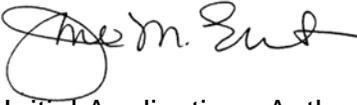




TO: P-12 Education Committee

FROM: Jhone M. Ebert 

SUBJECT: Charter Schools: Initial Applications Authorized by the Board of Regents

DATE: December 1, 2016

AUTHORIZATION(S): 

SUMMARY

Issue for Decision

The Commissioner and Department staff recommends that the Board of Regents consider, approve, and issue an initial charter and provisional charter for the following proposed charter school:

- **OnTECH Charter High School (Syracuse City School District)**

Reason(s) for Consideration

Required by New York State law.

Proposed Handling

This issue will be before the Board of Regents P-12 Education Committee and the full Board for action at the December 2016 Regents meeting.

Procedural History

Under the New York Charter Schools Act of 1998, the Board of Regents is authorized to approve applications for initial charters.

Background Information

Education law §2852(9) sets forth the number of charters issued. The numerical limit for charter schools is currently 460 charters. New charters may be issued on the recommendation of the State University of New York (SUNY) or the Board of Regents (BOR); however, no more than 50 charters can be issued in NYC on or after July 1, 2015. Based on the original 460 cap, there are 157 charters remaining under the cap.

A Charter School Fact Sheet outlining the number of charters issued and those currently remaining can be found at <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/psc/facts/nyscsfactsheet111716.pdf>.

A Summary of the 2010-2016 charter school application cycles is included below as **Attachment A**. The Charter School Application Summary, Findings, and Recommendation for the proposed new school is included below as **Attachments B**.

2016 Request for Proposal Timeline

The 2016 RFP timeline for applicants seeking to establish new charter schools authorized by the Board of Regents is as follows:

2016 Application Cycle			
Submission Rounds	Letter of Intent Due	Full Application Due	Regents Action
Round 1 Charter School Applications	February 29	April 7	June 13-14
Round 2 Charter School Applications	June 28	August 16	November 14-15*

*As per the new school RFP, this timeline is subject to change and the current item is being presented at the December 12-13 Regents meeting.

2016 New School Application Process – Round 2

In Round 2 of the 2016 application and review process, the Charter School Office received:

- Twenty-five applicant group Letters of Intent submitted by June 28, 2016;
- Fifteen applicant groups were invited to submit full applications by August 16, 2016 (14 applicant groups submitted timely applications);
- Nine applicant groups were invited to a Capacity Interview (held in October 2016); and
- Three applicant groups were approved by the Board of Regents as per staff recommendation at the November 14-15, 2016 meeting.

- One applicant group from Round 2 is recommended for Board of Regents approval at the December 12-13, 2016 meeting.

2016 Round 1 New School Recommendations

The Commissioner and Department staff recommend that the Board of Regents issue an initial charter and provisional charter for the below listed new charter schools, which will add 360 high-quality seats for families in Syracuse when the proposed OnTECH Charter High School serving grades 9-12 has fully expanded.

Request for Proposals Submission Process

- Phase I – Letter of Intent:
Each applicant group must submit a letter of intent that provides a brief description of the school mission and design, the proposed student population (including plans to meet enrollment and retention targets), evidence of community outreach efforts and community support, a proposed school district and/or proposed facility, information about the founding group, and anticipated members of the initial board of trustees.
- Phase II – Full Application:
Each applicant group must submit a written application that provides 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 the educational priorities of the Charter Schools Act. Each accepted application is rigorously evaluated through a peer-review process by a three member expert panel including national consultants, reviewers who are current educators in public schools or universities within New York State and across the nation, and experienced Department staff.
- Phase III – Capacity Interviews:
Each applicant group attends an interview to discuss the application and to demonstrate that they have the will, skill, knowledge, and capacity to successfully launch and operate the proposed school.
- Phase IV – Request for Modifications:
Each applicant group makes technical modifications to their applications, as necessary and as requested by the Department.

In addition to the above, throughout the chartering process, the Department reviews public comments provided through formal public hearings (required to be conducted by the school district of location for the proposed school) and through direct

communication with the Department's Charter School Office. Recommendations to award new charters are made to the Board of Regents by the Commissioner. These recommendations are given to groups with a strong educational plan and a presentation that demonstrates their readiness to launch and operate a highly effective public school. Based on a synthesis of information gathered throughout all stages of the process, the Department presents its recommendations to the Board.

Related Regents Items

New Schools Item for 2016 RFP Round 1:

<https://www.regents.nysed.gov/common/regents/files/616p12a2.pdf> .

New Schools Item for 2016 RFP Round 2 authorized by the Board of Regents in November of 2016:

<https://www.regents.nysed.gov/common/regents/files/1116p12a1.pdf> .

