



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 2012 Request for Proposals to
Establish Charter Schools Authorized by the Board of Regents
to establish the proposed:*

Great Oaks Charter School

October 2012

Summary of the Proposed Great Oaks Charter School

Name of Charter School	Great Oaks Charter School
Lead Applicant(s)	Michael Duffy
District of Location	Manhattan, CSD 2
Opening Date	Summer/Fall 2013
Projected Charter Term	November 5, 2012 - June 30, 2018
Management Company	None
Partners	Great Oaks Foundation
Facility	Proposed lease with private landlord
Projected Enrollment and Grade Span during Charter Term	Opening with 99 students in grade 6 in 2013-14; growing up to 495 students in grades 6 through 10 in 2017-18.
Projected Maximum Enrollment and Grade Span	550 students in grades 6 through 12
Mission Statement	<i>“The mission of the Great Oaks Charter School is to prepare our students to succeed in college by obtaining a four-year degree. We will accomplish this by combining high academic and behavioral expectations for our students with an extraordinary level of individual attention to each student’s needs through tutoring. We believe that this model will be particularly beneficial to English Language Learners and will target them for recruitment.”</i>

Great Oaks Charter School will be a college preparatory charter school serving students in grades 6 through 12 that will replicate the successful methods of the Match Charter School in Boston. The mission of Great Oaks Charter School is to “to prepare our students to succeed in college by obtaining a four-year degree.” As stated in the application, founding members believe that “college success requires higher-order thinking skills, a passion for reading and discovery, deep mastery of content and character traits like courage, discipline and perseverance.” Their premise is that the mission can be accomplished by combining high academic and behavioral expectations for all students with an extraordinary level of individual attention to each student’s needs through high-dose tutoring and support.

Great Oaks Charter School’s key features are modeled on practices that Match Charter School of Boston has refined over the last decade. These practices include a school culture of high academic and behavioral expectations predicated on the belief that every child can succeed; a strong focus on building relationships with students and their families; and a highly individualized academic program through daily tutoring delivered by a full-time Tutor Corps member.

Key elements of the school’s design include:

- High academic and behavioral expectations though rigorous academics and character building
- Excellent classroom instruction which provides rigorous, college-preparatory instruction while connecting with each student as an individual
- Fostering positive relationships among school staff, tutors, students and families
- Individualized lessons via high-dosage tutoring through the Tutor Corps

- Partnership with New York University’s Steinhardt School of Education to support a teaching career ladder and professional development
- Small school size
- More time on task, through a longer school day and year and additional supports
- Data-driven instructional practices to inform teaching and learning
- Focus on English language learners and other at-risk student populations to reach English proficiency and ultimately move on to college success

The key variable that permits Great Oaks to replicate elements of the Match model without the need for significant philanthropy is class size. By increasing the average general education class size to 33, the school is able to generate additional revenue (more than \$100,000 per class section, compared to a 25-student class), which allows Great Oaks to fund a high-dosage tutoring program. Great Oaks’ overall student-to-teacher ratio (excluding tutors) will be low (16:1) at full-scale. Each student will be provided with approximately 400 hours of individual or small group tutoring each year.

The proposed school calendar includes 200 instructional days per year, organized by trimesters. At the conclusion of each trimester, students take exams and data derived from the assessments will inform content to be retaught the first two weeks of the following trimester. Students who are academically struggling at any time of the school year will receive supplemental time and attention via after-school and Saturday school supports, in addition to the two hours of daily tutoring which every student at Great Oaks Charter School will receive.

The daily student schedule is structured to offer a longer school day, beginning at 7:30 a.m. and ending with an enrichment offering from 3:55 to 4:45 p.m. Monday through Thursday. On Fridays, students are dismissed at 1:00 p.m., so that the school community can be involved in professional development activities. The weekly instructional schedule includes 725 minutes per week of English language arts instruction, 493 minutes of mathematics, 261 minutes of science, 145 minutes of social studies, 116 minutes of physical education and health, along with 290 minutes of enrichment activities. A typical student day includes seven academic periods with five teacher-led classes and two tutorials which are integrated throughout the day. The eighth period of the day provides students with an opportunity to participate in an art or enrichment activity. These activities are led by the tutors, designed based on student interests, and rotated throughout the year to enable students to experience a variety of enrichments.

