



# New York State Education Department

## ***Renewal Site Visit Report 2018-2019***

### **New York City Montessori Charter School**

**Visit Date: October 24-25, 2018**

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# CONTENTS

**SCHOOL DESCRIPTION ..... 2**

**METHODOLOGY ..... 4**

**BENCHMARK ANALYSIS ..... 6**

    SUMMARY OF FINDINGS.....8

    BENCHMARK 1: STUDENT PERFORMANCE.....9

    BENCHMARK 2: TEACHING AND LEARNING.....13

    BENCHMARK 3: CULTURE, CLIMATE AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT .....16

    BENCHMARK 4: FINANCIAL CONDITION .....18

    BENCHMARK 5: FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT .....20

    BENCHMARK 6: BOARD OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNANCE .....21

    BENCHMARK 7: ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY.....23

    BENCHMARK 8: MISSION AND KEY DESIGN ELEMENTS .....25

    BENCHMARK 9: ENROLLMENT, RECRUITMENT, AND RETENTION .....26

    BENCHMARK 10: LEGAL COMPLIANCE .....28

## SCHOOL DESCRIPTION

### Charter School Summary<sup>1</sup>

<b>Name of Charter School</b>	New York City Montessori Charter School
<b>Board Chair</b>	Rory Cohen
<b>District of location</b>	NYC CSD 7
<b>Opening Date</b>	Fall 2012
<b>Charter Terms</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• December 14, 2011 - June 30, 2016</li> <li>• July 1, 2016 - June 30, 2019</li> </ul>
<b>Current Term Authorized Grades/ Approved Enrollment</b>	K - Grade 5 / 294 students
<b>Proposed Renewal Term Authorized Grades/ Proposed Approved Enrollment</b>	K - Grade 5 / 294 students
<b>Comprehensive Management Service Provider</b>	None
<b>Facilities</b>	423 East 138 <sup>th</sup> Street, Bronx– Private Space
<b>Mission Statement</b>	<i>The New York City Montessori Charter School will empower children to be critical thinkers and creative problem solvers with strong social skills so that they can succeed in their world and continue to learn in their pursuit of higher education as they prepare for careers needed in the 21st Century.</i>
<b>Key Design Elements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Differentiated instruction</li> <li>• Individual work plans</li> <li>• Specially designed materials</li> <li>• Prepared environment</li> <li>• Independence and the freedom and ability to make choices</li> <li>• Time and practice</li> <li>• Peer modeling and teacher scaffolding</li> <li>• Content related instructional strategies</li> <li>• Montessori philosophy</li> </ul>
<b>Requested Revisions</b>	None

**Noteworthy:** New York City Montessori Charter School (NYCMCS) is the first charter Montessori school in New York State. One third of its students are classified as students with disabilities and one fourth of its student body is considered English language learners (ELLs)/multilingual learners (MLLs). The school is implementing a program that blends the Montessori teaching philosophy with the New York State Learning Standards.

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<sup>1</sup> The information in this section was provided by the NYS Education Department Charter School Office.

## Renewal Outcomes

Pursuant to the Board of Regents Renewal Policy, the following possible renewal outcomes:

- **Full-Term Renewal:** A school's charter may be renewed for the maximum term of five years. For a school to be eligible for a full-term renewal, during the current charter term the school must have compiled a strong and compelling record of meeting or exceeding Benchmark 1, and at the time of the renewal analysis, have met substantially all other performance benchmarks in the Framework.
- **Short-Term Renewal:** A school's charter may be renewed for a shorter term, typically of three years. As discussed above, the Regents will place an even greater emphasis on student performance for schools applying for their second or subsequent renewal, which is consistent with the greater time that a school has been in operation and the corresponding increase in the quantity and quality of student achievement data that the school has generated. In order for a school to be eligible for short-term renewal, a school must either:
  - (a) have compiled a mixed or limited record of meeting Benchmark 1, but at the time of the renewal analysis, have met substantially all of the other performance benchmarks in the Framework which will likely result in the school's being able to meet Benchmark 1 with the additional time that short-term renewal permits, **or**
  - (b) have compiled an overall record of meeting Benchmark 1, but falls far below meeting one or more of the other performance benchmarks in the Framework.
- **Non-Renewal:** A school's charter will not be renewed if the school does not apply for renewal or the school fails to meet the criteria for either full-term or short-term renewal. In the case of non-renewal, a school's charter will be terminated upon its expiration and the school will be required to comply with the Charter School Office's Closing Procedures to ensure an orderly closure by the end of the school year.

**Please Note:** The Regents may include additional terms, conditions, and/or requirements in a school's Full-Term or Short-Term Renewal charter to address specific situations or areas of concern. For example, a school may meet the standards for full-term renewal or short-term renewal with regard to its educational success; but may be required to address organizational deficiencies that need to be corrected but do not prevent the Regents from making the required legal findings for renewal. A school may also meet the standards for full-term renewal or short-term renewal of only a portion of its educational program (e.g., for the elementary school program, but not the middle school program). Such additional terms and/or requirements may include, but are not limited to, restrictions on the number of students and grades to be served by the school, additional student performance metrics, heightened reporting requirements, or specific corrective action.

## SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS

### Current Grade Levels and Approved Enrollment

	<b>Year 1 2016 to 2017</b>	<b>Year 2 2017-2018</b>	<b>Year 3 2018-2019</b>
<b>Grade Configuration</b>	K-Grade 5	K-Grade 5	K-Grade 5
<b>Total Approved Enrollment</b>	294	294	294

### Proposed Renewal Term Grade Levels and Approved Enrollment

	<b>Year 1 2019 to 2020</b>	<b>Year 2 2020 to 2021</b>	<b>Year 3 2021 to 2022</b>
<b>Grade Configuration</b>	K-Grade 5	K-Grade 5	K-Grade 5
<b>Total Approved Enrollment</b>	294	294	294

## METHODOLOGY

A two-day renewal site visit was conducted at New York City Montessori Charter School on 10/24 - 25, 2018. The CSO team conducted interviews with the board of trustees, school leadership team, teachers, and parents. In cooperation with school leadership, the team also administered an anonymous online survey to teachers.

