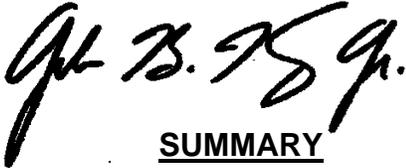




**TO:** P-12 Education Committee  
**FROM:** Ken Slentz   
**SUBJECT:** Charter Schools: Initial Applications and Charters  
Authorized by the Board of Regents  
**DATE:** December 13, 2013

**AUTHORIZATION(S):**   
SUMMARY

### **Issue for Decision**

The Commissioner and Department staff recommend that the Board of Regents consider, approve and issue initial charters and provisional charters for the following eight new charter schools:

#### **New York City School District**

- American Dream Charter School (proposed to locate in CSD 7)
- Brooklyn Laboratory Charter School (proposed to locate in CSD 13)
- Charter High School for Law and Social Justice (proposed to locate in CSD 8)
- Collegiate Academy for Mathematics and Personal Awareness Charter School (CAMPA) (proposed to locate in CSD 19)
- Compass Charter School (proposed to locate in CSD 13 or 17)
- South Bronx Early College Academy Charter School (proposed to locate in CSD 7)

#### **Rochester City School District**

- Renaissance Academy Charter School of the Arts
- Vertus Charter School

### **Reason(s) for Consideration**

Required by State statute, Article 56, the NYS Charter Schools Act.

### **Proposed Handling**

This item will come before the P-12 Education Committee and the Full Board for action at the December 2013 meeting.

## **Background Information**

The Commissioner and Department staff recommends that the Board of Regents issue the initial charters and provisional charters for the above listed eight new charter schools.

Together, these new schools will add approximately 3,580 high quality public K-12 seats for families in New York State. The schools represent a range of innovative educational and organizational approaches to improving learning outcomes and college and career readiness for students, with a strong focus on the needs of students who may be educationally or economically disadvantaged, English language learners or students with disabilities. Three schools will serve students in middle and high school grades, two will be high schools one will be a middle school and two will be elementary schools. Additional details about the eight proposed charter schools and how Department staff reviewed the applications is included in the attached *Summary, Findings and Recommendation* for each proposed school (Attachment A). The Full Applications for each school are posted at: <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/psc/startcharter.html>.

Chapter 101 of the Laws of 2010 increased the cap on the number of charters that can be issued in New York State, from 200 to 460. The statute also designates the Board of Regents and the Board of Trustees of the State University of New York (SUNY) as the authorizers for the additional 260 charters (130 charters to be issued by each, with no more than 57 in New York City) and requires that the two chartering entities create competitive Request for Proposal (RFP) processes for applications for the additional 260 charters. The statute dictated the timetable for the RFPs that were issued in 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013 and leaves to the discretion of the two Boards when subsequent years' RFPs will be issued.

The Board of Regents application and review process is designed to award charters to applicants that demonstrate the greatest probability of creating high quality public schools. The Department revised the charter school application process in the summer of 2010 to align with the criteria that is outlined in Chapter 101 of the Laws of 2010. The Regents approved and issued charters to seven new charter schools in 2010; to nine new charter schools in 2011 and to thirteen new charter schools in 2012.

The application and review process consists of multiple phases in which applicants are invited to advance on the basis of the successful evaluation of each submission. The steps in the review process include:

- Submission and review of a Letter of Intent providing a brief description of the school mission and design; the proposed student population (including plans to meet enrollment and retention goals for target populations); initial evidence of community outreach efforts and community support; a proposed location and/or proposed facility; information about the founding group and anticipated members of the initial board of trustees. During 2013, a total of 99 letters of intent were submitted over two rounds (February and September). Of the 99 Letters received, 60 applicants were invited to submit full applications.

- Submission and review of a written Full Application providing the full design of the proposed school, including instructional model and approach, targeted student population, organizational structure and financial plan. The Full Application is structured to objectively evaluate the proposed school's educational alignment and operational compliance to the requirements and educational priorities of the Charter School Act. Fifty five applications were submitted and reviewed in 2013. Each accepted application was rigorously evaluated by a four-member expert panel, each of which included qualified consultants, volunteer peer reviewers who are current active educators in public schools or universities, and experienced Department staff.
- Review of public comment provided through formal public hearings (required to be conducted by the school district of location for the proposed school) and through direct oral and written communication with the Director of the Charter School Office.
- Capacity interviews with founding groups to discuss application details and to evaluate the skill and knowledge of the initial board of trustees to launch and operate the proposed school. The Department conducted capacity interviews with fifteen applicant groups (representing nineteen proposed schools) in 2013.
- Recommendations are made the Board of Regents by the Commissioner to award new charters to applicant groups with the strongest plan and presentation to launch and operate a highly effective public school. These recommendations are based on a synthesis of information gathered throughout all stages of the process. After full evaluation of the information provide through capacity interviews and public comments, staff recommends nine new school applications for consideration by the Regents. The Department found that the remaining 2013 applications were fundamentally lacking in the presentation of a complete, comprehensive and viable school design plan or capacity to implement that plan. Department staff informed applicants of the option to withdraw the applications and consider resubmitting in future RFP rounds and all but three applicants did so.

The three applications which are not being recommended for approval, and that were not withdrawn, are for the New Generation of Scholars Charter School, the Renaissance Charter School of Oswego and the Rockland Academy of Excellence Charter School. These applications are not being recommended for approval by the Board of Regents because they did not meet the criteria established in Article 56 of the Education Law and/or did not meet some or all of the essential competencies identified in the RFP process. Additional information about these three applications and the review of the applications is included in the attached Summaries of Findings and Recommendations (Attachment B).

An up-to-date summary of the RFP application cycles conducted by the Department on behalf of the Regents, the number of charters issued during each cycle, and the number of charters remaining to be issued is presented below:

| RFP Cycle    | Letters of Intent Submitted | Full Applications Submitted   | Charters issued (# in NYC) | Charters remaining to be issued under cap (# in NYC) |
|--------------|-----------------------------|---|----------------------------|--|
| 2010         | 39                          | 35 prospectuses were submitted; 16 applicants were invited to submit full applications;<br><b>15 full applications were submitted</b> | 7 (5)                      | 123 (52)   |
| 2011         | 100                         | 80 prospectuses were submitted; 37 applicants were invited to submit full applications;<br><b>36 full applications were submitted</b> | 9 (7)                      | 114 (45)   |
| 2012 Round 1 | 30                          | 20 applicants were invited to submit full applications;<br><b>14 full applications were submitted</b>                                 | 3 (3)                      | 111 (42)   |
| 2012 Round 2 | 54                          | 37 applicants were invited to submit full applications;<br><b>25 full applications were submitted</b>                                 | 10 (8)                     | 101 (34)   |
| 2013         | 99                          | 60 applicants were invited to submit full applications;<br><b>55 full applications were submitted</b>                                 | 8 (6)                      | 93 (28)  |

### Recommendation

VOTED: That the Regents find that the proposed charter school: (1) meets the requirements set out in Article 56 of the Education Law, and all other applicable laws, rules and regulations; (2) will operate in an educationally and fiscally sound manner; (3) is likely to improve student learning and achievement and materially further the purposes set out in subdivision two of section twenty-eight hundred fifty of Article 56 of the Education Law; and (4) will have a significant educational benefit to the students expected to attend the charter school, and the Board of Regents therefore approves and issues a charter and provisional charter to the **American Dream Charter School** for a term of five years in accordance with §2851(2)(p) of the Education Law.

VOTED: That the Regents find that the proposed charter school: (1) meets the requirements set out in Article 56 of the Education Law, and all other applicable laws, rules and regulations; (2) will operate in an educationally and fiscally sound manner; (3) is likely to improve student learning and achievement and materially further the purposes set out in subdivision two of section twenty-eight hundred fifty of Article 56 of the Education Law; and (4) will have a significant educational benefit to the students expected to attend the charter school, and the Board of Regents therefore approves and

issues a charter and provisional charter to the **Brooklyn Laboratory Charter School** for a term of five years in accordance with §2851(2)(p) of the Education Law.

VOTED: That the Regents find that the proposed charter school: (1) meets the requirements set out in Article 56 of the Education Law, and all other applicable laws, rules and regulations; (2) will operate in an educationally and fiscally sound manner; (3) is likely to improve student learning and achievement and materially further the purposes set out in subdivision two of section twenty-eight hundred fifty of Article 56 of the Education Law; and (4) will have a significant educational benefit to the students expected to attend the charter school, and the Board of Regents therefore approves and issues a charter and provisional charter to **The Charter High School for Law and Social Justice** for a term of five years in accordance with §2851(2)(p) of the Education Law.

VOTED: That the Regents find that the proposed charter school: (1) meets the requirements set out in Article 56 of the Education Law, and all other applicable laws, rules and regulations; (2) will operate in an educationally and fiscally sound manner; (3) is likely to improve student learning and achievement and materially further the purposes set out in subdivision two of section twenty-eight hundred fifty of Article 56 of the Education Law; and (4) will have a significant educational benefit to the students expected to attend the charter school, and the Board of Regents therefore approves and issues a charter and provisional charter to the **Collegiate Academy for Mathematics and Personal Awareness Charter School (CAMPA)** for a term of five years in accordance with §2851(2)(p) of the Education Law.

VOTED: That the Regents find that the proposed charter school: (1) meets the requirements set out in Article 56 of the Education Law, and all other applicable laws, rules and regulations; (2) will operate in an educationally and fiscally sound manner; (3) is likely to improve student learning and achievement and materially further the purposes set out in subdivision two of section twenty-eight hundred fifty of Article 56 of the Education Law; and (4) will have a significant educational benefit to the students expected to attend the charter school, and the Board of Regents therefore approves and issues a charter and provisional charter to the **Compass Charter School** for a term of five years in accordance with §2851(2)(p) of the Education Law.

VOTED: That the Regents find that the proposed charter school: (1) meets the requirements set out in Article 56 of the Education Law, and all other applicable laws, rules and regulations; (2) will operate in an educationally and fiscally sound manner; (3) is likely to improve student learning and achievement and materially further the purposes set out in subdivision two of section twenty-eight hundred fifty of Article 56 of the Education Law; and (4) will have a significant educational benefit to the students expected to attend the charter school, and the Board of Regents therefore approves and issues a charter and provisional charter to the **Renaissance Academy Charter School of the Arts** for a term of five years in accordance with §2851(2)(p) of the Education Law.

VOTED: That the Regents find that the proposed charter school: (1) meets the requirements set out in Article 56 of the Education Law, and all other applicable laws, rules and regulations; (2) will operate in an educationally and fiscally sound manner; (3) is likely to improve student learning and achievement and materially further the purposes

set out in subdivision two of section twenty-eight hundred fifty of Article 56 of the Education Law; and (4) will have a significant educational benefit to the students expected to attend the charter school, and the Board of Regents therefore approves and issues a charter and provisional charter to the **South Bronx Early College Academy Charter School** for a term of five years in accordance with §2851(2)(p) of the Education Law.

VOTED: That the Regents find that the proposed charter school: (1) meets the requirements set out in Article 56 of the Education Law, and all other applicable laws, rules and regulations; (2) will operate in an educationally and fiscally sound manner; (3) is likely to improve student learning and achievement and materially further the purposes set out in subdivision two of section twenty-eight hundred fifty of Article 56 of the Education Law; and (4) will have a significant educational benefit to the students expected to attend the charter school, and the Board of Regents therefore approves and issues a charter and provisional charter to the **Vertus Charter School** for a term of five years in accordance with §2851(2)(p) of the Education Law.

VOTED: That, because the Regents have not made the findings required by Article 56 of the Education Law for the approval of an application for a charter school with regard to the **New Generation of Scholars Charter School**, the Regents do not approve the application for this proposed charter school.

VOTED: That, because the Regents have not made the findings required by Article 56 of the Education Law for the approval of an application for a charter school with regard to the **Renaissance Charter School of Oswego**, the Regents do not approve the application for this proposed charter school.

VOTED: That, because the Regents have not made the findings required by Article 56 of the Education Law for the approval of an application for a charter school with regard to the **Rockland Academy of Excellence Charter School**, the Regents do not approve the application for this proposed charter school.

### **Timetable for Implementation**

The Regents action is effective immediately.

Attachments



# New York State Education Department Charter School Office

## **Charter School Application Summary, Findings, and Recommendation**

Application in response to the  
New York State Education Department 2013 Request for Proposals to  
Establish Charter Schools Authorized by the Board of Regents  
To establish the proposed:

**American Dream Charter School**

December 2013

**Table 1: Summary of the Proposed American Dream Charter School**

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Name of Charter School                                  | American Dream Charter School   |
| Lead Applicant(s)                                       | Melissa Melkonian   |
| District of Location                                    | Bronx CSD 7   |
| Opening Date  | August 2014   |
| Projected Charter Term                                  | December 17, 2013 – June 30, 2019   |
| Management Company                                      | None  |
| Partners  | None  |
| Facility  | Approved for co-location in Building X030, 510 E. 141 <sup>st</sup> Street, Bronx.<br>Contingency plan identifies a viable private space option.  |
| Projected Enrollment and Grade Span during Charter Term | <b>Public Space (co-location):</b> School will open with 100 students in Grade 6 growing to a maximum of 300 students in Grades 6 through 8.<br><b>Private Space:</b> School will open with 120 students in Grade 6 growing to a maximum of 360 students in Grades 6 through 8. |
| Planned Grade Span (beyond Initial Charter Term)        | The applicant’s vision is to expand the school to serve Grades 6 through 12   |
| Mission Statement                                       | <i>“American Dream Charter School develops academic excellence in both Spanish and English, preparing students to excel in college and become leaders in their communities.”</i>  |

The founders of American Dream Charter School will cultivate an environment that is welcoming and encouraging for English language learners (ELL) and immigrant students, where learning and language development experience is supported. The model of instruction is designed to help students to achieve academic success in two languages and is based on existing models that support both home language and new language acquisition. The School intends to graduate students who are bilingual and biliterate in English and Spanish.

**Key Design Elements**

- **Dual Language Program:** Students who are native speakers and English language learners will be placed in advisories together to allow for students to serve as language models for each other, giving each group of students an opportunity to show mastery in

their native language as well as develop their second language. Students will receive an hour and twenty minutes of English language arts as well as an hour and twenty minutes of Spanish language arts daily.

- **Project and Experiential Based Learning:** “I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand.”(Confucius). The School will focus explicitly on providing students the opportunity to build critical thinking skills through real world experience, which will be achieved through two curricular components: field study and project-based learning (PBL)
- **Culturally Responsive Instruction:** The cultural experiences of community members will be a driving force of the School’s curriculum and instruction. The cultural considerations will not be limited to native language instruction and will be infused into an environment that resembles that of a “village,” where students, teachers, families, and the community will be active participants in the academic life of the School.
- **Data Driven Instruction and Assessment:** Students will be assessed regularly and meaningfully, using formative assessment tools and informal observation, so teachers will be able to accurately drive instruction. At the end of every six weeks of formal units, students will be assessed in math and reading in both English and Spanish.
- **Teacher Development and Support:** Teachers will work in a collective group of four, plus one ELL Specialist and one Learning Specialist per grade. The specialists support the teachers by providing the structure for teachers to reflect and think critically about improving their instructional methodologies and delivery through lesson study. Teachers will participate in self-reflection and consider moments of success and difficulty to inform future instruction.

American Dream Charter School will implement the following three schedule design features to support the program:

1. **June Mini-mester:** This will be an accelerated two week course geared to help students make gains in English proficiency.
2. **DREAM Advisory:** American Dream Charter School will establish an advisory program as the centerpiece of school culture. DREAM stands for Diversity, Respect, Empowerment, Advocacy and Motivation, which represent the five pillars of the School’s educational program. The DREAM Advisory is the first class of the day every day, where students learn the meaning of the five pillars and how each enhances their education and who they are as citizens and leaders in their community. In the advisory, students set goals for themselves as individuals and for the group, and use reflective time to hold themselves and one another accountable to those goals.
3. **Teacher Academy:** To prepare for the academic school year, teachers will participate in a two week intensive teaching academy where the curricular objectives are outlined, goals are set, and the foundation is established for the School’s year long professional development program. The focus of the year long professional development program will be on the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) model of lesson planning,

practice, and implementation. Teachers will have built-in professional development time throughout the school year to plan and set appropriate, measurable objectives to provide students with direction for learning and information on how they are progressing towards their set learning goals. Ongoing development will also allow teachers to plan their instruction to include relevant projects and experiential learning activities for students.

## **Education Plan**

American Dream Charter School will create a strong sense of community and understanding, based on mutual understanding and compassion among the teachers, students, parents, and community at large. The school calendar includes 190 days of instruction, beginning each day with a 30 minute advisory at 7:55 a.m. where students will learn about citizenship, collaboration, community, involvement, maintaining mental and physical health, and advocacy.

Following advisory, students will have four core classes: 1) English Language Arts (ELA) and Social Studies, 2) Spanish Language Arts (SLA) and Science, 3) Project Based Learning (PBL) and, 4) Mathematics. In belief that physical education supports learning, the founding group has scheduled 45 minutes a day of physical education for all students. Students will also receive music and art instruction on a six week alternating schedule.

Building a professional community that cultivates growth and discourse will be essential to the culture of the School. Every six weeks, teachers will have a professional development day to analyze data and review how best to meet the needs of students. Teachers will meet daily with the Director of Curriculum to discuss lessons, plan, research, and find resources.

Instructionally, one teacher will teach all subjects in the Dual Language classrooms at the Grade 6 level, to allow students to assimilate into the culture of the School, the culture of learning in two languages, and the culture of project-based learning. This approach will help Grade 6 students to acclimate to the instructional culture of the School in the first year and alleviate some of the anxiety that sixth grade students often experience in their transition to middle school.

Teachers at the Grade 7 through 8 levels will teach in their areas of certification, and students will have separate classes for content and language areas. Content area classes will involve content through a variety of methods, while language classes will focus on reading text related to the area of study, practicing reading strategies, developing writing skills, and using critical lens. Students will have a PBL block, math, physical education, art, and music. The school day will end at 4:00 p.m.

Prior to opening for instruction, teachers will participate in professional development via the School's two-week Teacher Academy in August. Additionally, four full-day professional development days, to analyze data from assessments and plan accordingly, are built into the school calendar. The professional development days align with the end/start of the quarters (marking periods) as well as with the interim assessments to measure student growth.

The School's Director of Curriculum and Instruction and the teachers will begin curriculum design during the summer and continue throughout the school year, meeting daily to analyze and

discuss lessons and units. Teachers will create and implement units in collaboration with each other, and discuss ways to improve their practice. Teachers will use their classroom practice to inform and improve their lessons. Teachers will follow a framework that aligns with the Common Core State Standards and the NYS Testing Program, and that supports English language learners by developing critical thinking and problem solving skills.

Specifically, the School will implement a number of curricular strategies to create and support a rich dual language literacy program in Spanish and English. The Dual Language program supports students becoming bilingual in both languages and fluent readers and writers (biliterate) in both languages. The Dual Language program will provide native language instruction and expose Spanish language learners to the world of learning about language and culture. This program works to provide students with cultural integrity and to build self-esteem. The Sheltered Instructional Observation Protocol (SIOP) will be used as the framework to design lessons in the Dual Language program and to support language acquisition and accelerate vocabulary growth, support comprehension, and scaffold writing and grammatical structures. In addition, Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA) will be used as the framework to help teachers guide students to self monitor and facilitate their own learning through explicit teaching of meta-cognitive skills.

Partnering with the Buck Institute for Education (BIE), the School will focus the project based learning (PBL) segment of the day on analyzing and answering complex questions based on investigations of content area material. Students will be expected to come up with answers to questions and solutions to problems. Through teacher-mediated and inquiry-based discussions, students will pose questions, plan projects, manage their time, implement and create their work, and present their findings. Student work may result in building models that demonstrate their perception of a complex idea. Students might stage an experiment that demonstrates an answer to an essential question being explored or contemplate essential questions that recur in a unit of study. The BIE approach infuses PBL strategies and methodology into the leadership of the School, into curricular and instructional matrices, and into the students' school experience. Like the SIOP, CALLA, and lesson study, PBL will also be ingrained into and throughout the fabric of the School.

During math block, students will focus on numerical computation, reading and comprehending math problems. Teachers will use IMPACT mathematics to guide instruction. Math instruction will be administered in Spanish until one calendar year after students have tested out of the NYSELAT. Math will be taught daily in 45 minute blocks, and students will make mathematical models twice each week during Project Based Learning. Math will focus on the number system, expressions and equations, understanding mathematical functions, geometry, and statistics and probability as outlined by the Common Core State Standards.

The School will administer diagnostic assessments to students in August before the School opens for fall instruction. The School will administer the *Evaluación del Desarrollo de Lectura*® (EDL) and the *Developmental Reading Assessment* (DRA), and the resulting baseline data will help teachers plan and design instruction. These assessments will be administered again in January and at the end of the academic year in June.

Using the *Scholastic Math Inventory*, students will be formally assessed four times a year to monitor growth and to target problem areas. These assessments will be administered before school begins in August, and again in November, January, and June. In addition, the School will use the sample New York State testing materials to improve curriculum as needed.

The School will use the *Language Assessment Scales–Reading/Writing Spanish* and New York State ELA test as cumulative assessments. Students who are two years below grade level in both English and Spanish will be progress monitored using running records and miscue analysis to better inform teachers and specialists on how to create targeted lessons that meet the needs of the students and facilitate reading development.

The Principal and Director of Curriculum and Instruction will ensure that teachers (grouped in grade level teams) analyze the data collected from a variety of assessments. Teachers will confer, share information, observations, running record and miscue analyses, and discuss educational plans and targeted lessons. The Director of Curriculum and Instruction will consult with teachers to ensure progress monitoring and adjustments are made to best meet the needs of students. Teachers will also use professional development days to analyze data and make adjustments to groups, curriculum, and PBL learning projects.

Using the Response to Intervention (RtI) approach, teachers will complete an action plan for each student and each class they teach to identify the intervention and supplemental instruction needs. Data collection and analysis relevant to these needs will be performed weekly and also during the specified professional development days outlined in the school calendar.

### **Community Outreach**

The applicant group has engaged in rigorous, ongoing outreach efforts to inform and solicit input from the CSD 7 community regarding how the proposed American Dream Charter School would address the educational and programmatic needs of students. The applicant group held a number of community forums, distributed informational brochures in various locations throughout the community, made presentations to community-based organizations and local public school officials, met with members of State and local legislatures, and invited the public to comment via the proposed School's website, email address, or phone. The applicant group has considered community feedback in its school design.

The School submitted draft Admissions and Enrollment Policies as required by and in accordance with the NYS Charter Schools Act. The School will recruit heavily within CSD 7 to attract and retain students who are English language learners and/or new arrivals to the United State. Students identified as ELL will have ample language support in and out of the classroom. Students will receive push-in ESL services and support from a certified ESL specialist. The ELL specialist will devise individual learning plans for each ELL student that will target goals in each of the four modalities (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) and will be shared with the general education teachers. Students will also receive native language instruction and the School will establish regular and constant communication with the students' families.

## School Governance and Leadership

Including the lead applicant, **Ms. Melissa Melkonian**, the planning team consists of 13 individuals. Six individuals are named in the application as proposed board members; four individuals are proposed as prospective employees of the School; and three other individuals will serve as advisors to the board of trustees. A School Trustee Background Information form, Statement of Assurance and resume or curriculum vitae was provided for each of the six individuals who will compose the School's initial board of trustees. As required, the applicant group has provided a set of draft by-laws and a draft code of ethics.

The six proposed initial members of the board of trustees are described below:

- **Angelo Cabrera**, founder and Research Coordinator of MASA MexEd, has experience in public relations, grant writing, program management, community liaison work, non-profit administration, journalism, and program development, management and evaluation.
- **Rick Levine**, a retired school high school administrator and educator, is a founding teacher at the Vanguard High School and Fannie Lou Hamer Freedom High School, a founding principal of Global Enterprise High School and an assistant principal at the Gregorio Luperón High School. He is a consultant with expertise in school leadership, teaching and learning, advisory groups, and alternative assessment.
- **Laurie Pastore**, currently an Instructional Coach and Support Teacher in the White Plains Central School District, is an experienced elementary school teacher and a former Director of Curriculum and Implementation. Her expertise is in curriculum development, standards alignment, teaching methodology and coaching.
- **Luz Maria Rojas**, currently an Assistant Principal at Queens Satellite Academy High School for Opportunity, is an experienced Bilingual and General Education teacher of students in Grades 5 through 12, Professional Developer, Instructional Coach Programmer and Data Analyst. She has expertise in school leadership, bilingual education and literacy.
- **Michael Weippert**, currently with the U.S. General Services Administration, has over five years of experience in commercial real estate leasing with a cumulative signed contract value of over \$95 million and over 3 years of experience managing construction contracts worth over \$650 million. He has expertise in commercial real estate and construction management.
- **Steven Zbaida**, currently the Principal of the multi-campus Satellite Academy High School, is an experienced school principal, secondary science teacher, and professional developer. His expertise is in budget development and allocation, facilities development, curriculum development, data analysis and “at-risk” student populations.

The founding group has identified an advisory board consisting of experienced individuals who will provide ongoing advice and support to the School leadership and board of trustees. The following individuals are named as members of the advisory board:

- **Paul Melkonian**, currently a school administrator at the Satellite Academy High School, is an experienced school leader, secondary science teacher and professional developer, with expertise in performance- based assessment, project based and experiential learning, budget allocation, facilities development, curriculum development, “at- risk” student populations and data analysis.
- **Nicholas Gold**, an employee of The GoldLab Symposium, is experienced in project planning and management, grant-making foundations, and biological research. His expertise is in non- profit and business development.
- **Adrien Odate**, a fitness trainer with Equinox Fitness Club, is an experienced personal fitness consultant, trainer, and entrepreneur. His expertise is in marketing and advertising.

The founding group has proposed that the lead applicant, **Ms. Melissa Melkonian**, serve as School Leader, stating that she is uniquely qualified to open, operate, and lead the proposed bilingual charter school. Ms. Melkonian is currently Assistant Principal at Bronx Preparatory Charter School. She is an experienced Bilingual, General Education, and Special Education teacher of students in Grades 5-12. She is also a former assistant principal and former Bronx Borough Director of Special Education (NYC SpEd Collaborative) . Her expertise is in school leadership, bilingual education, special education and differentiated instruction.

Additionally, the following three remaining members of the founding group are proposed as employees of the school:

- **Nena Gil**, an experienced dual language, bilingual education, and general education teacher in the White Plains City School District, is the proposed Director of Curriculum and Instruction.
- **Maria Vaz**, with eight years of finance and operations with the Great Oaks Charter School and expertise in budgeting, forecasting, data analysis, and human resources management, is proposed as the Director of Operations.
- **Angie Pillier-Odate**, general and special education teacher, is a proposed staff member.

American Dream Charter School has set forth an organizational structure that separates instruction from operations. The founding Principal will serve as the instructional leader, with support from the Director of Curriculum and Instruction. The Director of Curriculum and Instruction will ensure that all curricular frameworks, lessons, and teaching/learning are aligned to the Common Core State Standards (including the Bilingual Common Core Progressions), as well as implementation with integrity of the SIOP and CALLA models for bilingual instruction. In Year 2, American Dream Charter School will add a Director of School Culture who will

ensure that all students have set rituals and routines, devise the School’s behavior management system, implement the DREAM Advisory curriculum, and communicate effectively with the parents to ensure they are active members of the School community and are involved in their children’s education. The Director of Operations will handle all finance and operations business for the School, including facility. All three directors will report directly to the Principal.

**Facility**

American Dream Charter School submitted a request to the NYCDOE to co-locate its educational program within an existing public school facility in CSD 7. The NYCDOE proposed and the PEP approved on October 15, 2013, a co-location of the School’s middle school grades (6-8) in CSD 7 at Building X030. In the event that the co-location does not take place, the applicant group is developing a contingency plan to site the School in private space. The applicant group has identified St. Jerome’s School, a former and recently vacant school building owned by the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of New York, located at 222 Alexander Ave in the Bronx. The applicant is developing a fiscal plan to support the possibility of launch in a private facility.

**Technical Modification**

The applicant group provided a technical modification to the application, in order to bring the proposed first charter term grade configuration into alignment with NYCDOE district school grade configurations. American Dream Charter School provided two enrollment plan scenarios, depending on whether the School will be sited in shared public space or in private space. If the School is co-located in Building X030, the School will open with 100 students in Grade 6 in Year 1, and grow an additional 100 students per year until reaching its maximum of 300 students in Grades 6 through 8 in Year 3. If the School is unable to co-locate in Building X030 and is located in a private facility, the School will open with 120 students in Grade 6 in Year 1, and grow an additional 120 students per year until reaching its maximum of 360 students in Grades 6 through 8 in Year 3.

**Table 2: Proposed Enrollment Configurations: Colocated vs. Private Space, 2014-15 to 2018-19**

| <b>Minimum / (Maximum) Enrollment</b> | <b>2014-15</b>      | <b>2015-16</b>      | <b>2016-17</b>      | <b>2017-18</b>      | <b>2018-19</b>      |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Grade 6</b>                        | <b>100</b><br>(120) | <b>100</b><br>(120) | <b>100</b><br>(120) | <b>100</b><br>(120) | <b>100</b><br>(120) |
| <b>Grade 7</b>                        |                     | <b>100</b><br>(120) | <b>100</b><br>(120) | <b>100</b><br>(120) | <b>100</b><br>(120) |
| <b>Grade 8</b>                        |                     |                     | <b>100</b><br>(120) | <b>100</b><br>(120) | <b>100</b><br>(120) |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                          | <b>100</b><br>(120) | <b>200</b><br>(240) | <b>300</b><br>(360) | <b>300</b><br>(360) | <b>300</b><br>(360) |

## Projected Fiscal and Programmatic Impact on District of Location

The applicant group provided an analysis of the fiscal and programmatic impact of the proposed school on public and non-public schools in New York City, indicating that the fiscal impact of the American Dream Charter School on the New York City District public schools is expected to be nominal.

The New York State Education Department also conducted additional analysis on the projected fiscal impact of the School on its district of residence, the New York City School District (NYCSD), which is summarized below.

**Table 3: Projected Fiscal Impact Upon District of Location, 2014-15 to 2018-19<sup>1</sup>**

| Year    | Number of Students Enrolled in Charter School Per Year <sup>2</sup> | Charter School Basic Tuition Rate <sup>3</sup> | Total Charter School Basic Tuition Only | Estimated District Special Education Payment <sup>4</sup> | Total District General Fund Budget <sup>5</sup> | Percent of District Budget |
|---------|---|--|---|---|---|----------------------------|
| 2014-15 | 120   | \$15,224                                       | \$1,826,880                             | \$273,362   | \$19,864,726,000                                | 0.011%                     |
| 2018-19 | 360   | \$17,754                                       | \$6,391,440                             | \$956,370   |   | 0.037%                     |

The calculations above assume charter school basic tuition rates in the charter period (2014-15 through 2018-19) based on a trend analysis calculated by the Charter School Office and approved by the Department’s State Aid Office. In order to conservatively avoid underestimating the fiscal impact that the charter school will have on the district going forward, the Department is assuming no growth in the New York City School District budget during the duration of the school’s charter.<sup>6</sup>

It should be noted that, given the nature of district-based per-pupil funding, the estimates made by the Department in conducting this analysis are subject to unpredictable financial fluctuations. For forecasting purposes, the fiscal impact of this charter school on the district in which it will be located assumes that:

<sup>1</sup> In order to conservatively estimate the fiscal impact upon the district of location, maximum enrollment figures for each year were used. For additional information, please refer to Table 2

<sup>2</sup> Source: American Dream Academy Charter School Application

<sup>3</sup> Source: Education Law §2856(1)(a)(iii) and NYS Education Department Office of State Aid Charter School Basic Tuition Rate Analysis, Fall 2013

<sup>4</sup> Based on 2012-13 calculated special education classification rate for the district of location, as collected by NYSED Information and Report Services

<sup>5</sup> Source: The City of New York Adopted Financial Plan, 2013-2017,

[http://www.nyc.gov/html/omb/downloads/pdf/adopt13\\_fp.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/html/omb/downloads/pdf/adopt13_fp.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Additional notes: While the school has included other federal grants and/or funds that may flow through the district to be received by the school in its proposed budget, this analysis does not account for these sources of potential revenue, nor does it include the value of certain services (e.g. transportation) that the district is required to provide the charter school. However, the analysis also does not account for district per-pupil expense and overall resource savings that are likely to result from a reduction in the number of students attending district public schools as a result of students attending nonpublic schools located in the school district.

- There will be no fluctuation in the grade levels served by existing charter schools over the course of the charter term;
- The charter school will be able to meet its projected maximum enrollment;
- All students will come from the district of location; and
- All students will attend every day for a 1.0 FTE.

The specifics of the school’s enrollment composition are still unavailable; however, the Department acknowledges that the programmatic and fiscal impact of the proposed charter school on other public and private schools in the same area will also be influenced by the proportion of charter school enrollees that would have attended a same-district public or private school had it not been for the presence of this charter school.

Below, for reference, please find additional data on New York City Community School District 7.

**2011-12 Demographic Detail for Proposed District of Location:  
New York City Geographic District # 7 - Bronx<sup>7</sup>**  
*Charter Term Year 1 Grade Configuration Based on 2011-12 District Demographics*

|                                      | Total District Enrollment |       | Grade 6 |       |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------|-------|---------|-------|
| All Students                         | 19,074                    |       | 1,330   |       |
| <i>American Indian/Alaska Native</i> | 96                        | 0.5%  | 1       | 0.1%  |
| <i>Asian/Pacific Islander</i>        | 190                       | 1.0%  | 11      | 0.8%  |
| <i>Black</i>                         | 5,375                     | 28.2% | 356     | 26.8% |
| <i>Hispanic</i>                      | 13,226                    | 69.3% | 948     | 71.3% |
| <i>Multiracial</i>                   | 13                        | 0.1%  | -       | 0.0%  |
| <i>White</i>                         | 174                       | 0.9%  | 14      | 1.1%  |
| Economically Disadvantaged           | 17,352                    | 91.0% | 1,272   | 95.6% |
| Limited English Proficient           | 3,526                     | 18.5% | 241     | 18.1% |
| Students with Disabilities           | 4,002                     | 21.0% | 336     | 25.3% |

<sup>7</sup> Source: Student Information Repository System (SIRS) 2011-12 Report 303 BEDS Day Enrollment Verification Report by Location of Enrollment & Student Subgroup

**2011-12 Academic Proficiency Rates on NYS Exams Based on Grade Configurations for Proposed School<sup>8</sup>**

|               | 6   | 7   | 8   |
|---------------|-----|-----|-----|
| <i>NYC #7</i> |     |     |     |
| ELA           | 21% | 23% | 18% |
| Math          | 36% | 35% | 36% |
| <i>NYS</i>    |     |     |     |
| ELA           | 56% | 52% | 50% |
| Math          | 65% | 65% | 61% |

**Public Hearing and Public Comment**

As required by the Charter Schools Act, the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) held a hearing on October 24, 2013 to solicit comments from the community concerning American Dream Charter School. Twelve members of the community were present; three of whom spoke in favor of the proposed charter school. No members of the community spoke in opposition to the proposed charter school.