Teachers begin the school day at 7:30 a.m. and end each day at 4:45 p.m. There are two daily prep periods in the schedule, with almost four hours of school-wide professional development time set aside each Friday afternoon. The plan for professional development includes a Summer Staff Development Institute, a four-week full time training that will provide orientation to the school’s culture, academic program and expectations for new employees, as well as curriculum design and planning. The professional development will be provided by the Executive Director and the Director of Curriculum and Instruction in the first year of the school, with additional support provided by high-performing teachers in later years.

Tutor Corps members begin their day at 7:30 a.m. and end at 4:45 p.m. each week day. Daily prep time and participation in the whole school professional development on Fridays is included in their schedule. A planned partnership with New York University to support the preparation of teachers will enable tutors to be trained as classroom teachers. Participation in Summer Staff Development is required, with Tutor Corps members participating with teachers for four weeks and then for two additional weeks with the other tutors. Training will be provided by the Executive Director, and the Corps Director, supported by

the Director of Curriculum and Instruction and, in later years, with support from high-performing teachers.

The instructional goal of the school is that all students will complete the 12th grade with the knowledge and habits they will need to graduate from a selective four-year college or university. In order to achieve that mission, Great Oaks Charter School will incorporate the proven curriculum design approach of many high-performing charter schools, most notably the Match Charter School, by focusing on backward planning with thematic units that emphasize enduring threads of understandings. The school does not plan to adopt off-the-shelf programs and instead will leverage Wiggins and McTighe's *Understanding by Design* concept for curricular design, with year-end learning objectives drawn primarily from the Common Core State Standards. This work will be completed by teachers and school leaders under the direction of the Director of Curriculum and Instruction, and with the support of additional resources.

Across all classrooms, consistency in instructional practices will be established. This will help to create an environment where students know what is expected of them and valuable learning time is not lost by confusing students with different routines and procedures from teacher to teacher.

The founding group believes that the fundamental purpose of assessment is to gather accurate and timely information so that informed decisions and appropriate actions can be taken to maximize student learning. Therefore, teachers, tutors, instructional leaders and the board of trustees will implement a comprehensive assessment system to drive all decisions about curriculum, instruction, professional development, school-wide communication, student promotion, evaluation of staff, school policies and procedures and monitoring progress towards achieving the mission and accountability goals, among other purposes. A combination of teacher-developed and standardized assessment instruments, including the Achievement Network assessment system will be used.

Great Oaks Charter School will be located in CSD 2, which includes New York's Chinatown as well as neighborhoods that have been home to immigrants for generations. The board of trustees' intention is to seek space on Governors Island to serve the families of Lower Manhattan. They anticipate drawing a representative cross-section of CSD 2, with a particular emphasis on English language learners. The founding group understands and is committed to meeting required enrollment and retention targets in accordance with the NYS Charter Schools Act.

The applicant group has engaged in rigorous, ongoing outreach efforts to inform the CSD 2 community and to secure the community's input and comments regarding how the proposed Great Oaks Charter School intends to address the educational and programmatic needs of students. Evidence of the applicant group's responsiveness to community concerns can be seen in the founding team's decision to sharpen the school's focus on meeting the needs of English language learners. To strengthen school and family communication, Great Oaks Charter School will recruit and hire Tutor Corps members who are multi-lingual and mirror the language and culture of the student body and families.

Submitted with the application are letters of support from various stakeholder groups, including organizations interested in future partnering opportunities. These letters include, but are not limited to, the NYU Steinhardt School of Culture, Education and Human Development; St. Bartholomew's Church; New American Leadership Project; Hamilton Madison House; The Boys Club; Apex for Youth; NYCAN; and TASC-The After-school Corporation.

The draft Admissions and Enrollment Policy submitted with the application establishes enrollment preferences in accordance with the NYS Charter Schools Act, including a set-aside of 25% of vacant seats in each lottery for English language learners.

The lead applicant for Great Oaks Charter School is Michael Duffy. The founding team consists of nine members, eight of whom will transition to the initial board of trustees. The group has a broad range of expertise in charter school start-up, teaching, finance, real estate, law and community outreach.

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 eight individuals who will compose the school's initial board of trustees.

