



EAST BROOKLYN ASCEND
LOWER SCHOOL

**East Brooklyn Ascend
Charter School**

**2021-22 ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN
PROGRESS REPORT**

Submitted to the SUNY Charter Schools Institute on:

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2021-22 ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN PROGRESS REPORT

Jonathan Masci, Senior Manager of Strategic Initiatives for Ascend Learning, prepared this 2021-22 Accountability Progress Report on behalf of the school's board of trustees:

Trustee's Name	Board Position	
	Office (e.g. chair, treasurer, secretary)	Committees (e.g. finance, executive)
Nadine Sylvester	Co-Chair	Academic
Stanley Taylor	Co-Chair	Hiring, Nominating
Shelly Cleary	Treasurer	Academic, Finance
Emmanuel Fordjour	Secretary	Hiring, Nominating
Janai Jeter	Trustee	Academic, Hiring
Gamal Walker	Trustee	Finance
Jackie Wilson	Trustee	Hiring, Nominating

Katherine Stearns has served as the principal since July 2022.

SCHOOL OVERVIEW

East Brooklyn Ascend Charter School (East Brooklyn Ascend) opened in 2019. We exist to serve every student – to help them embody their inherent excellence by providing rich, joyful learning experiences that unlock a life of boundless choice. Our schools honor, nurture, and challenge the whole child. We foster critical thinking skills and a love of learning through our inquiry-based learning approach, Responsive Classroom model, and anti-racist education. We are deeply committed to advancing educational equity for all of our students. In school year 2021-22 (SY22), East Brooklyn Ascend served students in grades K-2. As of BEDS Day in SY22, East Brooklyn Ascend enrolled 73 students.

East Brooklyn Ascend is located in New York City Community School District 19 (CSD 19). In SY22, 34.7 percent of East Brooklyn Ascend students were eligible for free and reduced-priced lunch, 97.3 percent were black or Latino, and 12 percent were special education students.

ENROLLMENT SUMMARY

School Enrollment by Grade Level and School Year														
School Year	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Total
2019-20	27													27
2020-21	28	20												48
2021-22	24	27	22											73

GOAL 1: ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

Goal 1: English Language Arts

East Brooklyn Ascend Charter School students will meet grade-level expectations in English.

BACKGROUND

East Brooklyn Ascend implements the Ascend Common Core curriculum, which includes the following English Language Arts components:

Fundations, a program for phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension, is used in grades K-2. The program is based on the Wilson Reading System principles, which is supported by multiple studies, including one by Massachusetts’s Lynn Public Schools, of which the student population is composed of 66 percent black or Latino students. The study found that the system expedites grade-level reading improvement among elementary school students who previously struggled to achieve appropriate reading level growth.

Ascend has developed a unique writing program based loosely on the work of Lucy Calkins and The Reading and Writing Project at Columbia University’s Teachers College. Ascend’s writing

curriculum is genre-based and rooted in the belief that students need to write frequently. Grammar is strategically embedded in the units of study so that students learn grammar skills explicitly and then apply them immediately to the writing they do in class. The program requires teachers to provide frequent feedback to small groups of students in writing conferences while other students work independently. Ascend's writing program teaches students that writing is powerful, fun, beautiful, and purposeful.

Interactive Read Aloud sessions with students in grades K-2 occur five times per week. The class gathers on a rug while the teacher reads a carefully selected high-quality text and provides a model of fluent, expressive reading, which helps children recognize the value of reading for pleasure. Read Aloud promotes vocabulary acquisition, models the habits of a skilled reader, and supports deep discussion of texts through "turn and talks." Beginning in SY21, new Read Aloud texts were selected to provide more culturally diverse content, as well as content that pertains to social justice.

Over the next few years, literacy at Ascend will shift towards the Science of Reading, which, supported by years of research, promotes five components of effective reading instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension. In the 2022-23 school year, we will pilot three Science of Reading-aligned programs across our network to judge their efficacy in grades K - 2. East Brooklyn Ascend will pilot the OnYourMark 1:1 tutoring program.

Ascend's Literature Circle program in grades 3 and 4, influenced by a similar program at Success Academy Charter Schools and Icahn Charter Schools, promotes student discussion as teachers help students mine the deepest meaning of fine children's literature and develop the habits of excellent readers, all while building skills in reading comprehension and seminar-style discussion. In Literature Circle, each student has a copy of the text, and students read sections of the text both together and independently. Students are also assigned written work as a component of this literacy block.

