-2014, the percentage of teachers agreeing or strongly agreeing was above citywide averages for all of the four selected questions. The percentage of parents agreeing or strongly agreeing was above citywide averages for two of the three selected questions, and equal to the citywide average for the third question. The percentage of students agreeing or strongly agreeing was above citywide averages for two of the three selected questions.
- NYC School Survey Response Rates should be comparable over time, however, as the measurement of these has remained consistent. Response rates for each parents, teachers and students (if participating) are presented below for each year of the charter term. The response rates for Democracy Prep Charter School parents and teachers have been above NYC averages in all four years of the retrospective charter term. The response rates for Democracy Prep Charter School students were above NYC averages in three of the past four years, with the student response rate falling below the NYC average in the most recent school year, 2013-2014.

### NYC School Survey Results

Percent of Respondents that Agree or Strongly Agree						
Survey Question		Democracy Prep Charter School				Citywide Average
		2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2013-2014
Students*	Most of my teachers make me excited about learning.**	78%	81%	62%	58%	62%
	Most students at my school treat each other with respect.	61%	63%	60%	62%	60%
	I feel safe in the hallways, bathrooms, locker room, cafeteria, etc.	88%	88%	88%	89%	79%
Parents	I feel satisfied with the education my child has received this year.	97%	96%	96%	97%	95%
	My child's school makes it easy for parents to attend meetings.	95%	94%	95%	94%	94%
	I feel satisfied with the response I get when I contact my child's school.	91%	94%	94%	96%	95%
Teachers	Order and discipline are maintained at my school.	91%	86%	100%	98%	80%
	The principal at my school communicates a clear vision for our school.	84%	94%	98%	100%	88%
	School leaders place a high priority on the quality of teaching.	97%	100%	100%	100%	92%
	I would recommend my school to parents.***	-	81%	93%	95%	81%

\* Students in grades kindergarten through five do not participate in the NYC School Survey.

\*\* This question was phrased as "My teachers inspire me to learn" in the 2009-2010 through 2012-2013 School Surveys.

\*\*\* This question was not introduced until the 2011-2012 School Survey.

## NYC School Survey Results

		Response Rates			
		2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
Students*	Democracy Prep Charter School	88%	91%	87%	80%
	NYC	83%	82%	83%	83%
Parents	Democracy Prep Charter School	76%	72%	60%	72%
	NYC	52%	53%	54%	53%
Teachers	Democracy Prep Charter School	83%	100%	93%	86%
	NYC	82%	81%	83%	81%

\* Students in grades kindergarten through five do not participate in the NYC School Survey.

As part of the renewal process, representatives for the NYC DOE have collected evidence relevant to the school's climate and community engagement over the school's charter term. Based on discussion, document collection and review, and observation, the following was noted:

- Over the course of the charter term, the school has increased its support of families by creating a Family Leadership Council. The mission of the Family Leadership Council is to promote family involvement to support the school and its students. In addition, the school has partnered with Democracy Builders, a parent advocacy organization whose mission is to increase parent choice for excellent public schools.
- The NYC DOE conducted a public renewal hearing on March 10, 2015 at Democracy Prep Charter School located at 222 West 134<sup>th</sup> Street in an effort to elicit public comments. Approximately 59 participants attended the hearing with 30 speaking in support of the school's renewal and none speaking in opposition.
- The NYC DOE made randomized phone calls to parents/guardians from a roster provided by the school for students of all grades. Calls to school parents/guardians were made during April 2015 until 20 phone calls were completed. Of these calls, 100% provided positive feedback regarding the school.

## **Financial Health**

**Overall, the school is in a neutral position to meet near-term financial obligations.**

- Based on the FY14 financial audit, the school's current ratio of 1.59 indicated a strong ability to meet its current liabilities.
- Based on the FY14 financial audit and follow up, the school's unrestricted cash availability indicated a risk that the school will be able to cover at least one month of its operating expenses without an infusion of cash. In FY14, the school had \$634,725 of unrestricted cash on hand, equaling 20 days of operating expenses.
- A comparison of the enrollment projections for the 2014-2015 budget to the actual enrollment as of October 31, 2014 revealed that the school had met its enrollment target, supporting its projected revenue.
- As of the FY14 financial audit, the school had no debt obligations.

## **Financial Sustainability**

**Overall, the school is financially sustainable based on its current practices.**

- Based on the financial audits from FY11 to FY14, the school generated an aggregate surplus over these audited fiscal years, and in FY14 the school operated at a surplus.
- Based on the FY14 financial audit, the school's liability-to-asset ratio of 0.45 indicated that the school had more total assets than it had total liabilities.
- Based on the financial audits from FY11 through FY14, the school generated overall positive cash flow from FY11 to FY14, though the school generated negative cash flow in FY14.
- There was no material weakness noted in the four independent financial audits.

### **Essential Question 3: Is the School Compliant with its Charter and All Applicable Laws and Regulations?**

Over the charter term, Democracy Prep Charter School has been compliant with some applicable laws and regulations, but not several others.

