



**Cypress Hills Ascend
Charter School**

**2018-19 ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN
PROGRESS REPORT**

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By Dylan Schaffer

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2018-19 ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN PROGRESS REPORT

Dylan Schaffer, planning and external affairs manager for Ascend Learning, prepared this 2018-19 Accountability Progress Report on behalf of the school's board of trustees:

Trustee's Name	Board Position
Stephanie Mauterstock	Chair
Shelly Cleary	Treasurer
Christine Schlendorf	Secretary
Kwaku Andoh	Trustee
Amanda Craft	Trustee
Glenn Hopps	Trustee
Kathleen Quirk	Trustee
Nadine Sylvester	Trustee
Oral Walcott	Trustee

Lissette Roman has served as the school director since July 2018.

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The mission of all Ascend schools is to equip our students with the knowledge, confidence, and character to succeed in college and beyond. By offering a rich liberal arts education in a supportive environment, we animate children's natural sense of curiosity and prepare students to think on their own, thrive on their own, and engage the world as informed, responsible citizens.

At Ascend, our mission is to provide an extraordinary education to the children of Brooklyn, placing them firmly on a path to success in college and beyond. Our model focuses on developing in our students critical thinking skills and a sense of agency and independence. Ascend's value proposition rests on three pillars.

1. A rich and rigorous liberal arts curriculum that drives student achievement
2. A warm, joyful school culture built on Responsive Classroom and, in the high school, a restorative practices model, both of which foster student independence and agency
3. A commitment to operate truly public schools

Cypress Hills Ascend opened in September 2018 and will grow to serve students in grades K-12. Cypress Hills Ascend is located in Community School District 19 in Brooklyn. In school year (SY) 2018-19, 89 percent of students were eligible for free and reduced-priced lunch, 91 percent were black or Latino, 11 percent were special education students, and 16 percent were English language learners.

School Enrollment by Grade Level and School Year

School Year	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Total
2018-19	66	53												119

GOAL 1: ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

Goal 1: English Language Arts

Cypress Hills Ascend Charter School students will meet grade level expectations in English language arts.

BACKGROUND

Cypress Hills Ascend implements the Ascend Common Core curriculum. In SY 2018-19, the components of the English language arts program at Cypress Hills Ascend included:

- *Phonics* (kindergarten through grade 2). *Foundations* is a phonological/phonemic awareness, phonics, and spelling program for the general education classroom. *Foundations* is based upon the Wilson Reading System principles and serves as a prevention program to help reduce reading and spelling failure.

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The Ascend teacher will deliver one 30-minute *Foundations* whole-class lesson each day. *Foundations* lessons focus on carefully sequenced skills that include print knowledge, alphabet awareness, phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, decoding, vocabulary, fluency, and spelling. Critical thinking, speaking, and listening skills are practiced during story-time activities. Furthermore, targeted small group intervention is available for struggling students.¹

- Read Aloud sessions with students in grades K-2 occur daily through the first term of grade 2 with the class gathered 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 excellent texts through strategic “turn and talks.”
- *Writing* (kindergarten through grade 4). Students will study writing—which also includes grammar instruction—for 45 minutes four times per week from kindergarten through the grade 2, then three times per week in grades 3 and 4. 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 Teacher’s College. Ascend’s writing curriculum is genre-based and rooted in the belief that students need to write frequently and produce a high volume of writing. 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.
- *Guided Reading* (kindergarten through grade 4). Guided Reading, taught in small, leveled groups, has been at the center of the schools’ ELA program since 2010; it is deployed five times per week, for 60 minutes in grades K-2 and 45 minutes in grades 3-4. During Guided Reading period, students are divided into leveled groups of six to eight students. Homogeneous groups—defined by students’ reading level or specific skill deficits—meet with teachers who guide the students through reading a text of the appropriate level; when not meeting with a teacher, students read independently. Teachers will continue to use the Ascend Guided Reading lesson plan templates and existing lesson plans that have been developed over the last three years. The schools carefully track each student’s individual reading progress through use of the STEP assessments, developed by the University of Chicago; STEP, or Strategic Teaching and Evaluation of Progress, is an acclaimed system designed to help students from Pre-K to third grade learn to read.