One of our goals for upper elementary school students is to increase their knowledge of the world to better prepare them for the rigors of middle school social studies. To this end, in school year 2022-23, Ascend third and fourth graders will engage with a humanities program from the Lavinia Group. Insight Humanities uses a multicultural, project-based curriculum that integrates reading, writing, and social studies. Teachers are provided with everything they need to successfully teach: a comprehensive unit overview, writing exemplars, scripted daily lesson plans, project samples, and booklists. All units are thematically linked to the content focus throughout the year and work backward from inquiry-based essential questions.

Guided Reading is taught in small groups of students who are on the same reading level, as determined by the Fountas and Pinnell (F&P) Benchmark Assessment System. Teachers serve as skilled facilitators, providing explicit teaching and support for reading increasingly challenging texts. These texts are at students' instructional reading level and students read the whole text. In Guided Reading, teaching is responsive to individual student strengths and needs. Each Guided Reading session addresses skill gaps identified through the previous session, whether in the area of decoding, fluency, or comprehension. Data collected from the F&P Benchmark Assessment is used to inform instruction for each Guided Reading lesson. In SY22, Ascend expanded this component to all middle school grades.

In the Shared Text component, implemented in grades 2-8 and modeled after a similar close reading program at Success Academy Charter Schools, the teacher leads students to

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understand and then write about the deeper meaning of a short, complex text. Students then answer Common Core-style comprehension questions. Texts fall into a range of genres including fiction, non-fiction, and poetry. Due to the difficulties of adapting this model to a remote environment, this component was temporarily removed from the middle school curriculum during the pandemic; it resumed in SY22. Middle school students on or above grade level will receive Shared Text instruction for 30 minutes per day, four days per week during targeted intervention blocks; students below grade level will receive Guided Reading instruction (described below) during these blocks.

Ascend has created a powerful culture of response to instructional data (RTI) to support and enhance learning, and will continue to develop and employ a variety of assessments to measure progress towards mastering standards. In addition to New York State exams administered each spring, teachers use benchmark and mock assessments, unit tests, F&P assessments, and other measures of student performance during the course of the year. The Illuminate Data and Assessment (DnA) system allows staff to monitor progress and assess student comprehension, and supports data-driven teacher training and evaluation through access to instant feedback. Teachers and leaders consistently review student work and achievement data and trends, resulting in effective planning for upcoming lessons and timely and purposeful feedback to students.

All Ascend schools participate in Teacher Planning and Development (TPD), a network-wide program aimed at improving teaching and learning and creating a platform for teacher collaboration. Through unit studies, planning and assessment studies, lesson debriefs, teach-backs, and data meetings, TPD meetings represent a critical piece of a professional development program that also includes pre-service training, full professional development days, after-school sessions, and ongoing coaching and modeling.

In SY22, all Ascend schools returned to full in-person instruction. We plan to operate fully in-person in SY23 and succeeding years.

METHOD

To assess student achievement and growth in ELA, Ascend uses F&P Benchmark Assessments. The F&P metric reported is the percentage of students reaching their target F&P level. Our internal F&P goal is that at least 85% of kindergarten students will be at or above their target reading level by the end of the year; for grades 1-4, our goal is to increase the percentage of students at or above the target level by at least 10 percentage points from baseline to round 4.

RESULTS AND EVALUATION

Students meeting grade-level F&P goals

<i>Grade</i>	<i>Round 1</i>	<i>Round 2</i>	<i>Change</i>
K	23%	55%	32 pp
1	50%	54%	4 pp

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2	72%	84%	12 pp
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East Brooklyn Ascend met its F&P goal for grade 2, but not for grades K and 1.

ADDITIONAL CONTEXT AND EVIDENCE

Moving forward in SY 2022-23, we are confident that our strategy to increase student achievement will empower EBACS students to perform well as third graders take the state exams for the first time.

ACTION PLAN

In SY23, Ascend's unified organizational goal is to improve academic achievement for all of our students. Our vision is to see achievement exceed pre-pandemic levels, with gaps closing between our general education students and students in special populations, namely those receiving special education services and our English language learners. To support all students toward increased achievement, we plan a multi-prong strategy focused on instructional management by leaders, intellectual preparation by teachers, people management and accountability, strong hiring, effectively leveraging time on task, and family-school partnerships. To strengthen instructional management across the network, Ascend offered a robust leader institute training series in summer 2022, and will offer ongoing professional development throughout school year 2022-23. Our parallel summer teacher institute furthers the intellectual preparation of Ascend teachers, as will our implementation of outside curricula in select grades and subjects, including three pilots of Science of Reading-based literacy programs.