As of the review in April 2015, the Board of Trustees for Democracy Prep Charter School is in compliance with:

- **Membership size.** Over the charter term, the Board has consistently had a membership size that falls within the range outlined in the school's charter and in the Board's bylaws, a minimum of five and maximum of 11 members. The Board currently has 11 active members.
- **Timely submission of documents.** The Board did consistently submit the Annual Report to the New York State Education Department by the deadline of August 1 (or by the NYSED granted extension date) for each year of the current charter term.
- **Notification of Board Member Resignations/Submission of New Board Members for Approval.** The Board has consistently submitted Board resignation notices or new Board member credentials within the required five days of change to OSDCP for review and, if necessary, approval.
- **Posting of minutes and agendas.** The Board has consistently made all Board minutes and agendas available upon request to the public prior to or at Board meetings by posting on the school's website.

As of the review in April 2015, the Board of Trustees for Democracy Prep Charter School is out of compliance with:

- **Submission of all required documents.** Only two of the 11 current Board members have submitted conflict of interest and financial disclosure forms. The documents submitted, however, do not demonstrate conflicts of interest.<sup>29</sup>
- **Timely submission of documents.** The school has not posted to its website its annual financial audit for each year of the charter term, as required in charter law. Democracy Prep Charter School has only posted its FY13 and FY14 audits to its website.
- **Required number of monthly meetings.** The school's bylaws indicate that the Board is to hold 10 meetings a year, including an annual meeting in June. In all years of the charter term, the Board did not hold the required number of monthly meetings, as evidenced by posted meeting minutes. Required meetings are those which met quorum. The current Charter Schools Act requires that the Board hold monthly meetings over a period of 12 calendar months per year. The Board has not updated its bylaws to comply with this law.

As of the review in April 2015, the charter school is in compliance with:

- **Application and Lottery.** For the 2014-2015 school year, the school had an application deadline of April 2, 2014 and lottery date of April 10, 2014, adhering to charter law's requirement of accepting applications up to at least April 1. Over the course of the charter term, the school did consistently adhere to this requirement.
- **Student Discipline Plan.** The school has provided the NYC DOE with a current and complete copy of its Student Discipline Policy for the 2014-2015 academic year. This policy was determined to be compliant with federal law.
- **Safety Documents.** The school has submitted the required safety plan. The school has the required number of staff with AED/CPR certification.
- **Immunization.** The school has submitted its required immunization documentation and is in compliance with Department of Health standards of 99% for immunization.
- **Insurance.** The school has submitted appropriate insurance documents to the NYC DOE.
- **Fire Emergency.** One or more of the school leaders were trained in General Response Protocols/Fire Emergency Drill Conductor for NYC, as mandated by the NYC Fire Department.

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<sup>29</sup> Source: New York State Education Department Annual Report

- **Timely Submission of Invoicing and Reconciliation Documents.** Over the course of the charter term, the school did consistently submit complete invoicing and reconciliation documents by the associated deadlines.

As of the review in April 2015, the charter school is out of compliance with:

- **Fingerprint clearance.** All staff members do not have appropriate fingerprint clearance. Of the school's 62 teachers, one lacks fingerprint clearance.
- **Teacher certification.** The school has submitted required documentation for teacher certification and is not compliant with state requirements for teacher certification. The Charter Schools Act prohibits more than five staff members or more than 30% of the teaching staff from not being certified in accordance with requirements applicable to other public schools. Of the school's 62 teachers, 35 lack valid certification.

### Enrollment and Retention Targets

- Amendments to Article 56 of the New York State Consolidated Laws: Education, which relates to Charter Schools, call for charter schools, as a consideration of renewal, "to meet or exceed enrollment and retention targets" for students with disabilities, English Language Learners, and students who are eligible for the Free and Reduced Price Lunch program. The amendments further indicate "Repeated failure to comply with the requirement" as a cause for revocation or termination of the charter.
  - The law directs schools to demonstrate "that it has made extensive efforts to recruit and retain such students" in the event it has not yet met its targets.
  - The NYC DOE, as authorizer, will annually monitor the school's performance against these targets and the efforts it makes to meet this state requirement.
  - As of the creation of this report, charter school enrollment and retention targets as required by the NYS Charter Schools Act were still in a proposed status; these targets have since been finalized. The information presented below for enrollment is compared to NYC CSD and NYC averages, as well as the recently finalized current enrollment targets developed by NYSED. It should be noted that these targets were developed using a different methodology than that used to develop the school-specific enrollment rates for each special population as presented below.<sup>30</sup>
- In all years of the retrospective charter term, including the most recently completed school year 2013-2014, Democracy Prep Charter School:
  - served a higher percentage of students qualifying for Free or Reduced Price Lunch compared to the CSD 5 rate in two of the previous four years and served a higher percentage of students qualifying for Free or Reduced Price Lunch compared to the citywide in three of the previous four years;
  - served a lower percentage of students with disabilities compared to both the CSD 5 and citywide percentages, with the exception of the 2013-2014 school year, when the school served the same percentage of students with disabilities as the CSD 5 rate; and
  - served a lower percentage of English Language Learner students compared to both the CSD 5 and citywide percentages.