The team conducted over 20 classroom observations in kindergarten - Grade 5. The observations were approximately 10-15 minutes in length. Team members recorded observations on the Classroom Observation Worksheet and used the Classroom Observation Rubric to guide their reviews.

The documents and data reviewed by the team before, during, and after the site visit included the following:

- **Renewal Application**
- **Academic data**
- **Renewal Site Visit Workbook**
- **Current organizational chart**
- **A master school schedule**
- **Map of school with room numbers and teacher names**
- **Board materials (roster, minutes, and strategic plan, if applicable)**
- **Board self-evaluation processes and documents**

- **Student/family handbook**
- **Staff handbook and personnel policies**
- **A list of major assessments**
- **Teacher and administrator evaluation processes**
- **Interventions offered at the school**
- **School-conducted surveys of teachers, parents, and/or students, and/or NYC DOE surveys**
- **Professional development plans and schedules**
- **Efforts towards achieving enrollment and retention targets**
- **School submitted Annual Reports**

## BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

The Performance Framework, which is part of the oversight plan included in the Charter Agreement for each school, outlines 10 Performance Framework benchmarks in three key areas of charter school performance:

- Educational Success
- Organizational Soundness
- Faithfulness to Charter and Law

Observational findings from the review of the renewal application, supporting data, and the site visit will be presented in alignment with the [Performance Framework](#) benchmarks and Indicators according to the rating scale below, although not all indicators will necessarily be assessed on every site visit. A brief summary of the school's strengths will precede the benchmark analysis. Each benchmark will be rated; however, the report narrative will highlight those indicators not fully met by the school.

Level	Description
<b>Exceeds</b>	The school meets the performance benchmark; potential exemplar in this area.
<b>Meets</b>	The school generally meets the performance benchmark; few concerns are noted.
<b>Approaches</b>	The school does not meet the performance benchmark; a number of concerns are noted.
<b>Falls Far Below</b>	The school falls far below the performance benchmark; significant concerns are noted.

For the site visit conducted from October 24-25, 2018 at New York City Montessori Charter School (NYCMCS), see the following Performance Framework benchmark scores and discussion.

**New York State Education Department  
Charter School Performance Framework Rating**

Performance Benchmark		Level
<b>Educational Success</b>	<b>Benchmark 1: Student Performance:</b> The school has met or exceeded achievement indicators for academic trends toward proficiency, proficiency and high school graduation. At all grade levels and all assessments, scoring proficiently means achieving a performance level of 3 or higher (high school Regents and Common Core Regents exam score of 65 or higher).	<b>Approaches</b>
	<b>Benchmark 2: Teaching and Learning:</b> School leaders have systems in place designed to cultivate shared accountability and high expectations and that lead to students’ well-being, improved academic outcomes, and educational success. The school has rigorous and coherent curriculum and assessments that are aligned to the New York State Learning Standards (NYSLS) for all students. Teachers engage in strategic practices and decision-making in order to address the gap between what students know and need to learn so that all students experience consistent high levels of engagement, thinking and achievement.	<b>Approaches</b>
	<b>Benchmark 3: Culture, Climate, and Family Engagement:</b> The school has systems in place to support students’ social and emotional health and to provide for a safe and respectful learning environment. Families, community members and school staff work together to share in the responsibility for student academic progress and social-emotional growth and well-being. Families and students are satisfied with the school’s academics and the overall leadership and management of the school.	<b>Meets</b>
<b>Organizational Soundness</b>	<b>Benchmark 4: Financial Condition:</b> The school is in sound and stable financial condition as evidenced by performance on key financial indicators.	<b>Falls Far Below</b>
	<b>Benchmark 5: Financial Management:</b> The school operates in a fiscally sound manner with realistic budgets pursuant to a long-range financial plan, appropriate internal controls and procedures, and in accordance with state law and generally accepted accounting practices.	<b>Meets</b>
	<b>Benchmark 6: Board Oversight and Governance:</b> The board of trustees provides competent stewardship and oversight of the school while maintaining policies, establishing performance goals, and implementing systems to ensure academic success, organizational viability, board effectiveness and faithfulness to the terms of its charter.	<b>Meets</b>
	<b>Benchmark 7: Organizational Capacity:</b> The school has established a well-functioning organizational structure, clearly delineated roles for staff, management, and board members. The school has systems and protocols that allow for the successful implementation, evaluation, and improvement of its academic program and operations.	<b>Meets</b>
<b>Faithfulness to Charter &amp; Law</b>	<b>Benchmark 8: Mission and Key Design Elements:</b> The school is faithful to its mission and has implemented the key design elements included in its charter.	<b>Meets</b>
	<b>Benchmark 9: Enrollment, Recruitment, and Retention:</b> The school is meeting or making annual progress toward meeting the enrollment plan outlined in its charter and its enrollment and retention targets for students with disabilities, English language learners, and students who are eligible applicants for the free and reduced priced lunch program; or has demonstrated that it has made extensive good faith efforts to attract, recruit, and retain such students.	<b>Approaches</b>
	<b>Benchmark 10: Legal Compliance:</b> The school complies with applicable laws, regulations, and the provisions of its charter.	<b>Meets</b>