Recommendation

VOTED: That the Regents find that: (1) the proposed charter schools meets the requirements set out in Article 56 of the Education Law, and all other applicable laws, rules and regulations; (2) the applicant can demonstrate the ability to operate the school in an educationally and fiscally sound manner; (3) granting the application 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) granting the application will have a significant educational benefit to the students expected to attend the charter school, and the Board of Regents therefore approves and issues an initial charter and provisional charter to the **OnTECH Charter High School** for a term of five years in accordance with §2851(2)(p) of the Education Law.

Timetable for Implementation

The Regents action is effective immediately.

Attachments

SUMMARY OF 2010-2016 CHARTER SCHOOL APPLICATION CYCLES

Regents RFP Cycle	Letters of Intent Submitted	Full Applications Submitted	Charters Issued By BOR (# in NYC) ¹
2010	39	35 prospectuses were submitted; 16 applicants were invited to submit full applications; 15 full applications were submitted	7 (5)
2011	100	80 prospectuses were submitted; 37 applicants were invited to submit full applications; 36 full applications were submitted	9 (7)
2012 Round 1	30	20 applicants were invited to submit full applications; 14 full applications were submitted	3 (3)
2012 Round 2	54	37 applicants were invited to submit full applications; 25 full applications were submitted	10 (8)
2012 Round 3	24	24 applicants were invited to submit full applications; 12 full applications were submitted	0(0)
2013	99	60 applicants were invited to submit full applications; 55 full applications were submitted	8 (6)

¹ The 2015 legislative amendments to the Charter Schools Act takes the cap remaining under the 2007 and 2010 legislation (159) and provides for the reissuance of 22 charters, for a total of 181 charters to be used by either the Regents or SUNY. Chapter 20 of the Laws of 2015 imposed a limit of 50 new charters in New York City.

Regents RFP Cycle	Letters of Intent Submitted	Full Applications Submitted	Charters issued by BOR (# in NYC)
2014 Round 1	31	15 applicants were invited to submit full applications in either Round 1 or Round 2; 11 full applications were submitted in Round 1	2 (1)
2014 Round 2	51	18 applicants were invited to submit full applications 15 full applications were submitted	3 (3)
2015 Round 1	38	15 applicants were invited to submit full applications 15 full applications were submitted	Regents: 0(0)
2015 Round 2	51	17 applicants were invited to submit full applications 11 full applications were submitted	Regents: 3(2)
2015 Round 3	N/A	Letters of Intent Waived 15 full applications were submitted	Regents: 1(1)
2016 Round 1 (June)	11	11 applicants were invited to submit full applications 11 full applications were submitted	Regents: 3(2)
2016 Round 2 (November)	25	15 applicants were invited to submit full applications 14 full applications were submitted	Regents: 3(2)
2016 Round 2 Continued (December)	25	15 applicants were invited to submit full applications 14 full applications were submitted	1 Pending Board of Regents



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 2016 Round 2 Request for Proposals to
Establish Charter Schools Authorized by the Board of Regents for:

OnTECH Charter High School

December 2016

Table 1: Summary of the Proposed School

OnTECH Charter High School

Name of Charter School	OnTECH Charter High School
Lead Applicant(s)	Ellen K. Eagen
District of Location	Syracuse City School District
Opening Date	September, 2017
Projected Charter Term	July 2017 to June 2022
Management Company	None
Partners	None
Facility	Private Facility
Projected Enrollment and Grade Span during Charter Term	Year 1 (SY 2017-18): grade 9, 110 students Year 2 (SY 2018-19): grade 9-10, 200 students Year 3 (SY 2019-20): grades 9-11, 290 students Year 4 (SY 2020-21): grades 9-12, 360 students Year 5 (SY 2021-22): grades 9-12, 360 students
Planned Grade Span (beyond Initial Charter Term)	Not Applicable
Mission Statement	<i>The mission of OnTECH Charter High School is to promote college, career and life readiness for under-credited, disconnected and at-risk youth living in Syracuse, enabling them to graduate from high school as life-long learners, prepared socially, emotionally and academically to lead fulfilling lives, contributing back to the community.</i>

OnTECH Charter High School (OnTECH) seeks to improve student learning and achievement by graduating students from high school who are at-risk of not graduating. OnTECH will increase the learning opportunities for all students, with special emphasis on expanded learning experiences for students who are at-risk of academic failure. Students at-risk of academic failure include those students who performed at level 1 in terms of proficiency on any one of the grade 8 State assessments and students who have enrolled in high school, or are eligible for high school enrollment, but have earned less than five credits (over aged-under credited).

OnTECH Charter High School will employ a weighted lottery for English Language Learners (ELLs), encouraging and welcoming young adults who have recently come to the United States

and do not have proficiency in the English language. In 2015, more than 700 refugees from all over the world have settled in the Syracuse area through federal resettlement programs. Many more immigrants are expected in the future through similar ongoing programs. Young adults between 16 and 21 typically arrive without proficiency in English. Some have had no formal education or have had their education interrupted. These hurdles are particularly challenging in the high school grades. For the young-adult between 16 and 21, attaining a high school diploma requires passing content-based classes and content-based Regents exams – a difficult task when students are not proficient in English and/or literacy in their native language.