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

- **Susan Mustokoff Akselrad**, proposed Board Secretary, is currently Senior Counsel for Rhodia Inc. She has been a practicing corporate attorney for twenty-five years, is a parent and has prior experience as a classroom teacher in a public school.
- **Shun-Fang Chang** is a career educator currently serving as Assistant Principal/Director of College Office at Bronx High School of Science. She is currently a trustee for The College Board. As an author, she wrote, *The American College Admission Guide*, a Chinese language guide for Asians and Asian-Americans to the U.S. University system.
- **Michael Duffy**, proposed Board President, is the Managing Director for Victory Education Partners. He currently serves as the President of the Board of Directors of the Great Oaks Foundation. He previously served as the Executive Director of the Charter School Office for the New York City Department of Education. He brings to the board close to 20 years of charter school experience as a volunteer, advocate, founder, fundraiser, trustee, school leader and authorizer. He is a resident of CSD 2.
- **Kate Hayes**, proposed Board Vice-Chair, is a resident of CSD 2 and a parent.
- **Robert Ludlum**, proposed Board Treasurer, is Managing Director for Treasure Services at Chase Bank. His experience includes over twenty years as a finance professional specializing in fiscal oversight and internal controls. He resides in CSD 2.
- **Dr. Joseph P. McDonald** serves as a Professor of Teaching and Learning at NYU-Steinhardt School of Culture, Education and Human Development. He is the Chair of the Teacher Education Working Group at NYU and the Director of Research for the Annenberg Institute for School Reform. He is a resident of CSD 2.
- **John Love** is retired after forty years of experience as an independent school educator. He is the former Principal of Fieldston School.
- **Alia Smith** has served initially as a Tutor Corps member and then as Tutor Corps Director for Match Public Charter School in Boston. She is currently a graduate student at Columbia University Business School.

Benjamin Carson, the ninth member of the founding team, was one of the primary authors of the submitted application. He currently serves as the Launch Director for Great Oaks Foundation. His experience includes work in the NYCDOE Charter School Office as a statistician and founder of Great Oaks Charter School in Newark.

Included in the application is a partnership agreement between the proposed charter school and the Great Oaks Foundation, which recently supported the launch of the Great Oaks Charter School of Newark. The letter outlines the no-cost supports to be provided to the proposed school by the foundation. These include supporting the application process, facilities acquisition, significant fundraising and assisting the school's board of trustees with the recruitment of the initial team of staff and the first cohort of students.

The organizational structure of Great Oaks Charter School is designed to separate operational duties from academic responsibilities, and to allow instructional leaders to focus the majority of their time supporting instruction. The initial middle school leadership team will be composed of an Executive Director,

Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Tutor Corps Director, and the Director of Operations. A Dean of Students will be added in the third year of operation. In year four, when the initial cohort of students is promoted into the 9th grade, a high school leadership team will be added, to be joined by a High School Dean of Students in year five. The leadership teams will be led by the Executive Director who will be responsible for the overall success of the school. For both the middle school and the high school programs, the Executive Director will supervise all administrative staff and will serve as the key point of accountability for the Board's oversight of the school's operation. Additional responsibilities include taking the lead in annual budget planning, facilities planning and all other strategic matters.

The Director of Curriculum and Instruction will be responsible for supervision of all instructional aspects of the school including; coaching and evaluating the teaching staff, planning and delivering teacher and tutor professional development, supervising curriculum development and the revision processes; and managing the data analysis and review of assessment.

The Tutor Corps Director will supervise of all aspects of the Tutor Corps. This includes coaching and evaluating tutors, planning and delivering tutor training and professional development, direct supervision of tutors and a focus on recruitment and retention.

The Director of Operations is responsible for the non-instructional aspects of the school. This includes managing the daily school operations in the areas of food, transportation, facilities, attendance and visitors to the school. The position also supports the Executive Director in ensuring the school's fiscal integrity and compliance with state and federal regulations.

In year one the projected enrollment is ninety-nine students. The school anticipates hiring five general education middle school teachers, one special education teacher and twenty tutors to meet the needs of the students.

In order to recruit and retain effective teachers the board plans to initiate a thorough search process. The school will place a high value on recruiting a pool of applicants that reflect the diversity of the student body for all openings and focus recruitment efforts that are likely to reach a broad cross-section of teachers. Through a competitive compensation package, a performance-based incentive plan, career pathways, a school culture that emphasizes collaboration and support, and strong Tutor Corps support, they expect to attract high quality candidates.