## Summary of Findings

- The NYCMCS is in its seventh year of operation and serves students in kindergarten to Grade 5. *During its current charter term, the school is rated in the following manner:* meeting six benchmarks, approaching three, and falling far below one. Additional details regarding those ratings are provided below.
- During its previous charter renewal evaluation, NYCMCS met only two of the Performance Framework benchmarks and received Falls Far Below in benchmarks 1 and 2, for Educational Success. Since its renewal, the school has implemented a more rigorous, academically focused approach in an effort to improve student outcomes and meet the Performance Framework benchmarks. With the changes in academic programming, there has been staff turnover; remaining and new staff members demonstrated a commitment to the success of students and fulfilling the mission of the school. School leadership has stabilized under the current principal and the governing board has grown to add capacity. Additional details regarding those ratings are provided below.
- **Areas of Strengths:** Site visit team members observed a strong and positive school culture and high-quality instructional practices based on the Montessori principle of a “prepared environment” with large, bright, well-organized classrooms that support individualized and self-guided instruction. Classroom observations demonstrated the majority of students respond well to the flexibility of the Montessori model, which was implemented with greater fidelity in the non-testing grades. NYCMCS has made substantial progress in meeting its enrollment and retention targets since its 2015-2016 renewal when NYCMCS served fewer student subgroup populations than its district of location. The school is on par with CSD 7 regarding the enrollment of ELLs/MLLs and above the district regarding the enrollment of SWDs.

**Areas in Need of Improvement:** NYC Montessori Charter School’s academic performance has fluctuated in both ELA and math for the 2014-2015 school year through the 2017-2018 school year, but with the 2018 state assessment results it slightly outperformed its district of location New York City Community School District (NYC CSD) 7. From 2014-2015 to 2017-2018, the ELA proficiency outcomes have steadily increased from 5% to 33%. In the same time periods, math proficiency outcomes began at 18%, decreasing for two years, and then significantly increasing to 32%. Though it has not yet met state averages for all students, NYCMCS has made some progress, although it remains 12 and 17 percentage points behind the state in ELA and math respectively. NYCMCS continues to enroll fewer ED students than CSD 7. The school’s composite score shows that it is in poor financial condition; with the board indicating that the school is currently out of the red for the first time this 2018-2019 school year.

## Benchmark 1: Student Performance

*The school has met or exceeded achievement indicators for academic trends toward proficiency, proficiency and high school graduation. At all grade levels and all assessments, scoring proficiently means achieving a performance level of 3 or higher (high school Regents and Common Core Regents exam score of 65 or higher).*

### Finding: Approaches

- NYCMCS currently serves pre-kindergarten through Grade 5.
- NYCMCS is based on the Montessori model: differentiated instruction, specially designed learning materials, mixed-age groups, letting the student determine his/her pace to achieve mastery.
- NYCMCS implements the Montessori practices with greatest fidelity in the preK program and kindergarten-Grade 2. For Grades 3-5, single grade classrooms were created and the curriculum has been aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) with the Montessori philosophy infusing instruction.
- Teachers are subject-based departmentalized and work with teachers from all other grades who plan the same subject.
- There are two adults in each classroom.
- NYCMCS shifts classroom structure, enrollment and staffing based on the needs of students; during the 2018-2019 year, it has three 12:1:1 classrooms, nine integrated co-teaching (ICT) classrooms, and one general education classroom.
- ELLs/MLLs primarily receive support through co-teaching in the classroom. English as a New Language teachers work directly with teachers to integrate language standards in lesson planning and differentiate content

### Summative Evidence for Benchmark 1:

#### Indicator 1: All Schools

##### *1.a.i. Accountability - ESEA Accountability Designation:*

The school's ESEA Accountability Designation for 2017-2018 was Priority School.

##### *1.b.i. Similar Schools Comparison – Comparative Proficiency:*

In ELA and math, New York City Montessori Charter School students did tend to outperform students in a little more than half of the schools listed with similar grade spans and demographics.

#### Indicator 2: Elementary/Middle School Outcomes

##### *2.a.i. Trending Toward Proficiency – Aggregate Standards-Based Trend Toward Proficiency:*

In 2015-2016, 34% of students attending New York City Montessori Charter School were trending towards proficiency in ELA. In 2016-2017, the rate was 25%, and in 2017-2018, the rate was 33%. This falls below the minimum expectation of 75% as set forth in the Charter School Performance Framework.

In 2015-2016, 16% of students attending New York City Montessori Charter School were trending towards proficiency in math. In 2016-2017, the rate was 15%, and in 2017-2018, the rate was 39%. This falls below the minimum expectation of 75% as set forth in the Charter School Performance Framework.

**2.a.ii. Trending Toward Proficiency - Subgroup Standards-Based Trend Toward Proficiency:**

In 2015-2016, 24% of students with disabilities attending New York City Montessori Charter School were trending towards proficiency in ELA. In 2016-2017, the rate was 14%, and in 2017-2018, the rate was 31%. This falls below the minimum expectation of 75% as set forth in the Charter School Performance Framework. In 2015-2016, 12% of students with disabilities attending New York City Montessori Charter School were trending towards proficiency in math. In 2016-2017, the rate was 10%, and in 2017-2018, the rate was 21%. This falls below the minimum expectation of 75% as set forth in the Charter School Performance Framework.

In 2016-2017, 8% of ELL/MLL attending New York City Montessori Charter School were trending towards proficiency in ELA. In 2017-2018, the rate was 40%. This falls below the minimum expectation of 75% as set forth in the Charter School Performance Framework. In 2016-2017, 0% of ELL/MLL attending New York City Montessori Charter School was trending towards proficiency in math. In 2017-2018, the rate was 40%. This falls below the minimum expectation of 75% as set forth in the Charter School Performance Framework.

In 2015-2016, 34% of economically disadvantaged students attending New York City Montessori Charter School were trending towards proficiency in ELA. In 2016-2017, the rate was 25% and in 2017-2018, the rate was 31%. This falls below the minimum expectation of 75% as set forth in the Charter School Performance Framework. In 2015-2016, 13% of economically disadvantaged students attending New York City Montessori Charter School were trending towards proficiency in math. In 2016-2017, the rate was 16%, and 40% in 2017-2018. This falls below the minimum expectation of 75% as set forth in the Charter School Performance Framework.