The Department directly notified the Chancellor of the NYCDOE, as well as public and private schools in the region, of the charter school application and issued an open call for written public comment via the State Education Department Charter School Office website. The Chancellor was contacted by letter and invited to comment directly. Chancellor Dennis Walcott submitted a letter in support of American Dream Charter School, noting that “There is a need for high quality middle school seats in CSD 7, and we have been working with the applicant on space availability in this district. Particularly, there is a demand for a dual-language model in this district, which American Dream proposes to offer.” Chancellor Walcott recommends this charter application to support the children of New York City.

**Application Review Process**

On September 3, 2013, as required by the New York State Charter Schools Act, the New York State Education Department (the “Department”) released the 2013 Request for Proposals (“RFP”) to Establish Charter Schools Authorized by the Board of Regents. The charter school application process used by the Board of Regents and the Department during the 2013 RFP cycle is multi-staged and designed to ensure that any charter school applicant presented to the Board of Regents for possible approval demonstrates a detailed and complete school design plan that:

- includes a clear plan to meet or exceed enrollment and retention targets for students with disabilities, students who are English language learners, and students who are eligible to participate in the federal free reduced-price lunch program;

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<sup>8</sup> Student Information Repository System (SIRS) 2011-12 Report 101 High School Accountability Data Verification Report; 2011-12 Report 102 Elementary/Middle-Level Accountability Data Verification Report

- provides evidence of public outreach that conforms to the process prescribed by the Regents for the purpose of soliciting and incorporating community input regarding the proposed charter school;
- meets all requirements set forth in the Charter Schools Act as well as all other applicable laws, rules, regulations;
- demonstrates the ability to operate the school in an educationally and fiscally sound manner;
- is likely to improve student learning and achievement and materially further the purposes of the Act; and
- would have a significant educational benefit to the students expected to attend the proposed charter school.

In addition, the applicant group and founding board of trustees must demonstrate appropriate knowledge, capacity, and abilities to effectively create, maintain, and oversee a high-quality charter school.

During 2013, a total of 99 letters of intent were submitted in two rounds (February and September). After an initial review process, a total of 46 applications were evaluated in 2013, including the application for American Dream Charter School.

To assess whether to recommend approval or denial of the charter application to the Board of Regents, the Department established review panels to thoroughly evaluate each full application. Each panel was made up of professional expert consultants, peer reviewers who are school leaders and educators active in charter and public schools in New York, as well as qualified Department staff members. The review panel members reviewed, rated, and commented on each section of the application according to the criteria published in the Application Kit.

Department staff conducted a two-hour capacity interview with the 11 founding members, seven of whom are proposed initial board members and four proposed employees including the proposed school leader and proposed director of curriculum, on May 7, 2013. Questions posed to the proposed initial trustees included general questions around New York State Charter School Law, roles and responsibilities of the school community and the board to the community and various stakeholder groups as well to as the Board of Regents as authorizer. To fully understand the proposed academic program, governance role and fiscal viability of the proposed School, targeted questions were asked to clarify information provided in the full application.

The responses demonstrated adequate knowledge and grasp of key areas. Members of the applicant group as a whole and individually demonstrated knowledge of the charter school application and the proposed School. Structures, systems, protocols and procedures are in place to permit the board to effectively govern the School. The applicants addressed questions posed with specific and detailed information that presented a clear, realistic picture of how the School expects to operate.

## Findings

Based on the comprehensive review of the application and of the applicant, founding group, and proposed board of trustees, the Department makes the following findings:

1. The charter school described in the application meets the requirements of Article 56 of the Education Law (as amended) and other applicable laws, rules, and regulations.<sup>9</sup> This finding is based on the following (among other things):
  - the applicant has included in the application the information required by §2851(2)
  - the proposed charter school would meet or exceed enrollment and retention targets, as prescribed by the NYS Board of Regents,<sup>10</sup> of students with disabilities, English language learners, and students who are eligible applicants for the federal free and reduced price lunch program as required by Education Law subdivision 2852(9-a)(b)(i)
  - the applicant has conducted public outreach to solicit community input regarding the proposed charter school and to address comments received from the impacted community concerning the educational and programmatic needs of students in conformity with Education Law subdivision 2852(9-a)(b)(ii).
  
2. The applicant has demonstrated the ability to operate the proposed charter school in an educationally and fiscally sound manner.<sup>11</sup> This finding is based on the following (among other things):
  - The presentation in the application of a sound description of key features that are core to the school's overall design, and which rigorously addresses the criteria outlined in the Department's RFP in the areas of mission; key design elements; enrollment, recruitment and retention; and community to be served.
  - The presentation in the application of a sound educational plan, which rigorously addresses the criteria outlined in the Department's RFP in the areas of achievement goals; school schedule and calendar; curriculum and instruction; assessment; school culture and climate; and special student populations and related services.
  - The presentation in the application of a sound organizational and fiscal plan, which rigorously addresses the criteria outlined in the Department's RFP in the areas of founding group capacity; board of trustees and governance; management and staffing; evaluation; professional development; facilities; insurance; health, food and transportation services; family and community involvement; financial management; budget and cash flow; pre-opening plan; and dissolution plan.

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<sup>9</sup> Education Law §2852(2)(a).

<sup>10</sup> Note, the data upon which to base the enrollment and retention targets mandated by the amendments to the Act was not available at the time the statute mandated the RFP be issued. As a result, the Department evaluated the plans for student enrollment, recruitment, and retention plans of each class of student referenced in the amendments to the Act such that the Department could make the determination that the applicant would meet or exceed the enrollment and retention targets when developed. During the first year of the charter term, the Department will develop such targets and incorporate these targets into the school's charter agreement performance expectations.

<sup>11</sup> Education Law §2852(2)(b).

- An understanding of the New York State Charter Schools Act, and the skill, will and capacity to successfully launch and operate a high quality public charter school.
3. Granting the proposed charter is likely to improve student learning and achievement, will materially further the purposes of the Act<sup>12</sup> and will have a significant educational benefit to the students expected to attend the charter school.<sup>13</sup> This finding is based on the totality of the information presented in the application and during the application review process, as summarized in this document.

### **Recommendation**

Based on the Department's review and findings, Commissioner John B. King, Jr. recommends that the New York State Board of Regents approve the proposal to establish American Dream Charter School to open in 2014 in New York City.

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<sup>12</sup> Education Law §2852(2)(c).

<sup>13</sup> As applicable pursuant to §2852(2)(d).



# New York State Education Department Charter School Office

## **Charter School Application Summary, Findings, and Recommendation**

Application in response to the  
New York State Education Department 2013 Request for Proposals to  
Establish Charter Schools Authorized by the Board of Regents  
To establish the proposed:

### **Brooklyn Laboratory Charter School**

December 2013

**Table 1: Summary of the Proposed Brooklyn Laboratory Charter School**

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Name of Charter School                                  | Brooklyn Laboratory Charter School  |
| Lead Applicant(s)                                       | Dr. Eric Tucker   |
| District of Location                                    | Brooklyn CSD 13   |
| Opening Date  | September 2014  |
| Projected Charter Term                                  | December 17, 2013 – June 30, 2019   |
| Management Company                                      | None  |
| Partners  | None  |
| Facility  | Private space   |
| Projected Enrollment and Grade Span during Charter Term | Opening with 132 students in Grade 6; growing to 660 students in Grades 6 through 8   |
| Planned Grade Span (beyond Initial Charter Term)        | The applicant’s vision is to expand the school to serve 890 students in Grades 6 through 12   |
| Mission Statement                                       | <i>“Brooklyn Laboratory Charter School (LAB) prepares 6-12th grade students, including English language learners, students with disabilities, and over-age under-credited students, with the academic foundation, digital literacy, and leadership skills necessary to excel in college and professional life as they grow as ethical leaders.”</i> |

The founders of Brooklyn Laboratory Charter School (LAB) believe that when students are given effective structure, teachers, curriculum tools, and mentorship, every single student can succeed. The founders are dedicated to serving the highest need students of Brooklyn, regardless of their academic level, English language proficiency, or disability status implementing an academic model designed to assure that students graduate having mastered the NYS Common Core State Standards equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to graduate from a selective four-year college or university. To support success, the School will provide a rigorous, college-preparatory curriculum with a focus on literacy and will embrace next generation, data-driven assessment and personalized instruction to identify and meet the diverse needs of students.

## Key Design Elements

The key design elements of Brooklyn LAB Charter School include:

- **Rigorous, college-preparatory curriculum:** Brooklyn LAB Charter School will provide a college-preparatory liberal arts and STEM program of study in mathematics, English language arts (ELA), science, and social studies to foster student desire and capacity to learn independently, think critically, and communicate proficiently to succeed in postsecondary studies. The School's curriculum will be founded on Common Core State Standards and Next Generation Science Standards, and the skills students must master in order to succeed in college and beyond.
- **Effective instruction:** Brooklyn LAB Charter School will invest in recruiting, training, retaining, and supporting master teachers with the capacity to transform students' lives and infuse joy and rigor into every lesson. The School's curriculum, instructional approach, and professional development will serve and enhance teacher contribution to learning.
- **Focus on college-level reading and writing:** Literacy will be the cornerstone academic skill at Brooklyn LAB Charter School. The School will provide 195 minutes of literacy focused instruction in a typical day to ensure that students can read with comprehension and insight and analyze and effectively respond to texts across disciplines. The academic program will prioritize the classroom use of quality literature and informational texts, emphasize text-dependent questions and tasks, and privilege writing and research that analyze sources and evidence.
- **Extending learning time:** Brooklyn LAB Charter School will leverage blended instruction to focus human capital and extend the school day, week, and year. LAB will operate from 7:30 a.m. - 5:15 p.m. Students will attend classes at least 195 days each year, and receive additional time for learning in the summer and Saturday Academies. Students will spend two hours each day with STEM AmeriCorps tutors in the LAB Corps and at least an hour each day in enrichment courses in the 360Lab, which blend small group or 1:1 work with technology-delivered adaptive learning instruction.
- **Entrepreneurial learning:** One goal of Brooklyn LAB Charter School is to cultivate entrepreneurial learners. Schools today must prepare students to succeed in jobs and industries we can hardly imagine: the exponential rate of digital innovation is rapidly reordering the contours of both knowledge and work. Thus, students must learn to craft meaningful questions and assess the quality, sufficiency, and relevance of claims and evidence. Brooklyn LAB Charter School will offer experiences that foster interest-driven learning and instill in students a sense of awe and curiosity in the face of challenges. Working with designers and entrepreneurs, the School will give scholars opportunities to explore new challenges and learn from others.
- **Building productive, engaged, and active citizens:** The Brooklyn LAB Charter School founders believe that high quality education is the path to productive, engaged, and active

citizens who contribute to the community in positive ways. The School will provide students with service learning opportunities as part of the curriculum to instill and reflect the core values of volunteerism, service, and respect for the community.

- **No Excuses school culture:** Brooklyn LAB Charter School will set clear standards for timely arrival, homework completion, behavior and participation, founded on an unrelenting insistence that every student, given proper support, is capable of college success. The School will create a joyful and engaging learning environment in which achievement is continuously celebrated and reinforced by earned enrichment opportunities and incentives. School leaders and faculty will receive an intensive training in No Excuses culture and expectations, and how to foster a joyous yet structured learning environment that respects and nurtures students.
- **Data-driven instruction:** Brooklyn LAB Charter School commits to continuous, data-driven improvement in each classroom and for each student. At the School, assessment will exist to serve, inform, and enhance teaching and learning processes and outcomes. Teachers will be united in a relentless improvement ethic and will employ varied, real-time diagnostic data to inform their practice. All teachers and tutors are provided regular time for data review in order to improve instruction at the 360Lab, classroom, and whole-school level. The School will use the highest-quality formative and interim assessment tools to provide a dynamic, validated picture of student growth and skills gaps.
- **Next generation learning and assessment:** Informed by data and real-time diagnostic assessments, master teachers use the 360Lab to interact with students in small group tutoring scenarios while using digital resources. The School will use adaptive courseware to deliver progressive digital challenges, continuously tailoring modules to fit students' needs. The digital courseware tools integrate into a recommendation engine that searches online depositories of high-quality multimedia and networks of educators to guide teachers and students toward discrete, quality, CCLS-aligned open educational resources (OER) matched to students' learning needs and skill levels. Students use both game-based adaptive learning courseware and a variety of OER to work at their own pace. As students complete activities, embedded assessments track progress and give real-time feedback and badges to motivate students and give them a sense of ownership. Next generation assessments enable the School to meet the needs of diverse learners, including ELLs, special education students, and students behind grade level. To meet individual needs, teachers use the results of frequent embedded formative assessments to personalize instruction (e.g., targeting small group instruction to similarly situated students). 360Lab will provide extra practice or intensive intervention for some, while for others it will offer an opportunity to move ahead at their own pace.
- **Family partnership:** At Brooklyn LAB Charter School, students' families are critical to their success and the School's success, and that success can be achieved by developing positive and communicative relationships. All families will receive regular communication, both digitally and offline, about their students' academic and behavioral progress, using data from formative and summative assessments as benchmarks for discussion. A Parent and Family Association composed of parents/guardians will also

serve as a liaison to school leadership. Teachers and tutors will visit each student’s home at the start of the year and devote three to five hours per week to family calls.

**Technical Modification**

The applicant group provided a technical modification to the application, in order to bring the proposed first charter term grade configuration into alignment with NYCDOE district school grade configurations.

**Table 2: Projected Brooklyn LAB CS Enrollment Plan**

|                | 2014-15    | 2015-16    | 2016-17    | 2017-18    | 2018-19    |
|----------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| <b>Grade 6</b> | 132        | 123        | 132        | 264        | 264        |
| <b>Grade 7</b> |            | 126        | 132        | 132        | 264        |
| <b>Grade 8</b> |            |            | 132        | 132        | 132        |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>132</b> | <b>249</b> | <b>396</b> | <b>528</b> | <b>660</b> |

In year 1, the proposed school will enroll 132 grade 6 scholars through a lottery. In year 2, the proposed school anticipates retaining and promoting 126 of these scholars to grade 7 and admitting 123 new students in grade 6. Grade 8 will be added in year 3 of operation. A second grade 6 cohort will be added in year 4; a second grade 7 cohort will be added in year 5. The proposed school will include in its first renewal application a request to add a second grade 8 cohort as well as grades 9 through 12. Based on empirical data and experience, LAB anticipates about 4.5% attrition from each grade cohort. Grade cohorts will be back-filled to full enrollment from the waitlist for each grade cohort from grades 6 through 8.

**Education Plan**

The Brooklyn LAB Charter School schedule is designed to maximize the time students spend learning and mastering rigorous content and skills. The school calendar and schedule are built around three core principles:

1. ***Extend the school day, week, and year:*** The School will provide 195 days of instruction on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday from 7:30 a.m. to 5:25 p.m., and Wednesdays from 7:30 a.m. to 1:25 p.m. to allow staff to participate in professional development.
2. ***Preparation Academy*** for two weeks in August, during which they learn LAB’s expectations and prepare for the requirements of grade level work. Students who have not mastered a grade’s content must attend Summer Academy. Summer and Saturday Academies are in addition to the 195-day school year.
3. ***Maximize time on task with rigorous core content and skills.*** Time on task—focusing on what matters most and minimizing disruptions--drives achievement. Faculty will minimize disruptions and wasted time by using routines and common expectations throughout the school.

4. ***Optimize time on target:*** “Time on target” refers to time scholars spend mastering skills, competencies, and content. Four aspects of the LAB approach will help optimize time on target: (a) each scholar will receive two hours of personalized academic tutoring every day. Tutoring focuses on meeting scholars where they are and supporting mastery; (b) teachers will use frequent formative and interim assessments to inform data-driven instructional practices and to curate learning experiences for each scholar; (c) 360 Learning Lab (360Lab) time will give students personalized, adaptive courseware focused on reinforcing, remediating, and enriching their learning; and (d) homeroom teachers and mentors will support student learning through design-based projects.
5. ***LAB Enrichment Schedule:*** Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday, scholars will have seven academic periods and up to two hours of 360Lab. No less than five periods will be teacher-led classes. Two will be tutorials scheduled throughout the school day. Two hours each day, as part of the 360Lab, students will participate in literacy tutorials and STEAM-focused rigorous enrichment activities, with the help of InnovateEDU, the proposed school’s non-profit partner.

Each grade level cohort of approximately 132 students will be grouped into four homeroom groups of 33 students that move through the school day together. Classrooms will be mixed-ability with respect to students’ prior achievement, and special education or ELL status. The School will adopt an integrated co-teaching model and offer SETSS to students in accordance with their respective IEPs. In addition, during the second ELA class, a special education teacher will provide small group SETSS to those students who require additional support to ensure the student meets the requirements in his or her IEP. A similar approach or model will be implemented to support English Language Learners who will be instructed by an ESL teacher.

LAB strives to ensure that all of scholars, particularly English Language Learners, students with disabilities, under-credited students, and students at risk of academic failure, graduate from high school with the skills, knowledge, and habits they need to succeed in a selective four-year college or university. For LAB scholars to perform well on Regents, PARCC, SAT, ACT, and AP exams, instruction must be based on a rigorous curriculum aligned with the CCLS. LAB is developing curriculum to aggressively remediate academic gaps in middle school and accelerate mastery of core content in high school. In scope, sequence, and curriculum, LAB uses research-proven curricula suitable for students with varying learning needs together with internally developed curricula (LAB Learning Standards) aligned with or exceeding NYLS and CCLS. If research-proven curricula do not fully align with NYLS, CCLS, or fully prepare students for the demands of rigorous college courses, the proposed school will supplement these with internally developed curricula.

The curriculum development process begins by establishing LAB-wide academic goals that teachers then translate into class-specific goals and metrics. Each teacher creates an action plan for implementing the curriculum, administering assessments to measure its effectiveness, and creating additional action plans to address deficiencies. The School Director works closely with teachers to ensure unit and lesson plans align with the CCLS and the school’s scope and sequence. LAB will have in place a number of checks to ensure the curriculum is effective and successfully implemented. The ultimate measure of a curriculum’s success lies in both the ability of a teacher to plan lessons that engage students in learning on a daily basis and the ability of a

teacher to provide regular and ongoing evidence of student mastery. LAB will implement systems to provide feedback and accountability metrics on both of these measures.

LAB's middle school curriculum is designed to get over-age, under-credited students up to grade level, and the emphasis on academic rigor requires that all students receive a full year of Regents-level high school algebra, earth science, English, and social studies by the end of 8th grade. The high school curriculum will focus on college and career readiness and ensure that all LAB scholars graduate with a Regents Diploma or Regents with Advanced designation or Honors. The curriculum is divided into:

LAB teachers will use a full range of instructional methods to maximize student learning, including direct instruction, student facilitated learning, and independent study. Quality lessons will serve as the unifying principle of the instructional program, and the proposed school will consistently use research-proven strategies to build scholars' skills and knowledge.

The School Directors will be responsible for ensuring that teachers are proficient in delivering LAB's instructional methods by overseeing an intensive PD program, which includes:

- **Summer training:** Teachers will be required to report to school starting on August 1<sup>st</sup>, 11 business days before student arrival. Teachers will be trained on instructional techniques.
- **Ongoing PD:** In collaboration with the School Director, teachers will have the opportunity to take two days each semester for PD and will be provided individual PD budgets to access resources to best address their needs. The school's schedule includes a half day of PD each Wednesday, including instruction-focused PD.
- **Observation and coaching:** The School Directors will observe each teacher frequently, at least once a month, and create a regular schedule to meet with each teacher for at least 45 minutes to review, reflect, and discuss data gathered during these observations.

A key component of the LAB is the reliance on 2 hours of tutoring each day from an elite group of full-time tutors called the LAB Corps, which is made up off of recent college graduates/STEM AmeriCorps tutors. The LAB Corps is completely integrated into the academic program and will be overseen and supported by teachers and the LAB Corps Director. Tutorial content is designed by the classroom teacher as part of the lesson-planning process. Tutors are trained to interpret student achievement data and included in the data review meetings that take place after each interim assessment to better understand their students' progress and needs.

### **Assessments**

The Executive Director will oversee the assessment system and report on progress toward academic goals to the Board's Academic Committee each year, as well as to the larger community through family newsletters and the Annual School Report Card. The School Director will coordinate the implementation of state and city assessments including those mandated by the NYS Testing Program, and internal assessments. LAB will conduct the following routine assessments and analyze corresponding student achievement data:

- **Exit Tickets:** Teachers will use “Exit Tickets” at the end of each class as formative assessments to measure which students mastered the objective and which need additional support. Exit Tickets inform refinement to lesson plans, student groupings, and tutoring.
- **Homework, quizzes, and tests:** Students will receive homework assignments each evening, which will be used to evaluate mastery of skills and content in addition to traditional assessments, including weekly quizzes and unit tests. Assessment results will assist teachers in determining which students require additional support and which may benefit from enrichment. Assessment data will also be used to examine trends and identify areas in which an entire class may be struggling. For students and families, these assessments will provide routine feedback about student progress in each course.
- **Interim assessments:** LAB will use common standards-based assessments every six-to-eight weeks to measure instructional efficacy and student growth. These assessments will provide real-time data, with results turned around to teachers within 48 hours. The assessment results will be used to inform curriculum and assess the individual tutoring needs of each student.
- **Comprehensive summative assessment:** During Summer Academy, teachers will develop comprehensive assessments for each grade in ELA, math, science, and social studies. These assessments will be conducted at the end of each school year and are designed to cover all material taught during that year. These complement standards-based assessments, requiring students to demonstrate critical thinking and elaborate writing skills. LAB will compare comprehensive assessment results to state test scores and use this data to revise curriculum and instruction.

## Community Outreach

The applicant group has engaged in rigorous, ongoing efforts of outreach to inform and solicit input from the communities in Brooklyn CSD 13. The applicant group held a substantial number of community forums and events, distributed informational brochures in various locations throughout the community, made presentations to community based organizations and local public school officials, met with members of State and local legislatures, and invited the public to comment via the proposed school’s website, email address, or phone. The applicant group solicited and considered community feedback from surveys from forum attendees in its school design.

## School Governance and Leadership

Including the lead applicant Dr. Eric Tucker, the planning team consists of 13 individuals, nine of whom are as members of the School’s initial board of trustees. A School Trustee Background Information form, Statement of Assurance and resume or curriculum vitae was provided for each of the 11 individuals who will compose the school’s initial board of trustees. As required, the applicant group has provided a set of draft by-laws and a draft code of ethics.

The Board represents a diverse group of professionals with a broad array of experience and professional skills, who are capable of launching and overseeing a high-performing, highly-effective new public charter school. The following individuals will comprise the School’s initial Board of Trustees:

- **Fr. Anthony Andreassi** is a priest at Brooklyn Oratory of St. Philip Neri in Downtown Brooklyn. He teaches economics and history at Regis High School and is Board Chair of the Queen of the Rosary Catholic Academy. He has also taught at Gonzaga College and Xavier high schools. He holds a Ph.D. from Georgetown and a M.Div. from St. Joseph's.
- **Sharhonda Bossier** is Deputy Director at Families for Excellent Schools, where she leads efforts to organize families at 65 schools in New York City and 20 schools in New Jersey and Connecticut. She was Brooklyn Borough Director at Democracy Builders and a teacher at Urban Academy School for Law and Justice. She previously taught high school in Austin.
- **Brandon Buskey** is a lawyer at the ACLU Criminal Law Reform Project. He served as Assistant Attorney General in the Civil Rights Bureau at the NYS Attorney General and as a staff attorney at the Equal Justice Initiative, where he represented indigent defendants on death row in Alabama and juveniles sentenced to life imprisonment without parole throughout the nation. He holds a J.D. from NYU and B.A. from NC State. He lives with his wife in Fort Greene.
- **Sean Campbell** is Vice President, Real Estate Investment at Marathon Asset Management. He previously worked at D.E. Shaw in Real Estate Investments and Long-Short Equities, and at the NYC Economic Development Corporation. He has an M.Phil from Oxford.
- **Andrew Epstein** is CFO at Ascend Learning, where he oversees all financial matters, including financial policies and planning, budgeting, accounting, regulatory compliance and financial reporting, payroll, employee benefits, insurance, equipment leasing, purchasing systems and controls, and real estate borrowing. Epstein is a past consultant at Charter School Business Management and senior director of finance at Democracy Prep Public Schools. He is a former teacher and Teach for America corps member who taught middle-school science at KIPP Academy in the Bronx. He holds an M.B.A. from Columbia and a B.A. from the University of Michigan. He is a downtown Brooklyn parent.
- **Jessica Goldfin** is Chief of Staff at the MIT Media Lab. At the Knight Foundation, she served as the President's Senior Advisor. She is a digital learning expert who serves on the advisory committee for Games for Change and the Games and Learning Publishing Council.
- **Sarah Ray** works at McKinsey. She has served at the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Innovation and Improvement; with the White House Domestic Policy Council's Strong Cities, Strong Communities Initiative; and in the Secretary's Office at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. She has an M.P.A. from Princeton.
- **Sam Roe** is Director of Public Policy at Citizen Schools, past Education Program Manager at the Hope Street Group, and a noted expert on teacher effectiveness. He has

worked at the U.S. Department of State and the law firm Lowenstein Sandler. He has his J.D. from NYU and his M.P.P. from the Harvard Kennedy School. He graduated from PS 46 in Fort Greene in CSD 13.

- **Rafi Santo** leads the Research Lab within the Mozilla HIVE NYC Learning Network, which supports 56 museums, libraries, after-school programs, and informal learning spaces. Rafi is co-author on an MIT Press book series on digital design oriented curricula. Rafi worked at Global Kids and is completing his Ph.D. in Learning Sciences from Indiana University.

The founding group has proposed Ms. Erin Mote as the Executive Director, stating that she is uniquely qualified to open, operate, and lead the proposed charter school. Ms. Mote has served as advisor to the Clinton Foundation, Wal-Mart, Chevron, and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. A recognized technology and mobile applications expert, she created and served as the chief of party for the USAID Global Broadband and Innovations Alliance, managing a \$25 million annual budget and staff of 20. Her management expertise has also been honed working closely on a range of technology projects and programs with various U.S. government agencies, including the U.S. Department of State, the FCC, and the White House.

Additionally, the following three members of the founding group are also proposed to be employees of the school.

- **Dr. Eric Tucker** is proposed as the LAB Corps Director. Previously, he was director at the Federal Reserve Bank of New York. As managing director of Catalyst Strategy, Eric led school design and strategy work for clients including Harlem Prep, Ascend Learning, Democracy Prep, Excel Academy (MA), and Building Excellent Schools. As CAO and ED of the National Association for Urban Debate Leagues, Eric built and grew a national network serving 450 urban schools. He has taught at high schools in Providence and Chicago and worked for Providence's Superintendent. Eric received a D.Phil. from Oxford and edited the *Sage Handbook of Measurement*.
- **Rosanna Castro** is proposed as the Director of School Operations. Rosanna is currently completing an M.S. in Information and Knowledge Strategy at Columbia. She has a B.A. in Education Policy from Brown. Rosanna has held school operations leadership positions at Uncommon Schools and Democracy Prep and has worked with New Visions for Public Schools. She previously launched and managed the Rhode Island site of the National College Advising Corps and led the Family Outreach Program for the Rhode Island Department of Health. She is a Broad Fellow and a former Board Member of Providence Public Schools.
- **Waciuma Wanjohi** is proposed as Founding Master Teacher. He teaches at the American School of Bombay, a vanguard technology-enhanced, college-prep school. Waciuma previously taught ELA and social studies at PS 76, on East 122nd St., and at MS 44. He was Teacher of the Year for Project Eye-to-Eye, which focuses on inclusion of students with disabilities. He has an M.S. in education from City College and a B.A. from Brown.

The School plans to attract and retain highly qualified staff members by offering competitive salaries for all positions. The School has budgeted \$130,000 for the principal and an average of \$68,000 for teachers which will enable the recruitment of teachers with a Master's degree and two-four years of experience. Yearly three percent salary increases have been included in the operating budget as well as health care benefits and matching employee contributions to a 401(k) plan up to three percent of salary for employees who have completed two years of employment. The School will provide strong supports for staff, encouraging teachers to collaborate and scheduling ample time for preparation, professional development, mentors, and academic meetings.

**Facility**

The Brooklyn Laboratory Charter School has developed a conservative financial model that assumes private facilities in downtown Brooklyn. LAB facilities plan is split into two phases: (1) incubation in a short-term space and (2) permanent facility through the renovation of an existing building in downtown Brooklyn. For the first three years of operation, LAB will operate in a temporary, short-term space. During the summer between Years 3 and 4, LAB will move into a larger, renovated permanent home in downtown Brooklyn.

**Projected Fiscal and Programmatic Impact on District of Location**

The applicant group provided an analysis of the fiscal and programmatic impact of the proposed school on public and non-public schools in New York City, indicating that the fiscal impact of the Brooklyn Laboratory Charter School on the New York City School District public schools is expected to be nominal.

The New York State Education Department (“Department”) also conducted additional analysis on the projected fiscal impact of the School on its district of residence, the New York City School District (“NYCSD”), which is summarized below.

**Table 3: Projected Fiscal Impact upon District of Location, 2014-15 to 2018-19**

| Year    | Number of Students Enrolled in Charter School Per Year <sup>1</sup> | Charter School Basic Tuition Rate <sup>2</sup> | Total Charter School Basic Tuition Only | Estimated District Special Education Payment <sup>3</sup> | Total District General Fund Budget <sup>4</sup> | Percent of District Budget |
|---------|---|--|---|---|---|----------------------------|
| 2014-15 | 132   | \$15,224                                       | \$2,009,568                             | \$300,698   | \$19,864,726,000                                | 0.012%                     |
| 2018-19 | 660   | \$17,754                                       | \$11,717,640                            | \$1,753,345   |   | 0.068%                     |

<sup>1</sup> Source: The Brooklyn Laboratory Charter School Application

<sup>2</sup> Source: Education Law §2856(1)(a)(iii) and NYS Education Department Office of State Aid Charter School Basic Tuition Rate Analysis, Fall 2013

<sup>3</sup> Based on 2012-13 calculated special education classification rate for the district of location, as collected by NYSED Information and Report Services

<sup>4</sup> Source: The City of New York Adopted Financial Plan, 2013-2017, [http://www.nyc.gov/html/omb/downloads/pdf/adopt13\\_fp.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/html/omb/downloads/pdf/adopt13_fp.pdf)

The calculations above assume charter school basic tuition rates in the charter period (2014-15 through 2018-19) based on a trend analysis calculated by the Charter School Office and approved by the Department's State Aid Office. In order to conservatively avoid underestimating the fiscal impact that the charter school will have on the district going forward, the Department is assuming no growth in the New York City School District budget during the duration of the school's charter.<sup>5</sup>

It should be noted that, given the nature of district-based per-pupil funding, the estimates made by the Department in conducting this analysis are subject to unpredictable financial fluctuations. For forecasting purposes, the fiscal impact of this charter school on the district in which it will be located assumes that:

- There will be no fluctuation in the grade levels served by existing charter schools over the course of the charter term;
- The charter school will be able to meet its projected maximum enrollment;
- All students will come from the district of location; and
- All students will attend every day for a 1.0 FTE.

The specifics of the school's enrollment composition are still unavailable; however, the Department acknowledges that the programmatic and fiscal impact of the proposed charter school on other public and private schools in the same area will also be influenced by the proportion of charter school enrollees that would have attended a same-district public or private school had it not been for the presence of this charter school.

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<sup>5</sup> Additional notes: While the school has included other federal grants and/or funds that may flow through the district to be received by the school in its proposed budget, this analysis does not account for these sources of potential revenue, nor does it include the value of certain services (e.g. transportation) that the district is required to provide the charter school. However, the analysis also does not account for district per-pupil expense and overall resource savings that are likely to result from a reduction in the number of students attending district public schools as a result of students attending nonpublic schools located in the school district.

Below, for reference, please find additional data on New York City Community School District 13.<sup>6</sup>

**Table 4: 2011-12 Demographic Detail for Proposed District of Location:  
New York City Geographic District # 13 - Brooklyn**

*Charter Term Year 1 Grade Configuration Based on 2011-12 District Demographics*

|                                      | Total District Enrollment |       | Grade 6 |       |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------|-------|---------|-------|
| All Students                         | 23,039                    |       | 1,082   |       |
| <i>American Indian/Alaska Native</i> | 126                       | 0.5%  | 8       | 0.7%  |
| <i>Asian/Pacific Islander</i>        | 4,024                     | 17.5% | 42      | 3.9%  |
| <i>Black</i>                         | 13,047                    | 56.6% | 809     | 74.8% |
| <i>Hispanic</i>                      | 3,538                     | 15.4% | 192     | 17.7% |
| <i>Multiracial</i>                   | 109                       | 0.5%  | 2       | 0.2%  |
| <i>White</i>                         | 2,195                     | 9.5%  | 29      | 2.7%  |
| Economically Disadvantaged           | 17,461                    | 75.8% | 898     | 83.0% |
| Limited English Proficient           | 1,021                     | 4.4%  | 40      | 3.7%  |
| Students with Disabilities           | 2,669                     | 11.6% | 198     | 18.3% |

**Table 5: 2011-12 Academic Proficiency Rates on  
NYS Exams  
Based on Grade Configurations for Proposed School<sup>7</sup>**

|                | 6   | 7   | 8   |
|----------------|-----|-----|-----|
| <i>NYC #13</i> |     |     |     |
| ELA            | 38% | 36% | 30% |
| Math           | 46% | 47% | 42% |
| <i>NYS</i>     |     |     |     |
| ELA            | 56% | 52% | 50% |
| Math           | 65% | 65% | 61% |

<sup>6</sup> Source: Student Information Repository System (SIRS) 2011-12 Report 303 BEDS Day Enrollment Verification Report by Location of Enrollment & Student Subgroup

<sup>7</sup> Source: Student Information Repository System (SIRS) 2011-12 Report 101 High School Accountability Data Verification Report; 2011-12 Report 102 Elementary/Middle-Level Accountability Data Verification Report

## **Public Hearing and Public Comment**

As required by the Charter Schools Act, the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) held a hearing on October 22, 2013 to solicit comments from the community concerning Brooklyn Laboratory Charter School. The hearing was attended by twenty-eight community members. Six community members spoke at the hearing expressed their support for the proposed charter school. Eleven members of the community submitted written letters of support of the proposed charter school to the NYCDOE at the time of the hearing. The Department's Charter School Office received 17 additional letters of support for the proposed charter school via email and regular mail.