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<sup>30</sup> Please see the following website for more information: <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/psc/enrollment-retention-targets.html>

### Enrollment of Special Populations<sup>31</sup>

Special Population		2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2013-2014 State Enrollment Target (Current)
Free and Reduced Price Lunch (FRPL) <sup>32</sup>	<b>Democracy Prep Charter School</b>	<b>81.8%</b>	<b>79.4%</b>	<b>76.7%</b>	<b>79.7%</b>	<b>87.9%</b>
	CSD 5	78.5%	82.6%	81.7%	79.0%	
	NYC	77.7%	79.3%	78.6%	78.4%	
Students with Disabilities (SWD)	<b>Democracy Prep Charter School</b>	<b>11.9%</b>	<b>11.5%</b>	<b>15.0%</b>	<b>18.4%</b>	<b>13.2%</b>
	CSD 5	16.7%	16.6%	16.9%	18.4%	
	NYC	18.2%	17.7%	18.1%	18.7%	
English Language Learners (ELL)	<b>Democracy Prep Charter School</b>	<b>5.5%</b>	<b>4.6%</b>	<b>4.2%</b>	<b>4.6%</b>	<b>9.8%</b>
	CSD 5	9.4%	9.3%	8.6%	8.3%	
	NYC	13.5%	12.9%	12.4%	12.2%	

Additional Enrollment Information				
	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
Grades Served	6-10	6-11	6-12	6-12
CSD(s)	5	5	5	5

<sup>31</sup> Comparisons of a charter school's special populations to the CSD and City are made relative only to the grades served by the school. For example, if a charter school serves kindergarten through grade five, comparisons of that school's special populations will only be made relative to kindergarten through grade five in the CSD and citywide. CSD comparisons are particular to the grades served in each CSD each year. Enrollment rates reflect demographic characteristics as of June 1 and enrollment as of October 31 for each given school year, with the exception of enrollment in the 2012-2013 school year, which is as of October 26, 2012.

State enrollment targets were generated by a calculator developed by the State Education Department (SED). Once a school's CSD, total enrollment and grade span are entered, the calculator generates a school-specific enrollment target. The CSD for a multi-district school is the primary CSD as determined by each school. The enrollment is determined by the total number of students enrolled as of October 31, 2013. Any school with an unusual grade configuration (i.e. K, 6-9) should use an available grade configuration provided by SED that is most aligned as determined by the DOE, otherwise a school's actual grade span is used. For more information regarding SED's methodology behind the calculation of charter school enrollment and retention targets, please refer to the memo at <http://www.regents.nysed.gov/meetings/2012Meetings/July2012/712brca11.pdf>.

<sup>32</sup> The school used a private vendor for school lunch services in 2013-2014 and 2014-2015. As a result, the percentage of students receiving Free or Reduced Price Lunch in each of those two school years, as provided in the table above, was self-reported by the school as part of its Renewal Application dated December 2014. Please note that the NYC DOE's ATS records indicate that 80.1% and 58.9% of students at Democracy Prep Charter School were eligible for Free or Reduced Price Lunch based on HRA eligibility for school years 2012-2013 and 2013-2014, respectively.

#### **Essential Question 4: What are the School's Plans for the Next Charter Term?**

Democracy Prep Charter School was previously approved by the NYC DOE through a material revision to operate an elementary school (kindergarten through grade five); however, the school chose to delay the implementation of these authorized grades. The school does not envision any significant alterations to its future plans at this time.

## Part 5: Background on the Charter Renewal Process

### Renewal Process

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

The NYC DOE does not automatically grant charter renewal, and no charter operator is entitled to renewal. Rather, a school must prove that it has earned renewal and is worthy of continuing the privilege of educating New York City public school students. To make such determinations, the NYC DOE Office of School Design and Charter Partnerships renewal team performs a comprehensive review of the school's academic, operational and fiscal performance over the course of the charter which includes an analysis of the school's renewal application. This application is built around the four essential questions of the NYC DOE OSDCP Accountability Framework and includes a retrospective analysis of the school's prior track record as well as a prospective plan for the school. In reviewing this information, a school must be able to demonstrate that it can satisfy the four essential questions of the NYC DOE OSDCP Accountability Framework:

1. Is the school an academic success?
2. Is the school a fiscally and operationally sound, viable organization?
3. Is the school compliant with its charter and all applicable laws and regulations?
4. What are the school's plans for its next charter term?

The school presents evidence to support its application for renewal by providing a compelling response to these overarching questions that demonstrates its students have made significant academic progress, is serving students equitably, has sustainable operations to be successful in the next charter term, and that the school has met the goals and objectives pledged in its current charter. In addition, the school will describe challenges it has faced during its charter term, the strategies that were used to address those challenges and the lessons learned.

While the academic performance of students is the foremost determining factor of a school's success, a school's ability to demonstrate an effective educational program, a financially and operationally viable organization, and a strong learning community with support from stakeholders are also important factors that inform a renewal decision. For more information on how OSDCP makes renewal recommendations to the Chancellor, please see the NYC DOE OSDCP Accountability Framework overview in Part 6 of this report.