GOAL 2: MATHEMATICS

Goal 2: Mathematics

East Brooklyn Ascend Charter School students will meet grade level expectations in math.

BACKGROUND

East Brooklyn Ascend implements the Ascend Common Core curriculum. The curriculum includes the following mathematics components, which feature Cognitively Guided Instruction (CGI).

In grades K-4, our math program is built on the Launch, Explore, Discuss (LED) model, an inquiry-driven lesson structure that leads students to learn by questioning and discovering. In this approach, students build enduring conceptual understanding and problem-solving skills by progressing through three stages of learning: concrete (using manipulatives), pictorial (using visual representations and models), and abstract (using equations).

In Number Stories, also deployed in grades K-4 and founded on the tenets of CGI, students spend an entire period studying a single, Common Core-style story-problem that they might encounter in the real world. Students construct their own solutions, defend their thinking, and compare their approaches. The routines that open each Number Stories lesson (approximately

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10 minutes per day) also reinforce fluency; students practice math routines to build automaticity in computation.

In math in grades K-8, semi-weekly quizzes assess current content as well as a pre-selected, previously explored (spiraled) standard to constantly appraise knowledge gaps on major cluster standards. Teacher teams study these data points weekly and use them to plan for Response to Data (RTD) instructional periods.

Ascend has created a powerful culture of response to instructional data (RTI) to support and enhance learning, and will continue to develop and employ a variety of assessments to measure progress towards mastering standards. In addition to New York State exams administered each spring, teachers use benchmark and mock assessments, unit tests, F&P assessments, and other measures of student achievement during the course of the year. The Illuminate Data and Assessment (DnA) system allows staff to monitor progress and assess student comprehension, and supports data-driven teacher training and evaluation through access to instant feedback. Teachers and leaders consistently review student work and achievement data and trends, resulting in effective planning for upcoming lessons and timely and purposeful feedback to students.

All Ascend schools participate in Teacher Planning and Development (TPD), a network-wide program aimed at improving teaching and learning and creating a platform for teacher collaboration. Through unit studies, planning and assessment studies, lesson debriefs, teach-backs, and data meetings, TPD meetings represent a critical piece of a professional development program that also includes pre-service training, full professional development days, after-school sessions, and ongoing coaching and modeling.

In SY22, all Ascend schools returned to full in-person instruction. We plan to operate fully in-person in SY23 and succeeding years.

METHOD

To assess student achievement and growth in math, Ascend uses internal curriculum-based assessments. The metric reported is the percentage of students achieving mastery, or scoring at least 80% correct.

RESULTS AND EVALUATION

Students achieving mastery (80% or above) on unit tests

<i>Grade</i>	First Unit Test	Final Unit Test	<i>Change</i>
K	68%	82%	14 pp
1	50%	71%	21 pp
2	18%	75%	57 pp

In every grade, the percentage of students achieving mastery increased significantly over the course of the year; each grade's mastery rate increased by at least 10 percentage points.

ADDITIONAL CONTEXT AND EVIDENCE

School year 2021-22 was the first year in which Ascend began analyzing the percentage of students achieving mastery (80% correct) as opposed to proficiency (75% correct). This change reflects our commitment to promoting high standards of student achievement.

ACTION PLAN

In SY23, Ascend's unified organizational goal is to improve academic achievement for all of our students. Our vision is to see achievement exceed pre-pandemic levels, with gaps closing between our general education students and students in special populations, namely those receiving special education services and our English language learners. To support all students toward increased achievement, we plan a multi-prong strategy focused on instructional management by leaders, intellectual preparation by teachers, people management and accountability, strong hiring, effectively leveraging time on task, and family-school partnerships. To strengthen instructional management across the network, Ascend offered a robust leader institute training series in summer 2022, and will offer ongoing professional development throughout school year 2022-23. Our parallel summer teacher institute furthers the intellectual preparation of Ascend teachers, as will our implementation of outside curricula in select grades and subjects.

GOAL 3: SCIENCE

Goal 3: Science

East Brooklyn Ascend Charter School students will meet grade level expectations in science.

BACKGROUND

East Brooklyn Ascend implements the Ascend Common Core curriculum, which includes the following science components.

K-8 science units are designed based on the criteria set forth in the New York State P-12 Science Standards and according to the implementation timeline. The curriculum follows a multiyear sequence that helps students develop increasingly sophisticated practices and ideas across grades K-8 and beyond, with a focus on the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) Science and Engineering Practices (SEPs) and Crosscutting Concepts (CCs).