Innovative programs to address the needs of this type of student are not a focus of most school districts. As a result, these refugees are at-risk of dropping out of high school without developing necessary literacy skills needed to be viable members of the community. OnTECH seeks to expand the learning opportunities and experiences for these students via different and innovative teaching strategies including the use of Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) to support ELLs in acquiring academic knowledge as they develop proficiency in English and their native language(s). OnTECH will also embrace project-based learning within the context of agriculture and sustainable sciences, both a major engine for jobs in the Syracuse and Onondaga County area.

Key Design Elements

With its student population of largely ELLs, OnTECH Charter High School seeks to 1) create a community who aspire to and engage in life-long learning while understanding their potential as contributors in society through the promotion of citizenship and critical thinking skills; 2) provide all students with a strong bedrock of math, English and science literacy to enable them to identify as life-long learners; 3) provide project-based learning to enhance literacy, interpersonal and problem-solving skills to have all students see their potential as change-makers in the community; 4) provide students with a Regents high school diploma and technical skills relating to the sustainable sciences as an entry into the workforce and/or a career pathway; and 5) awaken in all students a sense of curiosity for knowledge, cultural awareness, and learning which will enrich their personal lives and lead to careers of life-long fulfillment.

The key features that are core to the school's overall design include the following approaches designed to best support the diverse needs of the population the school is seeking to serve:

- **Career & Technical.** The curriculum will focus on career and technical training for sustainable sciences and technology, specifically in the area of agriculture, agribusiness, sustainable sciences and alternative energy, a major source of employment in the Syracuse area. The curriculum will incorporate project-based learning and will connect to the region's indigenous industries and resource. OnTECH will provide job skills and career and technical teaching enabling students to begin a career or secure employment in growing industries in the Central New York region and/or to continue on to secondary education. Apprenticeship and employment opportunities will be part of the students' education and training. For example, OnTECH has established a relationship with Morrisville State College and SUNY Cobleskill, which has technical education programming in the sustainable sciences. Through these relationships, OnTECH will

establish an education pipeline for OnTECH graduates into a post-secondary field of study that will lead to a fruitful career.

- **Project-Based Curriculum.** Instruction will be based on project-learning, which involves completing complex tasks that result in realistic products, events, or presentations. Effective project-based learning has five key characteristics:
 - Project outcomes tied to the curriculum and learning goals;
 - Driving questions and problems lead students to the central concepts or principles of the topic or subject area;
 - Student investigations and research involve inquiry and knowledge building;
 - Students are responsible for designing and managing much of their own learning; and
 - Projects are based on authentic, real-world problems and questions that students care about.

- **Brain-based learning.** Brain-based learning is the purposeful engagement of strategies that apply to how the brain works in the context of education.
 - a. The design of the OnTECH schedule is based on current brain-based research. For example, the school will operate on a trimester system throughout the school year. Studies show that learning loss occurs during the summer, causing the loss of student gains in proficiency. In addition, summer learning will be necessary for students to accumulate enough credits to graduate high school before they are statutorily prohibited from attending high school.
 - b. The school day will start later in the day. This year the American Academy of Pediatrics issued a report calling on middle and high schools to start later in the morning to address sleep deprivation issues amongst adolescents. Sleep deprivation is correlated to attention deficit, depression and undermines test taking. In response, OnTECH will start the day at 10:00 a.m., allowing students to get the necessary amount of sleep.
 - c. OnTECH has built in physical education in the middle of the day. Research shows that physical education during the day can enhance learning in multiple ways. Physical activity gives your brain a break and then resets it, with a charge of endorphins functioning as a mood-booster, and enhancing self-esteem. In addition, physical activity enhances the neural synapsing of an adolescent's brain. For these reasons, the school has embedded physical education between two blocks of classes in the middle of the day.

- **Social-emotional Learning.** OnTECH will foster the socio-emotional learning and growth of its students. The curriculum will be infused with developing social competencies that can range from simple eye contact to empathy and compassion. The multicultural nature of the school's student body makes the necessity for a common language of respect, compassion and perseverance between the students, which is

essential to maintaining a productive environment. To address this issue in a differentiated manner, OnTECH will intrinsically infuse the school and classroom environment and the Advisory Curriculum with the 16 Habits of Mind. The Habits of Mind are an identified set of 16 problem solving, life related skills, necessary to effectively operate in society and promote strategic reasoning, insightfulness, perseverance, creativity and craftsmanship.