**2.b.i. Proficiency - Aggregate School Level Proficiency for All Students:** See Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Elementary/Middle School Assessment Proficiency Outcomes for All Students: School, District & NYS Level Aggregates**

	ELA					Math				
	New York City Montessori CS	NYC CSD 7	Variance to District	NYS	Variance to NYS	New York City Montessori CS	NYC CSD 7	Variance to District	NYS	Variance to NYS
2014-2015	5%	13%	-8	32%	-27	18%	18%	0	43%	-25
2015-2016	12%	21%	-9	39%	-27	11%	21%	-10	43%	-32
2016-2017	20%	24%	-4	40%	-20	13%	24%	-11	45%	-32
2017-2018	33%	30%	+3	45%	-12	32%	30%	+2	49%	-17

NOTE:

(1) Data in the table above represents all students tested who scored proficiently (level 3 or above) on each state assessment.

**2.b.ii. Proficiency – Subgroup School Level Proficiency:** See Table 2 below.

**Table 2: Elementary/Middle School Assessment Proficiency Outcomes by Subgroup**

Subject	School Year	Students with Disabilities (Variance to the district of location)	ELL/MLL (Variance to the district of location)	Economically Disadvantaged (Variance to the district of location)
ELA	2014-2015	0% (-5)	0% (-11)	4% (-9)
	2015-2016	7% (-1)	15% (+4)	10% (-11)
	2016-2017	14% (+6)	12% (-2)	20% (-4)
	2017-2018	19% (+7)	36% (+16)	34% (+4)
Mathematics	2014-2015	8% (-2)	0% (-16)	15% (-3)
	2015-2016	13% (+3)	10% (-7)	10% (-11)
	2016-2017	8% (-4)	6% (-12)	13% (-11)
	2017-2018	19% (+1)	29% (+2)	34% (+4)

**NOTES:**

- (1) Data in the table above represents tested students in respective subgroups who scored proficiently (level 3 or above) on each state assessment.
- (2) For the students with disabilities and the ELL/MLL subgroups, both current and former members of the subgroups have been combined.
- (3) In some cases, student subgroups still did not have enough tested students to form a representative sample (<5 students). For these subgroups, testing data was withheld.

2.b.iii. Proficiency – Grade Level Proficiency: See Tables 3 -4 below.

**Table 3: Grade Level Proficiency for All Students: ELA**

	2015-2016			2016-2017			2017-2018		
	New York City Montessori CS	NYC CSD 7 / NYS	Variance to NYC CSD 7 / NYS	New York City Montessori CS	NYC CSD 7 / NYS	Variance to NYC CSD 7 / NYS	New York City Montessori CS	NYC CSD 7 / NYS	Variance to NYC CSD 7 / NYS
Grade 3	15%	26% / 42%	-11 / -27	25%	28% / 43%	-3 / -18	52%	38% / 51%	+14 / +1
Grade 4	14%	24% / 41%	-10 / -27	17%	26% / 41%	-9 / -24	25%	33% / 47%	-8 / -22
Grade 5	8%	14% / 34%	-6 / -26	17%	19% / 35%	-3 / -18	20%	20% / 37%	0 / -17

**NOTE:**

- (1) Data in the table above represents all students tested who scored proficiently (level 3 or above) on each state assessment.

**Table 4: Grade Level Proficiency for All Students: Mathematics**

	2015-2016			2016-2017			2017-2018		
	New York City Montessori CS	NYC CSD 7 / NYS	Variance to NYC CSD 7 / NYS	New York City Montessori CS	NYC CSD 7 / NYS	Variance to NYC CSD 7 / NYS	New York City Montessori CS	NYC CSD 7 / NYS	Variance to NYC CSD 7 / NYS
Grade 3	12%	24% / 44%	-12 / -32	17%	28% / 48%	-11 / -31	47%	39% / 54%	+8 / -7
Grade 4	13%	23% / 45%	-10 / -32	8%	22% / 43%	-14 / -35	30%	30% / 48%	0 / -18
Grade 5	8%	16% / 40%	-8 / -32	13%	21% / 43%	-9 / -30	18%	23% / 44%	-5 / -26

**NOTE:**

(1) Data in the table above represents all students tested who scored proficiently (level 3 or above) on each state assessment.

## Benchmark 2: Teaching and Learning

*School leaders have systems in place designed to cultivate shared accountability and high expectations and that lead to students' well-being, improved academic outcomes, and educational success. The school has rigorous and coherent curriculum and assessments that are aligned to the New York State Learning Standards (NYSL) for all students. Teachers engage in strategic practices and decision-making in order to address the gap between what students know and need to learn so that all students experience consistent high levels of engagement, thinking and achievement.*

### Finding: Approaches

<u>Element</u>	<u>Indicators</u>
1. <i>Curriculum</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The school has a documented curriculum that is aligned to the NYSL.</li> <li>b. Teachers use unit and lesson plans that introduce complex materials, stimulate higher order thinking, and build deep conceptual understanding and knowledge around specific content.</li> <li>c. The curriculum is aligned horizontally across classrooms at the same grade level and vertically between grades.</li> <li>d. The curriculum is differentiated to provide opportunities for all students to master grade-level skills and concepts.</li> </ul>
2. <i>Instruction</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The school staff has a common understanding of high-quality instruction, and observed instructional practices align to this understanding.</li> <li>b. Instructional delivery fosters engagement with all students.</li> </ul>
3. <i>Assessment and Program Evaluation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The school uses a balanced system of formative, diagnostic and summative assessments.</li> <li>b. The school uses qualitative and quantitative data to inform instruction and improve student outcomes.</li> <li>c. The school uses qualitative and quantitative data to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of the academic program, and modifies the program accordingly.</li> </ul>
4. <i>Supports for Diverse Learners</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The school provides supports to meet the academic needs for all students, including but not limited to: students with disabilities, English language learners, and economically disadvantaged students.</li> <li>b. The school has systems to monitor the progress of individual students and facilitate communication between interventionists and classroom teachers regarding the needs of individual students.</li> </ul>

### Summative Evidence for Benchmark 2:

#### 1. Curriculum

School leaders that met with the site review team stated that the school continues to refine its approach to incorporating the Montessori philosophy with more rigorous instructional practices. School leadership that met with the review team, which included the principal, assistant principals of school culture, operations, and teaching and learning, described implementing the Montessori approach by making a distinction between Philosophy and Practice. The philosophy is found throughout the school in student-centered learning and materials visible in all classrooms. The core Montessori instructional practices are

implemented with the greatest fidelity in the pre-K program and kindergarten-Grade 2. For all grades, the curriculum has been aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) with the Montessori philosophy infusing instruction.