### Statutory Basis for Renewal

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

#### **§2850:**

- (a) Improve student learning and achievement;
- (b) Increase learning opportunities for all students, with special emphasis on expanded learning experiences for students who are at-risk of academic failure;
- (c) Encourage the use of different and innovative teaching methods;
- (d) Create new professional opportunities for teachers, school administrators and other school personnel;
- (e) Provide parents and students with expanded choices in the types of educational opportunities that are available within the public school system; and

- (f) Provide schools with a method to change from rule-based to performance based accountability systems by holding the schools established under this article accountable for meeting measurable student achievement results.

When granted, a charter is valid for up to five years. For a school chartered under the Act to operate beyond the initial charter term, the school must seek and obtain renewal of its charter.<sup>33</sup>

The Act states the following regarding the renewal of a school's charter:

**§2851.4:**

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

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

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

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

(d) Indications of parent and student satisfaction.

(e) The means by which the charter school will meet or exceed enrollment and retention targets as prescribed by the board of regents or the board of trustees of the state university of New York, as applicable, of students with disabilities, English Language Learners, and students who are eligible applicants for the free and reduced price lunch program which shall be considered by the charter entity prior to approving such charter school's application for renewal. When developing such targets, the board of regents and the board of trustees of the state university of New York shall ensure (1) that such enrollment targets are comparable to the enrollment figures of such categories of students attending the public schools within the school district, or in a city school district in a city having a population of one million or more inhabitants, the community school district, in which the charter school is located; and (2) that such retention targets are comparable to the rate of retention of such categories of students attending the public schools within the school district, or in a city school district in a city having a population of one million or more inhabitants, the community school district, in which the proposed charter school would be located.

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

The determination of whether to approve a renewal application rests in the sole discretion of a charter school's authorizer.

A school seeking renewal of its charter must submit a renewal application to the charter entity to which the original charter application was submitted.<sup>34</sup> As one such charter entity, the New York City Department of Education ("NYC DOE") institutes a renewal application process that adheres to the Act's renewal standards:

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

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<sup>33</sup> See §§ 2851(4) and 2852 of the Act.

<sup>34</sup> See generally §§ 2851(3) and 2851(4).

- A detailed financial statement that discloses the cost of administration, instruction and other spending categories for the charter school that will allow a comparison of such costs to other schools, both public and private;
- Copies of each of the annual reports of the charter school including the charter school report cards and certified financial statements;
- Indications of parent and student satisfaction; and
- The means by which the charter school will meet or exceed enrollment and retention targets as prescribed by the board of regents of students with disabilities, English Language Learners, and students who are eligible applicants for the free and reduced price lunch program which shall be considered by the charter entity prior to approving such charter school's application for renewal.<sup>35</sup>

Where the NYC DOE approves a renewal application, it is required under the Act to submit the application and a proposed charter to the Board of Regents for its review and approval.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> § 2851(4)(e) added with the 2010 amendments to the Act.

<sup>36</sup> See § 2852(5).

## Part 6: NYC DOE OSDCP Accountability Framework

The Office of School Design and Charter Partnerships team may recommend to the Chancellor three potential outcomes for charter schools applying for renewal: full-term renewal (with or without conditions), short-term renewal (with or without conditions), or non-renewal.

After the OSDCP renewal site visit, the OSDCP team incorporates its findings from the visit into this renewal report. The evidence and findings align to the four essential questions of the NYC DOE accountability framework and may include classroom observations, leadership interviews, assessment results, School Survey results, public hearings and other community feedback, as well as a variety of other data. Schools will be given the opportunity to correct factual errors in this report. If the OSDCP renewal team determines that renewal is not warranted, the school will be informed in writing of the reasons for the non-renewal. If OSDCP approves the renewal application and the Chancellor recommends renewal for the school, prior to the school's charter expiration date, OSDCP will send the renewal report and recommendation along with the school's renewal application and other supporting evidence to the Board of Regents for its approval.

### ***Full-Term Renewal, With or Without Conditions***

In cases where a school has demonstrated exceptional results with its students, a five-year renewal will be granted. A school must show that its program has clearly and consistently demonstrated high academic attainment and/or consistent and significant student academic progress, has met the majority of its charter goals, has demonstrated financial stability, has demonstrated operational viability, has attained sufficient board capacity, and has an educationally sound learning environment in order to gain this type of renewal.

### ***Short Term Renewal, With or Without Conditions***

In cases where a school is up for renewal of its initial charter and has two years or fewer of state-assessment results, or where any school has demonstrated mixed academic results or has uncertain organizational or financial viability, a short-term renewal with conditions may be considered.

### ***Non-Renewal***

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

### ***Grade Expansions or Enrollment Changes***

A school may seek material charter revisions as part of the renewal process. In the case of a grade expansion or change in authorized enrollment, these material charter revisions are considered separately from the charter renewal. Charter renewal, with or without conditions, is not a guarantee of approval for a proposed material charter revision.

## The NYC DOE OSDCP Accountability Framework

To help Chancellor-authorized charter schools better understand what we mean by success for charter schools, the OSDCP team has developed an Accountability Framework built around four essential questions for charter school renewal:

1. Is the school an academic success?
2. Is the school a fiscally and operationally sound, viable organization?
3. Is the school compliant with its charter and all applicable laws and regulations?
4. What are the school's plans for its next charter term?