Education Plan

OnTECH will operate on a trimester academic calendar, with summer serving as a fourth semester to prevent the loss of learning. Through the trimester system, over-aged and under-credited students will be able to accelerate their acquisition of high school credits and return to a pathway toward graduation. OnTECH students will receive 207 days of instruction beginning each school day at 10:00 a.m. Students start the day with an advisory class which is designed to support literacy and the social-emotional growth of students with a curriculum focused on the 16 Habits of Mind. Subsequent classes include core classes aligned with NYS Learning Standards. Students will also take a Physical Education class and a CTE class. Remediation and academic intervention classes will be scheduled in the morning before school begins, to support student achievement.

Teachers will have common planning time each day to collaborate with special education teachers, to modify curriculum, analyze student data from formative and summative assessments, and make the necessary corrections and modifications to the curriculum. Professional development will be held before school on Mondays and Fridays. Teachers will move up with their students to continue to foster a supportive environment with adults and role models that are a constant in the lives the student. The relationship and rapport that a teacher builds with students and their families will continue to grow as the teacher follows the student from freshmen year to senior year.

The curriculum design seeks to support and address the needs of over-aged students with interrupted formal education (SIFE). It also supports students who have limited acquisition of English, through structural and pedagogical strategies designed to provide students with the most intentional and supportive environment possible to become a high school graduate with college-ready skills. OnTECH's framework for teaching and learning focuses on school wide foundational best practices, a goal assessment loop, and an inquiry-based, student-centered, cooperative instructional model that utilizes project-based learning.

OnTECH staff will collaboratively develop the curriculum using the Understanding by Design Framework. The topics covered in each core class will be determined in accordance with the NYS Learning Standards. Each subject will use formative and summative assessments in addition to an end of the unit project-based performance task. The CTE curriculum will be based on the National Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources (AFNR) Content Standards. The CTE emphasis in Agriculture and Sustainable Energy will provide students with a rigorous and integrated curriculum of academic and industry-specific content. For many students preparing for success requires a different educational experience than the traditional model. The CTE

emphasis will give students exposure to learning that links their work in school to college and/or a career.

One of the key guiding principles of OnTECH's curriculum will be to not only nurture the academic needs of students from an instructional standpoint, but to also foster their socioemotional learning and growth. OnTECH's curriculum will include an advisory class to address this issue in a differentiated manner. The advisory curriculum will focus on the 16 Habits of Mind. The Habits of Mind are an identified set of 16 problem solving, life related skills, necessary to effectively operate in society and promote strategic reasoning, insightfulness, perseverance, creativity and craftsmanship. The understanding and application of these 16 Habits of Mind serve to provide the individual with skills to work through real life situations that equip that person to respond using awareness (cues), thought, and intentional strategy in order to gain a positive outcome.

The curriculum addresses the needs of over-aged under-credited, students with disabilities, students with interrupted educations, and ELLs by using interim pre-unit diagnostic exams to adjust the curriculum to the needs of students. School-wide foundational best practices build routine and comfort for students and minimize behavioral management. Using formative assessments as part of the school's goal assessment loop allows teachers to modify and adjust the curriculum to meet the needs of students. Creating project-base performance tasks at the end of each unit provides hands on real world applications of the material, wherein students are allowed to analyze and interpret information. Using heterogeneous grouping allows peer-to-peer support and discussion. Using technology assists students in improving literacy skills. Incorporating an advisory class addresses the social-emotional needs of special populations and teaches them the habits of successful students and professionals. Providing an alternative pathway to graduation through a CTE program gives students skills that will prepare them to enter the workforce.

Professional Development will focus on the key design elements of the school: teaching the ELL population (some of who have never had a formal education), and project-based learning. To successfully implement both of these key design components, OnTECH will work with national experts in the respective areas. For example, OnTECH has conditionally contracted with the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL), which will provide professional development services on the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) Model beginning two months prior to the start of and during the school year. Four days of professional development will be devoted to the SIOP teacher professional development workshop series where teachers will learn about and practice the eight components of the SIOP Model in order to effectively integrate language and content instruction for newcomer students. A special emphasis will be placed on helping teachers integrate content and language instruction for students with English proficiency levels of one and two, with a focus on how to leverage oral skills to increase literacy acquisition in English. The workshops will include a variety of activities, such as demonstration and explanation, analysis of video teaching sequences, small group tasks, and the creation of activities and lessons.

Teachers will also participate in SIOP guided lesson design PD and coaching to support new and veteran teachers' implementation of the SIOP Model in the classroom. The SIOP facilitator will meet with teams to plan SIOP lessons and activities and address challenges in SIOP implementation, and provide coaching and lesson support during lesson delivery. In addition,

every summer, teachers will receive professional development from the Buck Institute of Education (BIE), the leading experts in project-based education. The facilitator will work to incorporate project-based learning into the professional development sessions to contextualize the agricultural-based component of the curriculum within language development. Each June, the Executive Committee of the Board and the school leadership will evaluate the professional development and training plan with the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) and the Buck Institute of Education (BIE).