The implementation of a more CCLS aligned curriculum has led to the adoption of Eureka Math, Teachers College Readers and Writers Workshop, NYS standards for Science, and Engage NY for Social Studies. Reading is supported by Renaissance Learning (STAR Reading, STAR Early Literacy, Accelerated Reader), Wilson Foundations and Raz Kids/Headsprout Reading. Lesson planning, relatively new for teachers, is departmentalized so that no teacher has to develop all five subject-based lessons (the five subjects being math, reading, writing, social studies and science). Teachers share their plans with other teachers on their grade team with each teacher planning one subject exclusively. In departmentalized classrooms, teachers are assigned a subject and collaborate and plan with all grade-level teachers who have been assigned the same subject. The CSO site visit team observed consistent subject-based lessons across classrooms in the same grade band.

## **2. Instruction**

The leadership team focuses on greater instructional delivery consistency across all grade levels. School leadership has placed an emphasis on Gradual Release of Responsibility (where students are given more voice and autonomy) and on defining and refining how the Montessori Philosophy and Practice is implemented. The greater the emphasis is placed on rigor, as well as the shift in how the Montessori approach is implemented, has led to staff turnover with nine new teachers joining the school in the 2018-2019 school year. At the time of the renewal site visit there was one vacant position that was filled by a substitute teacher.

CSO team members observed various levels of rigor with generally high levels of student engagement in the classrooms. There appears to be a common understanding among staff that activities must be varied to meet the diverse learning styles of students though this was not evident in all observed classrooms. Lesson plan binders were available to the CSO within each classroom; and classroom observations generally showed evidence of common planning and alignment. Similar lessons were observed across grade band classrooms, though pacing and higher-order questioning tactics differed.

## **3. Assessment and Program Evaluation**

The school has been increasing its use of data to drive instruction. The leadership team has implemented a more comprehensive data generating system intended to analyze and monitor student progress. In addition to periodically administered assessments of Fountas & Pinnell, Wilson Foundations (K-2) and NWEA MAP (Grades 3-5), students are given, on an ongoing basis, the STAR Reading assessments and unit-based assessments of Writers Workshop and Eureka math.

Under the current principal, NYCMCS has developed a “Beat the Testmaker” program. Beginning as an intervention program, it now is mandated for all students. The program teaches test taking strategies and develops student skills on test-taking.

## **4. Supports for Diverse Learners**

School leadership described to the CSO team members that during the visit, they would observe students experiencing a variety of instructional methods and group settings including whole-group instruction, small-group instruction, and independent work-time during which one teacher conducts small-group lessons while the other supervises students that work independently. During classroom visits site team members did see various grouping structures and settings with differing levels of rigor.

The various instructional methods and group settings are used to support NYCMCS population of SWDs and ELLs/MLLs which has steadily increased to 32% and 23% respectively. The school leadership is working to effectively identify the needs of SWDs and ELLs/MLLs and has provided targeted staff training on delivering appropriate supports. The ELL/MLL instructor, who has participated in NYC Charter Special Education Collaborative workshops, works with teachers on lesson plan development to add differentiation for additional supports for ELLMLL students. The 2018 assessment results, the school's SWDs and ELLs/MLLs outperformed the district and the state.

SoBro, the school's partner organization, provides afterschool remediation to supplement the instruction that occurs during the school day. The afterschool program has been restructured this year to create greater consistency between classroom instruction and afterschool support. Afterschool teaching staff receive professional development training along with school staff and many are employed during the day as trained paraprofessionals. With the recently implemented change, the efficacy of the afterschool program has not yet been fully evaluated.



### Benchmark 3: Culture, Climate and Family Engagement

*The school has systems in place to support students’ social and emotional health and to provide for a safe and respectful learning environment. Families, community members and school staff work together to share in the responsibility for student academic progress and social-emotional growth and well-being. Families and students are satisfied with the school’s academics and the overall leadership and management of the school.*

**Finding: Meets**

<u>Element</u>	<u>Indicators</u>
1. <i>Behavior Management and Safety</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The school has a clear approach to behavioral management, including a written discipline policy.</li> <li>b. The school appears safe and all school constituents are able to articulate how the school community maintains a safe environment.</li> <li>c. The school has systems in place to ensure that the environment is free from harassment and discrimination.</li> <li>d. Classroom environments are conducive to learning and generally free from disruption.</li> </ul>
2. <i>Family Engagement and Communication</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Teachers communicate with parents to discuss students’ strengths and needs.</li> <li>b. The school assesses family and student satisfaction using strategies such as surveys, feedback sessions, community forums, or participation logs, and considers results when making schoolwide decisions.</li> <li>c. The school has a systematic process for responding to parent or community concerns.</li> <li>d. The school shares school-level academic data with the broader school community to promote transparency and accountability among parents, students and school constituents.</li> </ul>
3. <i>Social-Emotional Supports</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. School leaders collect and use data to track the socio-emotional needs of students.</li> <li>b. School leaders collect and use data regarding the impact of programs designed to support students’ social and emotional health.</li> </ul>

**Summative Evidence for Benchmark 3:**

**1. Behavior Management and Safety**

NYCMCS incorporates a Peace Curriculum into its school culture, which the school uses as the means to establish and maintain a safe and harassment-free environment. The purpose of the curriculum is to develop in students such values as citizenship, responsibility, respect for diversity, and the importance of peace. During the course of the site visit, a safe and respectful classroom environment was observable in most every classroom. Throughout the building, student behavior reflected an internalized sense of the Peace Curriculum.