Although academic performance is primary, the NYC DOE takes into account a wide variety of factors (as indicated by the framework strands and available evidence detail) when evaluating a school. These factors include academic, fiscal, operational and environmental indicators of a charter school's performance. Additionally, some of the indicators we evaluate relate to expected performance as defined in the New York State Charter Schools Act including evidence of improved student learning and achievement, special emphasis on expanded learning experiences for students who are at-risk of academic failure, use of different and innovative teaching methods, parent and student satisfaction, and enrollment and retention of special student populations. Further detail about the application of the framework to school reflection and evaluation is provided beginning on page 17 of the NYC DOE Chancellor-Authorized Schools Accountability Handbook for 2014-2015.

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

### 1. Is the School an Academic Success?

#### 1a. High Academic Attainment and Improvement

Schools that are academic successes have many of the characteristics below:

- Meet absolute performance goals established in school charter
- Meet student progress goals established in school charter
- Meet other rigorous academic goals as stated on school charter
- Demonstrate increasing student achievement/growth
- Are closing the achievement gap for at risk students, including special needs and ELL students
- Are surpassing academic performance measures of DOE identified peer-schools
- Are surpassing academic performance measures compared with district/city proficiency averages

Evidence for success might include, but not be limited to, the following depending on school configurations:

- Grades 3-8 NYS ELA Results (absolute and comparative performance, individual student progress, progress for at-risk populations, etc.)
- Grades 3-8 NYS Math Results (absolute and comparative performance, individual student progress, progress for at-risk populations, etc.)
- Grades 4 and 8 NYS Science Results (absolute and comparative performance, individual student progress, progress for at-risk populations, etc.)
- HS 4- and 6-Year Graduation Rates
- Grades 8-12 NYS Regent Exam Results
- Grades 8-12 College Readiness Credit Accumulation
- Percentage of Students Applying to and Being Admitted to College
- Percentage of Students Taking AP Courses and/or Percentage of Students Passing AP Courses
- When applicable, NYSAA or other approved alternate assessments results
- Results on state accountability measures
- Charter School Academic Goals
- School-reported internal assessments
- NYC DOE Progress Reports or School Quality Reports<sup>37</sup>

### **1b. Instructionally Sound and Responsive Education Program**

Schools with successful education programs have many of the characteristics below:

- Are self-reflective and examine practice based on outcomes against goals
- Have well-thought out curricular programs that are aligned with NYS learning outcomes as described by state and Common Core Learning Standards
- Use instructional models and resources that are consistent with school mission and flexible in addressing the needs of all learners
- Have defined strategies that they can measure and monitor for closing the achievement gap
- Offer defined opportunities for remediation and acceleration
- Utilizes a coherent and effective interim assessment system (e.g., use of formative, interim, and summative assessment data) for monitoring progress, predicting performance, and adjusting instruction
- Have an effective process for supporting improved classroom instruction, including frequent observation and feedback
- Have effective strategies and quality instructional programs for addressing students with special needs and ELLs
- Use a defined process for evaluating and supporting curricular tasks, programs and resources for effectiveness and fit with school mission and goals

Evidence for successful education programs, in addition to positive results, may include, but not be limited to, many of the following:

- Classroom observations
- Instructional planning documents (alignments, scope and sequences, curriculum maps, unit and lesson plans, etc.)
- Instructional leader and staff interviews
- Special Education/ELL progress monitoring documentation
- Professional development plans and resources
- Student/teacher schedules
- Student Intervention / Response to Intervention program description and resources
- Interim assessment results
- Data findings; adjusted lesson plans
- Self-assessment documentation

<sup>37</sup> Beginning with the 2013-2014 school year, the NYC DOE replaced the DOE Progress Report with the DOE School Quality Report. The 2012-2013 school year is the last year NYC public schools will have a Progress Report score. The Progress Report and School Quality Report contain similar indicators of performance.

## 1c. Learning Environment

Schools with successful learning environments have many of the characteristics below:

- Provide a safe, respectful, and stable academic environment conducive to student learning (one with efficient transitions and safe hallways, cafeteria, yard, etc.)
- Have a strong academic culture that creates high academic and behavioral expectations in a way that motivates students to consistently give their best effort academically and to actively engage in their own learning and the life of the school
- Use a comprehensive approach to student management, including positive behavioral expectations and a clear discipline policy to build and sustain a safe, orderly, and supportive classroom environment
- Have classrooms where academic risk-taking and student participation is encouraged and supported
- Have formal or informal structures or programs in place that provide students opportunities to develop as individuals and citizens (for example: a character education, citizenship, or community involvement or service program)

Evidence for successful learning environments may include, but not be limited to, many of the following:

- Classroom observations
- NYC DOE School Survey results (students, parents and teachers)
- School mission and articulated values
- Student management plan (code of conduct, school values, discipline policy, positive incentive system, etc.)
- Student attendance and retention rates
- Student discipline data (referral, suspension, expulsion)
- Parent complaint/concern information
- Self-administered satisfaction survey results
- Interviews with school leadership, staff, and, if appropriate, students
- Scheduled student engagement opportunities (e.g., student advisory, internships, student government, student led conferences, peer tutoring, peer mediation, etc.)
- School calendar and class schedules

## 2. Is the School a Fiscally and Operationally Sound, Viable Organization?

### 2a. Mission and Goals

Schools with a successful mission and goals have many of the characteristics below:

- Have an animated mission statement and clearly articulated goals (both academic and non-academic) that staff, students and community embrace
- Demonstrate an active self-evaluation process that involves regular monitoring, an examination of practices based on outcomes against goals, and reporting on progress towards school goals
- Have processes for adjusting strategies in support of goals as appropriate in response to monitoring data

Evidence for a successful mission and goals might include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Mission Statement
- School charter and external documents (student/family handbooks, school website, etc.)
- Annual Reports, school improvement plans, leadership/Board reports
- Board agendas and minutes
- Parent, student, and teacher satisfaction surveys
- Participation at parent-teacher conferences, school advocacy events, participation in academic goal related programs
- Stakeholder interviews (board, parents, staff, students, etc.)

### 2b. Leadership and Governance Structure

Schools with successful leadership and governance structures have many of the characteristics below:

- Have a clearly articulated governance structure, compliant with its charter and all applicable laws and regulations, with clear lines of accountability for the Board, school leadership and all staff
- Have a capable Board of Trustees with appropriate officers, committees, and a purposeful blend of skills and experiences to provide oversight and strategic direction to fulfill the mission and goals of its charter
- Have a Board that is fully compliant with all applicable laws and regulations, particularly, but not limited to, Open-Meeting Law and conflict of interest laws, and is fully compliant with its Board approved by-laws (number of meetings, quorum, posting of calendar, agenda and minutes)
- Have a defined process for Board reflection on effectiveness, assessing developing needs, and plan for professional growth
- Have developed a succession plan for board and school leadership, consistent with the charter and Board by-laws, to ensure continuity of direction and leadership over time
- Implements a school leadership structure that is aligned with charter and that is sufficient to fulfill school's mission and achieve its accountability goals and, if and when necessary, makes timely adjustments to that structure with proper notice to and approval by its authorizer
- Have timely and appropriate access to legal counsel
- Have instructional leadership staffing and support structures that holds staff accountable for student learning outcomes and provides regular feedback on instruction to teachers, including both formal and informal observations

Evidence for school governance and organizational design may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- School charter
- Board by-laws, roster, trustee resumes, calendar of meetings, meeting agenda and minutes
- Annual conflict of interest forms
- Board resources for evaluating school leadership and staff, including rubric/performance metrics
- Board resources for self-reflection and professional growth
- Board development plan
- Board interviews
- Staff roster, job descriptions, staff handbook and core operational policies
- School calendar
- Professional development plans
- Stakeholder interviews (board, school leadership and staff)

## 2c. School Climate and Community Engagement

Schools with a sustaining school climate and engaged parent and community support have many of the characteristics below:

- A healthy professional school climate that is collaborative, student-centered, and open to parents and community support
- Employ an effective means of measuring and monitoring core constituency satisfaction (parent, staff, and, when age appropriate, student), including, but not limited to, the NYC DOE School Survey
- Have effective home-school communication practices and engagement strategies to ensure meaningful parent involvement in the learning of their children
- Strong community-based partnerships that support and advocate for the school
- Engage families actively in the life of the school, including advocacy, community engagement, and feedback on school policies and initiatives
- Have a clear procedure for parents and staff to express concerns to school leadership and the Board, as appropriate, including a clearly articulated escalation path to authorizer
- Share instructional and operational practices with the larger NYC school community and actively seek opportunities for partnering and collaboration
- Encourage professional conversations about effective performance and quality instruction among staff, through, for example, such means as regular and periodic teaming (grade level teams, data days, etc.) and peer observations
- Have systems in place to evaluate professional development effectiveness and provide ongoing support for school-wide and individual initiatives

Evidence for school climate and community engagement may include, but not be limited to, the following:

- NYC DOE School Survey satisfaction parent, teacher, and, if appropriate student results
- Student retention and wait list data
- Staff retention data
- Leadership, staff, parent, student interviews
- Student and staff attendance rates
- Parent attendance at parent-teacher conferences
- Parent association meeting calendar and minutes
- Community partnerships and sponsored programs
- Participation in NYC DOE initiatives and efforts to collaborate/partner with other NYC schools
- Parent and community feedback via public hearings, renewal calls to parents, etc.
- Community outreach documents (newsletters, announcements, invitations, etc.)
- School Professional Development Plan and staff feedback on professional development events
- Resources for evaluations and observations, scheduled opportunities for professional collaboration, staff feedback on professional development events
- Student/Family and Staff Handbooks

## 2d. Operational Health

Schools that are effective, sustainable organizations have many of the characteristics below:

- A safe, clean and appropriately resourced educational facility with all appropriate services specified in charter and mandated by appropriate law and regulations
- Demonstrate efficient and orderly daily operations
- Have appropriate insurance coverage and insurance and facility documents
- An effective process for recruiting, hiring, compensating, monitoring, supporting, and evaluating school leadership and staff
- A flexible, data-driven approach to professional development for all staff
- Consistently meet student enrollment and retention targets as established by SED (applicable to schools renewed after 2010)
- Communications with NYC DOE are timely, comprehensive, and appropriate
- If applicable, school relationship with a charter management organization identified in charter and supported by a management agreement that spells out services, responsibilities, accountability reporting, performance expectations, and fees

Evidence of an operationally viable organization may include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Required facility documents (lease, certificate of occupancy, fire and safety inspections, etc.)
- Appropriate insurance documents
- Operational policies and procedures
- Operational organizational chart
- Secure storage areas for student and staff records
- Policies/protocols for maintaining secure records
- School safety plan
- Immunization completion rate information
- Appropriate AED/CPR certifications

## 2e. Financial Sustainability

Schools that are responsible stewards of public funds and are effective, sustainable organizations have many of the characteristics below:

- Maintain annual budgets that meet all short- and long-term financial responsibilities with available revenues
- Provide rigorous oversight of financial and operational responsibilities, at school leadership and Board levels, in a manner that keeps the school's mission and academic goals central to short- and long-term decision-making
- Consistently clean financial audits and compliant escrow accounts
- If applicable, strong, accountable partnerships with management organizations and other partners and significant vendors to support delivery of charter school's design and academic program
- School leadership and Board maintain effective internal controls of finances to ensure integrity of financial management and a proactive approach to mitigating risk
- School leadership and Board oversee financial and operational responsibilities in a manner that keeps the school's mission and academic goals central to decision-making
- Demonstrate financial planning for future school years, including per-pupil and space-related cost projections

Evidence for a financially sound, viable organization may include, but not be limited to, the following:

- School budget, P&Ls, and monthly/quarterly cash-flow reports
- Financial audits, escrow accounts and other fiscal reporting documents
- Financial leader(s) resume and accountability documents
- Financial and operational organizational chart
- Contracts or Memos of Understanding (MOUs) for significant partnerships and vendor relationships

### **3. Is the School in Compliance with its Charter and All Applicable Laws and Regulations?**

#### **3a. Approved Charter and Agreement**

Schools in substantial compliance with the school's charter and charter agreement have the characteristics below:

- Implement the key features of their charter as described in the original charter and, if appropriate, as modified in approved revisions to their charter, including but not limited to mission, academic program, school organization, grade configuration, enrollment, goals, etc.
- Ensure that up-to-date charter is available on request to staff, parents, and school community
- Implement comprehensive academic, behavioral, oversight, management, and operational policies and procedures that are substantially aligned with the charter and the school's stated mission and vision

Evidence for a school's compliance with the terms of its charter and charter agreement may include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Authorized charter and signed agreement
- Charter revision request approval and documentation
- School mission
- School policies and procedures
- Annual Comprehensive Review reports
- Board meetings, agendas and minutes
- Leadership/Board and staff interviews
- Public hearings (renewal or material revision hearings)

#### **3b. Applicable Federal and State Law**

Schools in substantial compliance with federal and state law have the characteristics below:

- Meet all legal requirements for Title I and IDEA regulations and reporting
- Meet or exceed enrollment and retention targets for Free and Reduced Price Lunch, ELL and Special Education students to those of their community school district of location<sup>38</sup> or are making documented good faith efforts to reach comparable percentages for enrollment and retention
- Implement school policies related to student discipline and promotion and retention that are fully compliant with laws and regulations related to students with disabilities and due process regulations
- Conduct an independently verified fair and open lottery and manage enrollment process and annual waiting lists with integrity
- Employ instructional staff with appropriate security clearances and meet all certification requirements

Evidence for compliance with applicable federal and state law may include, but not be limited to, the following:

- School reporting documents
- School's NYSED Annual Report
- Student recruitment plan and resources
- Student management policies and promotion and retention policies
- Student/Family Handbook
- Student discipline policy and records
- Parent complaint/grievance records
- Lottery policy, resources, and records; enrollment procedures and records
- Demographic data (school, district, and other as appropriate)
- Staff roster, fingerprint clearance for all staff, certification status of all instructional staff

<sup>38</sup> School-specific targets for enrollment and retention were developed by the NY State Education Department. This requirement of the New York State Charter Schools Act applies to schools renewed after 2010.