Assessment

For all students, OnTECH will use interim pre-unit diagnostic assessments, in unit formative assessments, end of unit summative assessments, and an end of unit performance task. Additional formative regent preparedness assessments will be given twice a year – in December and in May. For ELLs, the NYSESLAT and NYSITELL will be administered as per NYSED guidelines. A team of teachers will engage with new students to ascertain their level of formal education through the use of questioning and formative and summative assessments.

Diagnostic assessments will be administered by the classroom teacher, will be given before the start of each unit and will be used to diagnose strengths and areas of need in all students. Diagnostic assessments involve the gathering and careful evaluation of the students' knowledge and skills in a given learning area. Multiple graders will use pre-established rubrics to ensure the scoring and evaluation of student work is reliable. The data is then used to assist teachers in their planning to develop targeted learning objectives that reflect the needs of their students while keeping in mind the goal of high school graduation. In short, the diagnostic assessments are used by the teacher to determine where they need to amend their curriculum to meet the needs of their students. The results of the diagnostic exams will be shared with grade teams and content teams to build vertical alignment and to elicit feedback on appropriate modifications. The content of the diagnostic exams will be based on a deconstruction of the skills needed in the upcoming unit. The first diagnostic assessment for all incoming students will include a one-week unit and subsequent assessment.

In unit formative assessments will vary. They may include daily exit slips and checks for understanding, as well as mid-unit quizzes. The exit slip for each lesson will identify whether the skill and application of that skill needs to be retaught or the lesson revised. In lesson checks for understanding will be used to provide instant feedback to the teachers as to whether to continue the lesson or stop and reteach a skill/topic/concept. Mid-unit quizzes will focus on the current level of retention the students show with the material. The data collected from these formative assessments will be used in content teams to elicit feedback on what material is subject to re-reaching and the appropriate scaffolds that need to be implemented. End of unit summative assessments and performance tasks will be used to determine the current level of retention, and understanding of the material. End of unit exams will contain Regents level questions based on the material covered in the unit. Performance tasks will be project-based group work that asks students to apply the knowledge and strategies they have learned to a novel problem or issue. Data from these exams will be reviewed in content teams to determine additional methods of re-teaching.

To introduce students to the administration of the Regents exam, three formative mock Regents exams will be given. The first administration will be in December, the second will be in May, and the third will be in August. Each administration will contain modified Regents questions within the established Regents format and the scoring will be based on the Regents rubric. The modified questions will be written by content teams and will be limited to the current material that has been covered in each content area.

School Culture

Restorative justice practices will be implemented in the school to model the tenets of citizenship. Every discipline issue will be used as an educational opportunity to discuss one of the school's core values. Students will speak directly with advisors regarding all transgressions. All students will be trained in methods of mediation to address their issues. These methods will further foster literacy. In applicable instances student incidents will be heard by a panel of their peers.

To support and track the evolving culture of the school, OnTECH school leaders will implement an ongoing process for monitoring school climate. School leaders will evaluate and adopt tools for this process by consulting with outside organizations like the National School Climate Center (NSCC), which provides research and guidelines as well as survey materials and data analysis tools to support healthy school climate. NSCC identifies student safety and well-being, healthy relationships, effective teaching and learning, and meaningful connections to external communities as four critical dimensions of a healthy school climate.

Advisory periods will function as a critical component of the school's student support strategy, as well as an important mechanism for building and sustaining school culture. The advisory program will provide the following types of support:

- An introduction to the School's Core Values, the purpose of the core values, the basic tenets of the discipline code and the components of the discipline code;
- Ongoing academic support and monitoring of progress by a teacher whose primary role is to holistically guide student development;
- Training and coaching in self-advocacy, mediation and role on student disciplinary panel;
- Basic instruction to support academic success for students who have little or no prior school experiences, or prior negative school experiences;
- Integration of new students into the school community, including those joining mid-year
- Establishment and monitoring of student internship experiences in year 3-5; and
- Providing space and time for routine development of community, relationships, dialogue and entrepreneurial problem solving.

The advisory program will then be utilized for establishing routines, rituals, symbols, ceremonies, norms, roles and values that function as the building blocks of school culture.

Special Populations and Related Services

ELL students will be provided full and meaningful access to participate and progress in the general education curriculum as well as contributing to the overall culture of the school community. The construction of all unit plans are backward designed with mastery of the NYS Learning Standards as the end goal and a diagnostic exam and previous state exam levels as tools to address the possible need for review and remediation of units. ELL students will also receive requisite English as a New Language (ENL) classes to further support their English language acquisition. Additionally, ELL students will be heterogeneously grouped with non-ELL students to advance language skills. OnTECH will implement a school-wide Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) that is a research-based ELL support model with supports that are conducive to ELL success in both native and English language proficiency. All afterschool programs and all enrichment activities will be communicated in the students' native language.