A Culture Support Team, comprised of the assistant principal (AP) of school culture, the mental health counselor, and the special education behavior specialist, provide oversight and coordinate behavioral expectations and the school’s discipline policy, which has been revised to reflect a more restorative and preventative approach.

## **2. Family Engagement and Communication**

On the 2018 NYCDOE School Quality Parent and Teacher Survey, 90% of staff and parent respondents felt positive in categories of Strong Family Community Ties and Trust. For example, every morning the principal and AP of school culture welcome students and families at the school entrance; and on each subsequent floor is a staff member to greet and meet students and parents.

All stakeholders reported that communications are ongoing. Parents that met with the CSO team spoke about the support they received from the school, especially parents that were new to NYCMCS. They reported open and frequent points of communication, from the daily morning greetings by school leadership to information and meetings made accessible to non-English speaking parents. Teachers and other school personnel keep contact with parents frequently through phone calls, texts, e-mail and face-to-face meetings in addition to parents being able to check on their students' progress via an online portal system. To incentivize parents, student work folders include communications that parents are asked to sign; parents are then graded on 'participation' in their student's report card.

## **3. Social Emotional Supports**

Through the Culture Support Team (CST), the school has developed systems to support the social emotional needs of students. The CST is frequently in classrooms to monitor the environment and to ensure staff are capturing behavioral data. Staff can input real-time data through an application that provides quick and immediate access to a student behavioral plan. The data collection and analysis help the CST and teachers target and track support.

In addition, counseling services are provided to students (mandated and others) that may need additional support.

## Benchmark 4: Financial Condition

*The school is in sound and stable financial condition as evidenced by performance on key financial indicators.*

### Finding: Falls Far Below

#### Important Notes:

- The key financial indicators used to evaluate this benchmark will be presented within a separate fiscal dashboard instrument that will provide context for the school's performance on each of the metrics, outline the specific targets for each metric, and also provide additional subsidiary detail on each calculation.
- Unless otherwise indicated, financial data is derived from the school's annual independently audited financial statements.

<b>1. Near-Term Indicators:</b>	
1a.	Current Ratio
1b.	Unrestricted Days Cash
1c.	Enrollment Variance
1d.	Composite Score
<b>2. Sustainability Indicators:</b>	
2a.	Total Margin
2b.	Debt to Asset Ratio
2c.	Debt Service Coverage Ratio

#### Summative Evidence for Benchmark 4:

##### Financial Condition

New York City Montessori Charter School appears to be in poor financial condition as evidenced by performance on key indicators derived from the school's independently audited financial statements.

The Charter School Office reviews the financial performance and management of charter schools using quantitative and qualitative methods. Near-term indicators, such as the current ratio and unrestricted days cash, are measures of liquidity and of the charter school's capacity to maintain operations. Long-term indicators, such as total margin and debt-to asset ratio, are measures of the charter school's capacity to remain viable and to meet financial obligations.

##### Overall Financial Outlook

A *composite score* is an overall measure of financial health calculated by the Department's Office of Audit Services. This score is based on a weighting of primary reserves, equity, and net income. A charter school with a score between 1.5 and 3.0 is considered to be in strong financial health. New York City Montessori Charter School's 2016-2017 composite score is -0.5.

**New York City Montessori Charter School’s Composite Scores  
2014-2015 to 2016-2017**

<i>Year</i>	<i>Composite Score</i>
2014-2015	0.0
2015-2016	-0.5
2016-2017	-0.5

*Source: NYSED Office of Audit Services*

**Near-Term Indicators**

Near-term indicators of financial health are used to understand the current financial performance and viability of the school. The Charter School Office uses three measures:

The *current ratio* is a financial ratio that measures whether or not a charter school has enough resources to pay its debts over the next 12 months. The ratio is mainly used to give an idea of the school's ability to pay back its short-term liabilities (debt and payables) with its short-term assets (cash, inventory, receivables). The higher the current ratio, the more capable the school is of paying its obligations, with a ratio under 1.0 indicating concern. For 2016-2017, New York City Montessori Charter School had a current ratio of 1.2.

*Unrestricted cash* measures, in days, whether the charter school can meet operating expenses without receiving new income. Charter schools typically strive to maintain at least 90 days of cash on hand. For fiscal year 2016-2017, New York City Montessori Charter School operated with 19 days of unrestricted cash.

*Enrollment maximization* measures whether or not a charter school is meeting its enrollment projections, thereby generating sufficient revenue to fund ongoing operations. Actual enrollment that is over 85 percent is considered reasonable. New York City Montessori Charter School’s enrollment maximization for 2016-2017 was at 92%.

**Long-Term Indicators**

A charter school’s *debt to asset ratio* measures the extent to which the school relies on borrowed funds to finance its operations. It is calculated as total liabilities divided by total assets. A ratio of 0.9 or less meets a standard of low risk. For 2016-2017, New York City Montessori Charter School’s debt to asset ratio was 1.2.

*Total margin* measures the deficit or surplus a charter school yields out of its total revenues; in other words, whether or not the school is living within its available resources. Total margin is calculated as net income divided by total revenue. A total margin that is positive indicates low risk. For 2016-2017, New York City Montessori Charter School’s total margin was -1%.