The Department directly notified the Chancellor of the NYC DOE, as well as public and private schools in the region, of the charter school application and issued an open call for written public comment via the State Education Department Charter School Office website. The Chancellor was contacted by letter and invited to comment directly. In his letter, Chancellor Walcott stated that, "the NYC DOE found this proposal to be well-intentioned with the potential to offer a rigorous educational model, and recommended this charter application with reservation."

## **Application Review Process**

On September 3, 2013, as required by the New York State Charter Schools Act, the New York State Education Department (the "Department") released the 2013 Request for Proposals ("RFP") to Establish Charter Schools Authorized by the Board of Regents. The charter school application process used by the Board of Regents and the Department during the 2013 RFP cycle is multi-stage and designed to ensure that any charter school applicant presented to the Board of Regents for possible approval demonstrates a detailed and complete school design plan that:

- includes a clear plan to meet or exceed enrollment and retention targets for students with disabilities, students who are English language learners, and students who are eligible to participate in the federal free reduced-price lunch program;
- provides evidence of public outreach that conforms to the process prescribed by the Regents for the purpose of soliciting and incorporating community input regarding the proposed charter school;
- meets all requirements set forth in the Charter Schools Act as well as all other applicable laws, rules, regulations;
- demonstrates the ability to operate the school in an educationally and fiscally sound manner;
- is likely to improve student learning and achievement and materially further the purposes of the Act; and
- Would have a significant educational benefit to the students expected to attend the proposed charter school.

In addition, the applicant group and founding board of trustees must demonstrate appropriate knowledge, capacity, and abilities to effectively create, maintain, and oversee a high-quality charter school.

During 2013, a total of 99 letters of intent were submitted in two rounds (February and September). After an initial review process, a total of 46 applications were evaluated in 2013, including the application for the Brooklyn Laboratory Charter School.

To assess whether to recommend approval or denial of the charter application to the Board of Regents, the Department established review panels to thoroughly evaluate each full application. Each panel was made up of professional expert consultants, peer reviewers who are school leaders and educators active in charter and public schools in New York, as well as qualified Department staff members. The review panel members reviewed, rated, and commented on each section of the application according to the criteria published in the Application Kit.

Department staff conducted a two-hour capacity interview with eleven members of the founding group, including seven members proposed for the initial board of trustees, the proposed school leader, and two other proposed school employees, on October 18, 2013. Questions posed to the proposed initial trustees included general questions around New York State Charter School Law, roles and responsibilities of the school community and the board to the community and various stakeholder groups as well to as the Board of Regents as authorizer. To fully understand the proposed academic program, governance role and fiscal viability of the proposed School, targeted questions were asked to clarify information provided in the full application.

The responses demonstrated adequate knowledge and grasp of key areas. Members of the applicant group as a whole and individually demonstrated knowledge of the charter school application and the proposed School. Structures, systems, protocols and procedures are in place to permit the board to effectively govern the School. The applicants addressed questions posed with specific and detailed information that presented a clear, realistic picture of how the School expects to operate.

## **Findings**

Based on the comprehensive review of the application and of the applicant, founding group, and proposed board of trustees, the Department makes the following findings:

1. The charter school described in the application meets the requirements of Article 56 of the Education Law (as amended) and other applicable laws, rules, and regulations.<sup>8</sup> This finding is based on the following (among other things):
  - the applicant has included in the application the information required by §2851(2)
  - the proposed charter school would meet or exceed enrollment and retention targets, as prescribed by the NYS Board of Regents,<sup>9</sup> of students with disabilities, English language learners, and students who are eligible applicants for the federal free and

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<sup>8</sup> Education Law §2852(2)(a).

<sup>9</sup> Note, the data upon which to base the enrollment and retention targets mandated by the amendments to the Act was not available at the time the statute mandated the RFP be issued. As a result, the Department evaluated the plans for student enrollment, recruitment, and retention plans of each class of student referenced in the amendments to the Act such that the Department could make the determination that the applicant would meet or exceed the enrollment and retention targets when developed. During the first year of the charter term, the Department will develop such targets and incorporate these targets into the school's charter agreement performance expectations.

- reduced price lunch program as required by Education Law subdivision 2852(9-a)(b)(i)
- the applicant has conducted public outreach to solicit community input regarding the proposed charter school and to address comments received from the impacted community concerning the educational and programmatic needs of students in conformity with Education Law subdivision 2852(9-a)(b)(ii).
2. The applicant has demonstrated the ability to operate the proposed charter school in an educationally and fiscally sound manner.<sup>10</sup> This finding is based on the following (among other things):
- The presentation in the application of a sound description of key features that are core to the school’s overall design, and which rigorously addresses the criteria outlined in the Department’s RFP in the areas of mission; key design elements; enrollment, recruitment and retention;, and community to be served.
  - The presentation in the application of a sound educational plan, which rigorously addresses the criteria outlined in the Department’s RFP in the areas of achievement goals; school schedule and calendar; curriculum and instruction; assessment; school culture and climate; and special student populations and related services.
  - The presentation in the application of a sound organizational and fiscal plan, which rigorously addresses the criteria outlined in the Department’s RFP in the areas of founding group capacity; board of trustees and governance; management and staffing; evaluation; professional development; facilities; insurance; health, food and transportation services; family and community involvement; financial management; budget and cash flow; pre-opening plan; and dissolution plan.
  - An understanding of the New York State Charter Schools Act, and the skill, will and capacity to successfully launch and operate a high quality public charter school.
3. Granting the proposed charter is likely to improve student learning and achievement, will materially further the purposes of the Act<sup>11</sup> and will have a significant educational benefit to the students expected to attend the charter school.<sup>12</sup> This finding is based on the totality of the information presented in the application and during the application review process, as summarized in this document.

## **Recommendation**

Based on the Department’s review and findings, Commissioner John B. King, Jr. recommends that the New York State Board of Regents approve the proposal to establish the Brooklyn Laboratory Charter School to open in 2014 in New York City.

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<sup>10</sup> Education Law §2852(2)(b).

<sup>11</sup> Education Law §2852(2)(c).

<sup>12</sup> As applicable pursuant to §2852(2)(d).



# New York State Education Department Charter School Office

## **Charter School Application Summary, Findings, and Recommendation**

Application in response to the  
New York State Education Department 2013 Request for Proposals to  
Establish Charter Schools Authorized by the Board of Regents  
to establish the proposed:

**Charter High School for Law and Social Justice**

December 2013

**Table 1: Summary of the Proposed Charter High School for Law and Social Justice**

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Name of Charter School                                  | Charter High School for Law and Social Justice   |
| Lead Applicant(s)                                       | Dr. Mary Ellen Sullivan<br>Richard D. Marsico, Esq.  |
| District of Location                                    | Bronx CSD 8, 9, or 12  |
| Opening Date  | September 2014   |
| Projected Charter Term                                  | December 17, 2013 – June 30, 2019  |
| Management Company                                      | None   |
| Partners  | College of Mount Saint Vincent College<br>New York Law School  |
| Facility  | Private space  |
| Projected Enrollment and Grade Span during Charter Term | Opening with 120 students in Grade 9; growing to 450 students in Grades 9 through 12   |
| Planned Grade Span (beyond Initial Charter Term)        | Grades 9 through 12, 450 students  |
| Mission Statement                                       | <i>“The Charter High School for Law and Social Justice will provide students from the Southern Bronx with a comprehensive high school education and lay the academic and social groundwork for success in college and careers. Using a theme of law and social justice, the School will engage, inspire, and empower its students, and will equip them with the academic skills to earn a Regents diploma and gain admission to the college of their choice prepared for success. The School will create a pathway for its students to law school and careers as attorneys. The pathway will include mentoring opportunities with law students and attorneys and partnerships with institutions of higher learning. These institutions will offer college and law school experiences to our students and share with them the academic benchmarks and habits necessary to gain entrance to college and law school.”</i> |

The objective of the Charter High School for Law and Social Justice is to provide students from the southern Bronx with a high-quality comprehensive high school education focused on creating a pathway to college, law school, and careers as attorneys. The College of Mount Saint Vincent and New York Law School are partnering to combine resources to design and operate the School. Students will learn about the relationship between law and social justice, participate in service learning opportunities through social justice community service projects and law office internships. Additionally, students will acquire skills in trial and appellate advocacy, debate, critical thinking, and oral and written communication.

### **Key Design Elements**

- **A comprehensive high school curriculum that engages students and empowers them through the study of law and social justice:** The School's curriculum will be aligned with the New York State Common Core State Standards and College and Career Readiness Standards. The School will offer a four-year curriculum in law and social justice and will incorporate these themes into the core curriculum, elective courses, community service projects, law office internships, after-school clubs and activities, and the Summer Bridge program. The School will create an understanding of how law has been used to deny and promote social justice in society; empower students to play a role in promoting social justice, and support students' pathway to college, law school, and careers as attorneys.
- **Individualized academic supports, remediation, and acceleration efforts to meet the needs of all students:** Based on performance data of students residing in the community, the School expects to serve students representing a range of performance levels. A significant number of students are expected to enter the School at performance levels below grade level and/or to be English language learners or students with disabilities. The School will implement programs to meet the needs of all students and ensure timely graduation with a Regents diploma and the academic and social skills to attend and succeed in the college of their choice. These efforts will include:
  1. *Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and flexible grouping:* The School will develop its curriculum based on the principles of UDL, which recognizes that each student's learning style, interests, and ability level are unique and promotes multiple opportunities for students to access, use, and engage with information. Using these principles and the results of ongoing assessment data, teachers will differentiate instruction. Within heterogeneous classes, teachers will group students and provide instruction, based on their observations and assessment data.
  2. *Individual learning plans (ILP):* Each student will have an ILP designed to help them take ownership of their academic success by identifying goals and monitoring progress.
  3. *Small class sizes and low student-teacher ratios:* The School's student-teacher ratio at full enrollment will be approximately 14:1. This ratio will support class sizes of approximately twenty students in common core courses and allow for

individual attention, remediation, acceleration, and learning opportunities for all students.

4. *Teaching assistants:* The School will hire teaching assistants who are graduate students in the College of Mount Saint Vincent's Urban Residence Program. The teaching assistants will assist in providing differentiated instruction and academic support to all students.
5. *Support for English language learners (ELL) and students with disabilities:* The School will integrate ELLs and students with disabilities into all of its curricular and extracurricular programs. The School will provide sufficient special education and ESL faculty to meet the needs of its students through sheltered instruction, integrated co-teaching and special education teacher support services.
6. *An extended school day:* The school day will extend from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. two days a week and to 5:00 p.m. three days a week. The principal and assistant principals will use student assessment data to target after-school education efforts and assign students to general education, special education, ESL teachers, teaching assistants, or volunteer tutors.
7. *A second ELA class for Grade 9 and Grade 10 students:* All Grade 9 and Grade 10 students will take a second ELA class, offering an additional 230 minutes each week in ELA instruction. The class will focus on academic literacy skills with an emphasis on written and oral communication, language structure, and academic vocabulary.
8. *Mandatory summer bridge programs for incoming Grade 9 and rising Grade 10 students (Summer Bridge):* The School's Summer Bridge Program is modeled after and incorporates components of the Summer Law Institute and College Bound program sponsored by Legal Outreach, a non-profit organization that prepares urban youth in Grades 8 through 12 from underserved communities in New York City to compete at high academic levels. Summer Bridge will introduce students to the School's culture and expectations, and its theme of law and social justice. It will provide educators with the opportunity to assess students' skill levels, offer supplemental instruction and support in math and literacy, and begin the process of developing Individual Learning Plans.
9. *The Advisory Program (Advisory):* The School's schedule includes a 30 minute small-group advisory period for all students four days per week. The Advisory curriculum will focus on academics, social/emotional learning and career development.
10. *Looping in academic courses from Grade 9 to Grade 10:* Looping will help develop a stable and consistent learning environment and establish continuity in skills development.

11. *College experiences:* The School will offer all students the opportunity for college experiences and advisory. This may include AP courses in English, Spanish, and Social Studies, as well as freshman level core academic courses through the Taste of College Program. Students will also have access to a college preparatory program for eleventh graders on the campus of the College, a college planning course for seniors, and peer mentoring with College students.

- **Data-based decision-making and extended time for planning and professional development:** The School recognizes that its comprehensive approach to educating students will require significant planning and professional development. The School schedule includes two blocks each week, totaling 3.5 hours, during which all administrators, teachers and professional staff will engage in professional development and planning. The school calendar includes two days of professional development at the end of each semester and a week-long professional development institute in August. The School will engage in a cyclical process of student assessment, data analysis, and implementation of instructional and curricular decisions based on the results of the data analysis. The School will establish a schedule for diagnostic, formative, interim, and summative assessments. A team of administrators and teachers will collect, analyze, and report on the data, then teachers and administrators will utilize the data to target instruction, monitor Individual Learning Plans, and make decisions about curricular and instructional practices.

## **Education Plan**

The Charter High School for Law and Social Justice's academic calendar consists of 181 days of instruction. Students will arrive for breakfast between 7:50-8:25 a.m. with class instruction to begin at 8:30 a.m. The School will offer more core instructional time than a traditional public school as ELA, Math, Social Studies, and Spanish will meet three times a week each for a total of 230 minutes. This exceeds the New York State requirement by 50 minutes each week for each subject area. In 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades, a second ELA class "ELA Fundamentals," will meet three times a week for a total of 230 minutes. Students, teachers, and professional staff will participate in 30 minute, small group Advisory sessions four times a week.

The School has established mandatory extended school days from 4:00-5:00 p.m. on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays for supplemental instruction. Based on a 36 week academic year, the extended days will provide an additional 108 hours of supplemental, data-driven, targeted individual and small group instruction. From 5:00-6:00 p.m. on Monday through Thursday, students will participate in extracurricular activities, including debate, moot court, trial advocacy, and sports.

In addition to supplemental instruction during the extended school day, Summer Bridge, and the second ELA class, the School schedule will support students with disabilities and English language learners. The School will adopt an integrated co-teaching model and offer special education teacher support services to students in accordance with their respective IEPs. In addition, during the second ELA class, a special education teacher will provide small group special education teacher support services to those students who require it. A similar approach or

model will be implemented to support English Language Learners, who will be instructed by an ESL teacher.

Although the School will not offer electives in the traditional sense, students will have choices. In 10th grade, students may choose to remain in Spanish or begin a sequence of law-related courses. In eleventh grade, students will choose between United States History and Government and AP United States History. In twelfth grade, students will choose from regular and AP courses in ELA, math, science and Spanish.

During the junior year, students will attend a college-readiness program on the campus of the College of Mount Saint Vincent and complete a college-level thematic workshop with a social justice focus led by members of the College faculty. Juniors and seniors will also participate in peer mentoring. Students in 12<sup>th</sup> grade will take college readiness courses at the School which help them to develop organizational, time management, and study skills necessary for academic success. Qualified seniors will be able to register for free, freshman-level academic core curriculum courses at the College in place of the corresponding course at the School, through the College's "Taste of College" Program. The College students, with backgrounds similar to the School's students, will serve as role models of college success, thus emphasizing to the School's students that college success is an achievable goal.

The School will provide ongoing and high-quality professional development for administrators, teachers, and support staff via the establishment of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) embedded into the weekly schedule and annual calendar. The PLCs will provide a structure for peer mentoring and sharing successful practices. Teachers will participate in classroom inter-visitations, as well. A lead teacher for curriculum and instruction will open his or her classroom to serve as a laboratory in which teachers can observe lessons and examine student work. Additionally, these classroom observations and the reflective dialogue that ensues will help support the efforts to meet the needs of ELLs, students with IEPs and students at-risk of failure. School leaders will select peer mentors to serve in supportive roles to teachers.

Each week, a 90 minute period on Tuesday morning and a two-hour period on Friday afternoon (when students are not in attendance) will be devoted to professional development and school-wide, departmental, and grade level planning meetings. Common planning time will enable teachers to plan instruction, monitor student performance, and determine intervention strategies. Faculty, staff, and administrators will participate in a week-long institute prior to the commencement of the school year during which teachers will develop their Professional Development Plans.

The School's assessment system will ensure that the School is meeting its goals for student academic achievement. Through regular assessment and dissemination of the data to all stakeholders, the School will ensure that assessment data will drive key decisions about educating individual students, grade levels, and the entire School. The School will cultivate a culture in which administrators, teachers, and students develop a shared understanding of the integral role of formative, diagnostic, interim, and summative assessment in the teaching and learning processes. The School will achieve a high level of internal accountability through a deliberate and thoughtful analysis and discussion of data. Data will be used to systematically

monitor growth, guide learning, modify instruction, and assess the School's progress towards meeting its goals and objectives.

In the first year of operation, the principal will oversee the assessment system and ensure that data is analyzed and disseminated in a timely and efficient manner. In the second and third years, the assistant principal for curriculum and instruction will fulfill this role under the principal's supervision. In the fourth year, the assistant principal for administration, in collaboration with the assistant principal for curriculum and instruction, will be responsible for collecting, analyzing, and disseminating data. Data will be reviewed at Friday afternoon staff meetings allowing teachers and administrators to determine whether modification of curriculum and instructional practices is needed.

During the enrollment period, the School will administer a diagnostic exam, such as the NWEA MAP diagnostic exam, to all incoming students. The principal and teachers will analyze all available data to determine instructional needs to develop the Summer Bridge and to plan for the upcoming school year. The diagnostic exam will be administered again in the second half of the spring semester of freshman year. Teachers will identify areas of growth and develop targeted instruction for the Summer Bridge for rising Grade 10 students and subsequent instruction for 10<sup>th</sup> grade.

The School will adopt a disciplinary policy and Code of Conduct that ensure a safe and orderly climate to support student learning, growth, and development. The Code of Conduct will reflect the School's desire to create a culture and climate based on the principles of civility, mutual respect, citizenship, character, honesty, and integrity. The Code will set the expectation that all members of the School's community - parents, students, teachers, administrators, staff, and the Board - will work as partners to create this climate. The Code of Conduct will specifically identify the conduct that is expected of students, the conduct that is subject to discipline, the penalties for violations, and the procedures for resolving disciplinary issues. The code will comply with all laws regarding discipline of students with disabilities, including considering if the behavior was a manifestation of the child's disability. Consistent with the Dignity for All Students Act, the Code will contain a definition of harassment and bullying and prohibits both.

The Code of Conduct will approach discipline as a developmental matter rather than as a punitive issue, requiring School personnel to consider the child's age, record, and other factors to determine appropriate consequences. The Code will give the principal discretion to employ restorative justice procedures when appropriate and the Board will encourage this approach. The School is in a unique position to use the Code as a teaching tool. During Summer Bridge for incoming Grade 9 students, the School will introduce students to the Code as a legal document for them to understand and follow. Students will be taught about the Code using a traditional law school clinical teaching model, including discussion, analysis, and role playing. Additionally, the School will create a Youth Court to consider consequences for Code violations pursuant to the restorative justice strategies outlined in the Code.

The School will engage and collaborate with students, parents, and community residents in order to accomplish its mission and goals. Through an inclusive governance structure, the Board will ensure active family and community involvement. It will hold regular meetings with elected community officials and community leaders, conduct well-publicized and interactive Board

meetings, and promote an active Parent/Teacher/Student Association. Board of trustees by-laws require that at least one board member be a parent of a current student and at least one board member be a community resident, both of whom will have all voting rights and powers as other members of the board. The School will publicize its board meetings and comply with all requirements of the Open Meetings Law.

### **Community Outreach**

The applicant group has engaged in rigorous, ongoing efforts of outreach to inform and solicit input from the communities in Bronx CSD 8, 9, and 12. The applicant group held a number of community forums, made presentations to community-based organizations and local public school officials, and met with legislative officials. They also distributed informational brochures in various locations throughout the community and invited the public to comment via the proposed school's website, email address, or phone. The applicant group solicited and considered community feedback regarding its school design through surveys from forum attendees. For example, as initially envisioned, the School planned its curriculum around the law and created a pathway to law school and a career as an attorney. These remain important parts of the mission and key design elements, but based in part on community and student input, the School's first priority is to provide a comprehensive high school curriculum that is tailored to all learners and that will prepare students for success in college and a variety of careers.

### **School Governance and Leadership**

Including the lead applicants Dr. Sullivan and Mr. Marsico, the planning team consists of seventeen individuals, eleven of whom will serve as members of the School's initial board of trustees. A School Trustee Background Information form, Statement of Assurance and resume or curriculum vitae was provided for each of the eleven individuals who will comprise the school's initial board of trustees. As required, the applicant group has provided a set of draft by-laws and a draft code of ethics. The initial members of the board of trustees are:

- **Dr. Mary Ellen Sullivan**, proposed trustee and co-lead applicant, is the chair of the Teacher Education Department and Assistant Professor of Teacher Education at the College of Mt. Saint Vincent. She previously taught fifth and sixth grade from 1986-1989 at St. Frances de Chantal, and from 1989-2002 at Saint Raymond High School for Boys, where she taught English and was department chairperson. She resides in the Bronx.
- **Richard Marsico**, proposed trustee and co-lead applicant, is a Professor of Law and the Director of the Justice Action Center at New York Law School. He served as a member of the Mamaroneck Union Free School District Board of Education from 2005-2011.
- **Janine Azriliant**, proposed trustee, is an administrative law judge, an arbitrator in New York County, a member of the Southern District's Mediation Panel, a litigation attorney, and a volunteer counselor for people who cannot afford attorneys.

- **Darren Johnson**, proposed trustee, teaches social studies at Queen of the Rosary Catholic Academy in Brooklyn. He has a Master of Science in Education in School Building Leadership and a Master of Education in Elementary Education.
- **Jennifer LaMarsh**, proposed trustee, holds a J.D. degree from New York Law School. She has an undergraduate degree in psychology and American Sign Language. Prior to attending law school, she was an Applied Behavioral Analysis therapist and teacher of children with autism.
- **Cynara McQuillan**, proposed trustee, is an Associate Professor of Law at New York Law School, where she teaches Legal Practice. Previously, she was a senior litigation associate at Proskauer Rose LLP.
- **James B. O’Neal**, proposed trustee, is an attorney and co-founder and Executive Director of Legal Outreach, a non-profit legal educational organization that uses law as a tool to teach students from underserved communities in New York City to develop the skills necessary to pursue higher education and professional careers.
- **Dr. Robert Shaps**, proposed trustee, is the Superintendent of the Mamaroneck Union Free School District. He was Superintendent of the Hastings-on-Hudson Union Free School District from 2006-2010 and the Manchester Essex Regional School District in Massachusetts from 2003-2006. Dr. Shaps served for four years as principal of the Manchester Essex Regional High School and as assistant principal of Londonderry High School in Londonderry, New Hampshire.
- **Katherine Smelas**, proposed trustee, is an attorney and recently completed a term as a graduate fellow of the Justice Action Center at New York Law School. She ran the Center's Street Law program at Middle School 22 in the Bronx in 2011 and 2012.
- **Asha Smith**, proposed trustee, is a staff attorney in the Bronx Criminal Defense Practice of the Legal Aid Society. In addition to her J.D. degree, she has a Master of Science degree in teaching. Her student teacher placement was at University Heights High School in the Bronx.
- **Linnet Tse** served as a member of the Mamaroneck Union Free School District Board of Education from 2003-2012, two of those years as president. She was formerly a financial executive at PepsiCo, responsible for business planning and analysis.

Seven other individuals are named in the application as advisory board members, who will provide expert guidance and advice to the board and school leaders. The following individuals are named as members of the advisory board:

- **Amanda Chansingh** is a high school ELA teacher at Tech Academy in the Bronx. She also holds certification in Special Education.
- **Lawrence Grosberg** is a Professor of Law at New York Law School. He specializes in clinical and experiential teaching methodology and currently conducts clinics in mediation and elder law.
- **Eric C. Henry** is an attorney and legislative director for New York City Council member Andy King. He serves on the board of directors of the Wesley Parrot Youth Program and the Alpha Phi Alpha Senior Citizens Center.
- **Lisabeth Jorgensen** holds a J.D. degree from New York Law School and recently completed a term as a legislative fellow for the New York State Senate.
- **Sonia Tapryal** holds a J.D. degree from New York Law School.
- **Kelly Weiner** holds a J.D. degree from New York Law School and is a fellow at the Center for International Law at New York Law School.
- **Amanda Wichot** holds a J.D. degree from New York Law School and works at Bracewell & Giuliani LLP.

The School's staffing plan is aligned with its mission, objectives, key design elements, educational program, budget, and planned enrollment. The School will hire the principal and director of operations during the pre-opening period, adding key administrators as enrollment increases. The two key administrators will provide the necessary leadership and oversight for the instruction and curriculum, student support services, and business and financial operations of the School.

The principal will be responsible for all hiring decisions, subject to the board's ultimate approval. Key qualifications for the principal include previous experience in a leadership position in a high-performing public high school, preferably as the principal; a track record that demonstrates the ability to lead and inspire teaching staff; instructional leadership qualities; and familiarity with school finances and business operations. The Board will begin an extensive search for the principal, with the help of a search firm, immediately after the School's charter is authorized. The School has budgeted \$30,000 in the pre-opening period for administrator and teacher recruitment in each year of the five-year operating plan.

The School plans to attract and retain highly qualified staff members by offering competitive salaries for all positions. The School has budgeted \$130,000 for the principal and an average of \$68,000 for teachers which will enable the recruitment of teachers with a Master's degree and two to four years of experience. Yearly three percent salary increases have been included in the

operating budget as well as health care benefits and matching employee contributions to a 401(k) plan up to three percent of salary for employees who have completed two years of employment. The School will provide strong supports for staff by encouraging teachers to collaborate and scheduling ample time for preparation, professional development, mentoring, and academic meetings.

The School proposes New York Law School, 185 West Broadway, New York, New York, 10013, and the College of Mount Saint Vincent, 6301 Riverdale Ave., Riverdale, New York, 10471, as partner organizations. These accredited institutions of higher learning will help the School achieve its mission by offering expertise in law and high school education and resources in the form of students, faculty, alumni, and facilities. Neither institution will charge fees for its services. The services to be provided are consistent with their respective missions and proven commitment to promoting social justice and expanding opportunities to students from underserved communities.

### **Facility**

The applicant group submitted a request to the NYCDOE to co-locate its educational program within an existing public school facility in CSD 8, 9, or 12. The applicant group also presented plans in the application to secure a private facility. The NYCDOE has recommended, due to scarcity of public space, that the applicant pursue a private space option for the school.

### **Projected Fiscal and Programmatic Impact on District of Location**

The applicant group provided an analysis of the fiscal and programmatic impact of the proposed school on public and non-public schools in New York City, indicating that the fiscal impact of the Charter High School for Law and Social Justice on the New York City School District public schools is expected to be minimal.

The New York State Education Department (“Department”) also conducted additional analysis on the projected fiscal impact of the School on its district of residence, the New York City School District (“NYCSD”), which is summarized in the following table.

**Table 2: Projected Fiscal Impact Upon District of Location, 2014-15 to 2018-19**

| Year    | Number of Students Enrolled in Charter School Per Year <sup>1</sup> | Charter School Basic Tuition Rate <sup>2</sup> | Total Charter School Basic Tuition Only | Estimated District Special Education Payment <sup>3</sup> | Total District General Fund Budget <sup>4</sup> | Percent of District Budget |
|---------|---|--|---|---|---|----------------------------|
| 2014-15 | 120   | \$15,224                                       | 1,826,880                               | \$246,629   | \$19,864,726,000                                | 0.010%                     |
| 2018-19 | 450   | \$17,754                                       | \$7,989,300                             | \$1,078,556   |   | 0.046%                     |

The calculations above assume charter school basic tuition rates in the charter period (2014-15 through 2018-19) based on a trend analysis calculated by the Charter School Office and approved by the Department’s State Aid Office. In order to conservatively avoid underestimating the fiscal impact that the charter school will have on the district going forward, the Department is assuming no growth in the New York City School District budget during the duration of the school’s charter.<sup>5</sup>

It should be noted that, given the nature of district-based per-pupil funding, the estimates made by the Department in conducting this analysis are subject to unpredictable financial fluctuations. For forecasting purposes, the fiscal impact of this charter school on the district in which it will be located assumes that:

- There will be no fluctuation in the grade levels served by existing charter schools over the course of the charter term;
- The charter school will be able to meet its projected maximum enrollment;
- All students will come from the district of location; and
- All students will attend every day for a 1.0 FTE.

The specifics of the school’s enrollment composition are still unavailable; however, the Department acknowledges that the programmatic and fiscal impact of the proposed charter school on other public and private schools in the same area will also be influenced by the proportion of charter school enrollees that would have attended a same-district public or private school had it not been for the presence of this charter school.

<sup>1</sup> Source: The Charter High School for Law and Social Justice Application

<sup>2</sup> Source: Education Law §2856(1)(a)(iii) and NYS Education Department Office of State Aid Charter School Basic Tuition Rate Analysis, Fall 2013

<sup>3</sup> Based on most recently calculated special education classification rate for the district of location, as published by the Special Education Data Collection, Analysis and Reporting (SEDCAR)

<sup>4</sup> Source: The City of New York Adopted Financial Plan, 2013-2017,

[http://www.nyc.gov/html/omb/downloads/pdf/adopt13\\_fp.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/html/omb/downloads/pdf/adopt13_fp.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Additional notes: While the school has included other federal grants and/or funds that may flow through the district to be received by the school in its proposed budget, this analysis does not account for these sources of potential revenue, nor does it include the value of certain services (e.g. transportation) that the district is required to provide the charter school. However, the analysis also does not account for district per-pupil expense and overall resource savings that are likely to result from a reduction in the number of students attending district public schools as a result of students attending nonpublic schools located in the school district.

**Table 3: 2011-12 Demographic Detail for Proposed District of Location:  
New York City Geographic District # 8 - Bronx<sup>6</sup>**

*Charter Term Year 1 Grade Configuration Based on 2011-12 District Demographics*

|                                      | Total District Enrollment |       | Grade 9 |       |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------|-------|---------|-------|
| All Students                         | 31,693                    |       | 3,157   |       |
| <i>American Indian/Alaska Native</i> | 173                       | 0.5%  | 20      | 0.6%  |
| <i>Asian/Pacific Islander</i>        | 1,494                     | 4.7%  | 90      | 2.9%  |
| <i>Black</i>                         | 7,956                     | 25.1% | 903     | 28.6% |
| <i>Hispanic</i>                      | 20,123                    | 63.5% | 1,997   | 63.3% |
| <i>Multiracial</i>                   | 34                        | 0.1%  | 1       | 0.0%  |
| <i>White</i>                         | 1,913                     | 6.0%  | 146     | 4.6%  |
| Economically Disadvantaged           | 27,584                    | 87.0% | 2,709   | 85.8% |
| Limited English Proficient           | 3,705                     | 11.7% | 451     | 14.3% |
| Students with Disabilities           | 6,352                     | 20.0% | 868     | 27.5% |

**Table 4: 2011-12 Demographic Detail for Proposed District of Location:  
New York City Geographic District # 9 - Bronx<sup>7</sup>**

*Charter Term Year 1 Grade Configuration Based on 2011-12 District Demographics*

|                                      | Total District Enrollment |       | Grade 9 |       |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------|-------|---------|-------|
| All Students                         | 36,321                    |       | 2,711   |       |
| <i>American Indian/Alaska Native</i> | 155                       | 0.4%  | 18      | 0.7%  |
| <i>Asian/Pacific Islander</i>        | 474                       | 1.3%  | 32      | 1.2%  |
| <i>Black</i>                         | 11,477                    | 31.6% | 913     | 33.7% |
| <i>Hispanic</i>                      | 23,976                    | 66.0% | 1,730   | 63.8% |
| <i>Multiracial</i>                   | 15                        | 0.0%  | -       | 0.0%  |
| <i>White</i>                         | 224                       | 0.6%  | 18      | 0.7%  |
| Economically Disadvantaged           | 34,207                    | 94.2% | 2,592   | 95.6% |
| Limited English Proficient           | 8,793                     | 24.2% | 564     | 20.8% |
| Students with Disabilities           | 6,489                     | 17.9% | 659     | 24.3% |

<sup>6</sup> Source: Student Information Repository System (SIRS) 2011-12 Report 303 BEDS Day Enrollment Verification Report by Location of Enrollment & Student Subgroup

<sup>7</sup> Source: Student Information Repository System (SIRS) 2011-12 Report 101 High School Accountability Data Verification Report; 2011-12 Report 102 Elementary/Middle-Level Accountability Data Verification Report

**Table 5: 2011-12 Demographic Detail for Proposed District of Location:  
New York City Geographic District # 12 - Bronx**  
*Charter Term Year 1 Grade Configuration Based on 2011-12 District Demographics*

|                                      | Total District Enrollment |       | Grade 9 |       |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------|-------|---------|-------|
| All Students                         | 24,077                    |       | 1,910   |       |
| <i>American Indian/Alaska Native</i> | 181                       | 0.8%  | 9       | 0.5%  |
| <i>Asian/Pacific Islander</i>        | 468                       | 1.9%  | 35      | 1.8%  |
| <i>Black</i>                         | 6,649                     | 27.6% | 569     | 29.8% |
| <i>Hispanic</i>                      | 16,508                    | 68.6% | 1,280   | 67.0% |
| <i>Multiracial</i>                   | 12                        | 0.0%  | 1       | 0.1%  |
| <i>White</i>                         | 259                       | 1.1%  | 16      | 0.8%  |
| Economically Disadvantaged           | 22,403                    | 93.0% | 1,757   | 92.0% |
| Limited English Proficient           | 4,617                     | 19.2% | 409     | 21.4% |
| Students with Disabilities           | 4,609                     | 19.1% | 415     | 21.7% |

**Table 6: 2011-12 High School Academic Proficiency Rates on NYS Regents Exams Based on  
Grade Configurations for Proposed School**

| Proficiency   |     | Proficiency   |     | Proficiency <sup>8</sup> |     |
|---------------|-----|---------------|-----|--------------------------|-----|
| <i>NYC #8</i> |     | <i>NYC #9</i> |     | <i>NYC #12</i>           |     |
| ELA           | 64% | ELA           | 68% | ELA                      | 57% |
| Math          | 44% | Math          | 53% | Math                     | 50% |
| <i>NYS</i>    |     | <i>NYS</i>    |     | <i>NYS</i>               |     |
| ELA           | 82% | ELA           | 82% | ELA                      | 82% |
| Math          | 71% | Math          | 71% | Math                     | 71% |

<sup>8</sup> Note: The Charter High School for Law and Social Justice may be located in one of three NYC DOE locations. Academic comparisons were made using all three districts to ensure the future location of the school would be accounted. High School Regents Exam proficiency rates based on 2011-12 English Composition and Integrated Algebra Regents Exams.