In class libraries, books are organized by level and by subject, so that teachers can match students quickly to books appropriate to their STEP level and emerging curiosities.

¹ This text has been adapted from the publisher’s description at <http://www.foundations.com>.

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- Other components of the Ascend English language arts curriculum, including *Literature Circle*, *Shared Text*, and *Humanities* are not delivered to students in grades K-1.

METHOD

Cypress Hills Ascend administered the NWEA-MAP assessments, a computer adaptive standardized test that measures a student's abilities in the areas of reading and mathematics, and grades them in each of these areas compared to other students nationwide of the same grade level, providing a percentile rank for our students. The assessments were administered twice to all students, once in the fall, and again in the spring.

RESULTS AND EVALUATION

Cypress Hills Ascend students did not meet our expectations for their performance on the NWEA-MAP assessments. Students in grades K-1 achieved a median national percentile rank (mNPR) of 33 on the fall administration of the assessment; their mNPR increased slightly to 35 at the spring administration. Though the mNPR of kindergarten students decreased slightly from fall to spring (from 35 to 32), the mNPR of first grade students increased markedly, from 25 to 35.

Grade	Median national percentile rank (mNPR), fall 2018	Median national percentile rank (mNPR), spring 2019	Change, fall 2018 to spring 2019
K	35	32	-3
1	25	35	+10
Overall	33	35	+2

ADDITIONAL EVIDENCE

Ascend also measured students' median conditional growth percentiles (mCGP). This metric measures how typical (based on national norms) a student's growth in spring based on their starting point in fall, with a CGP of 50 indicating an exactly typical amount of growth given a students' starting point. Students at Cypress Hills Ascend grew slightly less than is typical from fall 2018 to spring 2019 in reading, with an overall mCGP of 47. While students in kindergarten grew less than expected, with a mCGP of 40, first grade students grew more than is typical, with an mCGP of 53.

ACTION PLAN

Cypress Hills Ascend will continue to improve its ELA program with targeted adjustments and interventions. Network-wide, Ascend will focus in SY 2019-20 on improving reading instruction in grades K-2, in order to ensure students are armed with the foundational reading skills necessary to succeed in the upper grades. As part of this initiative, Ascend's curriculum and instruction team (CIT) will focus its supports to the schools on phonics instruction and will continue to promote high-quality guided reading instruction. Additionally, the school will set incremental targets for phonics unit tests to ensure the school meets its end-of-year goal. School directors and network leaders will

devote time to observing guided reading and phonics lessons on network-wide implementation visits, and will provide feedback and targeted interventions to the schools based on the results of these observations. Finally, schools have shifted from STEP assessments to F&P assessments in reading in order to improve the way reading assessment data leads to teacher-led instructional adjustments and interventions. Schools will establish new end-of-year reading targets for F&P assessments after the first round of the assessment is administered in late September.

We are confident that these actions will lead to improved ELA instruction across the schools, particularly in grades K-2, which will in turn fuel stronger student achievement on NWEA-MAP assessments at Cypress Hills Ascend.

GOAL 2: MATHEMATICS

Goal 2: Mathematics

Cypress Hills Ascend Charter School students will meet grade level expectations in mathematics.

BACKGROUND

Cypress Hills Ascend implements the Ascend Common Core curriculum. In SY 2018-19, the components of the mathematics program at Cypress Hills Ascend included:

- *Math Workshop.* Our math program is built on the Launch, Explore, Discuss (LED) model, deployed in Math Workshop during a 45-minute period Monday through Friday. In the LED approach, students build enduring conceptual understanding and problem-solving skills by progressing through three stages of learning: concrete (manipulatives), pictorial (visual representations and models), and abstract (equations).
- *Number Stories.* In Number Stories, an Ascend-developed program deployed during a 45-minute period Monday through Thursday, students spend an entire period studying a single Common Core-style math problem, constructing their own solutions, defending their thinking, and comparing their approaches. When they see the approaches other scholars devise, they learn that there isn't one "right" way to solve a problem. When they then grasp the logic that bridges the several approaches, they deepen their understanding of essential concepts—and behold math's beauty.

In preparing for Number Stories lessons, teachers anticipate methods of varying sophistication that students will use to solve the problem. Teachers track the levels of individual students and facilitate the advancement of each student to the next level.