### **Benchmark 5: Financial Management**

*The school operates in a fiscally sound manner with realistic budgets pursuant to a long-range financial plan, appropriate internal controls and procedures, and in accordance with state law and generally accepted accounting practices.*

#### **Finding: Meets**

Renewal is based on evidence that the following indicators are generally present:

1. The school has an accurate and functional accounting system that includes monthly budgets.
2. The school sets budget objectives and regularly analyzes its budget in relation to those objectives.
3. The school has allocated budget surpluses in a manner that is fiscally sound and directly attends to the social and academic needs of the students attending the school.
4. The school has and follows a written set of fiscal policies.
5. The school has complied with state and federal financial reporting requirements.
6. The school has and is maintaining appropriate internal controls and procedures.
7. The school follows generally accepted accounting principles as evidenced by independent financial audits with an unqualified audit opinion, a limited number of findings that are quickly corrected, and the absence of a going concern disclosure.

#### **Summative Evidence for Benchmark 5:**

The Charter School Office reviewed New York City Montessori Charter School's 2016-2017 audited financial statements to determine whether the independent auditor observed sufficient internal controls over financial reporting. The auditor did not identify any deficiencies in internal controls that could be considered material weakness.

## Benchmark 6: Board Oversight and Governance

*The board of trustees provides competent stewardship and oversight of the school while maintaining policies, establishing performance goals, and implementing systems to ensure academic success, organizational viability, board effectiveness and faithfulness to the terms of its charter.*

### Finding: Meets

<u>Element</u>	<u>Indicators</u>
1. <i>Board Oversight and Governance</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. The board recruits and selects board members with skills and expertise that meet the needs of the school.</li><li>b. The board engages in strategic and continuous improvement planning by setting priorities and goals that are aligned with the school’s mission and educational philosophy.</li><li>c. The board demonstrates active oversight of the charter school management, fiscal operations and progress toward meeting academic and other school goals.</li><li>d. The board regularly updates school policies.</li><li>e. The board utilizes a performance-based evaluation process for evaluating school leadership, itself and providers.</li><li>f. The board demonstrates full awareness of its legal obligations to the school and stakeholders.</li></ul>

### Summative Evidence for Benchmark 6:

The New York City Montessori Charter School is generally meeting the indicators under this benchmark. Board meetings are held monthly; and a dashboard provides the board with critical data and information about the school. The board has expanded its capacity by bringing on additional trustees with relevant academic experience. It has developed a rubrics-based evaluation for the principal aligned to the school’s academic performance; In addition, the board performs a self-evaluation at its annual meeting.

Since its initial year there has been substantial change in the composition of the board. Of the original six founding board members, one remains on the board. During the course of this charter term, there was additional transition, with one member leaving and four joining, the current board having nine members. There are three standing committees designated in the school’s by-laws: executive, finance, and education. There is also an ad hoc building and grounds committee. During the board focus group, board members indicated that they would like to increase the board membership to fill out those committees.

Board members are invested in the school and have demonstrated greater awareness and understanding of its charter responsibilities. It has worked closely with the school principal this charter term to implement the school’s programmatic changes. As an example, the board reported that its education committee meets with the principal on a monthly basis. The board has also assumed greater oversight of its fiduciary obligation. It has reprioritized resources and established norms to make finances more predictable, which has led to a balanced budget.

The building and grounds committee is actively working with school leadership to stabilize the long-term viability of the school's facility.

## Benchmark 7: Organizational Capacity

*The school has established a well-functioning organizational structure, clearly delineated roles for staff, management, and board members. The school has systems and protocols that allow for the successful implementation, evaluation, and improvement of its academic program and operations.*

### Finding: Meets

<u>Element</u>	<u>Indicators</u>
<p>1. <i>School Leadership</i></p>	<p>a. The school has an effective school leadership team that obtains staff commitment to a clearly defined mission and set of goals, allowing for continual improvement in student learning.</p> <p>b. Roles and responsibilities for leaders, staff, management, and board members are clearly defined. Members of the school community adhere to defined roles and responsibilities.</p> <p>c. The school has clear and well-established communication systems and decision-making processes in place which ensures effective communication across the school.</p> <p>d. The school successfully recruits, hires, and retains key personnel, and makes decisions – when warranted – to remove ineffective staff members.</p>
<p>2. <i>Professional Climate</i></p>	<p>a. The school is fully staffed with high quality personnel to meet all educational and operational needs, including finance, human resources, and communication.</p> <p>b. The school has established structures for frequent collaboration among teachers.</p> <p>c. The school ensures that staff has requisite skills, expertise, and professional development necessary to meet students’ needs.</p> <p>d. The school has systems to monitor and maintain organizational and instructional quality—which includes a formal process for teacher evaluation geared toward improving instructional practice.</p> <p>e. The school has mechanisms to solicit teacher feedback and gauge teacher satisfaction.</p>
<p>3. <i>Contractual Relationships</i>  <input type="checkbox"/> N/A</p>	<p>a. The board of trustees and school leadership establish effective working relationships with the management company or comprehensive service provider.</p> <p>b. Changes in the school’s charter management or comprehensive service provider contract comply with required charter amendment procedures.</p> <p>c. The school monitors the efficacy of contracted service providers or partners.</p>

### Summative Evidence for Benchmark 7:

#### 1. School Leadership

NYCMCS is generally meeting the indicators under this benchmark. Staff is clear about the organizational structure and understands the roles and responsibilities of all administrative staff. School leadership has stabilized over this charter term under the principal and has rebuilt a leadership team that effectively supports and promotes the mission and vision of the school. The principal reports directly to the board,



and all instructional, non-instructional, and administrative personnel report to the principal. There are three teams in place: school culture, operations, and teaching and learning that are led by assistant principals (AP). Each AP works closely with the principal and each other to ensure operational and fiscal alignment to execute the school's mission and vision. During this charter term they have placed greater emphasis on increasing academic rigor while maintaining the Montessori philosophy across all grades. Due to thee, there has been significant turnover in teaching staff with nine new teachers in 2018-2019.

## **2. Professional Climate**

The principal, in conjunction with the teaching and learning AP, leads the educational program by overseeing its effective implementation. They conduct all observations (formal and informal) of teachers in the school. School leadership ensures that schedules allow for common lesson planning time based on grade bands (kindergarten, Grades 1-2, and Grades 3-5), as well as on subject-based teams.