## **Public Hearing and Public Comment**

As required by the Charter Schools Act, the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) held a hearing on October 24, 2013 to solicit comments from the community concerning the proposed Charter High School for Law and Social Justice. The hearing was attended by fourteen representatives from two charter schools, seven students and nine community members. One person spoke in favor the two charter school applications presented at the hearing. No one spoke or commented in opposition to the proposed charter school applications.

The Department directly notified the Chancellor of the NYCDOE, as well as public and private schools in the region, of the charter school application and issued an open call for written public comment via the State Education Department Charter School Office website. The Chancellor was contacted by letter and invited to comment directly. Chancellor Walcott recommends this charter application to support the children of New York City stating that, “The NYC DOE found this proposal to be well-designed, offering a rigorous educational model.”

## **Application Review Process**

On September 3, 2013, as required by the New York State Charter Schools Act, the New York State Education Department (the “Department”) released the 2013 Request for Proposals (“RFP”) to Establish Charter Schools Authorized by the Board of Regents. The charter school application process used by the Board of Regents and the Department during the 2013 RFP cycle is multi-staged and designed to ensure that any charter school applicant presented to the Board of Regents for possible approval demonstrates a detailed and complete school design plan that:

- includes a clear plan to meet or exceed enrollment and retention targets for students with disabilities, students who are English language learners, and students who are eligible to participate in the federal free and reduced-price lunch program;
- provides evidence of public outreach that conforms to the process prescribed by the Regents for the purpose of soliciting and incorporating community input regarding the proposed charter school;
- meets all requirements set forth in the Charter Schools Act as well as all other applicable laws, rules, regulations;
- demonstrates the ability to operate the school in an educationally and fiscally sound manner;
- is likely to improve student learning and achievement and materially further the purposes of the Act; and
- would have a significant educational benefit to the students expected to attend the proposed charter school.

In addition, the applicant group and founding board of trustees must demonstrate appropriate knowledge, capacity, and abilities to effectively create, maintain, and oversee a high-quality charter school.

During 2013, a total of 99 letters of intent were submitted in two rounds (February and September). After an initial review process, a total of 46 applications were evaluated in 2013, including the application for the Charter School for Law and Social Justice.

To assess whether to recommend approval or denial of the charter application to the Board of Regents, the Department established review panels to thoroughly evaluate each full application. Each panel was made up of professional expert consultants, peer reviewers who are school leaders and educators active in charter and public schools in New York, as well as qualified Department staff members. The review panel members reviewed, rated, and commented on each section of the application according to the criteria published in the Application Kit.

Department staff conducted a two-hour capacity interview with eight of the eleven initial board members proposed for the Charter School for Law and Social Justice on Tuesday, October 29, 2013. Questions posed to the proposed initial trustees included general questions around New York State Charter School Law, the roles and responsibilities of components of the school community, and accountability to stakeholder groups as well to as the Board of Regents as authorizer. To fully understand the proposed academic program, governance role and fiscal viability of the proposed School, staff asked targeted questions of the applicant group.

The responses demonstrated adequate knowledge and grasp of key areas. Members of the applicant group as a whole and individually demonstrated knowledge of the charter school application and the proposed School. Structures, systems, protocols and procedures are in place to permit the board to effectively govern the School. The applicants addressed questions posed with specific and detailed information that presented a clear, realistic picture of how the School expects to operate.

## **Findings**

Based on the comprehensive review of the application and of the applicant, founding group, and proposed board of trustees, the Department makes the following findings:

1. The charter school described in the application meets the requirements of Article 56 of the Education Law (as amended) and other applicable laws, rules, and regulations.<sup>9</sup> This finding is based on the following (among other things):
  - the applicant has included in the application the information required by §2851(2)
  - the proposed charter school would meet or exceed enrollment and retention targets, as prescribed by the NYS Board of Regents,<sup>10</sup> of students with disabilities, English language learners, and students who are eligible applicants for the federal free and

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<sup>9</sup> Education Law §2852(2)(a).

<sup>10</sup> Note, the data upon which to base the enrollment and retention targets mandated by the amendments to the Act was not available at the time the statute mandated the RFP be issued. As a result, the Department evaluated the plans for student enrollment, recruitment, and retention plans of each class of student referenced in the amendments to the Act such that the Department could make the determination that the applicant would meet or exceed the enrollment and retention targets when developed. During the first year of the charter term, the Department will develop such targets and incorporate these targets into the school's charter agreement performance expectations.

- reduced price lunch program as required by Education Law subdivision 2852(9-a)(b)(i)
- the applicant has conducted public outreach to solicit community input regarding the proposed charter school and to address comments received from the impacted community concerning the educational and programmatic needs of students in conformity with Education Law subdivision 2852(9-a)(b)(ii).
2. The applicant has demonstrated the ability to operate the proposed charter school in an educationally and fiscally sound manner.<sup>11</sup> This finding is based on the following (among other things):
- The presentation in the application of a sound description of key features that are core to the school’s overall design, and which rigorously addresses the criteria outlined in the Department’s RFP in the areas of mission; key design elements; enrollment, recruitment and retention;, and community to be served.
  - The presentation in the application of a sound educational plan, which rigorously addresses the criteria outlined in the Department’s RFP in the areas of achievement goals; school schedule and calendar; curriculum and instruction; assessment; school culture and climate; and special student populations and related services.
  - The presentation in the application of a sound organizational and fiscal plan, which rigorously addresses the criteria outlined in the Department’s RFP in the areas of founding group capacity; board of trustees and governance; management and staffing; evaluation; professional development; facilities; insurance; health, food and transportation services; family and community involvement; financial management; budget and cash flow; pre-opening plan; and dissolution plan.
  - An understanding of the New York State Charter Schools Act, and the skill, will and capacity to successfully launch and operate a high quality public charter school.
3. Granting the proposed charter is likely to improve student learning and achievement, will materially further the purposes of the Act<sup>12</sup> and will have a significant educational benefit to the students expected to attend the charter school.<sup>13</sup> This finding is based on the totality of the information presented in the application and during the application review process, as summarized in this document.

## **Recommendation**

Based on the Department’s review and findings, Commissioner John B. King, Jr. recommends that the New York State Board of Regents approve the proposal to establish the Charter High School for Law and Social Justice to open in 2014 in New York City.

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<sup>11</sup> Education Law §2852(2)(b).

<sup>12</sup> Education Law §2852(2)(c).

<sup>13</sup> As applicable pursuant to §2852(2)(d).



# New York State Education Department Charter School Office

## **Charter School Application Summary, Findings, and Recommendation**

Application in response to the  
New York State Education Department 2013 Request for Proposals to  
Establish Charter Schools Authorized by the Board of Regents  
To establish the proposed:

**Collegiate Academy for Mathematics and Personal Awareness  
Charter School (CAMPA)**

December 2013

**Table 1: Summary of the Proposed  
Collegiate Academy for Mathematics and Personal Awareness Charter School (CAMPA)**

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Name of Charter School                                  | Collegiate Academy for Mathematics and Personal Awareness Charter School (CAMPA)  |
| Lead Applicant(s)                                       | Viola Abbott<br>Daryl Rock  |
| District of Location                                    | NYC CSD 19  |
| Opening Date  | August 2014   |
| Projected Charter Term                                  | December 17, 2013 – June 30, 2019   |
| Management Company                                      | None  |
| Partners  | None  |
| Facility  | Private facility  |
| Projected Enrollment and Grade Span during Charter Term | Opening with 125 students in Grade 5; growing to 455 students in Grades 5 through 8   |
| Planned Grade Span (beyond Initial Charter Term)        | 455 students in Grade 5 through Grade 8   |
| Mission Statement                                       | <i>“The Collegiate Academy for Mathematics and Personal Awareness Charter School (CAMPA) will ensure that our students achieve academic success and engage in practices that lead to self-confidence and physical and mental health. Students will not only leave CAMPA with a command of the skills necessary to perform at a high level in high school and college, but will also develop the social tools required to thrive in our ever-changing global society.”</i> |

The Collegiate Academy for Mathematics and Personal Awareness Charter School (CAMPA) is designed around two unique focus areas: high school-level mathematics in middle school, and personal awareness and wellness. The CAMPA founding group designed the school around these two areas in response to an extensive joint planning process with community members in East New York.

## Key Design Elements

- **High School Level Mathematics in Middle School:** A study by the College Board, “Changing the Odds,” indicates that the two predictors for school success are mastery of Algebra and Geometry in high school, and aspirations of attending college formed by the eighth grade. The mathematics course content in high school, more than any other subject, proves the most accurate predictor of college success. A student who takes a Calculus course in high school is eight times more likely to graduate from college than a student who completed Algebra I, and, every step up the math ladder (Algebra I, Geometry, Trigonometry, Algebra 2, Pre-Calculus, and Calculus) increases the likelihood of earning a Bachelor’s degree by roughly 50%. CAMPA will purposefully create the supportive environment necessary (strong teachers, high expectations, rigorous curriculum that fosters a love for mathematics, peer tutoring, etc.) to ensure students are on course to complete high school Algebra in middle school.
- **Personal Awareness and Wellness:** Core to CAMPA’s mission to address middle school-age student development, CAMPA will use the research-based Social Emotional Learning (SEL) programs developed by Morningside Center to address personal awareness, in particular the Reading, Writing, Respect & Resolution (4Rs Program), the Resolving Conflict Creatively Program (RCCP) and Peer Mediation. The CAMPA wellness program will consist of physical education, nutrition, and community health and will be paired with CAMPA’s SEL programs to develop the whole child.
- **More instructional time:** CAMPA’s calendar and daily schedule provide for the equivalent of 200 instructional days per year. Additionally, students will have an extended day, with fifth and sixth grade students receiving 90 minutes more per day of instruction and seventh and eighth grade students receiving 135 minutes more per day. Another 60 minutes within the daily schedule will be dedicated to enrichment, which will be determined on an individual student basis. All incoming fifth grade students will attend a 20 day Summer Bridge program to prepare them for CAMPA’s rigorous middle school program. Students who are struggling academically, particularly those who meet the promotion in doubt criteria, will be required to attend a 20 day Summer Academy before advancing to Grades 6-8.
- **Peer tutoring by high school students:** Grade 11 and 12 students from partner high schools will serve as peer tutors and mentors to CAMPA students. The peer tutors will have completed the Math Regents, having demonstrated exemplary work, and serve as academic role models. Providing middle school students with high school peer tutors also provides them a mentor who can provide insight and preparation for the high school experience.
- **Co-planning instruction and co-teaching with high school in mind:** CAMPA fifth grade classroom teachers and sixth-eighth grade ELA and math teachers will partner with a content area specialist. The goal is twofold. First, with a high school certified content area specialist co-teacher, the team will remain focused on preparing students for high school level content and rigor through common planning and specialist classroom

modeling. Secondly, the co-teaching model facilitates a greater level of differentiated instruction and small group instruction in a class of heterogeneous learners, particularly in a school community expected to serve a large percentage of at-risk students.

- **SEL to Support Student Achievement:** CAMPA will use the 4Rs Program, RCCP and Peer Mediation programs from the Morningside Center to integrate literacy.
- **Partnering with the Community:** CAMPA seeks to partner with students, parents and the community on its wellness programming. CAMPA is in conversations with the *Live Light Live Right* program at Brookdale University Hospital and the Brownsville Recreation Center about partnering on wellness initiatives.
- **Organizational Structure and Capacity:** CAMPA's organizational structure is designed to maximize support for teachers. The School will employ a robust operations team that will allow the instructional leadership to focus entirely on instruction, including observing and coaching teachers, developing curriculum, and planning professional development.

## **Educational Plan**

The CAMPA Charter School calendar consists of 200 days of instruction; 191 full school days of instruction and 18 days of instruction attending Saturday school. Students will arrive at 7:45 a.m. for breakfast, supervised by school aides and the operations staff, until 8:15 a.m. Students begin their instructional day with a homeroom advisory from 8:15-8:30 a.m. which incorporates the SEL program developed by Morningside Center delivered by the classroom teacher. With the exception of the advisory teachers, all other teachers will have a 7:45-8:15 a.m. prep time. Additionally, CAMPA's teacher schedules provide for dedicated Coaching periods when the class is divided for small group instruction in ELA or mathematics.

All students, whether academically struggling or those who are at grade level in all subjects, will be eligible for enrichment programming and will receive more attention via a daily enrichment period. Specifically, core instruction ends for students at 3:15 p.m. for students in grades 5 and 6 and at 3:45 p.m. for students in grades 7 and 8 at which time all students will transition to one hour of enrichment Monday through Thursday. Students will be placed in small groups with ratios of 1:1, 3:1, 5:1 and 10:1 utilizing teachers and peer tutors to deliver instruction.

Saturday Academy occurs the first and second Saturday of each month. Saturday Academy, like the daily enrichment period, is mandatory for all students regardless of achievement level. Saturday Academy will occur from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., and provides students with another opportunity to engage and to overcome academic deficits, address current academic challenges, or continue on an accelerated pace.

During Saturday Academy, peer tutors will co-teach with CAMPA teachers, planning lessons during weekly meetings with teachers for students they support. The initial focus of the partnership with high school will be to employ peer tutors with demonstrated content area

expertise in ELA and mathematics to partner with 5th grade students who will enter CAMPA with a diversity of experience and skill level.

The school schedule and calendar will provide time for teacher support, common planning, and professional development. For example, the Math Specialist, licensed for high school mathematics, will co-plan and co-teach with the Grade 5 classroom teachers and with the Grade 6-8 math teachers to model the high school mathematics rigor and depth of content. Daily common planning time will be scheduled for all math and ELA teachers on grade level to meet with each other and the content area specialist. The ELA Specialist will have a similar schedule. The impact of this schedule on Grade 5 classroom teachers and Grade 6 through 8 ELA and Math teachers is that they receive 60-90 minutes of professional development while teaching *daily* and 60 minutes of common planning time with the Specialist and their grade level ELA or math teacher peers *daily*. On Fridays, students will be dismissed an hour earlier to provide teachers with an hour once a week for professional development. There will be an additional three full days during the school year when school is not in session that will be dedicated to teacher professional development.

For one week prior to the beginning of the Summer Bridge for students, the teachers will participate in professional development. Subsequent to this one week, teachers will participate in two weeks of professional development prior to the beginning of the school year. Additionally, teachers and the peer tutors will meet for an hour after every Saturday Academy to analyze the effectiveness of the peer tutoring program and to provide professional development to the peer tutors. Teachers and peer tutors will also meet weekly during teacher prep time at least 60 minutes a week.

To increase teacher engagement in the school's academic decision-making, teachers and leadership will annually engage in a rigorous in-house curriculum development process. It is vital that the process be educator-driven from within CAMPA, rather than simply involve the adoption of off the-shelf programs. Like many successful schools, CAMPA will leverage Wiggins and McTighe's influential *Understanding by Design* concept for curricular design. Research has shown that authentic pedagogy and higher-order thinking and deep-knowledge approaches have significantly more impact on student performance. CAMPA will retain curriculum consultants to prepare the core maps for each subject area. Then, during the two week summer teacher training each year, instructors will be supported in translating grade-level Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and New York State Standards (NYSS) into a set of thematic units grouped around the enduring understandings that are most important for students. Facilitated by the Principal and Achievement Director and supported by subject-area expert consultants as needed, each teacher will start with the relevant CCSS and NYSS standards for his or her grade and subject and map out a sequence of units that address those standards. In later years, the training period will be used to revise and enhance curriculum maps.

CAMPA's ELA learning objectives will be aligned to CCSS and NYSS and focus on reading, writing, speaking, listening and grammar concepts across the content areas to ensure that students increase comprehension, build new knowledge about a variety of subjects and think critically about historical and current events, and technical and scientific issues. CAMPA will use a balanced literacy approach because it integrates various modalities for literacy instruction.

In 5th grade, MacMillan/McGraw-Hill *Language Arts Series*, a balanced approach to grammar and writing, will be used as a resource to support instruction. In Grades 6 through 8, *Literature Common Core Bundle* from Glencoe/McGraw-Hill, a series that connects literature through single-focus meaningful questions and ideas, will be used as a resource in teaching the curriculum.

Part of CAMPA's mission is to instill a lifelong passion for mathematics in students that is carried out in high school and college. CAMPA will achieve this objective with a rigorous core mathematics program that fosters the college readiness skills of forming conjectures and drawing real-world connections to content, and begins skill building in preparation for students' study of Algebra. Students will hone problem-solving skills independently, as well as through collaboration and discussion of mathematical concepts—skills stressed in the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) standards. CAMPA will use *Connected Math* and *My Math* as resources in teaching the curriculum.

*Science:* Project-based learning will be applied in Grades 5 through 8. Students will have the opportunity to select topics of interest to investigate, and work collaboratively to develop projects. This method will support rigorous and engaging instruction using the following two resources for teaching science: FOSS and STEM. In the first year for Grade 5 students, CAMPA will use Harcourt, New York City Science textbook, which is supported by the New York City Science Core Curriculum as a resource for instruction. Since most publishers are in the process of developing textbooks for the science alignment to the CCSS, a decision for selecting a book for middle school grades 6 through 8 is pending. Integrated literacy will be used to enrich the learning process, including articles, internet, audio, video, digital literacy, nonfiction and realistic fiction. Students will be expected to read for information, use academic vocabulary, summarize and evaluate and write informative essays to demonstrate the ability to integrate information from multiple sources.

Teachers will learn ways to analyze data to determine student and programmatic needs through planned and purposeful professional development. They will work in grade level teams to determine what the data reveals about instruction and student achievement. Teachers will be expected to create action plans to address any areas of need. School leaders will analyze data from all levels to assess student achievement and programmatic success. Data will be used in a formative way to determine immediate needs to improve achievement as well as in a summative way to inform decision making for the future of the school. Teacher hiring, program development and scheduling are just a few aspects of the school community which will be predicated on the results of school wide data. The board of trustees will be presented a monthly data picture of the school's students and programs and use the data to consider implementation of staff recommendations for changes which will bolster the existing program or capitalize on areas of success that exist. Teachers will engage students in planning academic goals for themselves and discuss how they are progressing toward achieving them.

Project-based learning is an approach designed to engage students in investigations of their choosing because it is interdisciplinary and the responsibility of learning is released from the teacher and gradually given to the student. The Social Studies themes of history, geography, economics, civics, citizenship and government, which are woven into the fiber of each region

studied, will be evident in each project. Students will be expected to debate, form opinions, present facts in a sequential logical manner (verbally and in writing with the use of technology), cite sources, evaluate facts, participate in conversations, think and write critically. Students will read varied texts, documents, DBQ's, trade books and articles on the themes to assist in formulating understanding of the big ideas.

CAMPA will administer formative, summative, and norm-referenced assessments; analyze assessment data, and develop action plans for students. The Principal in the first year and the Achievement Director in future years will manage the assessment. The Principal and Achievement Director will be responsible for ensuring assessments are administered and scored with validity and will prepare analyses of student data for review by the school leaders and teachers. Friday afternoons will be reserved for all-school professional development each week, and a key recurring feature of these weekly meetings will be time for all staff to review data from interim assessments and coursework grades. These data reviews, facilitated by the Principal or Achievement Director will serve to identify concepts for re-teaching and to identify standards where a teacher may need to try a different approach. In addition, these data reviews will identify standards at the student-level that should become a priority for academic intervention.

Additionally, CAMPA teachers will use assessments to revise pacing, differentiate lessons, remediate skills or content, group students, select students for interventions, assess professional growth and progress, and communicate with students, parents, and families. The Principal and Assistant Principal will use assessments to design, review, and revise curriculum, evaluate teachers and instructional methods, and make decisions about PD and assess its efficacy. Assessment data will also be used to inform decisions about student promotion and determine school progress towards student achievement goals.

Parents and students will be made aware of student achievement data through a variety of mechanisms, including weekly newsletters or teacher phone calls (once per week on average) to inform parents of both positive and negative developments. More formally, four times per year students will receive a Report Card with course grades for each class. For subsequent Report Cards, any parent whose student who is on track to fail a course will meet with the teacher. At those conferences, teachers will discuss the student's data and indicate areas of improvement and school and parent strategies for providing support. The board of trustees will receive regular reports on student achievement data at each monthly meeting. Data presented will include baseline data, interim and end of unit assessment data, NYS practice test data and NYS standardized test data. The data will be presented against charter goals. The board will review assessment results throughout the year as they are generated and will also take a holistic look at the school's achievement data prior to the beginning of the following school year as a way of evaluating the Principal and setting strategic priorities for the school.

CAMPA's mission can only be achieved if classrooms are safe and teaching is uninterrupted. The School's board, leadership and staff are committed to establishing a positive school culture and will collaboratively solve problems and continually share best practices across the organization in order to maintain it. CAMPA will maintain a safe and orderly environment by incorporating respect, integrity and honesty into its educational program. Teachers will strive to encourage all students to develop a sense of self-control and respect for themselves and others.

Infractions will be dealt with gently but firmly, in accordance with the CAMPA Student Discipline Code. CAMPA leadership and its board will regularly review attendance and suspension data alongside anecdotal data gathered from teachers, parents and students to evaluate the effectiveness of the discipline policy and make amendments as necessary.

## **Community Outreach**

The applicant group has engaged in rigorous, ongoing efforts of outreach to inform and solicit input from the Brooklyn CSD 19 community regarding how the proposed School intends to address the educational and programmatic needs of students. The applicant group held a number of community forums, distributed informational brochures in various locations throughout the community, made presentations to community based organizations and local public school officials, met with members of State and local legislatures, and invited the public to comment via the proposed school's website, email address, or phone. The applicant group has considered community feedback in its school design.

## **School Governance and Leadership**

Including the lead applicants, Ms. Viola Abbott and Mr. Daryl Rock, the planning team consists of twelve individuals representing experienced educators, professionals in law, management, and finances, community members, and students. Eleven of the individuals are named in the application as proposed members of the initial board of trustees, and each has provided a completed School Trustee Background Information form, Statement of Assurance and resume or curriculum vitae. As required, the applicant group has provided a set of draft by-laws and a draft code of ethics.

The proposed initial members of the board of trustees are described below:

- **Viola Abbott**, Co-founder and Co-Lead Applicant, is currently an educational consultant with the New York City Department of Education's Leadership Program. She is a member of the East New York community member with over 30 years experience as a NYCDOE teacher, math coordinator, principal and superintendent in Brooklyn. She taught at Bank Street and Columbia University's Principal Academy.
- **Daryl Rock**, Co-founder and Co-Lead Applicant, is currently an educational consultant. He has 25 years of experience as a NYCDOE and charter school teacher, principal, and superintendent. Mr. Rock is a former Superintendent of the Harlem Children Zone Promise Academy Charter Schools.
- **Deborah Knight** is a Principal Mentor with the New York City Department of Education. She has 35 plus years experience as teacher, math coordinator, reading teacher, assistant principal and principal. Ms. Knight is the founding principal of a new school in Bedford Stuyvesant.

- **Jeannie Lopez, Esq.** is a Deputy Bureau Chief of the Brooklyn District Attorney's Office. She graduated from Brooklyn Law School.
- **Julia McDonald** is had 35 years of experience as a Human Resources Professional with Bank of New York. She is lifelong community member of East New York.
- **Joan Ramsey** is a Professor of Education at Mercy College Co-founder. She has over 30 years of experience as a NYCDOE teacher, principal and professional developer.
- **JoAnne Challenger** is a Senior Consultant with ENSYNC Diversified Management Services. She has more than 30 years of experience as a NYCDOE teacher and principal. Ms. Challenger is also an Assistant Professor at Mercy College.
- **Larry Hughes** is a Certified Financial Planner with the American Portfolios Financial Services. He Certified Financial Planner with 15 years experience on Wall Street and with American Portfolios Financial Services, Inc.
- **Lori Bennett** is an Education Consultant, with 35 years of experience as a NYCDOE teacher, math coordinator, principal and middle school superintendent. She is also a founding principal of a new school and a former NYCDOE Director of Middle School Initiatives.
- **Michele Weekes** is a lifelong resident of Bedford Stuyvesant with 35 years of experience as a NYCDOE teacher, assistant principal and principal. She was 15 year principal of the elementary school she attended as a child.
- **Rana Khan** is a Vice President of Policy and New Schools at the Newark Charter Schools Fund. She is a former Chief of Staff and Director of Space Planning at the New York City School Construction Authority and also has experience as a charter authorizer with the NYC DOE.

**Nordia Messam** served as a planning team member but will not continue on as a member of the board of trustees. She is a 2013 graduate of Brooklyn Technical High School in Media Communications, and is interested in filmmaking and animation.

CAMPA has established clearly defined roles and lines of authority, so each staff member has have a clear understanding of his or her responsibilities. CAMPA will rely on a strong centralized leader overseeing all aspects of the organization as Principal, supported by an Assistant Principal, Achievement Coordinator and a Coordinator of Student and Community Affairs. The instructional staff includes a range of classroom and specialized teachers and, on the operations side, the Finance and Human Resources Director leads the operations staff.

## Facility

CAMPA has identified a private facility in which to house the proposed charter school. The founders seek to occupy the proposed charter school in three modular classroom buildings, which are owned by the Bethlehem Baptist Church (the Church). The Church has committed to lease the space to CAMPA at a favorable rate. Each of the modular units contains approximately 9,000 square feet and includes 10 classrooms, office space and bathrooms. In its first year, CAMPA will utilize one modular and expand to all three modules by Year 3.

## Projected Fiscal and Programmatic Impact on District of Location

The applicant group provided an analysis of the fiscal and programmatic impact of the proposed school on public and non-public schools in York City, indicating that the fiscal impact of the CAMPA Charter School on the New York City School District public schools is expected to be nominal.

The New York State Education Department (“Department”) also conducted additional analysis on the projected fiscal impact of the School on its district of residence, the New York City School District (“NYCSD”), which is summarized below.

**Table 2: Projected Fiscal Impact upon District of Location, 2014-15 to 2018-19**

| Year    | Number of Students Enrolled in Charter School Per Year <sup>1</sup> | Charter School Basic Tuition Rate <sup>2</sup> | Total Charter School Basic Tuition Only | Estimated District Special Education Payment <sup>3</sup> | Total District General Fund Budget <sup>4</sup> | Percent of District Budget |
|---------|---|--|---|---|---|----------------------------|
| 2014-15 | 125   | \$15,224                                       | \$1,903,000                             | \$284,752   | \$19,864,726,000                                | 0.011%                     |
| 2018-19 | 455   | \$17,754                                       | \$8,078,070                             | \$1,208,746   |   | 0.047%                     |

The calculations above assume charter school basic tuition rates in the charter period (2014-15 through 2018-19) based on a trend analysis calculated by the Charter School Office and approved by the Department’s State Aid Office. In order to conservatively avoid underestimating the fiscal impact that the charter school will have on the district going forward, the Department is assuming no growth in the New York City School District budget during the duration of the school’s charter.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Source: The Collegiate Academy for Mathematics and Personal Awareness Application

<sup>2</sup> Source: Education Law §2856(1)(a)(iii) and NYS Education Department Office of State Aid Charter School Basic Tuition Rate Analysis, Fall 2013

<sup>3</sup> Based on 2012-13 calculated special education classification rate for the district of location, as collected by NYSED Information and Report Services

<sup>4</sup> Source: The City of New York Adopted Financial Plan, 2013-2017, [http://www.nyc.gov/html/omb/downloads/pdf/adopt13\\_fp.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/html/omb/downloads/pdf/adopt13_fp.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Additional notes: While the school has included other federal grants and/or funds that may flow through the district to be received by the school in its proposed budget, this analysis does not account for these sources of potential revenue, nor does it include the value of certain services (e.g. transportation) that the district is required to provide the charter school. However, the analysis also does not account for district per-pupil expense and overall resource savings that are likely to result from a reduction in the number of students attending district public schools as a result of students attending nonpublic schools located in the school district.

It should be noted that, given the nature of district-based per-pupil funding, the estimates made by the Department in conducting this analysis are subject to unpredictable financial fluctuations. For forecasting purposes, the fiscal impact of this charter school on the district in which it will be located assumes that:

- There will be no fluctuation in the grade levels served by existing charter schools over the course of the charter term;
- The charter school will be able to meet its projected maximum enrollment;
- All students will come from the district of location; and
- All students will attend every day for a 1.0 FTE.

The specifics of the school’s enrollment composition are still unavailable; however, the Department acknowledges that the programmatic and fiscal impact of the proposed charter school on other public and private schools in the same area will also be influenced by the proportion of charter school enrollees that would have attended a same-district public or private school had it not been for the presence of this charter school.

Below, for reference, please find additional data on New York City Community School District 19.

**Table 3: 2011-12 Demographic Detail for Proposed District of Location:  
New York City Geographic District # 19 - Brooklyn<sup>6</sup>**

*Charter Term Year 1 Grade Configuration Based on 2011-12 District Demographics*

|                                      | Total District Enrollment |       | Grade 5 |       |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------|-------|---------|-------|
| All Students                         | 25,440                    |       | 1,969   |       |
| <i>American Indian/Alaska Native</i> | 205                       | 0.8%  | 15      | 0.8%  |
| <i>Asian/Pacific Islander</i>        | 1,586                     | 6.2%  | 163     | 8.3%  |
| <i>Black</i>                         | 13,049                    | 51.3% | 924     | 46.9% |
| <i>Hispanic</i>                      | 10,254                    | 40.3% | 852     | 43.3% |
| <i>Multiracial</i>                   | 17                        | 0.1%  | -       | 0.0%  |
| <i>White</i>                         | 329                       | 1.3%  | 15      | 0.8%  |
| Economically Disadvantaged           | 23,207                    | 91.2% | 1,907   | 96.9% |
| Limited English Proficient           | 3,007                     | 11.8% | 234     | 11.9% |
| Students with Disabilities           | 3,796                     | 14.9% | 304     | 15.4% |

<sup>6</sup> Source: Student Information Repository System (SIRS) 2011-12 Report 303 BEDS Day Enrollment Verification Report by Location of Enrollment & Student Subgroup

**Table 4: 2011-12 Academic Proficiency Rates on NYS Exams Based on Grade Configurations for Proposed School<sup>7</sup>**

|                | 5   | 6   | 7   | 8   |
|----------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| <i>NYC #19</i> |     |     |     |     |
| ELA            | 39% | 30% | 31% | 24% |
| Math           | 53% | 43% | 38% | 34% |
| <i>NYS</i>     |     |     |     |     |
| ELA            | 58% | 56% | 52% | 50% |
| Math           | 67% | 65% | 65% | 61% |

### Public Hearing and Public Comment

As required by the Charter Schools Act, the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) held a hearing on October 24, 2013 to solicit comments from the community concerning CAMPA Charter School. The hearing was attended by ten members of the community. No comments were received concerning the proposed charter school application.

The Department directly notified the Chancellor of the NYC DOE, as well as public and private schools in the region, of the charter school application and issued an open call for written public comment via the State Education Department Charter School Office website. The Chancellor was contacted by letter and invited to comment directly. Chancellor Walcott recommends this charter application to support the children of New York City stating that, “The NYC DOE found this proposal to be well-designed, offering a rigorous educational model.”

### Application Review Process

On September 3, 2013, as required by the New York State Charter Schools Act, the New York State Education Department (the “Department”) released the 2013 Request for Proposals (“RFP”) to Establish Charter Schools Authorized by the Board of Regents. The charter school application process used by the Board of Regents and the Department during the 2013 RFP cycle is multi-stage and designed to ensure that any charter school applicant presented to the Board of Regents for possible approval demonstrates a detailed and complete school design plan that:

- includes a clear plan to meet or exceed enrollment and retention targets for students with disabilities, students who are English language learners, and students who are eligible to participate in the federal free reduced-price lunch program;
- provides evidence of public outreach that conforms to the process prescribed by the Regents for the purpose of soliciting and incorporating community input regarding the proposed charter school;

<sup>7</sup> Source: Student Information Repository System (SIRS) 2011-12 Report 101 High School Accountability Data Verification Report; 2011-12 Report 102 Elementary/Middle-Level Accountability Data Verification Report

- meets all requirements set forth in the Charter Schools Act as well as all other applicable laws, rules, regulations;
- demonstrates the ability to operate the school in an educationally and fiscally sound manner;
- is likely to improve student learning and achievement and materially further the purposes of the Act; and
- would have a significant educational benefit to the students expected to attend the proposed charter school.

In addition, the applicant group and founding board of trustees must demonstrate appropriate knowledge, capacity, and abilities to effectively create, maintain, and oversee a high-quality charter school.

During 2013, a total of 99 letters of intent were submitted in two rounds (February and September). After an initial review process, a total of 46 applications were evaluated in 2013, including the application for the Collegiate Academy for Mathematics and Personal Awareness (CAMPA) Charter School.

To assess whether to recommend approval or denial of the charter application to the Board of Regents, the Department established review panels to thoroughly evaluate each full application. Each panel was made up of professional expert consultants, peer reviewers who are school leaders and educators active in charter and public schools in New York, as well as qualified Department staff members. The review panel members reviewed, rated, and commented on each section of the application according to the criteria published in the Application Kit.

Department staff conducted a two-hour capacity interview with twelve members of the founding group, eleven of whom will serve on the initial board of trustees for the proposed CAMPA Charter School, on May 22, 2013. Questions posed to the proposed initial trustees included general questions around New York State Charter School Law, roles and responsibilities of the school community and the board to the community and various stakeholder groups as well to as the Board of Regents as authorizer. To fully understand the proposed academic program, governance role and fiscal viability of the proposed School, targeted questions were asked to clarify information provided in the full application.

The responses demonstrated adequate knowledge and grasp of key areas. Members of the applicant group as a whole and individually demonstrated knowledge of the charter school application and the proposed School. Structures, systems, protocols and procedures are in place to permit the board to effectively govern the School. The applicants addressed questions posed with specific and detailed information that presented a clear, realistic picture of how the School expects to operate.

## Findings

Based on the comprehensive review of the application and of the applicant, founding group, and proposed board of trustees, the Department makes the following findings:

1. The charter school described in the application meets the requirements of Article 56 of the Education Law (as amended) and other applicable laws, rules, and regulations.<sup>8</sup> This finding is based on the following (among other things):
  - the applicant has included in the application the information required by §2851(2)
  - the proposed charter school would meet or exceed enrollment and retention targets, as prescribed by the NYS Board of Regents,<sup>9</sup> of students with disabilities, English language learners, and students who are eligible applicants for the federal free and reduced price lunch program as required by Education Law subdivision 2852(9-a)(b)(i)
  - the applicant has conducted public outreach to solicit community input regarding the proposed charter school and to address comments received from the impacted community concerning the educational and programmatic needs of students in conformity with Education Law subdivision 2852(9-a)(b)(ii).
  
