





TO: P-12 Education Committee

FROM: Jhone M. Ebert 

SUBJECT: Charter Schools: Initial Applications and Charters Authorized by the Board of Regents¹

DATE: November 9, 2015

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 three new charter schools:

1. School in the Square Public Charter School (proposed to locate in NYC CSD 9 or 10)
2. South Bronx Community Charter High School (proposed to locate in NYC CSD 7)
3. Exploration Elementary Charter School for Science and Technology (proposed to locate in the Rochester 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 November 2015 Regents meeting.

Background Information

The Commissioner and Department staff recommend that the Board of Regents issue the initial charters and provisional charters for the above listed three new charter schools, which will add 1218 high quality seats for families in New York City and Rochester.

¹ A Summary of the 2010-2015 charter school application cycles is included below as Attachment A.

- **School in the Square Public Charter School** will utilize three pillars; rigorous curriculum, collaborative professional culture, and compassionate community, to engage, educate and empower their students. The school will have a public Square, an actual physical space where students will deliberate about school governance, discuss current events, and celebrate personal achievements. The school plans to partner with East Side House Settlement, which will place full-time advisors at the school to support students and their families. In addition, City Pathways is partnering with the school before, during and after school. Finally, Facing History And Ourselves will support the curriculum and weekly support forums in the Square community meetings. (Attachment B.)
- **South Bronx Community Charter High School** will promote student excellence through an emphasis on academic, interpersonal and professional skills in a supportive and responsive learning environment. Students will graduate with a positive sense of self, ready to design and realize their futures in college, community, and career. The school will utilize a combination of competency-based learning, supportive staffing, cultural responsiveness, and adaptive operations to promote student empowerment. (Attachment C.)
- **Exploration Elementary Charter School for Science and Technology** will partner with the Rochester Museum and Science Center to engage students, their families, and the community in the processes of scientific inquiry and the use of innovative technology to develop the social, emotional, and academic tools necessary to thrive in school and in today's interconnected world. Exploration's academic program balances explicit instruction in core content areas with innovative opportunities, allowing students time to explore, research, direct, experiment, and interact with knowledge as they approach new information with excitement, a sense of inquiry, and the confidence to promote academic achievement and life-long learning. (Attachment D.)

Additional details about the three proposed charter schools and how Department staff reviewed the applications is included in the attached *Summary, Findings and Recommendation* for each proposed school. The applications for these three schools are available electronically on the Department's website: <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 law also designated 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 required that the two chartering entities create competitive Request for Proposal (RFP) processes for applications for the additional 260 charters. The law dictated the timetable for the RFPs that were issued in 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013 and left the timetable for the release of RFPs in subsequent years to be determined by the Board of Regents and SUNY. The 2015 legislative amendment allows a charter that has been surrendered, revoked, terminated, or not renewed to be reissued by SUNY or the Board of Regents through an application process. There are 181 total charters available. Chapter 20 of the Laws of 2015 imposed a limit of fifty new charters in New York City.

The 2015 Request for Proposals (RFP) and Charter School Application Kit were issued in January 2015, and applications were accepted and reviewed in three rounds (March, August and October). 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 application and review process consists of the following four phases:

- 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 educational priorities of the Charter Schools Act. Each accepted application is rigorously evaluated through a peer-review process by a five-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 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 requested by the Department.

In addition to the above, throughout the chartering process, the Department reviews the 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.

In Round 2 of the 2015 application and review process, there were:

- 51 Letters of Intent submitted to the Department;
- 17 applicants invited to submit full applications and 11 submitted full applications;
- 4 applicants invited to the Capacity Interview; and
- 3 applicants recommended to the Board of Regents for approval.

Recommendation

VOTED: That the Regents find that: (1) the proposed charter school 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 a charter and provisional charter to the **School in the Square Public Charter School** for a term of five years in accordance with §2851(2)(p) of the Education Law.

VOTED: That the Regents find that: (1) the proposed charter school 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 a charter and provisional charter to the **South Bronx Community Charter High School** for a term of five years in accordance with §2851(2)(p) of the Education Law.