As with ELL students, students with interrupted formal education (SIFE) will be provided full and meaningful access to participate and progress in the general education curriculum to build native and English language proficiency. The construction of all unit plans are backward designed with mastery of the NYS Learning Standards as the end goal and a diagnostic exam and previous state exam levels as tools to address the possible need for review and remediation of units. Additionally, heterogeneous groupings will be used to facilitate peer-to-peer support from higher achieving students. SIFE students will be encouraged to participate in all enrichment and after-school activities.

Students with disabilities will be provided full and meaningful access to participate and progress in the general education curriculum. The construction of all unit plans are backward designed with mastery of the NYS Learning Standards as the end goal and a diagnostic exam and previous state exam levels as tools to address the possible need for review and remediation of units. Also, students with disabilities will be, whenever possible, placed in inclusion co-teaching classrooms. Heterogeneous grouping will also be used to facilitate peer-to-peer support from higher achieving students. All afterschool and enrichment programs will be announced and open to SWD students.

All special population students will benefit from an inquiry-based student center classroom that de-emphasizes lectures and focuses on student-to-student discussion. Diagnostic exams and the goal assessment processes will ensure that students are not being taught material for which they do not have the pre-requisite skill. The school-wide best practices ensure that student disruption is kept to a minimum because each class will have a consistent structure that is recognizable. The school and classroom environment will focus on supporting the social-emotional needs of students through the teaching of habits of mind and the celebration of student achievement toward mastery of NYS Learning standards. The school's CTE classes will provide an alternative to pathway to graduation for students who prefer career readiness.

Recruitment

OnTECH will implement a plan to recruit and retain populations. Key elements of the plan are as follows:

- OnTECH will implement an authorizer-approved weighted lottery for ELLs.
- OnTECH will continue its conversations with the District and demonstrate efforts to work collaboratively with the local district Committees on Special Education to educate them about the services, settings, and special program features available at the school.
- OnTECH will disseminated outreach materials including, but not limited to, information about the school, information on how to apply to the school, and contact information for stakeholder questions, that are accessible to all parents in the language representative of the many ethnic groups in the city. OnTECH has already contacted a local translating service to assess the languages in which they are versatile.
- OnTECH will target mailings, radio, and newspaper advertising in prevalent languages
- OnTECH will disseminate outreach materials including, but not limited to, information about the school, information on how to apply to the school, and contact information to organizations such as Interfaith Works, Catholic Charities, White Branch Library, and Hopeprint.
- OnTECH will reach out to the mosques and churches where the New Americans attend and ask to address the audiences in their native language.
- OnTECH will continue partnerships with community based and social service agencies.

Retention

OnTECH will maintain an open and family-like community inclusive of all students. It will plan events that ensure that parents feel welcome to attend. To this end:

- A parent representative will on the Board.
- Board meetings will be translated into various languages.
- Translators will be available during open houses and other school events.
- Google language translator dropdown will be added to school's website.
- All materials explaining the ELL and SWD program and supports available at the school will be translated.
- All school materials, including enrollment materials, will be translated into the predominant language of the communities served.

It is the intention that OnTECH facilities become part of the community of the families served. Currently, the refugee communities in Syracuse are not only isolated from the City but stay within their own communities. The goal is to create a place of community where all groups can congregate. OnTECH will do this purposefully. For example, it is the intention of the School to host soccer games that will engage all members of the community, inviting families that are already in the school to feel comfortable, and encouraging new families to come.

Community Outreach

OnTECH has rigorously demonstrated that it had conducted public outreach in conformity with a thorough and meaningful public review process to solicit community input and address comments as described in the application.

OnTECH has held a series of public community meetings in the City of Syracuse at various locations. OnTECH has presented the school to the community by explaining the private facility location in the north or west side of the city, the target populations, the grades and the programming. To advertise the meetings, OnTECH created flyers to post in local groceries and to mail electronically.

OnTECH issued press releases for these meetings and OnTECH's story has been covered in the local paper, university paper and by the local news channels. In addition Board members reached out to 14 businesses, community organizations and refugee groups, including but not limited to, the 100 Black Men, Southwest Community Center, Catholic Charities, the Community Foundation, and Refugee & Immigrant Self-Empowerment (RISE) — to name just a few — to present and discuss OnTECH, and to solicit comment, feedback and support.

OnTECH has evolved in a number of key ways based on the specific feedback it has received in meeting and discussing feedback from the community. For example, one of the key-design elements – a pathway focused on agriculture – evolved from various comments during two community meetings. Upon a suggestion from a community member, OnTECH researched out to the Future Farmers of America. That group provided for a curriculum aligned with the New York State Learning Standards, and that recognized the extent of the industry growth in this region. In addition, at another meeting, a recent immigrant spoke to agriculture being an important key element given the fact that many local immigrant groups come from agrarian communities. This suggested design element was adapted and will be a bridge for both parents and children of familiarity and a way for parents to remain a part of their children's lives in this new and oftentimes isolating environment.