The Great Oaks Tutor Corps is structured as a one-year residential tutoring fellowship. Recent graduates from top colleges and universities across the country commit to a year of service as full-time tutors to approximately five Great Oaks students and in exchange receive housing and a small living allowance. Great Oaks staff will identify prospective tutors by conducting vigorous outreach to campuses across the country, meeting with career placement offices, administrators and professors and attending college career fairs. The home languages of Great Oaks students will drive recruitment and selection of Tutor Corps members to ensure the school has adequate capacity to engage students and their families in their native languages.

For Tutor Corps members who wish to become classroom teachers, the Great Oaks Foundation has partnered with the Steinhardt School at NYU to create an innovative pathway. Great Oaks-NYU Teacher Residency blends the inherent benefits of working full-time as a tutor for a full year with the benefits that a large graduate school of education can offer. Covering a two-year course of study (the Tutor Corps year and the Corps member's first year as a classroom teacher), participants in this program receive hundreds of hours of coaching, participate in extensive practical coursework and attend content courses at NYU, leading first to initial certification as a teacher and then a Masters of Education. The scheduling of the Teacher Residency activities occurs entirely outside of the Great Oaks schedule (after PD on Fridays and

on Saturdays) and residency costs are borne by outside philanthropy and scholarships from NYU. There is no programmatic or fiscal impact on the Great Oaks Charter Schools.

The founding team states in their application, “...they are committed to being a partner with the downtown community in creating solutions to the school-overcrowding crisis in Lower Manhattan schools. For that reason, we will not co-locate or occupy public school space. From its first day of operation, GO will occupy a private facility in Lower Manhattan, Community School District 2, and will create new public school seats.” The founders have presented a two-stage facilities plan: two years in private incubation space, after which they plan to move into a completely renovated building that will serve as the school’s long-term home. Members of the founding group are working with architects and commercial real estate brokers specializing in assisting charter schools to find facility space. The vision is to acquire a long-term lease and renovate a historic building on Governors Island in New York Harbor. The founding group included budget projections and assumptions for all options.

The work to secure, develop and renovate the school’s permanent home is being conducted by the Great Oaks Foundation and the charter school founding board. The lead applicant has successfully guided the effort to identify, finance and renovate two different charter school building projects. The project budget will be underwritten by a combination of three sources of funds: Historic Preservation Tax Credits; Philanthropic Funds, raised by the Great Oaks Foundation through a Capital Campaign (\$15m); and Tax Exempt Bonds, issued through the ‘BuildNYC’ program of the NYC Economic Development Corporation.

Projected Fiscal and Programmatic Impact on District of Location

The applicant provided an analysis of the fiscal and programmatic impact of the proposed school on public and non-public schools in CSD 2, indicating that the fiscal impact of the Great Oaks Charter School on NYC Department of Education public schools is expected to be minimal (less than 0.0023% of the total NYC Department of Education budget). The impact on student enrollment of other district and charter public and non-public schools in the Community School District is also expected to be minimal (1% of the total public school enrollment in grades 6-12). The applicant states that Great Oaks Charter School intends to have a positive programmatic impact on the other public and nonpublic schools in the community and will strive to be a model high-performing school.

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

Year	Number of Students Enrolled in Charter Schools Per Year ¹	Charter School Basic Tuition Rate ²	Total Charter School Basic Tuition Only	Estimated District Special Education Payment ¹	Total District General Fund Budget ³	Percent of District Budget
2013-14	99	\$15,089	\$1,493,811	\$117,847	\$19,724,841,088	0.008%
2017-18	495	\$17,903	\$8,861,985	\$588,780	\$19,724,841,088	0.048%

¹ Source: Great Oaks Charter School Application

² Source: Education Law §2856(1)(a)(iii) and NYS Education Department Office of State Aid Charter School Basic Tuition Rate Analysis, September 2011.

³ Source: New York City DOE Financial Status Report September 2012; <http://schools.nyc.gov/Offices/DBOR/FSR/default.htm>.

The calculations above assume charter school basic tuition rates in the charter period (2013-14 thru 2017-18) based on a trend analysis provided 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 NYCSD budget during the duration of the school's charter.⁴

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; all students will come from NYCSD; 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.