VOTED: That the Regents find that: (1) the proposed charter school 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 a charter and provisional charter to the **Exploration Elementary Charter School for Science and Technology** 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 2010-2015 CHARTER SCHOOL APPLICATION CYCLES

Regents RFP Cycle	Letters of Intent Submitted	Full Applications Submitted	Charters Issued By Regents (# in NYC)	Regents Charters Remaining under 2010 cap of 130 (# in NYC)
2010	39	35 prospectuses were submitted; 16 applicants were invited to submit full applications; 15 full applications were submitted	7 (5)	123 (52)
2011	100	80 prospectuses were submitted; 37 applicants were invited to submit full applications; 36 full applications were submitted	9 (7)	114 (45)
2012 Round 1	30	20 applicants were invited to submit full applications; 14 full applications were submitted	3 (3)	111 (42)
2012 Round 2	54	37 applicants were invited to submit full applications; 25 full applications were submitted	10 (8)	101 (34)
2012 Round 3	24	24 applicants were invited to submit full applications; 12 full applications were submitted	0(0)	101 (34)
2013	99	60 applicants were invited to submit full applications; 55 full applications were submitted	8 (6)	93 (28)
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)	91 (27)
2014 Round 2	51	18 applicants were invited to submit full applications 15 full applications were submitted	3 (3)	88 (24)
Regents RFP Cycle	Letters of Intent Submitted	Full Applications Submitted	Charters issued by SUNY or BOR (# in NYC) ²	Charters remaining to be issued by SUNY or BOR (# in NYC) ³
2015 Round 1	38	15 applicants were invited to submit full applications 15 full applications were submitted	Regents: 0(0) SUNY: 0(0) Total: 0(0)	181(50)
2015 Round 2	51	17 applicants were invited to submit full applications 11 full applications were submitted	Pending Approval in November 2015	Pending
2015 Round 3	16	No Letters of Intent required 16 full applications were submitted	Pending Approval in December 2015	Pending

² 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. These 181 charters can be used by either Regents or SUNY. Chapter 20 of the Laws of 2015 imposed a limit of 50 new charters in New York City. SUNY totals are provided as of the date of the corresponding Board of Regents Round.

³ See note 1, above.



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 2015 Round 2 Request for
Proposals to Establish Charter Schools Authorized by the
Board of Regents to establish the proposed:

School in the Square Public Charter School

November 2015

Table 1: Summary of the Proposed School in the Square Public Charter School

Name of Charter School	School in the Square Public Charter School
Lead Applicant(s)	Evan Meyers
District of Location	CSD 9 or 10
Opening Date	Summer Focus Cycles: August 22-25, 2016 Summer Bridge: August 29-September 1, 2016
Projected Charter Term	September 6, 2016 to June 2021
Management Company	None
Partners	East Side Housing Settlement, City Pathways, and Facing History and Ourselves
Facility	Private or public co-location space
Projected Enrollment and Grade Span During Charter Term	Year 1: Grade 6, 108 Year 2: Grades 6-7, 216 Years 3-5: Grades 6-8, 324
Planned Grade Span (beyond Initial Charter Term)	Grades 6-8 for maximum enrollment of 324
Mission Statement	<i>“School in the Square (S2) will engage, educate, and empower adolescents in the Bronx to respond mindfully and creatively to life’s opportunities and challenges. S2 draws its name from the concept of the public square, where communities come together to solve problems and celebrate successes. We envision S2 as a place where students, families, and educators are seen, heard, and inspired and where students build the academic foundations, emotional intelligence, and leadership skills necessary to excel in college and professional life. In line with our commitment to equity and diversity, S2 is dedicated to serving the highest needs students of the Bronx, regardless of their academic achievement, English language proficiency, or disability status.”</i>

The founders of the School in the Square Public Charter School (“S2”) believe that when students feel that they are heard and known, they feel more valued, which leads them to invest and participate in their education. The word “square” in the school’s name refers to their public square, an actual physical space in the school where their students will deliberate about school governance, discuss current events, and celebrate personal achievements. Their classroom approach will foster students’ “growth mindset” by engaging students in solving real-world problems and assessing the standards of authentic practice and the Common Core.

Key Design Elements

The key design elements for S2 fit within three pillars, which derive from their mission:

- **Pillar 1: Rigorous Curriculum.** S2 will offer a Common Core aligned program of study in ELA, mathematics, science, social studies, and the arts that encourages critical thinking and cogent communication.

In-Depth, Immersive, and Extended Learning Experiences: S2 provides time and opportunity for thoughtful work on specific problems and sets of learning tasks, gradually providing deeper immersion in particular disciplines. S2 will extend learning beyond the conventional classroom through strategic partnerships with outside organizations, including a primary partnership with CityPathways to help middle schoolers “see paths” to possible futures through hands-on, high engagement learning cycles through which youth connect with NYC’s community, cultural, and environmental resources.

Personalized Learning: Personal learning time (PLT) provides students with targeted instruction in math and literacy to address gaps and provide enrichment as needed. Targeted instruction will ensure students can read with the insight required to analyze and effectively respond to texts across disciplines and develop understanding of key mathematical concepts and their applications to real-life problems.

Students in the Square Forum: Forums held every two weeks in the school “square” will give students varied and authentic opportunities to contribute to the school environment and have a voice in decisions.