### 3c. Applicable Regulations

Schools in substantial compliance with applicable regulations have the characteristics below:

- Safe and secure facilities with no significant compliance concerns
- Consistently clean annual audits, up-to-date escrow accounts, and complete all other financial reporting as required
- Boards that meet requirements for size, meeting frequency, public notice, applicable open-meeting and conflict of interest regulations, as well as comply with NYC DOE OSDCP's requirements for reporting changes in board membership and securing approval for new board members
- Inform NYC DOE OSDCP, and where required, receive OSDCP approval for changes in significant partnerships, such as dropping/replacing a management organization
- Effectively engaged parent associations

Evidence for compliance with applicable regulations may include, but not be limited to, the following:

- School or building safety plan; appropriate inspection documents
- Annual audits, escrow accounts, other financial reporting documents
- Board roster, calendar, agenda and minutes, conflict of interest documents, notification of changes/approval of new member request documents
- Charter revision requests
- Revised or new contracts
- Parent association calendar of meetings, identified officers, parent association agenda and minutes, parent satisfaction survey results
- Stakeholder interviews

## 4. What Are the School's Plans for its Next Charter Term?

### 4a. School Expansion or Model Replication

In anticipation of a new charter term, a school may consider various growth options: replication, expansion to new grades or increased enrollment, or alteration of its model in some significant way. Successful schools generally have processes for:

- Conducting needs/opportunity assessments
- Forming Board and leadership committees or subcommittees to investigate options, develop action plans, ensure capacity and resources are aligned, etc.
- Engaging school community in articulating charter revisions (or a new charter in cases of replication) to determine community needs and to communicate regarding the school's proposed growth plans
- Ensuring that the final proposal is ambitious but realistic in its plans
- Creating a well-reasoned and documented prospective for the school's new charter term and, if applicable, a new charter proposal (for replication)

Evidence for likely success in planning for school growth in a new charter term may include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Renewal application narrative, including performance results and analyses of the current charter term
- Renewal application revised charter submission, including mission, program description, governance, organization, budget, etc. for new term
- Charter revision or merger applications
- Leadership and Board interviews

### 4b. Organizational Sustainability

Successful schools consistently perform despite change. While there is no single path for ensuring sustainability, successful schools often have the following features:

- School anticipates organizational opportunities/needs and plans for resource development (for example, human resource policies for growing your own talent, or fundraising or budget management to take care of anticipated capital needs and to mitigate risks for the unexpected, or board development to bring new talent or specific needs-based expertise to the school)
- School develops contingency plans especially for facilities or financial scenarios

Evidence for organizational sustainability may include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Charter renewal application
- Board roster and resumes
- Board committees and minutes
- School organizational chart
- Staff rosters
- Staff handbook
- Leadership and staff interviews
- Budget

#### **4c. School or Model Improvements**

Successful schools are thoughtful about the continued appropriateness of school design features and elements of their models. They:

- Review performance carefully and even without major changes through expansion or replication, are careful to adjust elements to ensure continued and improved success
- Develop plans to improve the school learning environment, including improving their facilities to expand program offerings and/or developing new partnerships to further the school's mission

Evidence for successful improvements to a school's program or model may include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Renewal application narrative, including performance results and analyses of the current charter term
- Renewal application revised charter including mission, program description, governance, organization, budget, etc. for new term
- Leadership and Board interviews
- Contracts or Memos of Understanding (MOUs) with partners or important vendors

## Appendix A: School Performance Data

### Students scoring at or above Level 3

Grade-Level Proficiency in English Language Arts				
	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
<b>Democracy Prep Charter School</b>				
Grade 6	32.7%	43.2%	10.1%	13.9%
Grade 7	29.0%	34.3%	27.8%	22.4%
Grade 8	31.1%	37.6%	17.4%	38.5%
<b>DIFFERENCE FROM CSD 5 *</b>				
Grade 6	2.6	11.6	-3.8	-1.8
Grade 7	5.0	7.8	12.7	5.7
Grade 8	3.8	10.8	2.7	21.6
<b>DIFFERENCE FROM NYC</b>				
Grade 6	-10.9	-2.1	-13.2	-11.4
Grade 7	-7.5	-9.0	2.3	-4.3
Grade 8	-3.9	-1.4	-8.0	9.6

Grade-Level Proficiency in Mathematics				
	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
<b>Democracy Prep Charter School</b>				
Grade 6	70.4%	74.8%	11.9%	39.8%
Grade 7	82.8%	80.4%	33.0%	40.6%
Grade 8	90.6%	89.9%	33.0%	65.1%
<b>DIFFERENCE FROM CSD 5 *</b>				
Grade 6	30.7	35.3	-4.5	20.7
Grade 7	44.5	42.5	22.2	27.7
Grade 8	48.1	50.8	22.0	58.3
<b>DIFFERENCE FROM NYC</b>				
Grade 6	14.4	15.5	-16.9	6.0
Grade 7	27.3	23.1	8.0	11.0
Grade 8	38.1	34.7	7.3	42.4

\* CSD comparisons are particular to the CSD in which the school was sited each year.

### Regents Pass Rates

Democracy Prep Charter School			
	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
Integrated Algebra	94.4%	96.1%	95.0%
Algebra 2 / Trigonometry	82.5%	90.4%	73.9%
Comprehensive English	99.0%	95.6%	93.9%
U.S. History	94.5%	94.6%	98.8%
Chemistry	87.5%	79.0%	64.9%
Physics	60.4%	58.1%	45.9%
Living Environment	94.4%	95.4%	98.3%
Language Other Than English	-	94.0%	100.0%

## Appendix B: Additional Accountability Data

### NYC DOE Accountability Reports

[Annual Comprehensive Report 2012-2013](#)

[Annual Comprehensive Report 2013-2014](#)