Designed to engage scholars in inquiry-based tasks that promote a deep conceptual understanding of grade-level standards, science instruction also follows the Launch, Explore, Discuss (LED) model. Data-driven planning enables teachers to tailor instruction to meet the individual needs of students. As students engage with scientific phenomena from kindergarten on, they develop agency as lifelong scientific thinkers.

To harness the power of students' curiosity about the world around them, Ascend's program provides students a range of relevant learning experiences as they engage with scientific phenomena. Examples include inquiry and investigation, evidence-based argument, and application of skills and knowledge in unit projects. Units may also include reading informational

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texts critically and leveraging scientific knowledge and skills to take action on issues of social justice.

Ascend has created a powerful culture of response to instructional data (RTI) to support and enhance learning, and will continue to develop and employ a variety of assessments to measure progress towards mastering standards. In addition to New York State exams administered each spring, teachers use benchmark and mock assessments, unit tests, and other measures of student performance during the course of the year. The Illuminate Data and Assessment (DnA) system allows staff to monitor progress and assess student comprehension, and supports data-driven teacher training and evaluation through access to instant feedback. Teachers and leaders consistently review student work and achievement data and trends, resulting in effective planning for upcoming lessons and timely and purposeful feedback to students.

All Ascend schools participate in Teacher Planning and Development (TPD), a network-wide program aimed at improving teaching and learning and creating a platform for teacher collaboration. Through unit studies, planning and assessment studies, lesson debriefs, teach-backs, and data meetings, TPD meetings represent a critical piece of a professional development program that also includes pre-service training, full professional development days, after-school sessions, and ongoing coaching and modeling.

In SY22, all Ascend schools returned to full in-person instruction. We plan to operate fully in-person in SY23 and succeeding years.

METHOD

To assess student achievement and growth in science, Ascend used the metric of course assessment performance. Ascend science courses are aligned to New York State science standards, as well as the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), and employ rigorous instructional methods.

RESULTS AND EVALUATION

	K	1	2
% Mastery	36%	29%	21%

ADDITIONAL CONTEXT AND EVIDENCE

Moving forward in SY 2022-23, we are confident that our strategy to increase student achievement will empower EBACS students to perform well as third graders take the state exams for the first time.

ACTION PLAN

In SY23, Ascend's unified organizational goal is to improve academic achievement for all of our students. Our vision is to see achievement exceed pre-pandemic levels, with gaps closing between our general education students and students in special populations, namely those receiving special education services and our English language learners. To support all students toward increased achievement, we plan a multi-prong strategy focused on instructional

management by leaders, intellectual preparation by teachers, people management and accountability, strong hiring, effectively leveraging time on task, and family-school partnerships. To strengthen instructional management across the network, Ascend offered a robust leader institute training series in summer 2022, and will offer ongoing professional development throughout school year 2022-23. Our parallel summer teacher institute furthers the intellectual preparation of Ascend teachers, as will our implementation of outside curricula in select grades and subjects.

GOAL 4: ESSA

Due to COVID-19 and the subsequent changes to the state’s testing, accountability, and federal reporting requirements, the 2021-22 school accountability statuses are the same as those assigned for the 2020-21 school year. Assigned accountability designations and further context can be found [here](#).

Goal 4: ESSA

East Brooklyn Ascend will remain in good standing according to the state’s ESSA accountability system.

Goal 4: Absolute Measure

Under the state’s ESSA accountability system, the school is in good standing: the state has not identified the school for comprehensive or targeted improvement.

METHOD

Because *all* students are expected to meet the state's performance standards, the federal statute stipulates that various sub-populations and demographic categories of students among all tested students must meet the state standard in and of themselves aside from the overall school results. As New York State, like all states, is required to establish a specific system for making these determinations for its public schools, charter schools do not have latitude in establishing their own performance levels or criteria of success for meeting the ESSA accountability requirements. Each year, the state issues School Report Cards that indicate a school’s status under the state accountability system.

RESULTS AND EVALUATION

This measure cannot be assessed as East Brooklyn Ascend has never been assigned an ESSA accountability status. East Brooklyn Ascend opened in fall 2019 and thus was not assigned an accountability status for the 2018-19, 2019-20, or 2020-21 school years. Since 2021-22 accountability statuses for all schools are the same as those assigned in 2020-21, East Brooklyn Ascend likewise does not have an accountability status for the 2021-22 school year.

ADDITIONAL EVIDENCE

N/A

Accountability Status by Year

Year	Status
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2019-20	N/A
2020-21	N/A
2021-22	N/A