⁴ 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.

Below, for your reference, please find additional data on New York City Community School District 2.⁵

New York City Community School District 2

Enrollment Data	
Total District Enrollment:	59,844
Grade 6 through 10 Enrollment:	28,501
White:	21%
Black/African-American:	19%
Hispanic/Latino:	36%
American Indian/Alaskan Native:	1%
Asian/Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander:	23%
Free/Reduced Priced Lunch:	62%
English Language Learners:	12%
Students with Disabilities:⁶	13.6%
Graduation Rate	CSD 2
2007 Graduation Cohort:	68%

State Assessments (% proficient)		
Grade level	English Language Arts	Mathematics
6	66%	80%
7	67%	80%
8	63%	75%
2007 Cohort Grades 9 – 12	76%	73%

Public Hearing and Public Comment

As required by the Charter Schools Act, the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) held a public hearing on Thursday August 30, 2012 to solicit comments from the community concerning Great Oaks Charter School. Twelve individuals spoke at the meeting. One individual spoke against charter schools in general and thirteen, who were either parents or teachers from a public school located on the Governors Island, spoke or wrote against sharing the Island with another school. Three members of the community spoke in favor of the proposal, citing the track record of success of the school model, the

⁵ Source: 2010-2011 New York State School Report Card (<https://reportcards.nysed.gov/view.php?schedist=district&county=none&year=2011>); 2011-2012 state assessment data for Grades 3 through 8 English language arts and mathematics (<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/irs/ela-math/>); 2007 cohort graduation rates (<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/irs/pressRelease/20120611/home.html>).

⁶ Source: Special Education School District Data Profile for 2010-11 <http://eservices.nysed.gov/sepuprep/>. This figure is the available city-wide classification rate: the ratio of the count of school-age students with disabilities (ages 4-21) to the total enrollment of all school-age students in the school district, including students who are parentally placed in nonpublic schools located in the school district. The numerator includes all school-age students for whom a district has Committee on Special Education (CSE) responsibility to ensure the provision of special education services. The denominator includes all school-age students who reside in the district. In the case of parentally placed students in nonpublic schools, it includes the number of students who attend the nonpublic schools located in the school district. Source data are drawn from the Student Information Repository System (SIRS) and from the Basic Education Data System (BEDS).

commitment on the part of the applicant group to serving English language learners, and the high-dose tutoring and mentoring that will be available to all students. Supporting comments mirror the letters of support from the community that were included in the written application.

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. In response, personnel and parents from New York Harbor School submitted two petitions with over 300 signatures and multiple comments in opposition to the proposed site of the Great Oaks Charter School on Governor's Island. The concerns are related to the impact on New York Harbor School and families of sharing the harbor community and resources with another school and with students of a different age group and culture.

The Chancellor was contacted by letter and invited to comment directly. Chancellor Walcott submitted a letter in support of the Great Oaks Charter School, noting: "The NYCDOE found this proposal to be well-designed and features a rigorous educational model. Chancellor Dennis Walcott recommends this charter application to support the children of New York."

Application Review Process

On January 3, 2012, as required by the New York State Charter Schools Act, the New York State Education Department (the "Department") released the 2012 Request for Proposals ("RFP") to Establish Charter Schools Authorized by the Board of Regents. The charter school application process utilized by the Board of Regents and the Department during the 2012 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 2012 Round 2, 54 letters of intent were received in June 2012 and, after an initial review process, 37 applicants were invited to submit full applications. The Department received 25 full applications, including the application for Great Oaks Charter School.

To assess whether to recommend approval or denial of the charter application to the Board of Regents, the Department established multi-person review panels to thoroughly evaluate each full application. Each of these panels was comprised 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 seven of the eight initial board members of the proposed school and one additional founding group member, on Thursday, September 13, 2012. 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.⁷ 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,⁸ 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.⁹ 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.

⁷ Education Law §2852(2)(a).

⁸ 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.

⁹ Education Law §2852(2)(b).

- 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 Act¹⁰ and will have a significant educational benefit to the students expected to attend the charter school.¹¹ 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 Great Oaks Charter School to open in 2013 in New York City.

¹⁰ Education Law §2852(2)(c).

¹¹ As applicable pursuant to §2852(2)(d).