School Governance and Leadership

The Board will have no fewer than 5 and no more than 15 members depending upon the determination of the Board as voted upon in the authorizer approved by-laws. The School will start with seven Trustees who will serve two year staggered terms. Trustees will be recruited and selected from the community. A crucial element of the governance structure of a community charter school like OnTECH is the voice of the parent, student and teacher. Representatives of these constituent groups have a seat at the Board as nonvoting members. The parent, teacher and student representatives will feel comfortable contributing to every discussion. On relevant topics, the Board will solicit the representative's feedback on certain issues. In order to recruit, monthly board meetings will be held at times that are convenient for working parents and at the end of the school year. Many parents have young children or night jobs making it difficult for them to attend. Technology will be used to ensure that parents can see information first hand. For example, the Board will live stream the meeting and video archive the meetings. Finally, all

materials will be translated so that a parent representative does not need to feel inhibited by their lack of English skills. In addition to the parent representative, the Board will create an advisory committee of members of the various refugee communities. The Board shall meet 12 times a year on a calendar schedule that the Board determines at the beginning of each school year. The Board may also call special meetings in accordance with by-laws. All meetings shall be in compliance with the New York State open meetings law.

A School Trustee Background Information form, Statement of Assurance and resume or curriculum vitae was provided for each of the 5 members who will comprise the 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 Board of Trustees includes the following individuals:

Proposed Board Member	Proposed Role on Board
Ellen Eagen	Trustee, President
Steven Kimatian	Trustee, Treasurer
Robert Gardino	Trustee
John Stegeman	Trustee
Victoria Giarratano	Trustee

School Staffing Plan

The Board of Trustees has the overall responsibility for setting policy for the school and for taking the steps to ensure that the law is being met. The Board will hire a Head of School who will be responsible for executing the mission of OnTECH and overseeing the day-to-day operations. The Head of School will report directly to the Board of Trustees.

The Head of School is expected to be dynamic, decisive and well informed on all matters concerning the school. He/she is charged with the responsibility of implementing the school mission and vision. The Head of School must align internal and external school initiatives with the goals and objectives set forth in the school’s charter, for which the School and Board is held accountable by its authorizer. The Head of School has the authority to specify actions required and detail how the School will operate. The Head of School will oversee the budget development, board communication, fiscal oversight and programmatic leadership. The Head of School will also teach or serve as an advisor. The Director of Instruction, Director of Assessment, and, as the school grows, the Director of College and Career Guidance will support the Head of School.

The staffing plan for OnTECH is a 10:1 student-staff ratio or less for the entire student population. OnTECH will begin with six general education teachers and two learning specialists in the first year of operation. Staffing will increase each year as student enrollment increases, until the fourth year of operation, when the school is at full capacity. No additional students, teachers and staff will be added for the fifth year of the charter term. OnTECH seeks to hire teaching assistants with the necessary credentials who are themselves from the new American

communities to help with cultural and language barriers and to add value for the students to see individuals like themselves in the role of a teacher. Two ELL teachers will be hired from the start and all teachers will be trained in SIOP professional development.

OnTECH will establish a relationship with the educational graduate schools in the area, including Cortland and Syracuse University to identify and attract individuals who are interested in progressive education. Over the last three years the district of location has provided incentives for early retirement to teachers, as a result there is a pool of retired teachers that are still interested in working at OnTECH.

OnTECH will apply a multifaceted approach to retaining high quality teachers by working with the teachers individually and collectively. On an individual basis, the Head of School will use the teacher evaluation process to receive individual feedback from teachers and to address concerns. In addition, the Head of School will use the evaluation process as an opportunity to engage all teachers and staff in discussions relating to long-term professional goals and to provide teachers and staff opportunities to develop themselves professionally and personally. OnTECH will match each teacher with a colleague so that they can work in a mentor/mentee relationship. On a collective basis, the Head of School will issue a climate survey that will address issues directly related to staff, will analyze the climate survey and will make any appropriate changes. Third, the budget has and will continue to be developed based on a competitive salary with the District. Fourth, while certain decisions around the school schedule were made in the best interest of the students, certain aspects about the design of the day may be advantageous for hiring talented staff. For example, certain teachers may want to start the day later to take children to work, work part-time, and work in the early evening.

Facility

OnTECH seeks to locate the school in the near Westside or Northside of the City of Syracuse that have been areas of rebuilding and restoration over the last ten years, as well as designated areas for incubation of new entrepreneurial businesses. Syracuse is fortunate to have several available sites that meet the needs of the school. The preferred site under exploration is located at 484 West Onondaga Street in the near Westside. This location is equidistant between the two anticipated target populations of the school, being accessible from the Northside, which is home to a great majority of the refugee population, and the Southside, which provides access to students from low-income populations. The area is walkable and sits along a main artery bus transportation line.