2. The applicant has demonstrated the ability to operate the proposed charter school in an educationally and fiscally sound manner.<sup>10</sup> This finding is based on the following (among other things):
  - The presentation in the application of a sound description of key features that are core to the school's overall design, and which rigorously addresses the criteria outlined in the Department's RFP in the areas of mission; key design elements; enrollment, recruitment and retention; and community to be served.
  - The presentation in the application of a sound educational plan, which rigorously addresses the criteria outlined in the Department's RFP in the areas of achievement goals; school schedule and calendar; curriculum and instruction; assessment; school culture and climate; and special student populations and related services.
  - The presentation in the application of a sound organizational and fiscal plan, which rigorously addresses the criteria outlined in the Department's RFP in the areas of founding group capacity; board of trustees and governance; management and staffing; evaluation; professional development; facilities; insurance; health, food and transportation services; family and community involvement; financial management; budget and cash flow; pre-opening plan; and dissolution plan.

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<sup>8</sup> Education Law §2852(2) (a).

<sup>9</sup> Note, the data upon which to base the enrollment and retention targets mandated by the amendments to the Act was not available at the time the statute mandated the RFP be issued. As a result, the Department evaluated the plans for student enrollment, recruitment, and retention plans of each class of student referenced in the amendments to the Act such that the Department could make the determination that the applicant would meet or exceed the enrollment and retention targets when developed. During the first year of the charter term, the Department will develop such targets and incorporate these targets into the school's charter agreement performance expectations.

<sup>10</sup> Education Law §2852(2) (b).

- An understanding of the New York State Charter Schools Act, and the skill, will and capacity to successfully launch and operate a high quality public charter school.
3. Granting the proposed charter is likely to improve student learning and achievement, will materially further the purposes of the Act<sup>11</sup> and will have a significant educational benefit to the students expected to attend the charter school.<sup>12</sup> This finding is based on the totality of the information presented in the application and during the application review process, as summarized in this document.

### **Recommendation**

Based on the Department's review and findings, Commissioner John B. King, Jr. recommends that the New York State Board of Regents approve the proposal to establish the Collegiate Academy for Mathematics and Personal Awareness (CAMPA) Charter School to open in 2014 in New York City.

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<sup>11</sup> Education Law §2852(2) (c).

<sup>12</sup> As applicable pursuant to §2852(2) (d).



# New York State Education Department Charter School Office

## **Charter School Application Summary, Findings, and Recommendation**

Application in response to the  
New York State Education Department 2013 Request for Proposals to  
Establish Charter Schools Authorized by the Board of Regents  
to establish the proposed:

**Compass Charter School**

**December 2013**

**Table 1: Summary of the Proposed Compass Charter School**

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Name of Charter School                                  | Compass Charter School  |
| Lead Applicant(s)                                       | Michelle Healy<br>Brooke Peters   |
| District of Location                                    | Brooklyn, CSD 13  |
| Opening Date  | Summer/Fall 2014  |
| Projected Charter Term                                  | December 17, 2013 – June 30, 2019   |
| Management Company                                      | None  |
| Partners  | None  |
| Facility  | Co-location in Building K113, 300 Adelphi Street, Brooklyn was approved in October, 2013; applicant has provided a fiscal and site contingency plan for private space if needed.  |
| Projected Enrollment and Grade Span during Charter Term | Opening with 132 students in Grades K through 1 in 2014-2015; growing to 396 students in Grades K through 5 by the end of the initial charter term, 2018-19.  |
| Planned Grade Span (beyond Initial Charter Term)        | 396 students in Kindergarten through Grade 5  |
| Mission Statement                                       | <i>“Compass Charter School (CCS) is a safe and nurturing educational environment that honors the individuality of each learner. By engaging in a process of inquiry, our graduates will be equipped with the necessary skills to lead fulfilling personal and professional lives, including a developed sense of self, the ability to think in innovative and flexible ways, and the inspiration to make a positive impact on their community.”</i> |

The proposal for Compass Charter School was developed by a team of three experienced educators (New York City and South Central Los Angeles) who founded The Odyssey Initiative for the purpose of identifying successful practices from all types of schools across the nation. Their goal was to use what they learned to inform the design of a model elementary school to be launched in New York City.

### **Key Design Elements**

#### *Programs and Structures to Promote Student Achievement*

- **Inquiry-driven, Project-Based Learning:** All students will engage in inquiry-based interdisciplinary projects, as well as participate in a variety of research practices, including observations, question development, interviews, artifact collection, field visits, note-taking and hands-on experiments.
- **Sustainability education and sustainable practices** will be infused through the daily practices and curriculum of Compass Charter School (CCS). Interdisciplinary units of study will provide students with opportunities to examine the concepts of environmental

stewardship, resource management, social justice, and economic justice. Sustainable practices such as recycling, serving responsibly sourced food, and using energy efficient products in the school environment will be incorporated into daily routines and structures. Students, families, and staff will be encouraged to adopt these practices in their lives outside of school.

- **Arts Education:** The School will use the arts as a form of communication and expression. Visual arts, music, and movement/dance will be incorporated into the CCS model. Arts specialists will plan lessons and co-teach with classroom educators to fully integrate the arts into core subjects.
- **Assessment practices:** Formative and summative assessments will be administered to students giving CCS educators a wide range of data to inform daily instruction.
- **Integrated Co-Teaching:** Various models will be implemented across all classrooms to promote an inclusive educational environment. Having two teachers in a classroom will allow a smaller student-to-teacher ratio and can offer a supportive least-restrictive environment for students with Individual Education Plans (IEPs).
- **Looping:** This practice will provide an opportunity for teachers to form strong personal relationships with their students as well as their families. Co-teaching teams will loop, or move up, with the same group of students for two years (K-1, 2-3, 4-5).
- **Extended school day:** The school day will be from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. four days per week, allowing for approximately three weeks more instructional time than the district average. One day per week, school will be in session from 8:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. A plan to develop an after school program or partner with after school programs for students is in place.

### *Professional Learning Community*

- **Early Release for Students:** One day per week students will be dismissed at 1 pm. to allow teachers to participate in a four-hour professional development block. During this time, teachers will participate in a host of learning activities, including collaborative team planning, peer coaching partnerships, professional literature circles, and student data analysis sessions.
- **Clinical Supervision:** This cycle will be used by all instructional staff to support individual teaching practice and reflection.
- **The Danielson Framework:** This framework will be used to evaluate teacher performance and provide standardized feedback for educators to use in their professional goal-setting practice.

- **Summer Teachers' Institute and Fall/Winter Planning Days:** This plan will add twenty-two days of professional development and planning time to each teacher's schedule.

## **Education Plan**

The founding group has modeled the school schedule and elements of the professional development plan on their observations and conversations with staff at a successful charter school in California. They have proposed a school calendar that includes 180 days of instruction. With the longer school day students will receive the equivalent of fourteen additional school days each academic year compared to the public schools in the district of location. Instruction will begin daily at 8:00 a.m., concluding at 4:00 p.m. four days per week and at 1:00 p.m. one day per week. This schedule will allow early release time for staff professional development. The founding board is in the planning stages of creating an after-school program.

Building a professional learning community is a key design element of the school. One day per week, teachers will have four hours on the day that students have an early release for grade level planning, individualized professional development sessions, and school-wide meetings and professional development. Teachers will also have one hour on each of the other four days during the school week to plan with their co-teacher, meet with the Directors of Curriculum and Instruction (DCIs), analyze data to inform instruction, prepare for upcoming lessons, and communicate student progress with families. Teachers will have a duty free lunch period and an additional forty minutes of preparation time twice a week. During the month of August, staff will convene for a Summer Institute where they will develop curriculum, establish and revisit school culture and community norms, set up their classrooms, meet with families, and write their individual professional development goals for the year.

During the planning year, the proposed three member administrative team, Co-Directors of Curriculum and Instruction (2) and the Director of Operations will create a comprehensive curricular scope and sequence for each subject area that is aligned with New York State and Common Core State Standards. The founders will form planning teams comprised of one to three educators in addition to themselves. The volunteer educators invited to participate will be coaches, professors, curriculum specialists, and classroom teachers who have a deep knowledge of the New York State and Common Core State Standards and a minimum of five years of experience in curriculum design and teaching in the subject area.

Based on observations at successful schools across the country, personal experiences as teachers in elementary classrooms, and current research in literacy, the founding group plans to create and implement a balanced literacy curriculum. It will be guided by the Common Core Learning Standards along with several current, evidence-based resources. The teaching of reading and writing will align closely with the Reading and Writing workshop model developed at Teachers College Reading and Writing Project. Additionally, the team will use the experiences of Richard Allington, Ellin Oliver Keene, Irene Fountas and Gay Su Pinnell, Carl Anderson, and Katie Wood Ray to guide the creation and implementation of the balanced literacy framework.

Teachers will use the components of a balanced literacy framework along with the Common Core State Standards to plan units of study and differentiated lessons to meet the needs of the students in their classrooms. To successfully incorporate a balanced literacy model, the following components will be included within the daily and weekly schedule: reading workshop daily for 60 minutes; writing workshop 5.5 hours per week as a stand alone class or as part of project time; integrated writing opportunities, daily read aloud; word study for 30 minutes daily; guided reading, shared reading, interactive writing, and Visual Thinking Strategies.

The math curriculum will be developed utilizing resources and lessons from a variety of curricular sources that emphasize a constructivist, problem-based approach to mathematics. Materials will be blended together to create units of study that meet the benchmarks, skills, and practices detailed in the New York State Common Core Learning Standards for Mathematical Practice. When developing the scope and sequence, the proposed administrative team plans to design a coherent spiral. Tasks and lessons will be designed to give children space to create, invent, experiment with, and make sense of mathematical ideas and truths through exploration, collaboration with others, and reflection on their own practices. Curricular resources that will inform this work are *TERC Investigations*, *Contexts for Learning*, and Marilyn Burn's *Math Solutions* materials.

As a school with a curricular model guided by an inquiry approach to teaching and learning, students will engage in inquiry-based projects that make them problem-posers and developers of authentic research questions to explore. Teachers will use the New York State Standards for Science and Social Studies to plan units of study, while keeping in mind topics of interest to the students in each class. Projects will integrate social studies, science, reading, and writing.

A key design element of the school includes sustainability education and sustainable practices. Science and social studies will be learned in tandem through the lens of sustainability as part of in-class project work. The school will hire a sustainability coordinator in Year One who will teach science and work with classroom teachers to incorporate the tenets of sustainability into the curriculum. In addition to the work of the sustainability coordinator, Compass Charter School staff will build capacity for sustainability education through a consulting partnership with The Cloud Institute for Sustainability Education.

Arts education is a central component of the school's mission and vision. The arts will be included in the educational program in two ways: through weekly discipline-based art classes taught by an art teacher and through arts integration which will be incorporated into interdisciplinary class projects. Visual art will also be integrated into the literacy program through the use of Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS). All students will participate in one VTS lesson each month.

Based on their experience as educators and researchers, the founders concluded that every positive school culture is founded on a set of common beliefs or core values. As in other positive school cultures, the Compass Charter School Habits for Living and Learning will influence all aspects of the school, and will put the mission and vision to work purposefully inside of each classroom.

Compass Charter School is committed to using data as a key lever for improving student achievement. The founders have designed the assessment system to meet the following objectives: determine progress/mastery of the Common Core Learning Standards; identify individual student needs to determine appropriate interventions and differentiation; plan upcoming instruction; and measure whether the school is meeting its goals, in particular those related to student achievement.

The School plans to implement a combination of commercial, state mandated and teacher-developed measures. Examples of commercial assessments include *Brigance K-1 Screen III* and *Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessments* for diagnostic use, *First Performance Fox in a Box Literacy Assessment* and *First Performance Fox Adds Up Mathematics Assessment* for formative assessments, and *Terra Nova 3* as a summative tool. Teachers will also use on demand writing samples, anecdotal observations, conference notes and rubrics to inform instructional decisions.

### **Community Outreach**

The founding group will be located in Brooklyn CSD 13, which encompasses Brooklyn Heights, Fort Green, Clinton Hill, West Bedford Stuyvesant and much of Prospect Heights. It is a rapidly changing and diverse district with the majority of children living in poverty.

The applicant group has reached out to multiple stakeholders in Brooklyn, CSD 13, all of whom continues to provide input and have pledged to support the opening of Compass Charter School. The team has met with elected officials, the New York City Department of Education, the CSD 13 Community School District Superintendent, tenant associations, faith-based organizations, small business owners, child care providers, the Community Education Council for CSD 13, various community-based organizations, and community residents and families of young children. The application includes many emails and letters of support.

The draft admission and enrollment policy submitted with the written application establishes enrollment preferences in accordance with NYS Education Law. The School is committed to meeting the established enrollment and retention targets for English language learners (ELLs), students with disabilities (SWDs), and economically disadvantaged youth, by leveraging the experiences of the founding group, through outreach by board of trustee members, and by implementing a proactive and targeted recruitment initiative each year. If, over time, the board of trustees and school leadership notice that the student population does not reflect the demographics of the neighborhood, they plan to re-evaluate the recruitment practices and incorporate new strategies to attract the target populations.

## School Governance and Leadership

The planning team consists of nine individuals with a broad range of expertise in elementary education, higher education, business administration, grant-writing, legal compliance, financial management, not-for-profit governance/management, community engagement, and family involvement. Six individuals are named in the application as proposed members of the initial board of trustees, and each has provided a completed School Trustee Background Information form, Statement of Assurance, and resume or vitae. As required, the applicant group has provided a set of draft by-laws and a draft code of ethics.

The six proposed initial members of the board of trustees are described below:

- **Nancy Cardwell** is currently Professor of Child Development and Educational Advocacy at Bank Street College of Education. Her expertise and experience include Adjunct Lecturer at City College, City University of New York, and Education Consultant who facilitated professional development sessions in urban, suburban and rural communities with pre-kindergarten through 12th grade educators and parents in Massachusetts, New York and South Africa.
- **Jason Horowitz** is founder and CEO of Skedj, an on-line mobile social scheduling application. Prior experiences include: lead transactions and operations attorney; oversight of internal and external governance functions, including management of the Board governance process for CKX, Inc.; ten years of experience on the advisory committee for Stepping Stone Day School, a not-for profit school for special needs babies and preschoolers.
- **Dorian Muller** is employed by the Brooklyn Community Housing Services and has a child attending public school in CSD 13. She has community organizer experience.
- **James Patchett** is employed by Goldman Sachs where he is responsible for community development projects across the United States, focusing on charter school facilities.
- **Eric “Wally” Gingold** is currently serving as the CEO of NES Energy, Inc. His experiences include: owner of a multi-million dollar supplier of lighting energy conservation projects; and a former 5th grade teacher within the NYC Department of Education.
- **Eliza Spang** is currently working at the Institute of Play and Quest2Learn School. Her experiences include: responsible for strategizing and managing development of products based on the game-like learning model pioneered by the Institute of Play; designed, developed and taught a course in curriculum planning and arts integration to beginning teachers at Relay Graduate School of Education; and science teacher for Novato Unified School and Hamilton-Wenham Regional School Districts.

The remaining three members of the applicant group are proposed as school employees. **Michelle Healy** and **Brooke Peters** are the Co-Directors of Curriculum and Instruction. Founding member and Media Contact, **Todd Sutler**, is the proposed Director of Operations. All three are also founders and employees of The Odyssey Initiative.

The three applicant group members who are proposed employees are described below:

- **Michelle Healy:** As lead applicant, Ms. Healy is the proposed Co-Director of Curriculum and Instruction. She is currently a teacher at Community Roots Charter School and the Future Leaders Institute. She holds special education certification and did graduate work at Bank Street College in the Education's Math Leadership Program. She is a co-founder of the Odyssey Initiative.
- **Brooke Peters:** As co-lead applicant, Ms. Peters is the proposed Co-Director of Curriculum and Instruction. She is currently a teacher at Community Roots Charter School in the Bronx and Arco Iris Primary Center. She holds National Board Certification in Literacy and has served as Arts Program Coordinator and Bilingual Coordinator responsible for managing all mandated assessments for English language learners. She is a co-founder of the Odyssey Initiative.
- **Todd Sutler:** Mr. Sutler's experience includes teaching at Community Roots Charter School, the Bank Street School for Children and Manhattan County School. As Executive director of the Odyssey Initiative, he secures funding, manages the budget and supervises staff. He negotiated partnerships with the Center for Teaching Quality and Educators' Travel Network. He has also served as the director of an after-school program. As Vice President, of Debt Markets for Merrill Lynch in Tokyo, Toronto and New York City, he analyzed and captured profitable trading.

The Compass Charter School model aims to provide a shared school leadership structure with two Co-Directors of Curriculum and Instruction who separate management responsibilities between the lower (K-2) and upper (3-5) grades. The administrative team will be rounded out by the Director of Operations. All three individuals report directly to the Board of Trustees. Members of the administrative team have staff who report directly to them. The school will open with twenty-one staff, with all positions but one beginning in year one. A learning specialist will be hired to work with the Learning Support Coordinator beginning in year three.

## **Facility**

The founding group met with representatives from the New York City Department of Education, Office of Portfolio Planning, to request public space. On October 24, 2013 a public hearing was held to discuss the co-location of the proposed charter school to be sited in Building K113 located at 300 Adelphi Street, Brooklyn. The Panel for Education Policy (PEP) solicited public comments until October 30 and subsequently formally approved the co-location of the proposed elementary charter school with M.S. 113 Ronald Edmonds Learning Center and P372K @K113, a District 75 Program. In the event that the co-location does not go into effect, the founding group has submitted a viable contingency plan in a private facility.

## Projected Fiscal and Programmatic Impact on District of Location

The applicant group provided an analysis of the fiscal and programmatic impact of the proposed school on public and non-public schools in New York City, indicating that the fiscal impact of the Compass Charter School on the New York City School District public schools is expected to be nominal.

The New York State Education Department (“Department”) also conducted additional analysis on the projected fiscal impact of the School on its district of residence, the New York City School District (“NYCSD”), which is summarized below.

**Table 2: Projected Fiscal Impact Upon District of Location, 2014-15 to 2018-19**

| Year    | Number of Students Enrolled in Charter School Per Year <sup>1</sup> | Charter School Basic Tuition Rate <sup>2</sup> | Total Charter School Basic Tuition Only | Estimated District Special Education Payment <sup>3</sup> | Total District General Fund Budget <sup>4</sup> | Percent of District Budget |
|---------|---|--|---|---|---|----------------------------|
| 2014-15 | 132   | \$15,224                                       | \$2,009,568                             | \$300,698   | \$19,864,726,000                                | 0.012%                     |
| 2018-19 | 396   | \$17,754                                       | \$7,030,584                             | \$1,052,007   |   | 0.041%                     |

The calculations above assume charter school basic tuition rates in the charter period (2014-15 through 2018-19) based on a trend analysis calculated by the Charter School Office and approved by the Department’s State Aid Office. In order to conservatively avoid underestimating the fiscal impact that the charter school will have on the district going forward, the Department is assuming no growth in the New York City School District budget during the duration of the school’s charter.<sup>5</sup>

It should be noted that, given the nature of district-based per-pupil funding, the estimates made by the Department in conducting this analysis are subject to unpredictable financial fluctuations. For forecasting purposes, the fiscal impact of this charter school on the district in which it will be located assumes that:

- There will be no fluctuations in the grade levels served by existing charter schools over the course of the charter term;
- The charter school will be able to meet its projected maximum enrollment;

<sup>1</sup> Source: Compass Charter School Application

<sup>2</sup> Source: Education Law §2856(1)(a)(iii) and NYS Education Department Office of State Aid Charter School Basic Tuition Rate Analysis, Fall 2013

<sup>3</sup> Based on 2012-13 calculated special education classification rate for the district of location, as collected by NYSED Information and Report Services

<sup>4</sup> Source: The City of New York Adopted Financial Plan, 2013-2017, [http://www.nyc.gov/html/omb/downloads/pdf/adopt13\\_fp.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/html/omb/downloads/pdf/adopt13_fp.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Additional notes: While the school has included other federal grants and/or funds that may flow through the district to be received by the school in its proposed budget, this analysis does not account for these sources of potential revenue, nor does it include the value of certain services (e.g. transportation) that the district is required to provide the charter school. However, the analysis also does not account for district per-pupil expense and overall resource savings that are likely to result from a reduction in the number of students attending district public schools as a result of students attending nonpublic schools located in the school district.

- All students will come from the district of location; and
- All students will attend every day for a 1.0 FTE.

The specifics of the school’s enrollment composition are still unavailable; however, the Department acknowledges that the programmatic and fiscal impact of the proposed charter school on other public and private schools in the same area will also be influenced by the proportion of charter school enrollees that would have attended a same-district public or private school had it not been for the presence of this charter school.

Below, for your reference, please find additional data on New York City Community School District 13.<sup>6</sup>

**Table 3: 2011-12 Demographic Detail for Proposed District of Location:  
New York City Geographic District # 13 - Brooklyn**  
*Charter Term Year 1 Grade Configuration Based on 2011-12 District Demographics*

|                                      | Total District Enrollment |       | Grade K |       | Grade 1 |       |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------|-------|---------|-------|---------|-------|
| All Students                         | 23,039                    |       | 1,233   |       | 1,160   |       |
| <i>American Indian/Alaska Native</i> | 126                       | 0.5%  | 13      | 1.1%  | 2       | 0.2%  |
| <i>Asian/Pacific Islander</i>        | 4,024                     | 17.5% | 64      | 5.2%  | 56      | 4.8%  |
| <i>Black</i>                         | 13,047                    | 56.6% | 683     | 55.4% | 692     | 59.7% |
| <i>Hispanic</i>                      | 3,538                     | 15.4% | 246     | 20.0% | 229     | 19.7% |
| <i>Multiracial</i>                   | 109                       | 0.5%  | 14      | 1.1%  | 21      | 1.8%  |
| <i>White</i>                         | 2,195                     | 9.5%  | 213     | 17.3% | 160     | 13.8% |
| Economically Disadvantaged           | 17,461                    | 75.8% | 882     | 71.5% | 842     | 72.6% |
| Limited English Proficient           | 1,021                     | 4.4%  | 72      | 5.8%  | 77      | 6.6%  |
| Students with Disabilities           | 2,669                     | 11.6% | 101     | 8.2%  | 136     | 11.7% |

<sup>6</sup> Source: Student Information Repository System (SIRS) 2011-12 Report 303 BEDS Day Enrollment Verification Report by Location of Enrollment & Student Subgroup

**Table 4: 2011-12 Academic Proficiency Rates on NYS Exams  
Based on Grade Configurations for Proposed School<sup>7</sup>**

|                | 3   | 4   | 5   |
|----------------|-----|-----|-----|
| <i>NYC #13</i> |     |     |     |
| ELA            | 43% | 43% | 42% |
| Math           | 47% | 55% | 55% |
| <i>NYS</i>     |     |     |     |
| ELA            | 56% | 59% | 58% |
| Math           | 61% | 69% | 67% |

### **Public Hearing and Public Comment**

As required by the Charter Schools Act, the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) held a hearing on Tuesday, October 22, 2013, to solicit comments from the community regarding Compass Charter School. Two other charter applicant groups were also discussed at this meeting. Nine members of the public signed up to speak; one person decided not to speak, two people spoke against the hearing process, one spoke in opposition to co-locations in general (including Compass Charter School) and six spoke in support of a different charter school proposal. At the co-location hearing conducted at Building K113, 300 Adelphi Street, Brooklyn, on Thursday, October 24, 38 individuals provided testimony. Concerns primarily included the loss of space and resources for the middle school program. Individuals expressed additional concerns about opening another elementary school in the district, as other high-quality options already exist within CSD13. Many speakers spoke in support of Compass Charter School, as well. Community members noted that they were eager to have another elementary option in the neighborhood. Speakers also expressed gratitude for the school leaders and spoke to their character and dedication to their students.

The Department directly notified the Chancellor of the NYCDOE, as well as public and private schools in the region, of the charter school application and issued an open call for written public comment via the State Education Department Charter School Office website. The Chancellor was contacted by letter and invited to comment directly. Chancellor Walcott submitted a letter in support of Compass Charter School, stating “The NYCDOE found this proposal to be well, offering a rigorous educational model. Chancellor Walcott recommends this charter application to support the children of New York City.”

### **Application Review Process**

On September 3, 2013, as required by the New York State Charter Schools Act, the New York State Education Department (the “Department”) released the 2013 Request for Proposals (“RFP”) to Establish Charter Schools Authorized by the Board of Regents. The charter school

<sup>7</sup> Source: Student Information Repository System (SIRS) 2011-12 Report 101 High School Accountability Data Verification Report; 2011-12 Report 102 Elementary/Middle-Level Accountability Data Verification Report

application process used by the Board of Regents and the Department during the 2013 RFP cycle is multi-stage and designed to ensure that any charter school applicant presented to the Board of Regents for possible approval demonstrates a detailed and complete school design plan that:

- includes a clear plan to meet or exceed enrollment and retention targets for students with disabilities, students who are English language learners, and students who are eligible to participate in the federal free reduced-price lunch program;
- provides evidence of public outreach that conforms to the process prescribed by the Regents for the purpose of soliciting and incorporating community input regarding the proposed charter school;
- meets all requirements set forth in the Charter Schools Act as well as all other applicable laws, rules, regulations;
- demonstrates the ability to operate the school in an educationally and fiscally sound manner;
- is likely to improve student learning and achievement and materially further the purposes of the Act; and
- would have a significant educational benefit to the students expected to attend the proposed charter school.

In addition, the applicant group and founding board of trustees must demonstrate appropriate knowledge, capacity, and abilities to effectively create, maintain, and oversee a high-quality charter school.

During 2013, a total of 99 letters of intent were submitted in two rounds (February and September). After an initial review process, a total of 46 applications were evaluated in 2013, including the application for the Compass Charter School.

To assess whether to recommend approval or denial of the charter application to the Board of Regents, the Department established review panels to thoroughly evaluate each full application. Each panel was made up of professional expert consultants, peer reviewers who are school leaders and educators active in charter and public schools in New York, as well as qualified Department staff members. The review panel members reviewed, rated, and commented on each section of the application according to the criteria published in the Application Kit.

Department staff conducted a two-hour capacity interview with four of the proposed initial board members and three founding team members for the proposed Compass Charter School, on May 13, 2013. Questions posed to the proposed initial trustees included general questions around New York State Charter School Law, roles and responsibilities of the school community and the board to the community and various stakeholder groups as well to as the Board of Regents as authorizer. To fully understand the proposed academic program, governance role and fiscal viability of the proposed School, targeted questions were asked to clarify information provided in the full application.

The responses demonstrated adequate knowledge and grasp of key areas. Members of the applicant group as a whole and individually demonstrated knowledge of the charter school application and the proposed School. Structures, systems, protocols and procedures are in place

to permit the board to effectively govern the School. The applicants addressed questions posed with specific and detailed information that presented a clear, realistic picture of how the School expects to operate.

## Findings

Based on the comprehensive review of the application and of the applicant, founding group, and proposed board of trustees, the Department makes the following findings:

1. The charter school described in the application meets the requirements of Article 56 of the Education Law (as amended) and other applicable laws, rules, and regulations.<sup>8</sup> This finding is based on the following (among other things):
  - the applicant has included in the application the information required by §2851(2)
  - the proposed charter school would meet or exceed enrollment and retention targets, as prescribed by the NYS Board of Regents,<sup>9</sup> of students with disabilities, English language learners, and students who are eligible applicants for the federal free and reduced price lunch program as required by Education Law subdivision 2852(9-a)(b)(i)
  - the applicant has conducted public outreach to solicit community input regarding the proposed charter school and to address comments received from the impacted community concerning the educational and programmatic needs of students in conformity with Education Law subdivision 2852(9-a)(b)(ii).
2. The applicant has demonstrated the ability to operate the proposed charter school in an educationally and fiscally sound manner.<sup>10</sup> This finding is based on the following (among other things):
  - The presentation in the application of a sound description of key features that are core to the school's overall design, and which rigorously addresses the criteria outlined in the Department's RFP in the areas of mission; key design elements; enrollment, recruitment and retention; and community to be served.
  - The presentation in the application of a sound educational plan, which rigorously addresses the criteria outlined in the Department's RFP in the areas of achievement goals; school schedule and calendar; curriculum and instruction; assessment; school culture and climate; and special student populations and related services.
  - The presentation in the application of a sound organizational and fiscal plan, which rigorously addresses the criteria outlined in the Department's RFP in the areas of founding group capacity; board of trustees and governance; management and staffing;

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<sup>8</sup> Education Law §2852(2) (a).

<sup>9</sup> Note, the data upon which to base the enrollment and retention targets mandated by the amendments to the Act was not available at the time the statute mandated the RFP be issued. As a result, the Department evaluated the plans for student enrollment, recruitment, and retention plans of each class of student referenced in the amendments to the Act such that the Department could make the determination that the applicant would meet or exceed the enrollment and retention targets when developed. During the first year of the charter term, the Department will develop such targets and incorporate these targets into the school's charter agreement performance expectations.

<sup>10</sup> Education Law §2852(2) (b).

- evaluation; professional development; facilities; insurance; health, food and transportation services; family and community involvement; financial management; budget and cash flow; pre-opening plan; and dissolution plan.
- An understanding of the New York State Charter Schools Act, and the skill, will and capacity to successfully launch and operate a high quality public charter school.
3. Granting the proposed charter is likely to improve student learning and achievement, will materially further the purposes of the Act<sup>11</sup> and will have a significant educational benefit to the students expected to attend the charter school.<sup>12</sup> This finding is based on the totality of the information presented in the application and during the application review process, as summarized in this document.

### **Recommendation**

Based on the Department's review and findings, Commissioner John B. King, Jr. recommends that the New York State Board of Regents approve the proposal to establish Compass Charter School to open in 2014 in New York City.

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<sup>11</sup> Education Law §2852(2) (c).

<sup>12</sup> As applicable pursuant to §2852(2) (d).



# New York State Education Department Charter School Office

## **Charter School Application Summary, Findings, and Recommendation**

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*Application in response to the  
New York State Education Department 2013 Request for Proposals to  
Establish Charter Schools Authorized by the Board of Regents  
to establish the proposed:*

**South Bronx Early College Academy Charter School**

December 2013

**Table 1: Summary of the Proposed South Bronx Early College Academy Charter School**

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Name of Charter School                                  | South Bronx Early College Academy Charter School   |
| Lead Applicant(s)                                       | Ric Campbell, Ed.D<br>Davon Russell  |
| District of Location                                    | Bronx, CSD 7   |
| Opening Date  | Summer/Fall 2014   |
| Projected Charter Term                                  | December 17, 2013 – June 30, 2019  |
| Management Company                                      | None   |
| Partners  | WHEDco and Bard College MAT Program  |
| Facility  | Seeking private space  |
| Projected Enrollment and Grade Span during Charter Term | Opening with 166 students in Grades 6 and 7 in 2014-2015; growing to 396 students in Grades 6 through 8 in 2018-2019   |
| Planned Grade Span (beyond Initial Charter Term)        | The applicant’s vision is to expand the school to serve Grades 6 through 12  |
| Mission Statement                                       | <i>“The South Bronx Early College Academy Charter School (Early College Academy) will provide a rigorous and comprehensive liberal arts education to students in the South Bronx through a challenging, New York State (NYS) Common Core standards-aligned curriculum. The Early College Academy will establish a learning environment that emphasizes differentiation and personalization of instruction and a student-centered and fully inclusive approach to teaching and learning. Students will graduate from the Early College Academy prepared for success in college and for active and thoughtful citizenship”</i> |

The intent of the South Bronx Early College Academy Charter School (the School, or Early College Academy) is to provide students with differentiated instruction, using a comprehensive, standards-aligned educational program to prepare graduates for success in college and for active and thoughtful citizenship. Accordingly, each aspect of the School design is built upon the foundation of three principles, which will foster academic rigor and promote student learning.

The three philosophical principles at the heart of the School include:

1. A student-centered approach to teaching and learning with instructional supports, advisories and other structures that will support identification and addressing of student learning needs;
2. A belief that literacy is the basis of all learning and a commitment to literacy instruction across the curriculum; and
3. A belief that learning emerges from authentic work and a commitment to project-based instruction and assessments that include portfolios and exhibitions.

## Key Design Elements

Key elements of the School's design include:

- **Small school culture and extended day/year:** South Bronx Early College Academy Charter School plans to serve a maximum enrollment of 396 students during the first charter term. Average class sizes will be 20 or fewer students. An extended school day and year allow for increased instructional time, as well as opportunities for alternative approaches to assessment (e.g. portfolio presentations and exhibitions) and a variety of instructional supports.
- **Differentiated and personalized instruction:** Staff will differentiate instruction in order to address student needs and learning styles. The School will establish a data culture through ongoing assessment and review of data in professional learning communities (PLCs). Teachers will be trained and empowered to use data effectively to design and implement standards-aligned instructional units.
- **Use of research-based, standards-aligned curricula and instructional strategies:** South Bronx Early College Academy will use a variety of strategies and tools to design curricula, to establish rigorous Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) in all subjects and to ensure alignment with NYS Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). Specific practices to support literacy instruction include those developed by Bard College's Institute for Writing and Thinking, the frameworks from the Teachers College-Columbia University Reading and Writing Project, and the Strategic Literacy Initiative at WestEd.
- **Comprehensive advisory and classroom supports:** Students will participate in daily advisory group meetings during which Early College Academy faculty members will meet with small groups of students to support their success. This may take the form of monitoring student progress, providing counsel and advocacy, and supporting effective school-home connections. Students will also receive increased instructional supports in the classroom from resident MAT program graduate students who will provide tutoring and give other assistance to teachers.
- **Comprehensive college preparation and opportunities for early college:** Early College Academy will prepare students for entry into and success in college by providing a strong educational foundation as well as ongoing support and assistance in researching, selecting and applying for college. The School will also provide opportunities for students to take credit-bearing college courses while in high school as dual enrollment courses satisfying high school and college requirements.
- **Parent and family support:** The school will work with its partner, WHEDco, to develop and sustain internal capacity to provide a variety of family supports. Social workers and school counselors from WHEDco will provide training and work with School staff to provide ongoing support to students and parents.