Professional development is ongoing and provided in whole-group, small-group, and one-on-one coaching. Frequent observations followed by immediate feedback, mostly conducted on a daily basis, determine the areas of coaching and support necessary for teachers. Despite this charter term's staff attrition rate, with 50% of teaching staff returning in 2018-2019, NYCMCS is generally staffed with competent and qualified personnel. In the most resent NYCDOE's School Quality Report, teachers indicate strongly positive survey results in culture awareness and inclusive classroom instruction and principal instructional leadership.

On site, the CSO team observed a supportive school environment. Administrators, staff, families, and the board are committed to the school and which is evidenced by staff, including school leadership, enrolling their own children in the school and more than 10% of students in NYCMCS being siblings.

## **3. Contractual Relationships**

The board and school work effectively with outside community partners providing after-school care, along with academic and emotional social supports to their students and families. The school has policies, systems and procedures in place to effectively monitor the efficacy of contracted service providers or partners.

## Benchmark 8: Mission and Key Design Elements

*The school is faithful to its mission and has implemented the key design elements included in its charter.*

### Finding: Meets

<i>Element</i>	<i>Indicators</i>
1. <i>Mission and Key Design Elements</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. School stakeholders share a common and consistent understanding of the school's mission and key design elements outlined in the charter.</li><li>b. The school has fully implemented the key design elements in the approved charter and in any subsequently approved revisions.</li></ul>

### Summative Evidence for Benchmark 8:

All stakeholders express a shared vision of the school and its mission and key design elements. The board members, leadership, staff, and parents that spoke to the CSO team all expressed a strong commitment to the school.

Classroom observations demonstrated an alignment of practice of the key design elements as outlined in the school's charter. CSO team members observed a strong and positive school culture and instructional practices based on the Montessori principle of a "prepared environment" with large, bright, well-organized classrooms that support individualized and self-guided instruction. Classroom observations demonstrated the majority of students respond well to the flexibility of the Montessori model, which was implemented with greater fidelity in the non-testing grades.

The school continues to refine its approach to incorporating the Montessori philosophy with the NYSLS. School leadership has placed an emphasis on Gradual Release of Responsibility (where students are given more voice and autonomy) and on defining and refining how Montessori Philosophy and Practice is implemented. There is a greater emphasis on rigor and shift in how the Montessori approach is implemented.

### Benchmark 9: Enrollment, Recruitment, and Retention

*The school is meeting or making annual progress toward meeting the enrollment plan outlined in its charter and its enrollment and retention targets for students with disabilities, English language learners, and students who are eligible applicants for the free and reduced priced lunch program; or has demonstrated that it has made extensive good faith efforts to attract, recruit, and retain such students.*

#### Finding: Approaches

<i>Element</i>	<i>Indicators</i>
1. <i>Targets are met</i>	a. The school maintains sufficient enrollment demand for the school to meet or come close to meeting the enrollment plan outlined in the charter.
2. <i>Targets are not met</i>	a. The school is making regular and significant annual progress toward meeting the targets. b. The school has implemented extensive recruitment strategies and program services to attract and retain students with disabilities, English language learners, and students who are eligible for free and reduced priced lunch. Strategies include, but are not limited to: outreach to parents and families in the surrounding communities, widely publicizing the lottery for such school, efforts to academically support these students, and enrollment policy revisions, such as employing a weighted lottery or enrollment preference, to increase the proportion of enrolled students from the three priority populations. c. The school has implemented a systematic process for evaluating recruitment and outreach strategies and program services for each of the three categories of students, and makes strategic improvements as needed.

#### Summative Evidence for Benchmark 9:

NYCMCS has made substantial progress in meeting its enrollment and retention targets since its 2015-2016 renewal when NYCMCS served fewer students in the subgroup populations than its district of location. The school is currently on par with NYC CSD 7 in serving ELLs/MLLs and above the district in serving SWDs; however, NYCMCS continues to serve fewer EDs than NYC CSD 7.

**Table 5: Student Demographics –  
New York City Montessori Charter School Compared to District of Location**

	2016-2017			2017-2018		
	NYC Montessori Charter School	NYC CSD 7	Variance	NYC Montessori Charter School	NYC CSD 7	Variance
Students with Disabilities	28%	26%	+2	32%	27%	+5
ELL/MLL	22%	21%	+1	23%	23%	0
Economically Disadvantaged	90%	97%	-7	88%	96%	-8

**NOTES:**

- (1) Data in the table above represents a comparison between those grades served in the charter school to only those same grades in the district.
- (2) For the students with disabilities and the ELL/MLL subgroups, both current and former members of the subgroups have been combined.

According to NYSED data, in the 2017-2018 school year, 78% of students were retained in New York City Montessori Charter School compared with 92% in the district of location.

## Benchmark 10: Legal Compliance

*The school complies with applicable laws, regulations, and the provisions of its charter.*

### Finding: Meets

<i>Element</i>	<i>Indicators</i>
1. <i>Legal Compliance</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. The school has compiled a record of substantial compliance with applicable state and federal laws and the provisions of its charter including, but not limited to: those related to student admissions and enrollment; FOIL and Open Meetings Law; protecting the rights of students and employees; financial management and oversight; governance and reporting; and health and safety requirements.</li><li>b. The school has undertaken appropriate corrective action when needed, and has implemented necessary safeguards to maintain compliance with all legal requirements.</li><li>c. The school has sought Board of Regents and/or Charter School Office approval for significant revisions.</li></ul>

### Summative Evidence for Benchmark 10:

The school has worked with the NYSED Charter School Office, the NYSED Special Education Office and the NYCDOE to implement processes and procedures to correctly report and bill for students receiving special education services.

The board and school leadership have undertaken appropriate corrective action when needed to comply with legal requirements.

The school has not requested significant revisions to its charter.