Taught using Cognitively Guided Instruction (CGI), Number Stories was launched throughout the Ascend network in spring 2014

- *Math fluency.* For approximately 10 minutes a day during the math period(s), students will practice math routines to build automaticity and fluency in computation.

METHOD

Cypress Hills Ascend administered the NWEA-MAP assessments, a computer adaptive standardized test that measures a student's abilities in the areas of reading and mathematics, and grades them in each of these areas compared to other students nationwide of the same grade level, providing a percentile rank for our students. The assessments were administered twice to all students, once in the fall, and again in the spring.

RESULTS AND EVALUATION

Cypress Hills Ascend students did not meet our expectations for their performance on the NWEA-MAP assessments in math, though we are encouraged by students' progress from fall to spring. Students in grades K-1 achieved a median national percentile rank (mNPR) of 33 on the fall administration of the assessment; their mNPR increased to 40 at the spring administration. The mNPR of kindergarten students increased from fall to spring (from 37 to 43), and the mNPR of first grade students increased markedly, from 27 to 39.

Grade	Median national percentile rank (mNPR), fall 2018	Median national percentile rank (mNPR), spring 2019	Change, fall 2018 to spring 2019
K	37	43	+6
1	27	39	+12
Overall	33	40	+6

ADDITIONAL EVIDENCE

Ascend also measured students' median conditional growth percentiles (mCGP). This metric measures how typical (based on national norms) a student's growth in spring based on their starting point in fall, with a CGP of 50 indicating an exactly typical amount of growth given a students' starting point. Students at Cypress Hills Ascend grew slightly more than is typical from fall 2018 to spring 2019 in math, with an overall mCGP of 53. While students in kindergarten grew slightly less than expected, with a mCGP of 45, first grade students grew significantly more than is typical, with an mCGP of 71.

ACTION PLAN

We are confident in the strength of Ascend's math program to increase student performance in math as they progress through the grades, and we will continue to improve the program with targeted adjustments and interventions. Ascend will continue in SY 2019-20 its network-wide focus on continuously monitoring and responding to student work, tracking student progress towards objectives during math lessons and effectively adjusting instruction to meet the learning needs of all students.

GOAL 3: SCIENCE

Goal 3: Science

Cypress Hills Ascend Charter School Students will meet grade level expectations in science.

BACKGROUND

Cypress Hills Ascend implements the Ascend Common Core curriculum. In SY 2018-19, Ascend's original inquiry-based science program derives from the MacMillan/McGraw-Hill's *A Closer Look* science program, which was selected for its strong Common Core alignment, integration of rich content with well-conceived inquiry experiments, and vibrant, engaging textbooks. The program's goal is to provide all students with a solid foundation in science literacy. Students develop their ability to observe, describe, compare, inquire, and evaluate while studying the "big ideas" and essential core concepts of science. The program was developed to meet the requirements and expectations established in both the National Science Education Standards and in the Benchmarks for Science Literacy. Each grade level contains two complete units on Life Science, Earth Science, and Physical Science.

METHOD

Throughout the school year, students are administered interim assessment tasks that help teachers gauge student progress. Kindergarten students were administered three assessments in SY 2018-19, while grade 1 students were administered 12 assessments.

RESULTS AND EVALUATION

Kindergarten and grade 1 students performed well on science assessments administered throughout the school year. Eighty-five percent of students in kindergarten passed the first two assessments and 86 percent passed the third, for an average of 85.3 percent passing. In first grade, an average of 78 percent of students passed each assessment, with performance on individual assessments ranging from 50 percent passing to 99 percent passing.

ACTION PLAN

We are confident in the strength of Ascend's science program to increase student performance in math as they progress through the grades, and we will continue to improve the program with targeted adjustments and interventions. Ascend will continue in SY 2019-20 its network-wide focus on continuously monitoring and responding to student work, tracking student progress towards objectives during science lessons and effectively adjusting instruction to meet the learning needs of all students.

GOAL 4: ESSA

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Cypress Hills Ascend will remain in good standing.

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 is not applicable.

ADDITIONAL EVIDENCE

This measure is not applicable.

Accountability Status by Year

Year	Status
2016-17	n/a
2017-18	n/a
2018-19	n/a