## Education Plan

The proposed calendar for the Early College Academy Charter School includes 190 days of instruction. The instructional day begins at 8:00 a.m. and concludes at 5:00 p.m. The extended school day is designed around instructional blocks of 60 minutes with some shorter 40-minute blocks to allow for flexibility. The annual calendar, including holidays, will be adapted from the local school district calendar to the greatest degree possible. Teachers will have a minimum of three 60-minute periods per day for planning, assessment, home/family contact, peer coaching/observation sessions, instructional/child study team meetings, and grade level/departmental curriculum design and data analysis team meetings.

With a student population of 166 in the first year, the proposed School will establish structures that promote and facilitate peer support, foster supportive faculty-student relationships and set the tone for the growth of the school. Concurrently, the proposed School will establish within a relatively small learning environment the practices and protocols that will promote data-driven instruction, professional learning communities for teachers and additional supports for students. The proposed School will provide consistent instruction and support to students throughout middle school, as well as individualized support to middle school students as they prepare for the transition to high school.

The founding group plans to devote a considerable amount of time to the planning and preparation needed to develop the instructional program and pedagogy by intensive professional development for staff, beginning in April 2014. The initial curriculum design process for the middle level program for Grades 6-8 includes implementing a “backwards design” approach that mirrors the CCLS modules for English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics published on the NYSED website, EngageNY.org. Anchoring the academic program will be the prototypes for the CCLS aligned assessments in both ELA and mathematics found on the PARCC website. Curriculum will be designed following the principles and practices of the Universal Design for Learning (UDL).

The Middle Level Program designed for Grades 6 through 8 has five key features that include:

1. Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) for all students based on data analysis which informs an ongoing Response to Intervention (RTI) model for measuring students’ present levels of performance and monitoring their progress/growth toward course and grade level content and skill goals;
2. An emphasis on academic literacy and commitment to a framework for literacy instruction in all disciplines;
3. Hour-long instructional periods and other master schedule structures to allow for differentiated instruction, inclusive special education (co-teaching) and academic intervention (“push-in”) services to be incorporated regularly within all core disciplines and “pull-aside” services to be provided at alternate and individualized periods of the day;
4. A flexible block schedule to permit two-hour interdisciplinary blocks for English-Social Studies (Humanities) and Math-Science (STEM) investigations; and,

5. Strong congruence among course syllabi, instructional materials and the rigorous “shifts” called for in instructional practice within the CCLS.

Students will be engaged in an integrated approach to technological literacy beginning at the middle school level. Using various technologies in the context of regular classroom instruction, such as online databases, computing technologies, modeling software, word processing, and communication/ presentation programs, students will develop technological fluency. Students will have access to laptop computers in classrooms and desktop computers in a dedicated computer room.

The planned curriculum includes instruction in fine arts, music, and the dramatic arts. The middle school fine arts curriculum is designed for deep immersion across a range of subjects with the idea that a student will begin to choose a more focused area of study in high school. The design of the program will be completed by drawing on the resources of Bard College’s undergraduate arts faculty and other arts institutions in NYC with which Bard and WHEDco routinely collaborate. The high school curriculum will provide multiple pathways by offering course sequences that respond to student interests, similar to a liberal arts college course of study.

All students in Grades 6 through 8 will participate in music classes, which include regularly scheduled courses in instrumental and vocal music as part of an El Sistema-inspired program directed by faculty from the Longy School of Music at Bard College. Beginning in the second year of operation, students will have an opportunity to engage in aspects of theater production, staging plays and creating performances that connect to various areas of the academic curriculum.

Early College Academy will provide daily physical fitness/education activities integrated with health education which will be coordinated with WHEDco social workers and family services to provide appropriate instruction in human sexuality and drug and alcohol abuse.

In order to meet the needs of students, some of whom may not have achieved grade level mastery prior to enrollment in the charter school, both the sixth and seventh grade levels have been designed as intensive core subject instructional years focusing on the four major subject disciplines (English, social studies, math and science). Longer instructional periods (60 minutes) are planned to include opportunities for intensive Response to Intervention (RTI) to be delivered within each course. The purpose of this schedule is, in part, to accelerate learning and achievement in these disciplines to enable each student to enter ninth grade ready to challenge Regents level programming. As a result, all sixth and seventh grade students will defer formal study of Languages Other Than English (LOTE) until grade 8.

The applicant group seeks to expand in subsequent renewal periods to include Grades 9 through 12, and has described in this application a plan to transition its middle school students into high school. For example, freshman will begin with a first year seminar entitled, “Self and Society in the Liberal Arts.” The intent of the seminar is to provide the framework for core courses, which include interdisciplinary explorations correlated with the NYSED K-12 Common Core Social Studies Framework, as well as appropriate inquiries in the STEM integrated courses of math and

science. The High School Program for students follows NYS Commissioner's Regulations Section 100.5.C.3 and requires students to earn twenty-two credits in order to graduate. Credits will generally be earned during grades 9-12, with the potential of a second language unit of credit and an accelerated study unit of credit being earned in Grade 8 based on a student's ILP.

The Early College Academy plans to have most students pass the minimum five requisite Regents examinations (i.e., English, math, a lab science, global studies, and United States History), by the conclusion of Grade 10. These major disciplines, supplemented by other required subject studies in second languages, art and/or music, physical education/health, and a second lab science will form the primary program blocks of grades 9 and 10. The school, in partnership with Bard College and at least one other local New York City College, will offer a range of college courses to students in grades 11 and 12 that will allow dual enrollment. Students may prepare for Regents exams and concurrently earn high school and/or college credits. Course offerings will be identified based on the needs, career aspirations and interests of the student body as they matriculate from middle school. Ultimately, the goal is to have all students earn a New York State Regents diploma with Advanced Designation and complete twelve college credits.

The School plans to implement a combination of standardized assessments, state mandated testing and teacher-developed measures to inform instruction, assess academic progress and determine college readiness. Instructional Child Study Teams will meet weekly and analyze data to determine if modifications are needed to support teaching and learning. These teams will also take a lead role in developing and reviewing ILPs. Twice a year, or as modified in an individual student's Individual Education Plan (IEP) students will have an opportunity to assemble a portfolio of their semester's work which will be presented to a panel of teachers, peers, and community members as an exhibition of their learning accomplishments.

### **Community Outreach**

The school intends to be located in Community School District 7, in the Melrose community of the South Bronx. The community is ethnically and linguistically diverse. Fifty-eight percent of the residents are Latino and 45% are African American. The most common language spoken in Melrose is Spanish, spoken by 74.7% of households. The community is challenged by high poverty with 38% of the adult residents and 49% of the children living below the poverty level. Among adult residents, only 28% graduated high school and 23% did not attend high school at all. Only 7% of adult residents have a college bachelor's degree. The community school district has consistently failed to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics at any level, or to meet graduation rate targets.

The applicant group has reached out to multiple stakeholders in Community School District 7 over the past two years, including elected officials, the CSD 7 School Superintendent, the Bronx Police, small business owners, tenant associations, childcare providers and community residents. The founding group has also worked with one of the School's partners, WHEDco, participating in various community events and soliciting community comments via a survey. The written application includes a letter of support from the Community Education Council (CEC) District 7 President.

Admission and enrollment policies submitted with the written application establish enrollment preferences in accordance with NYS Education Law. The School is committed to meeting the established enrollment and retention targets for English language learners (ELLs), students with disabilities (SWDs), and economically disadvantaged youth by leveraging the experiences of their partner WHEDco, Board of Trustees member outreach, and implementing a proactive and targeted recruitment initiative each year.

### **School Governance and Leadership**

The applicant group for the Early College Academy Charter School includes fifteen individuals, seven of whom will transition to the initial board of trustees and eight who will serve as advisors. Lead applicant **Dr. Ric Campbell**, currently serves as the Dean of Teacher Education at Bard College. Co-lead applicant, **Davon Russell**, serves as the Executive Vice President of WHEDco. Both will transition to the initial Board of Trustees for two and three years, respectively.

A School leader has not been identified. The board will establish a Principal Selection Committee, with representation from the Personnel Committee and the founding representatives of CEI-PEA and/or JPS Solutions, to seek and select a principal with proven experience in educational leadership and in improving academic achievement of low-income and/or minority students.

The proposed founding board of trustees includes seven members with a broad range of expertise in education, administration, grant writing, legal compliance, financial planning, fundraising, facilities development, not-for profit governance/management, community engagement, family involvement and charter school start-up, and governance. As required, the applicant has provided a set of draft by-laws and a draft code of ethics. Additionally, a School Trustee Background Information form, Statement of Assurance and resume or curriculum vitae is provided for each of the seven individuals who will compose the school's initial board of trustees.

The proposed members of the initial board of trustees are described below:

- **Nancy Biberman, Esq.** has experience in law, administration, building effective organizations and facilities development. She founded and oversaw the growth of WHEDco into an organization with a \$14 million budget and 275 employees, and serves as President.
- **Ric Campbell, E.D.** has more than 25 years of experience in classroom teaching and in administration, teacher development and fundraising. He founded the Bard College MAT Program in 2004 and founded the Paramount Bard Academy, a charter school in Delano, California.
- **Valerie Capers, Ed.D** is a world-renowned jazz pianist/composer and lifelong Bronx resident. She served as a faculty member of the Manhattan School of Music, and as Department Chair of Music and Art at Bronx Community College (CUNY). Blind since childhood, Dr. Capers is a role model for students facing challenges and has expertise in K-12 and college classroom teaching and music education.

- **Eric Nadelstern** served as Deputy Chancellor for the Division of School Support and Instruction for the NYC Department of Education (DOE) 1,700 schools. As founding Principal of the International High School at LaGuardia Community College, he created a school for English Language Learners (ELLs) that became the model for the International High Schools across NYC and the nation.
- **Harvey Newman** has served for more than 30 years as a successful NYC public school teacher and principal and is currently Director of CEI-PEA's Charter School Technical Assistance Center and Charter School Coalition and the Co-Director of the national Network of Independent Charter Schools.
- **Davon Russell** has experience in administration, fundraising, community engagement and family involvement. He oversees WHEDco's community service programs, including Head Start, and youth and teen initiatives.
- **Deborah Taylor, MSW** is a member of the PS 449 PTA and Principalship Team and has experience in school social work, parent engagement and school improvement.

Founding team members who will serve as advisors include:

- **Elise DeBoard** has experience in curriculum design, teaching and ELL instruction. She is teaching at International Community High School (ICHS).
- **Kristin Erat** founded PS 449 and has experience in starting and running a successful school. She is currently serving as school Principal.
- **Stacey Gauthier** is the current principal at The Renaissance Charter School in Queens, where she has led the school through two renewals and has been the recipient of numerous awards and grants.
- **Maryann Hedaa** is a trustee at the Brilla College Preparatory Charter School and the founder and former teacher and Principal of the St. Ignatius School. She has experience in student recruitment and school management. She is currently the Founder and Managing Director of Hunts Point Alliance for Children.
- **Stephanie Lane** has experience in science instruction and, as a curriculum consultant for the Bridges Project, a NYCDOE program for students with low native language literacy or interrupted formal education in ELL student education. She is currently a teacher at the International Community High School (ICHS).

The board of trustees will oversee the principal who is responsible for the day-to-day management and instructional leadership of the School. In coordination with the Board, the principal will oversee the deployment and oversight of Bard MAT Program faculty and Teaching Assistants (TAs). The administrative team also includes an assistant principal, a special education coordinator and an operations/business/data manager.

In seeking teaching candidates, the School's strategy during its early development (i.e. the first two-to-three years of operations) will be to hire only teachers with at least three years of experience working effectively in an urban K-12 School. Expertise in instruction, curriculum development, alignment of curricula with CCLS and NYS standards, and effective classroom management are skills that will be sought.

### **Partnerships**

The school's management and staff will be supported with permanent commitments of staff and resources by its partners: Bard MAT Program and WHEDco. The commitments are outlined in the Memoranda of Understanding, and include the following:

- **The Bard MAT Program** will provide the time and expertise of its faculty members, who will provide ongoing professional development, advise the principal and teachers regarding curriculum and instructional strategies, and support the School in planning, teacher recruitment, and teacher development. It will also provide at least 30 Master's level graduate students to work on-site at the School for 3 to 5 days per week, 30 weeks per year as teaching assistants and tutors.
- **WHEDco** will support the School in building in-house capacity to provide a variety of student and family supports and will provide WHEDco personnel to implement student and family supports and train Early College Academy staff, including a parent/family engagement coordinator, a health and wellness coordinator, a guidance counselor, a School-based social worker and additional professional support, as needed.

### **Facility**

The School is currently in negotiations for privately owned leased space located in CSD 7. The budget includes adequate funding to lease the Bronx Borough Courthouse, located at 513 East 161<sup>st</sup> Street in the Bronx.

### **Technical Modification**

The applicant group provided a technical modification to the application, in order to bring the proposed first charter term grade configuration into alignment with NYCDOE district school grade configurations. South Bronx Early College Academy will enroll students in Grades 6 through 7 during its first year and will grow to serve students in Grades 6 through 8 during its first charter term. Enrollment during the first charter term is projected in the following table.

**Table 2: Proposed Enrollment, 2014-15 to 2018-19**

|                | <b>2014-15</b> | <b>2015-16</b> | <b>2016-17</b> | <b>2017-18</b> | <b>2018-19</b> |
|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| <b>Grade 6</b> | 83             | 83             | 132            | 132            | 132            |
| <b>Grade 7</b> | 83             | 83             | 83             | 132            | 132            |
| <b>Grade 8</b> |                | 83             | 83             | 83             | 132            |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>166</b>     | <b>249</b>     | <b>298</b>     | <b>347</b>     | <b>396</b>     |

**Rationale for Selecting Enrollment Size and Growth Strategy:** The proposed School will enroll 83 Grade 6 students and 83 Grade 7 students in its opening year. In 2015, another class of 83 Grade 6 students will enter. Thereafter, each entering class will consist of 132 6th grade students. At the end of the charter term, the School will serve a total of 396 middle school students.

The enrollment plan assumes a relatively low annual attrition rate, with available seats being filled immediately from the waiting list, through additional recruitment and/or the next enrollment lottery.<sup>1</sup> The proposed enrollment targets allow for small class sizes, which in turn allow for targeted intervention in middle school when a large percentage of students are expected to enter the school significantly behind grade level in ELA, math and other subjects. In designing its enrollment strategy, the founding group has considered the research demonstrating that class size has the greatest positive impact on academic achievement when classes have 20 or fewer students.<sup>2</sup> The Early College Academy’s enrollment plan will enable it to keep class enrollment as close as possible to this optimal level while maintaining sufficient numbers to meet budgetary expectations, recognizing the possible loss of some students to family mobility and other factors during the academic year. Small class size, combined with high-quality teaching and extensive in-classroom instructional support, will ensure that each student receives personal attention and individualized instruction.

### **Projected Fiscal and Programmatic Impact on District of Location**

The applicant group provided an analysis of the fiscal and programmatic impact of the proposed School on public and non-public schools in New York City, indicating that the fiscal impact of South Bronx Early College Academy Charter School on the New York City School District public schools is expected to be nominal.

The New York State Education Department (“Department”) also conducted additional analysis on the projected fiscal impact of the School on its district of residence, the New York City School District (“NYCSD”), which is summarized in the following table.

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<sup>1</sup> The founders of the Early College Academy recognize that new students who replace students leaving the school during the academic year may need additional instructional and counseling supports and interventions to help them adapt to the school’s culture and meet the school’s rigorous academic standards and expectations. Diagnostic tests will help identify specific student needs, and plans for providing targeted support will be developed. In addition to supporting such students through advisories, each such student will be assigned a faculty mentor to provide academic support and encouragement.

<sup>2</sup> For instance, Muennig, P. & Woolf, S. H. (2007) Health and Economic Benefits of Reducing the Number of Students per Classroom in US Primary Schools *American Journal of Public Health*, September 27, 2007; also Kim Connor and Rosemary Day. "Class Size: When Less Can Be More," Sacramento, California: 1988. Senate Office of Research.

**Table 3: Projected Fiscal Impact upon District of Location, 2014-15 to 2018-19**

| Year    | Number of Students Enrolled in Charter School Per Year <sup>3</sup> | Charter School Basic Tuition Rate <sup>4</sup> | Total Charter School Basic Tuition Only | Estimated District Special Education Payment <sup>5</sup> | Total District General Fund Budget <sup>6</sup> | Percent of District Budget |
|---------|---|--|---|---|---|----------------------------|
| 2014-15 | 166   | \$15,224                                       | \$2,527,184                             | \$378,150   | \$19,864,726,000                                | 0.015%                     |
| 2018-19 | 396   | \$17,754                                       | \$7,030,584                             | \$1,052,007   |   | 0.041%                     |

The calculations above assume charter school basic tuition rates in the charter period (2014-15 through 2018-19) based on a trend analysis calculated by the Charter School Office and approved by the Department’s State Aid Office. In order to conservatively avoid underestimating the fiscal impact that the charter school will have on the district going forward, the Department is assuming no growth in the New York City School District budget during the duration of the school’s charter.<sup>7</sup>

It should be noted that, given the nature of district-based per-pupil funding, the estimates made by the Department in conducting this analysis are subject to unpredictable financial fluctuations. For forecasting purposes, the fiscal impact of this charter school on the district in which it will be located assumes that:

- There will be no fluctuation in the grade levels served by existing charter schools over the course of the charter term;
- The charter school will be able to meet its projected maximum enrollment;
- All students will come from the district of location; and
- All students will attend every day for a 1.0 FTE.

The specifics of the school’s enrollment composition are still unavailable; however, the Department acknowledges that the programmatic and fiscal impact of the proposed charter school on other public and private schools in the same area will also be influenced by the proportion of charter school enrollees that would have attended a same-district public or private school had it not been for the presence of this charter school.

<sup>3</sup> Source: South Bronx Early College Academy Charter School Application

<sup>4</sup> Source: Education Law §2856(1)(a)(iii) and NYS Education Department Office of State Aid Charter School Basic Tuition Rate Analysis, Fall 2013

<sup>5</sup> Based on 2012-13 calculated special education classification rate for the district of location, as collected by NYSED Information and Report Services

<sup>6</sup> Source: The City of New York Adopted Financial Plan, 2013-2017,

[http://www.nyc.gov/html/omb/downloads/pdf/adopt13\\_fp.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/html/omb/downloads/pdf/adopt13_fp.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Additional notes: While the school has included other federal grants and/or funds that may flow through the district to be received by the school in its proposed budget, this analysis does not account for these sources of potential revenue, nor does it include the value of certain services (e.g. transportation) that the district is required to provide the charter school. However, the analysis also does not account for district per-pupil expense and overall resource savings that are likely to result from a reduction in the number of students attending district public schools as a result of students attending nonpublic schools located in the school district.

Below, for reference, please find additional data on New York City Community School District 7.<sup>8</sup>

**Table 4: 2011-12 Demographic Detail for Proposed District of Location:  
New York City Geographic District # 7 - Bronx**  
*Charter Term Year 1 Grade Configuration Based on 2011-12 District Demographics*

| All Students                  | Total District Enrollment |            | Grade 6 |            | Grade 7 |            |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|------------|---------|------------|---------|------------|
|                               | Count                     | Percentage | Count   | Percentage | Count   | Percentage |
| American Indian/Alaska Native | 96                        | 0.5%       | 1       | 0.1%       | 3       | 0.2%       |
| Asian/Pacific Islander        | 190                       | 1.0%       | 11      | 0.8%       | 5       | 0.4%       |
| Black                         | 5,375                     | 28.2%      | 356     | 26.8%      | 398     | 28.8%      |
| Hispanic                      | 13,226                    | 69.3%      | 948     | 71.3%      | 968     | 70.1%      |
| Multiracial                   | 13                        | 0.1%       | -       | 0.0%       | -       | 0.0%       |
| White                         | 174                       | 0.9%       | 14      | 1.1%       | 7       | 0.5%       |
| Economically Disadvantaged    | 17,352                    | 91.0%      | 1,272   | 95.6%      | 1,290   | 93.4%      |
| Limited English Proficient    | 3,526                     | 18.5%      | 241     | 18.1%      | 258     | 18.7%      |
| Students with Disabilities    | 4,002                     | 21.0%      | 336     | 25.3%      | 330     | 23.9%      |

**Table 5: 2011-12 Academic Proficiency Rates on NYS Exams  
Based on Grade Configurations for Proposed School<sup>9</sup>**

|               | 6   | 7   | 8   | High School <sup>10</sup> |
|---------------|-----|-----|-----|---------------------------|
| <b>NYC #7</b> |     |     |     |                           |
| ELA           | 21% | 23% | 18% | 63%                       |
| Math          | 36% | 35% | 36% | 49%                       |
| <b>NYS</b>    |     |     |     |                           |
| ELA           | 56% | 52% | 50% | 82%                       |
| Math          | 65% | 65% | 61% | 71%                       |

<sup>8</sup> Source: Student Information Repository System (SIRS) 2011-12 Report 303 BEDS Day Enrollment Verification Report by Location of Enrollment & Student Subgroup

<sup>9</sup> Source: Student Information Repository System (SIRS) 2011-12 Report 101 High School Accountability Data Verification Report; 2011-12 Report 102 Elementary/Middle-Level Accountability Data Verification Report

<sup>10</sup> Note: High School Regents Exam proficiency rates based on 2011-12 English Composition and Integrated Algebra Regents Exams.

## **Public Hearing and Public Comment**

As required by the Charter Schools Act, the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) held a hearing on October 24, 2013 to solicit comments from the community concerning South Bronx Early College Academy Charter School along with one other charter school proposed for the community school district. Twelve members of the public attended; three of them spoke in support, commenting that both proposals will serve the needs of the community including English language learners. Both plans offered flexible school schedules and opportunities for students to earn college credit. The Charter School Office has not received any additional negative or supportive public comment.

The Department directly notified the Chancellor of the NYCDOE, as well as public and private schools in the region, of the charter school application and issued an open call for written public comment via the State Education Department Charter School Office website. The NYC DOE found this proposal to be well intentioned with the potential to offer a rigorous educational model. Chancellor Walcott recommends this charter application “with reservation” and advises the applicant group to “pursue private options” in which to house the proposed school.

## **Application Review Process**

On September 3, 2013, as required by the New York State Charter Schools Act, the New York State Education Department (the “Department”) released the 2013 Request for Proposals (“RFP”) to Establish Charter Schools Authorized by the Board of Regents. The charter school application process used by the Board of Regents and the Department during the 2013 RFP cycle is multi-staged and designed to ensure that any charter school applicant presented to the Board of Regents for possible approval demonstrates a detailed and complete school design plan that:

- includes a clear plan to meet or exceed enrollment and retention targets for students with disabilities, students who are English language learners, and students who are eligible to participate in the federal free reduced-price lunch program;
- provides evidence of public outreach that conforms to the process prescribed by the Regents for the purpose of soliciting and incorporating community input regarding the proposed charter school;
- meets all requirements set forth in the Charter Schools Act as well as all other applicable laws, rules, regulations;
- demonstrates the ability to operate the school in an educationally and fiscally sound manner;
- is likely to improve student learning and achievement and materially further the purposes of the Act; and
- would have a significant educational benefit to the students expected to attend the proposed charter school.

In addition, the applicant group and founding board of trustees must demonstrate appropriate knowledge, capacity, and abilities to effectively create, maintain, and oversee a high-quality charter school.

During 2013, a total of 99 letters of intent were submitted in two rounds (February preliminary review and September formal review). After an initial review process, a total of 46 applications were assessed in 2013, including the application for South Bronx Early College Academy Charter School.

To assess whether to recommend approval or denial of the charter application to the Board of Regents, the Department established review panels to thoroughly evaluate each full application. Each panel was made up of professional expert consultants, peer reviewers who are school leaders and educators active in charter and public schools in New York, as well as qualified Department staff members. The review panel members reviewed, rated, and commented on each section of the application according to the criteria published in the Application Kit.

Department staff conducted a two-hour capacity interview with the eight of the proposed initial board members of South Bronx Early College Academy Charter School, on Tuesday, May 21, 2013 and a second capacity interview on Thursday, October 31, 2013. Questions posed to the proposed initial trustees included general questions around New York State Charter School Law, roles and responsibilities of the school community and the board to the community and various stakeholder groups as well to as the Board of Regents as authorizer. To fully understand the proposed academic program, governance role and fiscal viability of the proposed School, targeted questions were asked to clarify information provided in the full application.

The responses demonstrated adequate knowledge and grasp of key areas. Members of the applicant group as a whole and individually demonstrated knowledge of the charter school application and the proposed School. Structures, systems, protocols and procedures are in place to permit the board to effectively govern the School. The applicants addressed questions posed with specific and detailed information that presented a clear, realistic picture of how the School expects to operate.

## **Findings**

Based on the comprehensive review of the application and of the applicant, founding group, and proposed board of trustees, the Department makes the following findings:

1. The charter school described in the application meets the requirements of Article 56 of the Education Law (as amended) and other applicable laws, rules, and regulations.<sup>11</sup> This finding is based on the following (among other things):
  - the applicant has included in the application the information required by §2851(2)
  - the proposed charter school would meet or exceed enrollment and retention targets, as prescribed by the NYS Board of Regents,<sup>12</sup> of students with disabilities, English

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<sup>11</sup> Education Law §2852(2) (a).

<sup>12</sup> Note, the data upon which to base the enrollment and retention targets mandated by the amendments to the Act was not available at the time the statute mandated the RFP be issued. As a result, the Department evaluated the plans for student enrollment, recruitment, and retention plans of each class of student referenced in the amendments to the Act such that the Department could make the determination that the applicant would meet or exceed the enrollment and retention targets when developed. During the first year of the charter term, the Department will develop such targets and incorporate these targets into the school's charter agreement performance expectations.

- language learners, and students who are eligible applicants for the federal free and reduced price lunch program as required by Education Law subdivision 2852(9-a)(b)(i)
- the applicant has conducted public outreach to solicit community input regarding the proposed charter school and to address comments received from the impacted community concerning the educational and programmatic needs of students in conformity with Education Law subdivision 2852(9-a)(b)(ii).
2. The applicant has demonstrated the ability to operate the proposed charter school in an educationally and fiscally sound manner.<sup>13</sup> This finding is based on the following (among other things):
- The presentation in the application of a sound description of key features that are core to the school’s overall design, and which rigorously addresses the criteria outlined in the Department’s RFP in the areas of mission; key design elements; enrollment, recruitment and retention; and community to be served.
  - The presentation in the application of a sound educational plan, which rigorously addresses the criteria outlined in the Department’s RFP in the areas of achievement goals; school schedule and calendar; curriculum and instruction; assessment; school culture and climate; and special student populations and related services.
  - The presentation in the application of a sound organizational and fiscal plan, which rigorously addresses the criteria outlined in the Department’s RFP in the areas of founding group capacity; board of trustees and governance; management and staffing; evaluation; professional development; facilities; insurance; health, food and transportation services; family and community involvement; financial management; budget and cash flow; pre-opening plan; and dissolution plan.
  - An understanding of the New York State Charter Schools Act, and the skill, will and capacity to successfully launch and operate a high quality public charter school.
3. Granting the proposed charter is likely to improve student learning and achievement, will materially further the purposes of the Act<sup>14</sup> and will have a significant educational benefit to the students expected to attend the charter school.<sup>15</sup> This finding is based on the totality of the information presented in the application and during the application review process, as summarized in this document.

## **Recommendation**

Based on the Department’s review and findings, Commissioner John B. King, Jr. recommends that the New York State Board of Regents approve the proposal to establish the South Bronx Early Academy Charter School to open in 2014 in New York City.

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<sup>13</sup> Education Law §2852(2) (b).

<sup>14</sup> Education Law §2852(2) (c).

<sup>15</sup> As applicable pursuant to §2852(2) (d).



# New York State Education Department Charter School Office

## **Charter School Application Summary, Findings, and Recommendation**

Application in response to the  
New York State Education Department 2013 Request for Proposals to  
Establish Charter Schools Authorized by the Board of Regents  
to establish the proposed:

**Renaissance Academy Charter School of the Arts**

December 2013

**Table 1: Summary of the Proposed Renaissance Academy Charter School of the Arts**

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Name of Charter School                                  | Renaissance Academy Charter School of the Arts  |
| Lead Applicant(s)                                       | David Silver  |
| District of Location                                    | Rochester City School District  |
| Opening Date  | August 2014   |
| Projected Charter Term                                  | December 17, 2013 – June 30, 2019   |
| Management Company                                      | None  |
| Partners  | None  |
| Facility  | Private space   |
| Projected Enrollment and Grade Span during Charter Term | Opening with 176 students in Kindergarten through Grade 2; growing to 506 students in Kindergarten through Grade 6  |
| Planned Grade Span (beyond Initial Charter Term)        | 506 students in grades Kindergarten through Grade 6   |
| Mission Statement                                       | <i>“Renaissance Academy Charter School of the Arts will provide children an enriched and rigorous educational experience through the infusion of the humanities and arts rooted in a culture of high academic standards leading to success in college and careers.”</i> |

The founders of the Renaissance Academy Charter School of the Arts have designed a comprehensive educational program to ensure the attainment of high academic standards for the students to be served. The educational program is aligned to the objectives established in Education Law §2850(2). The School will:

- increase student achievement through rigorous curricula and instructional activities;
- ensure students are at (or above) grade level upon transition to middle school;
- decrease the achievement gap among learners while addressing their individual needs;
- provide extensive and focused classroom experiences, enriched with language experiences;
- provide a culture of self-awareness, responsibility and respect for all members of the community;
- use Habits of Mind to frame pedagogy and use the arts as a vehicle for student engagement, multi-modality opportunities of learning, and differentiated instruction; and

- provide opportunities for students to participate with artists, attend performances and field trips to arts and cultural institutions and create a learning-rich environment in which teachers are engaged in job-embedded professional development that will increase their instructional efficacy and student achievement results.

## **Key Design Elements**

Renaissance Academy Charter School of the Arts will serve elementary age students in Grades K through 4 and middle school age students in Grades 5 through 6. Enrollment will be open for all students regardless of race or ethnicity and inclusive of diverse student populations (i.e., students with disabilities, students who are limited English proficient, students who are eligible for free or reduced school lunch, and students who are gifted and talented). The Key Design Elements identified below are core aspects of the proposed Renaissance Academy Charter School of the Arts.

- **More Support for Instruction:** Every child will be taught by a team of professionals who will team teach and collaborate to provide students with a multifaceted approach to learning. Each child will have direct instruction by a reading specialist, a special educator, a speech and language therapist, and a drama coach as they team teach with the classroom teacher. Together, these educational professionals will work with students to consistently assess the best approaches individually tailored to each child's needs.
- **More Time on Task:** With a longer school day, there is time to build in blocks of uninterrupted instruction where in-depth learning can happen. For the K-2 student, time for has been built in for snack and all students will have ample time to explore the music, drama, movement/dance, and visual arts. The longer year, 191 days, provides ample time to integrate the arts into all areas, provide hands on learning opportunities, performances and field trips.
- **Addressing Dispositions for College:** A Habit of Mind means having a disposition toward behaving intelligently when confronted with problems, the answers to which are not immediately known: dichotomies, dilemmas, enigmas and uncertainties. Employing Habits of Mind requires drawing forth certain patterns of intellectual behavior that produce powerful results. These are critical skills students need to deal with life's challenges. These dispositions have been incorporated into the School's Key Design Elements because of the need for students to develop these Habits of Mind (dealing with failure, striving to complete a task, etc.) in order to be successful in life. The arts are viewed as a vehicle through which lessons can be structured to instill Habits of Mind and Character Education units.
- **The Arts:** In addition to complying with the New York State Learning Standards in the Arts (Music, Visual Arts, Dance, Theatre), the arts will be interwoven into all curricula - an integrated arts education that connects to all areas of inquiry. Students will participate in workshops and residencies provided by professional artists, attend in-school performances by artists, and field trips to arts and cultural institutions. Integration of the arts will provide alternative modalities of expression and communication to support

important language and comprehension milestones. Arts education impacts positive cognitive, physical, emotional and social development. Teaching about and through the arts fosters positive emotional development by encouraging children to identify and analyze their feelings and develop a deeper understanding of themselves.

- **Faculty and Organization:** The staffing structure of Renaissance Academy Charter School of the Arts provides the school community with the ability to address core values. Along with a solid academic team, a full complement of staff will provide the network of comprehensive care, concern, and commitment for the success of each child. The co-teaching model with a core teacher and a specialist results in low ratios of students to staff, which contributes to insuring student success. Student performance and achievement goals will drive staffing needs and affect recruitment, retention and key decisions about the programs to be offered. A comprehensive system of accountability is imbedded in the evaluation system for the program and for teacher, administrator, and board evaluations. Student achievement levels and meeting projected growth are key indicators to efficacy.
- **Connections/Potential Partnerships:** The Renaissance Academy sees itself as a new member in a vital and established arts community. Extensive conversations have been held with the following entities that have committed to join in serving the School's families:
  - **Colleges and Universities:** Nazareth College, SUNY Brockport
  - **Arts Organizations:** Young Audiences, Memorial Art Gallery, Rochester Children's Theater, Rochester Philharmonic, The Strong, GEVA, PUSH Physical Theater, Genesee Center for Arts and Education

## Education Plan

The school calendar established for Renaissance Academy Charter School of the Arts consists of 191 days of instruction. Renaissance Academy Charter School will begin each school day at 8:00 a.m. and end at 4:00 p.m. During this time, seven hours and 15 minutes (Grades K-2) and seven hours and 30 minutes (Grades 3-6) will be devoted to instruction, with a 30 minute lunch.

*A typical day for students:* The school day will begin with student participation and engagement in the morning rituals of the classroom, including breakfast. At 8:30 a.m., instruction will begin in the core academic areas. (Students in grades K-2 will have a 15-minute mid-morning snack each day). The K-2 program will focus heavily on language acquisition, vocabulary development and literacy as is age appropriate. This focus sets the foundation for strong student reading, thinking, and reasoning skills. Drama, speech, special education, and reading teachers will work with the students through the literacy blocks to develop their expressive/receptive language skills, readiness skills and emergent reader skills. K-6 classes will be heterogeneously grouped, except during Math and ELA when students will be grouped by level. During the remainder of the day, instruction will take place in math, science, social studies, library studies, art, music, dance and drama. Supplemental and intervention services will be supplied within the classroom through a co-teaching model and the inclusion of specialty teachers.

*A typical teacher day:* Teachers will arrive at 7:30 a.m. to prepare for the day and for student arrival at 8:00 a.m. From 8:00-8:30 a.m., teachers will facilitate student breakfast and lead students in rituals and routines to promote identified aspects of character education, one of the School's key design elements. Core instruction will take place throughout the day, with intervention support integrated into the classroom with specialty teachers using a co-teaching model. A two-day rotation will allow for integration of various specialty teachers. During the day, teachers will have time to make home phone calls to check on students' daily attendance, conference with parents, return calls, and address issues. From 2:00-3:30 p.m., teachers will engage in a variety of professional development activities such as participation in professional obligations, professional learning communities, meetings with parents, and working on curricula committees. They may also observe students in arts classes, debrief colleagues after walk-through visits and observations, meet with special area educators to co-plan, or meet with administration.