Technical Modification

The applicant group provided a technical modification to the application. The modification aligns the expected graduation outcomes with mission to serve an at-risk population including students who are over-aged and under-credited as well as those who English Language Learners having arrived recently to the United States as refugees. Specifically, the proposed charter school seeks to be evaluated based on a 6 year graduate rate rather than a 4- or 5- year rated for

accountability purposes. Students will have more time for credit recovery and foundational remediation. Additionally, this modification allows students to pass the Regents exams, graduate from high school, and avoid the need to take remedial courses in college – which has become a common occurrence for students across the State.

Additionally, the applicant group provided a technical modification related to the units of credit needed to graduate in New York State. The applicant group seeks to correct the number of units of credit for graduation to 22 rather than 44 units of credit required to graduate from a high school in New York City.

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 Syracuse CSD, indicating that the fiscal impact of the OnTECH Charter School on the Syracuse CSD is expected to be nominal as presented below.

Table 2: Projected Fiscal Impact upon District of Location, 2017-18 to 2021-22²

Year	Number of Students Enrolled in Charter School Per Year	Charter School Basic Tuition Rate	Total Charter School Basic Tuition	Estimated Revenue from District (SPED, Food Service, Grants)	Total District General Fund Budget ³	Percent of District Budget
2017-18	110	\$ 12,501	\$ 1,375,114	\$ 1,561,006	\$ 392,683,824	0.398%
2018-19	200	\$ 12,501	\$ 2,500,208	\$ 2,871,992	\$ 392,683,824	0.731%
2019-20	290	\$ 12,626	\$ 3,661,555	\$ 4,161,641	\$ 392,683,824	1.060%
2020-21	360	\$ 12,626	\$ 4,545,378	\$ 5,103,054	\$ 392,683,824	1.300%
2021-22	360	\$ 12,752	\$ 4,590,832	\$ 5,103,054	\$ 392,683,824	1.311%

² OnTech Charter High School Application

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.

Programmatically, OnTECH would be complementary to and supportive of the Syracuse School District and the other public and private schools in the Syracuse community. OnTECH will attract students who are at risk of dropping out or who have already dropped out of school and, therefore, these students may not be enrolled at any of the Syracuse schools. Secondly, OnTECH would not compete for the same students as the Syracuse Academy of Science Charter School which offers a STEM program to students who have already demonstrated the capability to perform at high levels. OnTECH would not affect the enrollment of faith-based schools or private independent schools, as these are all tuition based and are not generally seeking to enroll academically at-risk students. These schools have traditional, direct-instruction programming and have entrance exams.

**Table 3: 2014-15 Demographic Detail for Proposed District of Location:
Syracuse CSD**

	Total District Enrollment: Syracuse	
All Students	20,084	
Economically Disadvantaged	15,499	77%
Limited English Proficient	3,010	15%
Students with Disabilities	3,976	20%

**Table 4: 2014-15 High School Cohort Academic and Graduation Rates Based on
Grade Configurations for Proposed School**

Cohort Results	Syracuse	NYS
<i>ELA Cohort Proficiency</i>	59%	84%
<i>Math Cohort Proficiency</i>	68%	86%
<i>Cohort Graduation Rate</i>	55%	80%

Public Hearing and Public Comment

As required by the Charter Schools Act, the Syracuse City School District conducted a public hearing on Wednesday, October 5, 2016 to solicit comments from the community concerning the proposed OnTECH Charter School. At least thirty (30) members of the community were listed on the District's hearing sign-in sheets. Eight (8) individuals support the proposed application largely based on their understanding of the needs of the increasing refugee population. An additional six community members submitted comments in favor of the proposed school directly to the Department. Three spoke in opposition of the proposed application who expressed concern that the charter diverts vital public resources away from high-needs, poverty stricken districts. The Department received several additional letters of support from the community including elected officials.

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.⁴ This finding is based on the following, among other things:
 - i. The applicant has included in the application the information required by Education Law §2851(2).
 - ii. The proposed charter school would meet or exceed enrollment and retention targets, as prescribed by the NYS Board of Regents, 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 §2852(9-a)(b)(i).
 - iii. 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 §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.⁵ This finding is based on the following, among other things:
 - i. 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.

⁴ Education Law §2852(2)(a).

⁵ Education Law §2852(2)(b).

- ii. 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.
 - iii. 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.
 - iv. 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 Act⁶ and will have a significant educational benefit to the students expected to attend the charter school.⁷ 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, the New York State Education Department recommends that the New York State Board of Regents approve the proposal to establish the OnTECH Charter High School to open in 2017 in the city of Syracuse, New York.

⁶ Education Law §2852(2)(c).

⁷ As applicable pursuant to Education Law §2852(2)(d).