The Head of Arts and the Head of Academics will lead the professional development program with significant input from classroom teachers and, when necessary, outside consultants. The School will offer an intensive summer orientation for teachers and establish an ongoing professional development program embedded into the school day and year. Program topics will be based on the needs of the staff as determined from staff surveys, results of assessments and classroom observations. The effectiveness of the professional development program will be gauged by staff surveys, walk through data, lessons and unit plan review, classroom implementation of skills/techniques and student results.

The School will provide teachers with extensive ongoing professional development on Habits of Mind, Response to Intervention, and various other pedagogical strategies (differentiation of instruction, student behavioral management and establishing school culture) to meet diverse learning needs in the classroom. The School will establish a Response to Intervention team to work with teachers to address specific learning and behavioral issues in the classroom.

The founders of Renaissance Academy Charter School of the Arts plan to build organizational capacity and share resources and best practices by providing time at each faculty meeting for a staff member or team to share a best practice that has been successful in their classroom. The School will create a professional learning section of the library, including scholarly writings, model lesson/unit plans, and journals. Professional development opportunities will be shared with other charter schools and traditional schools.

Teachers will have planning time during each school day to analyze data to determine areas of need and areas of strength while reviewing student work against the state and national standards (Engage NY). They may also conduct lesson plan studies, meet as a critical friends group, function as a collegial circle that focuses on particular instructional strategies, and observe the practices of other colleagues. School-wide opportunities in which all staff will be able to learn together will be woven into the cultural fabric of the School.

The Renaissance Academy of the Arts Charter School will recruit and retain highly qualified teachers by offering salaries comparable to those in the Rochester area, with consideration of teacher experience and credentials. The School will hire highly qualified, non-certified special

area teaching staff, based on experience, as permitted by NYS Education Law, Article 56 Charter Schools Act.

The School will espouse the work of Danielson as its framework for teaching and learning. Because teaching is an extremely complex activity, this framework is useful in laying out the various areas of competence in which professional teachers need to develop expertise.

The ELA, social studies, science and mathematics curricula at the School will be based on best practices and aligned with the New York State Common Core Learning Standards. In the core content areas, in-depth alignment and incorporation of the Common Core Learning Standards will be undertaken at grade level.

*English Language Arts* is the foundation for all other subject area learning. By devoting additional time to ELA, the School will use a comprehensive approach to teaching literacy at all grade levels. Students will develop reading acquisition through phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, comprehension and vocabulary and will gain the capacity to read, write, listen and speak for understanding, for literacy response and expression, for critical analysis and evaluation, and for social interaction. Core materials will include *Wonders* by McMillan McGraw-Hill, a research-based reading program that is aligned to the New York State Standards for ELA, the Common Core Standards for ELA and the NY State testing program. The reading program will provide leveled trade books, reader's workshop, writer's workshop, support materials for ELL students, and resources to support the School's Response to Intervention program. In all grades, the ELA curriculum will address the four ELA Career and College Readiness Anchor Standards.

The Renaissance Academy for the Arts Charter School will utilize *Math in Focus: Singapore Math* by Marshall Cavendish as the School's primary curricular resource for mathematics. This program, aligned to the Common Core State Standards, is highly engaging and allows students to use all their senses to discover important mathematical concepts and thinking skills. Students will be engaged in hands-on discovery based learning that culminates in performance-based assessment. The Singapore Math Framework has proven effective with diverse learners as it provides varied access points for students.

During the planning year, the Head of Academics and the Head of Arts will work with the academic and arts teachers to enhance connections among all disciplines, core curriculum, and all key design elements. Using *Understanding by Design* as a framework, the team will create suggested activities and performance-based assessments that align with the school's focus. During the course of the school year, the School will provide teachers with time to form Small Learning Communities in which they will identify and research curricular strategies. Teachers will work together with the synergy of several disciplines (special education, speech, ESOL, reading, the arts and core classroom teachers) to co-plan units and lessons, which will enhance the integration of arts into all subject areas. Particular emphasis will be placed on the needs of special populations.

The following instructional strategies and practices will ensure successful implementation of the curriculum:

- **Speech and language support in K-2 classrooms:** Children who enter school with language difficulties are at risk of literacy problems, poor academic achievement, low self-esteem, social and behavioral problems and ultimately, reduced employment options. Oral language competency in the young child is a strong protective measure against negative outcomes in later life.
- **Co-teaching model:** Co-teaching will occur a minimum of three times a day with the special education teacher, the ESOL teacher, and the speech and language pathologist. Each will model specialized differentiated lessons for all students, thus embedding collegial training in best practices.
- **Arts integration across content areas:** Art taught within the child's educational career provides a means for reaching traditional academic goals, social and emotional growth, civic engagement, and equitable opportunity. Students will participate in workshops and residencies provided by professional artists, attend in-school performances by artists, and field trips to arts and cultural institutions. Classroom teachers will participate in professional development to advance their knowledge and understanding of various art forms and arts integration research.

The School will employ a variety of diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments to check for understanding and assess student achievement. Assessments will occur in all courses at all grade levels, including:

- **Assessing Habits of Mind:** Metacognitive questioning charts, Student Self Assessment Checklist, students using illustrations and writing personal logs to track learning, student/teacher designed rubrics and focused observations.
- **Embedded assessments:** The selected curriculum materials have diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments included for each unit. Teachers will embed the appropriate assessments throughout each unit and use the results to inform instructional decision-making. Results will be vertically and horizontally reviewed to determine additional areas of program need and/or strength.
- **Collaboratively-created grade level assessments:** Teachers will create anchor grade level assessments to assess student progress and program effectiveness, which will closely mirror the rigor and format of the required NYS Assessments.
- **Performance-based assessments:** Students will be engaged in authentic, real-life performance-based assessments in all subject areas aligned to the Common Core State Standards and New York State Learning Standards. Teachers, students and their parents will know where each student ranks locally, in the state, and in the nation. Such assessments also provide information on the strengths and areas of need for each student.

- **New York State assessments:** Students will take the required NYS assessments.
- **Nationally-normed standardized assessments:** The School will use the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) Common Core MAP to obtain a comprehensive picture of students' strengths and weaknesses.

Teachers will learn ways to analyze data to determine student and programmatic needs through planned and purposeful professional development. They will work in grade level teams to determine what the data reveals about instruction and student achievement. Teachers will be expected to create action plans to address any areas of need. School leaders will analyze data from all levels to assess student achievement and programmatic success. Data will be used in a formative way to determine immediate strategies to improve student achievement as well as in a summative way to inform decision making for the future of the School.

Teacher hiring, program development and scheduling are just a few aspects of the school community which will be predicated on the results of school-wide data. The board of trustees will be presented a monthly data picture of student achievement and will use the data to consider changes which will bolster the existing program or capitalize on areas of success that exist. Teachers will engage students in planning academic goals for themselves and discuss how they are progressing toward achieving them.

### **Community Outreach**

The applicant group has engaged in rigorous, ongoing efforts of outreach to inform and solicit input from the Rochester City/Monroe County community regarding how the proposed School intends to address the educational and programmatic needs of students. The applicant group held a number of community forums, distributed informational brochures in various locations throughout the community, made presentations to community-based organizations and local public school officials, met with members of State and local legislatures, and invited the public to comment via the proposed school's website, email address, or phone. The applicant group has considered community feedback in its school design.

### **School Governance and Leadership**

Including the lead applicant, **Mr. David Silver**, the planning team consists of three experienced educators. Five individuals are named in the application as proposed members of the initial board of trustees, and each provided a completed School Trustee Background Information form, Statement of Assurance and resume or curriculum vitae. As required, the applicant group has provided a set of draft by-laws and a draft code of ethics.

The ten proposed initial members of the board of trustees are described below:

- **Ms. Nan Westervelt**, proposed Chairperson, is a member of the Arts in Education community in Rochester. She served as Executive Director of Young Audiences of Rochester, Inc. for 15 years and the Monroe One BOCES Arts in Education Coordinator for 10 of those years. Ms. Westervelt currently works as a consultant for a non-profit management and arts in education organization.

- **Ms. Toyia Wilson**, proposed Secretary, is Turnaround Initiative Principal for the Greece Central School District. She has over 15 years experience in high school administration in the Rochester City School District. In Greece, Ms. Wilson works with the Superintendent, the Deputy Superintendent, the Executive and the Learning Teams to support school principals in closing achievement gaps and raising performance for all students, thus leading to improved grade level performance and on time graduation. She provides leadership for professional learning outlined in the Greece Strategic and School Based Improvement Plans. She is working to build system-wide understanding of the alignment among strategic initiatives to improve Greece reform results.
- **Mr. Frederick Kulikowski**, proposed Treasurer, is a finance expert with more than 30 years of experience in the banking industry. He holds a BS (summa cum laude) from the University of Pennsylvania, and an MBA from the University of Rochester. Most recently he was employed as a Vice President with CapGen Financial, a private equity investment group focused on U.S. banks. His primary role was to evaluate the managerial, sales, and operational capabilities of identified targets, and to conduct reviews of retail networks and lending teams. In earlier employment, Mr. Kulikowski was President and COO of Commercial Federal Bank (2004-2005), an \$11B bank headquartered in Omaha, Nebraska.
- **Ms. Sue W. Lococo**, proposed Vice Chair, has 40 years of experience in special education. She is currently employed at the Holy Childhood Agency, a non-denominational, non-profit agency in Rochester serving individuals with developmental disabilities. Her teaching experience includes Intermediate and Middle School level in self-contained and inclusion models for students with a variety of educational classifications. Ms. Lococo served as a member of the Committee on Special Education for 17 years. In addition, Ms. Lococo was a district consultant on the inclusion model and a rater for the NY State Social Studies, English, RCT, and ELA tests.
- **Ms. Dale Klein** is currently on the faculty of the Memorial Art Gallery's Creative Workshop for children and has a strong academic and public profile in the arts. She is an award winning artist receiving accolades from the Rochester Print Club, Hunterdon Museum of Art, Syracuse University Art Gallery, Nazareth College and the Memorial Art Gallery, Rochester NY. In addition to her knowledge and skill in the arts, Ms. Klein has an outstanding professional career in social work. She worked as a social worker in private practice and at the Child and Adolescent Clinic, University of Rochester and the Family Service of Rochester. She is works with children as a summer reading program volunteer at School 52 in Rochester.

The founding group has proposed that the lead applicant, **Mr. David Silver**, serve as the Executive Director and Head of Arts/Operations, stating that he is uniquely qualified to open, operate, and lead the proposed charter school. Mr. Silver is the founding principal of the Rochester City School District's School of the Arts he where he is responsible for having built the culture and program that has led to the identification of this school as one of the best high schools in New York State and the best high school in District as measured by graduation rates,

numbers of students with advanced Regents Diplomas, and acceptance and attendance to the colleges of the students' choice. Mr. Silver has expertise in several critical and related areas of school leadership and operations: school administration, school budgeting, curriculum development and instruction, facilities management, teacher recruitment, supervision, and program development and evaluation.

Additionally, the founding group has proposed **Donna Marie Cozine, Ed.D.**, as the leading candidate for the position of Head of Academics. Dr. Cozine has served in various roles at the District level, including Elementary School Teacher, Principal, Assistant Principal, Curriculum Developer, Professional Developer, and Instructional Coach. She also has expertise in: school administration, school accountability, school budgeting, curriculum development and instruction, facilities management, teacher recruitment, supervision and evaluation, and program development and evaluation.

The staffing structure will provide the School community with the ability to address core values as expressed by the Key Design Elements. Along with a solid academic team, a full complement of staff will provide the network of comprehensive care, concern, and commitment for the success of each child. As the years progress, the low proportionate numbers of staff to students will remain consistent to insure success. Student performance and progress toward achievement goals will drive staffing needs and affect recruitment, retention, and key decisions about the program. The staffing structure may change to enable the school to have a stronger academic program. A comprehensive system of accountability is embedded in the evaluation system of education programs and teacher, administrator, and board evaluations.

The day to day operations will be the responsibility of the Head of Academics and the Head of Arts/Operations, who will work closely with each other and faculty leadership to support and actively participate in all facets of teaching and learning within the building. Formal weekly leadership meetings will be scheduled and serve as the time when the co-leaders officially update each other on their areas of supervision. Joint responsibilities of the two building administrators include legal compliance, the safety and well-being of the students, and personnel decisions including the hiring, supervision and professional development of staff.

The Head of Academics will have lead responsibility for the overall curriculum and academic programs of the School. This administrator will serve as the key administrator of instructional leadership, teacher and staff evaluation and supervision. Duties will also include oversight of testing and assessment and completion of state reports.

The Head of Arts/Operations will have lead responsibility in the areas of special education regulations, policies and procedures, and specialty curricula selection and implementation. This administrator will also function as a liaison with community arts organizations, consultants and guest artists, and will have responsibility for vendors, consultants, and out-sourced services. A number of other areas of oversight include the budget, human resources, legal, marketing, transportation, and facilities.

Both school administrators will be responsible for any changes in staffing due to these findings.

## Facility

The founding group reported difficulty in locating an appropriate school facility within the City of Rochester. This challenge was increased by the needs of the School’s arts program and the necessity for green space for students. The founders of Renaissance Academy Charter School of the Arts have been seeking a suitable facility in or near the arts center in the City of Rochester. The group has thus far not been able to identify a site that either meets, or can be remodeled in a fiscally possible manner to meet, the NYSED building requirements. The founders and proposed governing board have extended the search and identified three sites that appear to meet the NYSED building requirements and can be available by September 2014. Each of these buildings, however, is just outside the boundaries of the City School District. Any of the three options would enable the School to target its recruitment efforts in the City of Rochester, especially for students of low socio-economic means and for whom English may not be the primary language. The founding group is continuing to evaluate potential facilities for the School.

## Projected Fiscal and Programmatic Impact on District of Location

The applicant group provided an analysis of the fiscal and programmatic impact of the proposed school on public and non-public schools in the city of Rochester, indicating that the fiscal impact of the Renaissance Charter School for the Arts on the Rochester City School District public schools is expected to be minimal.

The New York State Education Department also conducted additional analysis on the projected fiscal impact of the School on its district of residence, the Rochester City School District, which is summarized below:

**Table 2: Projected Fiscal Impact Upon District of Location, 2014-15 to 2018-19**

| Year    | Number of Students Enrolled in Charter School Per Year <sup>1</sup> | Charter School Basic Tuition Rate <sup>2</sup> | Total Charter School Basic Tuition Only | Estimated District Special Education Payment <sup>3</sup> | Total District General Fund Budget <sup>4</sup> | Percent of District Budget |
|---------|---|--|---|---|---|----------------------------|
| 2014-15 | 176   | \$13,192                                       | \$2,321,792                             | \$413,279   | \$734,224,377                                   | 0.373%                     |
| 2018-19 | 506   | \$15,011                                       | \$7,595,566                             | \$1,352,011   |   | 1.219%                     |

The calculations above assume charter school basic tuition rates in the charter period (2014-15 through 2018-19) based on a trend analysis calculated by the Charter School Office and approved by the Department’s State Aid Office. In order to conservatively avoid underestimating the fiscal impact that the charter school will have on the district going forward, the Department is

<sup>1</sup> Source: The Renaissance Academy Charter School for the Arts Application

<sup>2</sup> Source: Education Law §2856(1)(a)(iii) and NYS Education Department Office of State Aid Charter School Basic Tuition Rate Analysis, Fall 2013

<sup>3</sup> Based on 2012-13 calculated special education classification rate for the district of location, as collected by NYSED Information and Report Services

<sup>4</sup> Source: 2013-14 Adopted Budget Book, Rochester City School District, Section 1, Page 3

assuming no growth in the Rochester City School District budget during the duration of the school's charter.<sup>5</sup>

It should be noted that, given the nature of district-based per-pupil funding, the estimates made by the Department in conducting this analysis are subject to unpredictable financial fluctuations. For forecasting purposes, the fiscal impact of this charter school on the district in which it will be located assumes that:

- There will be no fluctuation in the grade levels served by existing charter schools over the course of the charter term;
- The charter school will be able to meet its projected maximum enrollment;
- All students will come from the district of location; and
- All students will attend every day for a 1.0 FTE.

The specifics of the school's enrollment composition are still unavailable; however, the Department acknowledges that the programmatic and fiscal impact of the proposed charter school on other public and private schools in the same area will also be influenced by the proportion of charter school enrollees that would have attended a same-district public or private school had it not been for the presence of this charter school.

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<sup>5</sup> Additional notes: While the school has included other federal grants and/or funds that may flow through the district to be received by the school in its proposed budget, this analysis does not account for these sources of potential revenue, nor does it include the value of certain services (e.g. transportation) that the district is required to provide the charter school. However, the analysis also does not account for district per-pupil expense and overall resource savings that are likely to result from a reduction in the number of students attending district public schools as a result of students attending nonpublic schools located in the school district.

Below, for reference, please find additional data on Rochester City School District.

**Table 3: 2011-12 Demographic Detail for Proposed District of Location:  
Rochester City School District<sup>6</sup>**

*Charter Term Year 1 Grade Configuration Based on 2011-12 District Demographics*

|                                      | Total District Enrollment |       | Grade K |       | Grade 1 |       | Grade 2 |       |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------|-------|---------|-------|---------|-------|---------|-------|
| All Students                         | 32,323                    |       | 2,544   |       | 2,484   |       | 2,411   |       |
| <i>American Indian/Alaska Native</i> | 84                        | 0.3%  | 8       | 0.3%  | 7       | 0.3%  | 10      | 0.4%  |
| <i>Asian/Pacific Islander</i>        | 995                       | 3.1%  | 74      | 2.9%  | 63      | 2.5%  | 63      | 2.6%  |
| <i>Black</i>                         | 20,116                    | 62.2% | 1,575   | 61.9% | 1,500   | 60.4% | 1,507   | 62.5% |
| <i>Hispanic</i>                      | 7,774                     | 24.1% | 595     | 23.4% | 631     | 25.4% | 575     | 23.8% |
| <i>Migrant</i>                       | 5                         | 0.0%  | -       | 0.0%  | -       | 0.0%  | -       | 0.0%  |
| <i>Multiracial</i>                   | 38                        | 0.1%  | 4       | 0.2%  | 1       | 0.0%  | 5       | 0.2%  |
| <i>White</i>                         | 3,316                     | 10.3% | 288     | 11.3% | 282     | 11.4% | 251     | 10.4% |
| Economically Disadvantaged           | 28,385                    | 87.8% | 2,335   | 91.8% | 2,323   | 93.5% | 2,236   | 92.7% |
| Limited English Proficient           | 3,410                     | 10.5% | 185     | 7.3%  | 294     | 11.8% | 333     | 13.8% |
| Students with Disabilities           | 5,862                     | 18.1% | 358     | 14.1% | 393     | 15.8% | 394     | 16.3% |

**Table 4: 2011-12 Academic Proficiency Rates on NYS Exams Based on Grade Configurations for Proposed School<sup>7</sup>**

|                  | 3   | 4   | 5   | 6   |
|------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| <i>Rochester</i> |     |     |     |     |
| ELA              | 23% | 22% | 22% | 22% |
| Math             | 27% | 30% | 32% | 30% |
| <i>NYS</i>       |     |     |     |     |
| ELA              | 56% | 59% | 58% | 56% |
| Math             | 61% | 69% | 67% | 65% |

<sup>6</sup> Source: Student Information Repository System (SIRS) 2011-12 Report 303 BEDS Day Enrollment Verification Report by Location of Enrollment & Student Subgroup

<sup>7</sup> Source: Student Information Repository System (SIRS) 2011-12 Report 101 High School Accountability Data Verification Report; 2011-12 Report 102 Elementary/Middle-Level Accountability Data Verification Report

## **Public Hearing and Public Comment**

The Department directly notified the Superintendent of the Rochester City School District, as well as public and private schools in the region, of the charter school application and issued an open call for written public comment via the State Education Department Charter School Office website. Superintendent Vargas was contacted by letter and invited to remark directly to the Charter School Office. No comment was received.

As required by Education Law, Article 56, the Charter Schools Act, the Rochester City School District held a hearing on October 8, 2013 to solicit comments from the community concerning Renaissance Academy Charter School of the Arts. No one spoke in favor or in opposition to the proposed charter school. Subsequent to the hearing, the Honorable Thomas S. Richards, Mayor of the City of Rochester, submitted a letter supporting the application to establish the proposed charter school. An additional three letters of support were also submitted to the Department.

## **Application Review Process**

On September 3, 2013, as required by the New York State Charter Schools Act, the New York State Education Department (the “Department”) released the 2013 Request for Proposals (“RFP”) to Establish Charter Schools Authorized by the Board of Regents. The charter school application process used by the Board of Regents and the Department during the 2013 RFP cycle is multi-staged and designed to ensure that any charter school applicant presented to the Board of Regents for possible approval demonstrates a detailed and complete school design plan that:

- includes a clear plan to meet or exceed enrollment and retention targets for students with disabilities, students who are English language learners, and students who are eligible to participate in the federal free and reduced-price lunch program;
- provides evidence of public outreach that conforms to the process prescribed by the Regents for the purpose of soliciting and incorporating community input regarding the proposed charter school;
- meets all requirements set forth in the Charter Schools Act as well as all other applicable laws, rules, regulations;
- demonstrates the ability to operate the school in an educationally and fiscally sound manner;
- is likely to improve student learning and achievement and materially further the purposes of the Act; and
- would have a significant educational benefit to the students expected to attend the proposed charter school.

In addition, the applicant group and founding board of trustees must demonstrate appropriate knowledge, capacity, and abilities to effectively create, maintain, and oversee a high-quality charter school.

During 2013, a total of 99 letters of intent were submitted in two rounds (February and September). After an initial review process, a total of 46 applications were evaluated in 2013, including the application for the Renaissance Academy Charter School of the Arts.

To assess whether to recommend approval or denial of the charter application to the Board of Regents, the Department established review panels to thoroughly evaluate each full application. Each panel was made up of professional expert consultants, peer reviewers who are school leaders and educators active in charter and public schools in New York, as well as qualified Department staff members. The review panel members reviewed, rated, and commented on each section of the application according to the criteria published in the Application Kit.

Department staff conducted a two-hour capacity interview with the five proposed initial board members, two proposed school leaders, and one additional founding member of Renaissance Academy Charter School of the Arts, on Wednesday, October 30, 2013. Questions posed to the proposed initial trustees included general questions around New York State Charter School Law, the roles and responsibilities of components of the school community, and accountability to stakeholder groups as well to as the Board of Regents as authorizer. To fully understand the proposed academic program, governance role and fiscal viability of the proposed School, staff asked targeted questions of the applicant group.

The responses demonstrated adequate knowledge and grasp of key areas. Members of the applicant group as a whole and individually demonstrated knowledge of the charter school application and the proposed School. Structures, systems, protocols and procedures are in place to permit the board to effectively govern the School. The applicants addressed questions posed with specific and detailed information that presented a clear, realistic picture of how the School expects to operate.

## **Findings**

Based on the comprehensive review of the application and of the applicant, founding group, and proposed board of trustees, the Department makes the following findings:

1. The charter school described in the application meets the requirements of Article 56 of the Education Law (as amended) and other applicable laws, rules, and regulations.<sup>8</sup> This finding is based on the following (among other things):
  - the applicant has included in the application the information required by §2851(2)
  - the proposed charter school would meet or exceed enrollment and retention targets, as prescribed by the NYS Board of Regents,<sup>9</sup> of students with disabilities, English language learners, and students who are eligible applicants for the federal free and

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<sup>8</sup> Education Law §2852(2) (a).

<sup>9</sup> Note, the data upon which to base the enrollment and retention targets mandated by the amendments to the Act was not available at the time the statute mandated the RFP be issued. As a result, the Department evaluated the plans for student enrollment, recruitment, and retention plans of each class of student referenced in the amendments to the Act such that the Department could make the determination that the applicant would meet or exceed the enrollment and retention targets when developed. During the first year of the charter term, the Department will develop such targets and incorporate these targets into the school's charter agreement performance expectations.

- reduced price lunch program as required by Education Law subdivision 2852(9-a)(b)(i)
- the applicant has conducted public outreach to solicit community input regarding the proposed charter school and to address comments received from the impacted community concerning the educational and programmatic needs of students in conformity with Education Law subdivision 2852(9-a)(b)(ii).
2. The applicant has demonstrated the ability to operate the proposed charter school in an educationally and fiscally sound manner.<sup>10</sup> This finding is based on the following (among other things):
- The presentation in the application of a sound description of key features that are core to the school’s overall design, and which rigorously addresses the criteria outlined in the Department’s RFP in the areas of mission; key design elements; enrollment, recruitment and retention;, and community to be served.
  - The presentation in the application of a sound educational plan, which rigorously addresses the criteria outlined in the Department’s RFP in the areas of achievement goals; school schedule and calendar; curriculum and instruction; assessment; school culture and climate; and special student populations and related services.
  - The presentation in the application of a sound organizational and fiscal plan, which rigorously addresses the criteria outlined in the Department’s RFP in the areas of founding group capacity; board of trustees and governance; management and staffing; evaluation; professional development; facilities; insurance; health, food and transportation services; family and community involvement; financial management; budget and cash flow; pre-opening plan; and dissolution plan.
  - An understanding of the New York State Charter Schools Act, and the skill, will and capacity to successfully launch and operate a high quality public charter school.
3. Granting the proposed charter is likely to improve student learning and achievement, will materially further the purposes of the Act<sup>11</sup> and will have a significant educational benefit to the students expected to attend the charter school.<sup>12</sup> This finding is based on the totality of the information presented in the application and during the application review process, as summarized in this document.

### **Recommendation**

Based on the Department’s review and findings, Commissioner John B. King, Jr. recommends that the New York State Board of Regents approve the proposal to establish the Renaissance Academy Charter School of the Arts Charter School to open in 2014 in Rochester.

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<sup>10</sup> Education Law §2852(2) (b).

<sup>11</sup> Education Law §2852(2) (c).

<sup>12</sup> As applicable pursuant to §2852(2) (d).



# New York State Education Department Charter School Office

## **Charter School Application Summary, Findings, and Recommendation**

Application in response to the  
New York State Education Department 2013 Request for Proposals to  
Establish Charter Schools Authorized by the Board of Regents  
to establish the proposed:

**Vertus Charter School**

December 2013

**Table 1: Summary of the Proposed Vertus Charter School**

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Name of Charter School                                  | Vertus Charter School  |
| Lead Applicant(s)                                       | Perry White<br>Dr. Leigh McGuigan  |
| District of Location                                    | Rochester City School District   |
| Opening Date  | September 2014   |
| Projected Charter Term                                  | December 17, 2013 – June 30, 2019  |
| Management Company                                      | None   |
| Partners  | None   |
| Facility  | Private space  |
| Projected Enrollment and Grade Span during Charter Term | Opening with 96 students in Grade 9 in 2014; growing to 384 students in Grades 9 through 12  |
| Planned Grade Span (beyond Initial Charter Term)        | 384 students in Grades 9 through 12  |
| Mission Statement                                       | <i>“Vertus Charter School prepares leaders of character for the community and the workplace. Vertus is a year-round career preparatory high school serving young men who are at risk of not completing high school. Every student will earn a Regents diploma as well as a technical certificate or job credential. Each graduate will choose the post-secondary pathway that is right for him: university, community college, further technical training, or a good job.”</i> |

The founding group of Vertus Charter School has designed a comprehensive educational program to assure the attainment of high academic standards for the students they intend to serve. The School is designed to serve urban males at-risk of not completing high school - in Rochester, statistically nine out of ten students. The *Schott 50 State Report of Public Education Black Males* in 2012 ranks Rochester last in the country, with a 9% graduation rate for African Americans and 10% for Hispanics.

In creating the school model, the group researched proven programs across the United States that demonstrated best practices and positive results for urban male students. The applicants secured a \$100,000 planning grant from Next Generation Learning Challenges to support the development of the school's blended learning model, public outreach, and the charter application process.<sup>1</sup>

Vertus Charter School will serve young men who are at-risk of not completing high school or who have already dropped out. The founders opted to establish a single gender boy's school because single gender environments have been shown to lead to increased academic achievement among at-risk students (Bracey, 2006; International Boys School Coalition; Mael, et al, 2005; Hughes, 2009). The School will provide intensive academic, social and emotional supports to enable students to graduate with a Regents Diploma along with a technical certificate or industry certification, which will prepare them to move successfully into the workplace or higher education.

The proposed strategies to achieve the School's goals include a year-round calendar, a blended learning model that will allow for instruction tailored to the individual students' needs, and designated staff (Tutors) to serve as consistent leaders and mentors throughout the students' years at the School. Career program managers will ensure that all students earn a career credential. Graduates who choose to move directly into a community college or university will receive ongoing support from the charter school during their first post-secondary year.

### **Key Design Elements**

The founding group has defined four Key Design Elements based on proven programs, demonstrated best practices and research about effective services for urban students. The Vertus Charter School Design Pillars are described as follows:

- **Strong Relationships:** The School plans to foster a deep sense of community by building strong relationships between students and staff. Each young man will receive small group as well as individual academic support. The School will be organized into learning teams of twelve students, each led by a full-time adult tutor who will provide guidance and mentorship in and out of school. Teachers will offer academic support tailored to meet the individual needs of each student.
- **Personalized Year-Round Academics:** Vertus Charter School will provide a year-round calendar of 204 instructional days. Upon entry, each student will be assessed and will develop an Individual Life Plan (ILP) with the support of his tutor, lead teachers, and family. This plan will include a course schedule and short- and long-term goals for academic study, career preparation and character development. Academic coursework will be teacher-directed and will take place in Learning Labs that blend online lessons with group projects and individual support.

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<sup>1</sup> Additional information about the grant can be found at <http://www.gatesfoundation.org/Media-Center/Press-Releases/2011/01/Next-Generation-Learning-Challenges-Seeks-Promising-Tools-That-Can-Help-Students-Get-Ready-For-College>

- **Character Development:** Students will participate in daily seminars that develop character, enhance literacy and presentation skills, and prepare them for the workplace and for life. Seminars will include topics in leadership, entrepreneurship, philosophy, health and well-being, and practical topics such as interviewing and behavior in the workplace. Field trips, workplace visits and other cultural opportunities will be program components.
- **Career Preparation:** Beginning in Grade 9, students will explore career options and identify the skills and knowledge they will need to enter and advance in that field. Career programs will prepare students for 21<sup>st</sup> century job placement and to earn a living wage, and will link students to local employers seeking specific skill sets. Students who choose to go directly into the workforce will have an opportunity to complete a probationary job placement while in high school.

## Education Plan

The proposed school calendar establishes a year-round schedule for students and staff and provides 204 days of instruction. The school year is divided into quarters to provide multiple opportunities for students to earn course credit, sufficient time to be successful and individualized pacing. The instructional day begins at 9:00 a.m. and concludes at 4:30 p.m. Teachers will have 23 professional development days built into the calendar and a minimum of 1.5 hours of planning time daily. A weekly staff meeting for 1.5 hours will be included in the schedule.

Students and staff will be grouped for instruction using a learning team model. In Year 1 of operation, the School will be organized into two houses of 48 students each. Each House will have four learning teams, with 12 students to a team. Each team will be led by a tutor and be paired with another team in order to fill in and provide additional support as needed. This framework also enables a mentoring arrangement for each pair of tutors. This structure will grow with the school as grade levels are added.

Each learning team will move through the day together, with each House taking Humanities (English and History) and STEM Learning Labs (Mathematics and Science) together in 130 minute blocks with 65 minutes devoted to each subject area. Students will receive instruction in the Learning Labs through a blend of online lessons with group projects and small group and individual interventions and academic support. Students will have the potential of earning nine or more credits per year. For students who enter the School behind grade level, the daily schedule provides time for intensive non-credit bearing remediation courses to improve proficiency in reading and mathematics.

The founders have designed a blended learning model that operates within a traditional school day schedule, meets State requirements for seat time, provides students with additional time to master all content material and receive support in areas where academic achievement has been weak. Students must be reading on a Grade 6 reading level prior to beginning online course work; intensive literacy instruction will be provided for as many quarters as needed to support student learning.

The founding team has preliminarily selected Edgenuity (formerly e2000) to provide the School's core curriculum. The founders have reviewed curriculum maps for all core courses to ensure alignment with the NYS Common Core Learning Standards. Edgenuity offers more than 100 courses for students in Grades 6 through 12 across core subject areas as well as world languages, general electives, career pathways, test preparation for national and state exams, credit recovery courses and Regents review courses. Other online tools that will be used to support student progress and provide interventions as well as enrichment include READ 180, MATH 180, Empower3000 and the Wilson Reading Program.

All students will participate in a daily seminar course focusing on character development, workplace readiness, study skills, literacy and leadership. During seminar, students will create, monitor, and revise their Individual Life Plans.

The Career curriculum will be developed during the planning year with support from the School's board of trustees and representatives from the local business community. It will begin with a career readiness program for students' freshman year, adding skills development courses for sophomores and move into industry certification coursework for juniors and seniors. Based on research and outreach to the Rochester community, the School will offer three main career strands: Health Careers, Information Technology and Advanced Manufacturing. Through course work at the School and through partnerships with local colleges, students will earn career certifications at Monroe Community College, Rochester Institute of Technology, SUNY-Brockport or the University of Rochester. Edgenuity offers certain online career certification courses, including Microsoft Office Specialist, Nursing Assistant and Pharmacy Technician.

Students will have opportunities to participate in credit-bearing coursework in art, music and physical education during their third and fourth years at the school, after they have earned their core credits. All students will be offered art and music enrichment activities, as well as sports and physical activities, after school.

The school plans to implement a combination of diagnostic, formative and summative assessments, standardized evaluations, state mandated testing and teacher-developed measures to inform instruction, assess academic progress and measure organizational goals. Information gathered will be monitored by lead teachers on a weekly basis in order to understand student progress and needs. Tutors will use the data to monitor their students' progress and identify areas in need of targeted support. Data will also be used as a communication tool with parents, helping them to understand their student's accomplishments and areas for growth as well as ways they can help their child be successful.

### **Community Outreach**

Vertus Charter School will be located in the City of Rochester, Monroe County. The applicant group has reached out to multiple stakeholders in Rochester, including elected officials, small business owners, community-based organizations, local college officials, faith-based organizations, and community residents. They have used a variety of media and communication approaches to conduct outreach, including a website and social media presence, media coverage,

public meetings and multiple individual meetings with community members and leaders, families and stakeholders. Through meetings and the website, the founding group has solicited information and feedback from the community and has incorporated some of these ideas into the design of the proposal.

Letters of support for the proposed Vertus Charter School were submitted from several community agencies, colleges and universities, and corporations in the Rochester area. Supporters include The Center for Youth, House of Mercy, Boys and Girls Clubs of Rochester, Rochester Institute of Technology - Institute of Health Sciences and Technology, Nazareth College, Rochester Technology and Manufacturing Association, University of Rochester Medical Center, Larsen Engineers, Litron Laboratories, Bishop David Singleton - Ark of Jesus Ministries, as well as several private citizens.

The founding group plans to recruit young men who are representative of the students located in the downtown area of the City of Rochester. In accordance with the mission, recruitment efforts will target young men who are in danger of not graduating from high school, most of whom are living in poverty, have learning disabilities, and/or are English language learners (ELLs). In order to reach this population, the founders will continue to cultivate relationships with individuals and organizations that know and work with at-risk young men in Rochester. The School will continue to use the website and other social media sources to disseminate information and enrollment applications. Outreach materials have been and will continue to be translated into Spanish. Founders will also conduct door-to-door recruitment in Rochester's poorest neighborhoods in order to find the students who would benefit most from the school.

The draft admission and enrollment policy submitted with the written application establishes enrollment preferences in accordance with NYS Education Law. The school is committed to meeting the established enrollment and retention targets for English language learners (ELLs), students with disabilities (SWDs), and economically disadvantaged youth (as defined by eligibility for free and reduced-price meals).

### **School Governance and Leadership**

The planning group for Vertus Charter School includes 10 individuals, eight of whom will transition to advisory roles and two others, the co-lead applicants, who will transition to leadership positions at the School. The planning group has developed a proposed initial board of trustees comprised of seven community members with demonstrated leadership skills and substantial experience in public, private and non-profit management and governance and workforce development. Each has provided a completed School Trustee Background Information form, Statement of Assurance and resume or curriculum vitae. As required, the applicant group has provided a set of draft by-laws and a draft code of ethics.

The seven proposed initial members of the board of trustees are described below:

- **General John Batiste** is the President and CEO of Klein Steel, Rochester, NY, and a former Commanding General, 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division, United States Army. General Batiste is a graduate of the United States Military Academy and the Army War College.
- **Bryan Hickman** has served as turnaround CEO in the manufacturing sector and is co-founder of E3 Rochester, Inc., and organization dedicated to recruit high quality charter operators to Rochester.
- **Dr. Steve Jacobs** is Professor and Associate Director of the Center for Media, Arts, Games, Interaction & Creativity (MAGIC) at Rochester Institute of Technology.
- **Rev. Sebrone Johnson** is the Divisional Director of Technology and Program Operations at the Urban League of Rochester and Pastor of Education at Emmanuel Baptist Church.
- **Michael Mandina** is the President of Optimax and Chairperson of the Finger Lakes Advanced Manufacturers' Enterprise (FAME), a non-profit committed to regional workforce development.
- **Todd Oldham** is the Vice President for Economic Development and Innovative Workforce Services at Monroe Community College.
- **Ken Wasnock** is CEO of Axzo, a provider of career and professional development learning content.

The following eight founding team members will continue to serve in an advisory capacity to the staff and board of trustees:

- **Jean Claude Brizard** is currently Senior Advisor at The College Board and previously served as Superintendent, Rochester City School District (2008 to 2011) and as CEO of Chicago Public Schools. As the leader of Westinghouse Career and Technical High School and NYCDOE Region 8 schools, he also brings specific expertise in career and technical education.
- **Cory Johnson** is a Rochester native with experience as a youth development leader in numerous programs for at-risk children and youth in Rochester. He is currently the Program Manager at Rochester's Center for Youth, and has worked at the Society for the Protection and Care of Children and the City of Rochester, Pathways to Peace Program.
- **Ted Ginn, Sr.** is the Founder and Leader of Ginn Academy, a nationally renowned high school serving at-risk boys. The Ginn Academy has the highest graduation rate for African American boys in the State of Ohio.
- **Aylon Samouha** is currently a consultant with expertise in online learning and charter school start-up and operations. He is a former Chief Schools Officer, Rocketship Education, and Senior Vice-President, Teach for America; he also held numerous leadership positions at Kaplan, Inc. Mr. Samouha co-founded Prisoners of Conscience, a fundraising organization for human rights activists serves on the board of Giving Open Access to Learning (G.O.A.L.).

- **Dr. Gerald Ardito** is an Assistant Professor at PACE University School of Education and Seidenberg School of Computer Science. As an educator and researcher, he has focused on use of technology in the learning environment to deepen student engagement and learning and allow teachers to deliver customized instruction.
- **Chris Aguirre:** Mr Aguirre is the founder and principal of City Polytechnic High School of Engineering, Architecture, and Technology, a CTE early college career high school in Brooklyn, NY. His prior work includes Director of Vocational Education, Kodiak Island School District, and Visual Communications Teacher.
- **Dr. Ed Poliandro:** Dr. Poliandro is Associate Director for Multicultural and Community Affairs at Mt. Sinai School of Medicine. He has been involved in diversity training in medical education and health care field for over twenty years. He has had extensive experience in working with urban youth and families. His research interests include the needs and beliefs of poor urban families as a source of coping and resiliency.
- **Jeremy Kaplan:** Mr. Kaplan is a consultant and former head of education for The Door, a social service agency in New York City. He was also the founding principal of Broome Street Academy Charter School, which serves at-risk youth in New York City.

Co-lead applicants **Dr. Leigh McGuinan** and **Perry White** will assume leadership roles at Vertus Charter School. Dr. McGuinan is proposed to serve as Chief Executive Officer for the School. Her extensive experience includes charter school management and executive leadership with The New Teacher Project, to support effective human capital in education, and with NYCDOE, where she established the first Office of School Leadership. Perry White is the School's proposed Director of External Affairs. Mr. White has extensive charter school experience as founder and 12-year CEO of Citizen's Academy, a USDOE Blue Ribbon school and one of the highest performing charter schools in Ohio. He has expertise in charter start-up, management and blended learning.

The organizational structure of the School is designed to support personalized learning, student support and career experiences. The CEO will lead the School and be responsible for the day-to-day operations, the hiring and supervision of all other School staff and authorizer relations. Other responsibilities will include leading the design of the academic program and supporting lead teachers in managing the Learning Labs. The CEO will report directly to the board.

The Director of External Affairs will work with the Career Program Managers to develop career education programs and post-secondary support. This position also includes responsibility for partnerships with families, the community and college access. The Director of External Affairs will also report directly to the board.

The Business Manager will work directly with the CEO. Duties include ensuring compliance with all fiscal policies and procedures as well as developing an annual budget to be presented to the board for their approval. Responsibilities also include overseeing the work of a contracted accountant and an independent audit firm and providing regular reports to the board's Finance Committee.

Staff who will be working directly with students include a Dean who is responsible for campus affairs and the tutor program; a Student Services Coordinator who is responsible for special education and ESL and lead teachers who will manage the Learning Labs and help to shape the school’s academic program. Senior tutors will work with tutors to develop and implement character and leadership education under the supervision of the CEO and Dean. The Student Services Coordinator will manage special education compliance.

**Facility**

The School seeks to lease a private facility in or near downtown Rochester, convenient to public transportation, with parking, and accessible to people with disabilities. Three potential sites are under consideration. The first choice of the founding group is a building which formerly housed the Rochester Educational Opportunity Center, owned by SUNY Brockport. A letter of support from the Vice-President of SUNY Brockport states the intent to negotiate in good faith with the founding group. The E3 Foundation will continue to play a lead role in helping the School to identify and lease the most appropriate facility. The initial board will convene a Facilities Committee that will include local volunteers with expertise in real estate leasing and renovation.

**Projected Fiscal and Programmatic Impact on District of Location**

The applicant group provided an analysis of the fiscal and programmatic impact of the proposed school on public and non-public schools in Rochester, indicating that the fiscal impact of the Vertus Charter School on the Rochester City District public schools is expected to be nominal.

The New York State Education Department (“Department”) also conducted additional analysis on the projected fiscal impact of the School on its district of residence, the Rochester City School District (“NYCSD”), which is summarized below.

**Table 2: Projected Fiscal Impact Upon District of Location, 2014-15 to 2018-19**

| Year    | Number of Students Enrolled in Charter School Per Year <sup>2</sup> | Charter School Basic Tuition Rate <sup>3</sup> | Total Charter School Basic Tuition Only | Estimated District Special Education Payment <sup>4</sup> | Total District General Fund Budget <sup>5</sup> | Percent of District Budget |
|---------|---|--|---|---|---|----------------------------|
| 2014-15 | 96  | \$13,192                                       | \$1,266,432                             | \$225,425   | \$734,224,377                                   | 0.203%                     |
| 2018-19 | 384   | \$15,011                                       | \$5,764,224                             | \$1,026,032   |   | 0.925%                     |

<sup>2</sup> Source: Vertus Charter School Application

<sup>3</sup> Source: Education Law §2856(1)(a)(iii) and NYS Education Department Office of State Aid Charter School Basic Tuition Rate Analysis, Fall 2013

<sup>4</sup> Based on 2012-13 calculated special education classification rate for the district of location, as collected by NYSED Information and Report Services

<sup>5</sup> Source: 2013-14 Adopted Budget Book, Rochester City School District, Section 1, Page 3

The preceding calculations assume charter school basic tuition rates in the charter period (2014-15 through 2018-19) based on a trend analysis calculated by the Charter School Office and approved by the Department's State Aid Office. In order to conservatively avoid underestimating the fiscal impact that the charter school will have on the district going forward, the Department is assuming no growth in the Rochester City School District budget during the duration of the school's charter.<sup>6</sup>

It should be noted that given the nature of district-based per-pupil funding, the estimates made by the Department in conducting this analysis are subject to unpredictable financial fluctuations. For forecasting purposes, the fiscal impact of this charter school on the district in which it will be located assumes that:

- There will be no fluctuation in the grade levels served by existing charter schools over the course of the charter term;
- The charter school will be able to meet its projected maximum enrollment;
- All students will come from the district of location; and
- All students will attend every day for a 1.0 FTE.

The specifics of the school's enrollment composition are still unavailable; however, the Department acknowledges that the programmatic and fiscal impact of the proposed charter school on other public and private schools in the same area will also be influenced by the proportion of charter school enrollees that would have attended a same-district public or private school had it not been for the presence of this charter school.

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<sup>6</sup> Additional notes: While the school has included other federal grants and/or funds that may flow through the district to be received by the school in its proposed budget, this analysis does not account for these sources of potential revenue, nor does it include the value of certain services (e.g. transportation) that the district is required to provide the charter school. However, the analysis also does not account for district per-pupil expense and overall resource savings that are likely to result from a reduction in the number of students attending district public schools as a result of students attending nonpublic schools located in the school district.

Below, for reference, please find additional data on the Rochester City School District.<sup>7</sup>

**Table 3: 2011-12 Demographic Detail for Proposed District of Location:  
Rochester City School District**

*Charter Term Year 1 Grade Configuration Based on 2011-12 District Demographics*

|                                      | Total District Enrollment |       | Grade 9 |       |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------|-------|---------|-------|
| All Students                         | 32,323                    |       | 3,392   |       |
| <i>American Indian/Alaska Native</i> | 84                        | 0.3%  | 2       | 0.1%  |
| <i>Asian/Pacific Islander</i>        | 995                       | 3.1%  | 122     | 3.6%  |
| <i>Black</i>                         | 20,116                    | 62.2% | 2,159   | 63.6% |
| <i>Hispanic</i>                      | 7,774                     | 24.1% | 821     | 24.2% |
| <i>Migrant</i>                       | 5                         | 0.0%  | -       | 0.0%  |
| <i>Multiracial</i>                   | 38                        | 0.1%  | 1       | 0.0%  |
| <i>White</i>                         | 3,316                     | 10.3% | 287     | 8.5%  |
| Economically Disadvantaged           | 28,385                    | 87.8% | 3,046   | 89.8% |
| Limited English Proficient           | 3,410                     | 10.5% | 377     | 11.1% |
| Students with Disabilities           | 5,862                     | 18.1% | 737     | 21.7% |

**Table 4: 2011-12 Academic Proficiency Rates on NYS Exams Based  
on Grade Configurations for Proposed School**

|                  | High School <sup>8</sup> |
|------------------|--------------------------|
| <i>Rochester</i> |                          |
| ELA              | 58%                      |
| Math             | 40%                      |
| <i>NYS</i>       |                          |
| ELA              | 82%                      |
| Math             | 71%                      |

<sup>7</sup> Source: Student Information Repository System (SIRS) 2011-12 Report 303 BEDS Day Enrollment Verification Report by Location of Enrollment & Student Subgroup

<sup>8</sup> Source: Student Information Repository System (SIRS) 2011-12 Report 101 High School Accountability Data Verification Report; 2011-12 Report 102 Elementary/Middle-Level Accountability Data Verification Report

## **Public Hearing and Public Comment**

The department directly notified Dr. Bolgen Vargas, Superintendent of the Rochester City School District, as well as public and private schools in the region, of the charter school application and issued an open call for written public comment via the State Education Department Charter School Office website. The Superintendent was contacted by letter and invited to comment directly to the Charter School Office. No comment was received.

As required by Education Law, Article 56, Charter Schools Act, the Rochester City School District (RCSD) held a hearing on October 8, 2013 to solicit comments from the community concerning Vertus Charter School. No comments in support or in opposition from the community members were provided.

## **Application Review Process**

On September 3, 2013, as required by the New York State Charter Schools Act, the New York State Education Department (the “Department”) released the 2013 Request for Proposals (“RFP”) to Establish Charter Schools Authorized by the Board of Regents. The charter school application process used by the Board of Regents and the Department during the 2013 RFP cycle is multi-staged and designed to ensure that any charter school applicant presented to the Board of Regents for possible approval demonstrates a detailed and complete school design plan that:

- includes a clear plan to meet or exceed enrollment and retention targets for students with disabilities, students who are English language learners, and students who are eligible to participate in the federal free reduced-price lunch program;
- provides evidence of public outreach that conforms to the process prescribed by the Regents for the purpose of soliciting and incorporating community input regarding the proposed charter school;
- meets all requirements set forth in the Charter Schools Act as well as all other applicable laws, rules, regulations;
- demonstrates the ability to operate the school in an educationally and fiscally sound manner;
- is likely to improve student learning and achievement and materially further the purposes of the Act; and
- would have a significant educational benefit to the students expected to attend the proposed charter school.

In addition, the applicant group and founding board of trustees must demonstrate appropriate knowledge, capacity, and abilities to effectively create, maintain, and oversee a high-quality charter school.

During 2013, a total of 99 letters of intent were submitted in two rounds (February and September). After an initial review process, a total of 46 applications were evaluated in 2013, including the application for the Vertus Charter School.

To assess whether to recommend approval or denial of the charter application to the Board of Regents, the Department established review panels to thoroughly evaluate each full application. Each panel was made up of professional expert consultants, peer reviewers who are school leaders and educators active in charter and public schools in New York, as well as qualified Department staff members. The review panel members reviewed, rated, and commented on each section of the application according to the criteria published in the Application Kit.

Department staff conducted a two-hour capacity interview with the seven proposed initial board members and three founding team members on Friday, November 1, 2013. Questions posed to the proposed initial trustees included general questions around New York State Charter School Law, roles and responsibilities of the school community and the board to the community and various stakeholder groups as well to as the Board of Regents as authorizer. To fully understand the proposed academic program, governance role and fiscal viability of the proposed School, targeted questions were asked to clarify information provided in the full application.

The responses demonstrated adequate knowledge and grasp of key areas. Members of the applicant group as a whole and individually demonstrated knowledge of the charter school application and the proposed School. Structures, systems, protocols and procedures are in place to permit the Board to effectively govern the School. The applicants addressed questions posed with specific and detailed information that presented a clear, realistic picture of how the School expects to operate.

## **Findings**

Based on the comprehensive review of the application and of the applicant, founding group, and proposed board of trustees, the Department makes the following findings:

1. The charter school described in the application meets the requirements of Article 56 of the Education Law (as amended) and other applicable laws, rules, and regulations.<sup>9</sup> This finding is based on the following (among other things):
  - the applicant has included in the application the information required by §2851(2)
  - the proposed charter school would meet or exceed enrollment and retention targets, as prescribed by the NYS Board of Regents,<sup>10</sup> of students with disabilities, English language learners, and students who are eligible applicants for the federal free and reduced price lunch program as required by Education Law subdivision 2852(9-a)(b)(i)

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<sup>9</sup> Education Law §2852(2) (a).

<sup>10</sup> Note, the data upon which to base the enrollment and retention targets mandated by the amendments to the Act was not available at the time the statute mandated the RFP be issued. As a result, the Department evaluated the plans for student enrollment, recruitment, and retention plans of each class of student referenced in the amendments to the Act such that the Department could make the determination that the applicant would meet or exceed the enrollment and retention targets when developed. During the first year of the charter term, the Department will develop such targets and incorporate these targets into the school's charter agreement performance expectations.

- the applicant has conducted public outreach to solicit community input regarding the proposed charter school and to address comments received from the impacted community concerning the educational and programmatic needs of students in conformity with Education Law subdivision 2852(9-a)(b)(ii).
2. The applicant has demonstrated the ability to operate the proposed charter school in an educationally and fiscally sound manner.<sup>11</sup> This finding is based on the following (among other things):
- The presentation in the application of a sound description of key features that are core to the school’s overall design, and which rigorously addresses the criteria outlined in the Department’s RFP in the areas of mission; key design elements; enrollment, recruitment and retention; and community to be served.
  - The presentation in the application of a sound educational plan, which rigorously addresses the criteria outlined in the Department’s RFP in the areas of achievement goals; school schedule and calendar; curriculum and instruction; assessment; school culture and climate; and special student populations and related services.
  - The presentation in the application of a sound organizational and fiscal plan, which rigorously addresses the criteria outlined in the Department’s RFP in the areas of founding group capacity; board of trustees and governance; management and staffing; evaluation; professional development; facilities; insurance; health, food and transportation services; family and community involvement; financial management; budget and cash flow; pre-opening plan; and dissolution plan.
  - An understanding of the New York State Charter Schools Act, and the skill, will and capacity to successfully launch and operate a high quality public charter school.
3. Granting the proposed charter is likely to improve student learning and achievement, will materially further the purposes of the Act<sup>12</sup> and will have a significant educational benefit to the students expected to attend the charter school.<sup>13</sup> This finding is based on the totality of the information presented in the application and during the application review process, as summarized in this document.

### **Recommendation**

Based on the Department’s review and findings, Commissioner John B. King, Jr. recommends that the New York State Board of Regents approve the proposal to establish Vertus Charter School to open in 2014 in Rochester.

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<sup>11</sup> Education Law §2852(2) (b).

<sup>12</sup> Education Law §2852(2) (c).

<sup>13</sup> As applicable pursuant to §2852(2) (d).



THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT / THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK

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November 19, 2013

LaKiesha George  
[REDACTED]

**Via Electronic Transmission**

Dear Ms. George:

Thank you for your submission of a charter school application to establish the New Generation of Scholars Charter School in response to Round 2 of the *2013 Request for Proposals to Establish Charter Schools Authorized by the Board of Regents* (RFP). After a comprehensive review of your proposal, we have determined that the application to establish your proposed charter school does not meet the evaluation criteria set forth in the RFP.

Our expert review panel, which includes professional consultants, peer reviewers active in public schools (including charter schools), and qualified Department staff members, evaluated the Full Application according to the criteria published in the Application Kit. Subsequently, we conducted a capacity interview with you and members of your founding group on October 24. Attached to this letter is a summary of some of the significant findings of the review panel and the interview team. This summary is designed to provide you with a better understanding of the rigorous approval criteria and the expectations the Board of Regents has established for a high quality charter school application.

At this time, you may withdraw your application from further consideration by the Board of Regents for the current review round. To withdraw, simply notify us of your decision to do so in writing via email to [charterschools@mail.nysed.gov](mailto:charterschools@mail.nysed.gov). If you choose to withdraw, no further action on your submission will be taken by the Charter School Office or the Board of Regents. If you choose not to withdraw, my office will prepare a recommendation for Board of Regents action to disapprove the application at the December 16-17, 2013 meeting. The recommendation will outline the deficiencies noted by the review panel.

We acknowledge the time and effort your founding group spent to design an engaging and viable education program to meet the needs of students in your community. If you have any questions concerning the summary of findings, please feel free to contact Susan Megna, New Schools Coordinator, at 518-474-1762 or [smegna@mail.nysed.gov](mailto:smegna@mail.nysed.gov).

Thank you for your commitment to excellent schools.

Sincerely,

Bill Clarke

cc: Susan Megna

2013 Request for Proposals to Establish Charter Schools Authorized by the Board of Regents  
Summary of Some of the Significant Common Findings  
**New Generation of Scholars Charter School**

The following summary of reviewer findings is intended to provide the applicant with a better understanding of the rigorous criteria and expectations involved in approving an application to establish a high quality charter school. The findings presented are highlights and do not present an exhaustive list of specific deficiencies that, if addressed, would guarantee approval of the proposed application. The applicant group should review these findings and consider appropriate modifications to the school design plan, should you seek to submit an application to establish a Regents-authorized charter school in the future.

Overall Findings

- Based on the written narrative, class schedule attachments, and information gathered during the capacity interview, the teacher/student ratio during various instructional times remains unclear. One example to consider is the time devoted to language arts instruction. It appears from the attachment that staff leaves during the instructional component for planning time however, the narrative indicates that part of the school philosophy is an “All Hands on Deck” approach. The rationale for having planning time during instructional periods remains unclear.
- The design element, “All Hands on Deck” needs to be further developed and explained. One area to reconsider is the purpose of this approach and how it increases student time with teachers, and the roles and responsibilities of staff during this time.
- As presented in the application, the recruitment plan is intermingled with the retention plan, making it difficult for reviewers to evaluate.
- The academic program and staffing plan designed to serve English language learners should be reevaluated given the possible number and overall needs of students who may enroll at the school in the proposed community. The rationale for these choices should also be described in the narrative.
- The plan for curriculum development and alignment needs is incomplete. It would be helpful to clarify which staff will be contributing to this work, a description of the consultant support sought by the founding team, deliverables and a realistic timeline for this component of the program.
- Additional information is needed to understand how data will be used to inform instruction. This includes the identification of staff that will be responsible for leading this work and a description of their expertise to move this work forward in an effective manner.
- The co-teaching model should be described with greater specificity, including roles and responsibilities and time built into the schedule for shared planning and discussing the growth or needs of the students being served.
- It is difficult to envision what common planning time would look like in practice. It was not clearly explained by the group or described in the written application narrative or charts.

- The professional development plan needs to be clearly articulated and aligned with the overall plan for the school. Also needed is an understanding of who will be leading this work and the expertise they bring to the school and staff.
- Additional details are needed to understand how and by whom staff will be evaluated, the expertise/training of the person completing the evaluations, how the board of trustees plans to be evaluated and how the school plans to determine parent satisfaction.
- The staffing plan in general is not clear and does not provide a picture of how staff would be utilized to support students and colleagues.
- It was mentioned at the capacity interview that the school would be seeking teaching candidates that are bi-lingual; however, that requirement is not aligned with Attachment 8A Hiring and Personnel Policies and Procedures.
- Further development is needed to create a viable plan to foster family and community support.
- The facility plan lacks specificity (i.e. square footage per child) and does not include a viable back-up plan should a co-location request not be approved. The budget does not include additional funds in case leasing or repair costs are higher than anticipated in a private facility.
- The budget provided makes assumptions on salaries, facility costs, etc. Reviewers needed additional information to learn how assumptions were determined. Not all line items in the budget are aligned with the proposed plan in the narrative. There is a concern that the ending cash balance at the end of year one is less than \$20,000 leaving little room for unanticipated costs.
- Further consideration and development of the proposal is necessary to provide confidence in the applicants' capacity to launch and implement a high quality school for students and the community.
- The proposed administrative team currently does not appear to have the skill set or breadth of experience to launch and implement a new school.



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November 19, 2013

Dr. Rodica Ieta  
[REDACTED]

**Via Electronic Transmission**

Dear Dr. Ieta:

Thank you for your submission of a charter school application to establish the Renaissance Charter School of Oswego in response to Round 2 of the *2013 Request for Proposals to Establish Charter Schools Authorized by the Board of Regents* (RFP). After a comprehensive review of your Full Application, we have determined that the application to establish your proposed charter school does not meet the evaluation criteria set forth in the RFP.

Our expert review panel, which includes professional consultants, peer reviewers active in public schools (including charter schools), and qualified Department staff members, evaluated the Full Application according to the criteria published in the Application Kit. Attached to this letter is a summary of some of the review panel's significant findings. This summary is designed to provide you with a better understanding of the rigorous approval criteria and the expectations the Board of Regents has established for a high quality charter school application.

At this time, you may withdraw your application from further consideration by the Board of Regents for the current review round. To withdraw, simply notify us of your decision to do so in writing via email to [charterschools@mail.nysed.gov](mailto:charterschools@mail.nysed.gov). If you choose to withdraw, no further action on your submission will be taken by the Charter School Office or the Board of Regents. If you choose not to withdraw, my office will prepare a recommendation for Board of Regents action to disapprove the application at the December 16-17, 2013 meeting. The recommendation will outline the deficiencies noted by the review panel.

We acknowledge the time and effort your founding group spent to design an engaging and viable education program to meet the needs of students in your community. If you have any questions concerning the summary of findings, please feel free to contact Susan Megna, New Schools Coordinator, at 518-474-1762 or [smegna@mail.nysed.gov](mailto:smegna@mail.nysed.gov).

Thank you for your commitment to excellent schools.

Sincerely,

Bill Clarke

cc: Susan Megna

2013 Request for Proposals to Establish Charter Schools Authorized by the Board of Regents  
Summary of Some of the Significant Common Findings of the Review Panel for the Full  
Application for **Renaissance Charter School of Oswego**

The following summary of reviewer findings is intended to provide the applicant with a better understanding of the rigorous criteria and expectations involved in approving an application to establish a high quality charter school. The findings presented are highlights and do not present an exhaustive list of specific deficiencies that, if addressed, would guarantee approval of the proposed application. The applicant group should review these findings and consider appropriate modifications to the school design plan, should you seek to submit an application to establish a Regents-authorized charter school in the future.

Overall Findings

The review panel rated the overall application as “approaches.” The application lacks specificity in key areas necessary to demonstrate a coherent plan and capacity to implement. In several sections, the applicant directly copied text from the 2012 Brilla Charter School application, with no attribution (Section II.D., III.B., III.C., III.D., III.E., III.I.). The academic program is vague and does not explain what is meant by a core knowledge curriculum. Also, many of the founders appear connected to a single organization, which raises questions about independence and capacity.

- The proposal describes a compelling need in the community and provides some explanation for how it will address that need (e.g., longer school day, support systems, employing content experts), but lacks specifics on implementation.
- The applicant does not provide a clear picture of the school’s key design elements, nor does it provide the research and evidence of effective practices to support the model. The application describes a traditional approach to education without supporting evidence that this approach will serve the needs of the diverse cultures that comprise the urban poor in Oswego.
- The applicant seems to assume that the school district will be supportive and work collaboratively with the charter school (and possibly even refer students), but the application does not present supporting evidence to substantiate this assumption.
- It appears that the applicant copied SUNY’s old accountability plan goals and measures, which are out of date and not aligned with the Board of Regents Performance Framework.
- The school calendar and schedule demonstrates an adequate amount of time for the core instructional periods. More details would be helpful concerning teacher student groupings for instruction and how the teacher work day will be organized, especially the planning time and the professional development. A sample teacher schedule is not provided.
- The curriculum section does not clearly address selection or creation of instructional resources and materials.
- While the application envisions formative assessment as playing an important role in the educational program, it does not provide information on the assistance and support to be provided to teachers in the creation of the formative assessments.

- The school culture and climate section presents a vision but again lacks specifics about implementation at the classroom and school level. The draft Discipline Policy does not meet all criteria (e.g., does not address the Dignity for All Students Act).
- The proposed members of the initial board of trustees seem to lack experience in fiscal management and K-12 education.
- The application is missing information and detail concerning recruitment of staff, plans for future staffing needs and the use of data to drive staffing decisions.
- While the applicant presents a strategy for family and community involvement that is likely to further the school's mission and program, more details would be helpful concerning strategies to deal with families who won't or can't be actively involved with their child's school.
- The proposed professional development plan has some significant omissions: details concerning common planning time for teachers; who will be providing the professional development; and the plans for professional development for the implementation of the alignment with State Common Core Learning Standards for ELA and Math are missing.
- The applicant provides a very limited description of potential facilities and costs (including what SUNY Oswego might provide).



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December 9, 2013

Ms. Dionne Olamiju  
[REDACTED]

**Via Electronic Transmission**

Dear Ms. Olamiju:

Thank you for your submission of a charter school application to establish the Rockland Academy of Excellence Charter School in response to the *2013 Request for Proposals to Establish Charter Schools Authorized by the Board of Regents* (RFP). After a comprehensive review of your proposal, we have determined that the application to establish your proposed charter school does not meet the evaluation criteria set forth in the RFP.

Our expert review panel, which includes professional consultants, peer reviewers active in public schools (including charter schools) and qualified Department staff members, evaluated the Full Application according to the criteria published in the Application Kit. Subsequently, we conducted two capacity interviews with you and members of your founding group and initial board of trustees, on May 29, 2013 and on November 8, 2013. Attached to this letter is a summary of some of the significant findings of the review panel and the interview team. This summary is designed to provide you with a better understanding of the rigorous approval criteria and the expectations the Board of Regents has established for a high quality charter school application.

Of particular concern to the Department is the fact that the membership of the initial Board of Trustees has changed significantly since the application was submitted and since the two capacity interviews. As you are aware, the required Capacity Interview phase of the application review process is designed to assess the capacity of the founding group and initial board of trustees to effectively launch and oversee the School. The 2013 Request for Proposals (RFP) includes the following statement to this effect:

**Phase III: Capacity Interview.** The Department will invite applicants whose Full Applications were determined to meet or exceed the evaluation criteria in each of the three major sections outlined in the application to participate in a Capacity Interview. NYSED officials conduct the capacity interview to evaluate the founding group and initial board members' understanding of academic and operational accountability as well as the characteristics of the community where the proposed school will be located. Equally as important, NYSED assesses the capacity of the proposed board to effectively launch and oversee the school's academic program, organizational viability, and finances. The interview provides opportunities for the founding group and proposed board to present and elaborate on the information provided in the Full Application, and respond to any technical questions that may have been generated by peer reviewers during the application review process as well as other questions that may have emerged during the public hearing and comment process. Please see the

applicable RFP timeline for the dates during which NYSED will conduct the Capacity Interviews.

Department staff met with members of the original founding group and initial board of trustees for the proposed Rockland Academy of Excellence Charter School twice. However, we received information last week that several members of the initial board of trustees were either informed by you that their service on the board was no longer needed, or chose to leave the board once other members had been asked to leave. The reconfiguration of the initial board of trustees was confirmed when we received the Information for Corporate Document form from you last night. The list of the members of the initial board of trustees on that form significantly reduces the number of board members. It does not include eleven of the members who were listed in the application, including two of the four proposed board officers, President and Treasurer. In addition, the list you provided last night includes some new members for whom we have no information other than their names and addresses. Regardless of the circumstances of the departures of the eleven members of the initial board, who are apparently no longer affiliated with the application or proposed school, the significant reconfiguration of the board at this late stage in the application process is of grave concern to the Department. We have had no opportunity to meet with this new group and therefore cannot provide any assurance to the Board of Regents of the group's capacity to launch and operate a successful charter school. Additionally, we have concerns that this last minute revision of the board signals a lack of understanding of the role of the board of trustees for a charter school (which becomes incorporated as an Education Corporation upon issuance of a charter) versus the role of the applicant.

At this time, you may withdraw your application from further consideration by the Board of Regents for the current review round. To withdraw, simply notify us of your decision to do so in writing via email to [charterschools@mail.nysed.gov](mailto:charterschools@mail.nysed.gov). If you choose to withdraw, no further action on your submission will be taken by the Charter School Office or the Board of Regents. If you choose not to withdraw, my office will prepare a recommendation for Board of Regents action to disapprove the application at the December 16-17, 2013 meeting. The recommendation will outline the concerns described in this letter and the attached summary of findings.

We acknowledge the time and effort your founding group spent to design an engaging and viable education program to meet the needs of students in your community. If you have any questions concerning the summary of findings, please feel free to contact Susan Megna, New Schools Coordinator, at 518-474-1762 or [smegna@mail.nysed.gov](mailto:smegna@mail.nysed.gov).

Thank you for your commitment to excellent schools.

Sincerely,



Bill Clarke

cc: Susan Megna

2013 Request for Proposals to Establish Charter Schools Authorized by the Board of Regents  
Summary of Some of the Significant Common Findings  
**Rockland Academy of Excellence Charter School**

The following summary of reviewer findings is intended to provide the applicant with a better understanding of the rigorous criteria and expectations involved in approving an application to establish a high quality charter school. The findings presented are highlights and do not present an exhaustive list of specific deficiencies that, if addressed, would guarantee approval of the proposed application. The applicant group should review these findings and consider appropriate modifications to the school design plan, should you seek to submit an application to establish a Regents-authorized charter school in the future.

Overall Findings

- The composition of the proposed initial board of trustees was significantly reconfigured after the conclusion of the NYSED review process. This invalidates the NYSED assessment of governance and leadership capacity of the proposed school and does not support a recommendation to issue a charter at this time.
- Overall concerns do not inspire confidence that the founding board of trustees will select and oversee a school leader with the necessary experience and skill to successfully launch and implement a high quality charter school in the East Ramapo community.
- Reviewers and the capacity interview team found a misalignment between design elements related to serving special education students and the application's budget. Specifically, the budget does not provide adequate funding for the special education program as proposed.
- The school intends on recruiting a large number of students with Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and English language learners. However, the design choices around special education, specifically the disciplinary process, teacher prep and co-planning times and promotion standards are not fully developed in some areas to support the needs of the proposed students.
- Although the responses to school culture and climate generally meet the criteria, there are gaps in two areas. The section does not address the Dignity for All Students Act in the narrative and only perfunctorily in Attachment 4. The description for dealing with disciplinary decisions regarding Students with Disabilities does not include all components laid out in statute, therefore it is inadequate.
- Reviewers and the capacity interview team found the partnership with Victory Educational Partners to be unclear as to deliverables or costs.
- Various aspects of the application describe using data to inform decision-making. However, missing is a designation of who will be responsible for the data at the staff level. Additionally, the application states that school leaders will use assessment data to hold teachers accountable, but does not specifically note how that will be done.