- **Pillar 2: Collaborative Professional Culture.** S2 will develop robust teaming structures and a culture of collaboration with adults that will create a consistent and rigorous learning environment for youth. Teachers will meet in teams to support student growth, share strategies to improve instruction and collaborate on curriculum, and monitor assessments. All staff will participate in professional development within a culture of respect and continuous improvement using the following strategies.

Teachers in the Square: S2 teachers will help students become better learners by modeling commitment to continual development as pedagogues. Teachers will self-reflect and receive ongoing, targeted feedback from their peers, supervisors, students, and their families through observations, inter-visitations, study groups, written correspondence, and surveys.

Common Planning: S2 teachers will develop a common professional language and use research-based frameworks for lesson design and data-driven instruction. Teachers will have seven hours per week of common planning time to collaborate on shared unit and lesson planning, meet with special education, ELL, and other service providers, as well as meet with their grade-level team to identify effective instructional practices.

- **Pillar 3: Compassionate Community.** The proposed model provides a network of personnel and programmatic supports to ensure the physical, social, and emotional well-being of each child.

Families in the Square: The proposed school will forge deep understanding and connection with each student and their family. Their East Side House Settlement (“ESH”) partner will support these efforts by closely monitoring attendance to identify chronically late or absent students, managing student discipline by using restorative justice practices, proactively identifying at-risk students, performing comprehensive family outreach, and connecting students and families to social services and community resources in the Bronx.

PrimeTime: At the start of each day, students will ready themselves for learning in an advisory-style 30 minute period called PrimeTime that incorporates mindfulness meditation.

Restorative Approaches: The founders are deeply committed to reducing interpersonal conflict and fostering a caring school environment. Restorative approaches to school discipline involve developing trusting, caring relationships, teaching self-regulation and social skills, and building community between teachers and students.

Education Plan

The S2 school day runs from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. with an optional early bird homework/reading club with breakfast beginning at 8:00 a.m. Their 187-day school calendar provides 10 additional days of learning for students and 18 additional days of assessment, teaching, and professional development for educators. The school curriculum and instructional practices will cultivate critical and creative thinking, collaborative skills and dispositions, and leadership. Their students will master Common Core skills and connect their learning to real-life situations, yielding powerful insights and prompting productive action.

S2 believes the New York State Common Core ELA Learning Standards provide a pathway to nurturing students who are college and career ready in ELA and communication skills. Towards this end, students must demonstrate independence; build strong content knowledge; respond to varying demands of audience, task, purpose, and discipline; comprehend as well as critique; value evidence; use technology and digital media strategically and capably; and come to understand other perspectives and cultures. To achieve this result for their students, S2 plans to adopt the Engage NY curriculum, a comprehensive grades 6-8 English Language Arts curriculum that provide lessons, assessments, and resource materials from Expeditionary Learning (EL). S2’s Forum and Debate classes will provide complementary real-life applications of the standards. The EL curriculum provides a clear progression of learning goals in reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Students will build knowledge through reading and writing grounded in evidence from text, both literary and informational. Daily sharing of explicit learning targets at the opening of each lesson and identifying the “gist” of shared texts prior to the main idea supports the daily practice of gathering evidence to answer text-based questions. The study of vocabulary is integrated throughout, and routines and practices promote stamina and build toward complexity.

S2 believes that middle school math is where students come to connect arithmetic and algebra, and gain the universally relevant mathematical understanding necessary for success

in college and beyond. S2 chose its mathematics program, Eureka Math, to create a solid foundation for algebra in grades 6 through 8. It focuses on basic skills to develop automaticity and strong conceptual understanding at every level through focus on visualization, explanations using precise vocabulary, and manipulative-based representation of math concepts. Eureka Math material derives from a partnership with the NYSED and served as the basis for the EngageNY Common Core curriculum.

The science curriculum at S2 will coordinate content and processes with (1) Intermediate Level Science Core Curriculum, (2) New York State Learning Standards for Mathematics, Science, and Technology, and (3) Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) based on the Framework for K–12 Science Education developed by the National Research Council. S2 will use FOSS as their science curriculum. Students will engage in structured activities to achieve science literacy and deepen their understanding of science concepts and the interconnectedness of mathematics, science, and technology. Scientific inquiry and hands-on laboratory work (in 70 minute blocks) will help students develop the skills of analysis, inquiry, and design. Through informational texts, content-rich science videos, and online resources, students will build background knowledge and learn to pose and evaluate arguments based on evidence.

S2's social studies program will draw on the NYC DOE's 6-8 Social Studies Scope and Sequence (S & S), a comprehensive resource that integrates the CCLS, the NYS Social Studies Core Curriculum (content, concepts, key ideas, understandings, and performance indicators), and the NYS Social Studies Framework. Its outcomes align closely with S2's commitment to developing the social studies competencies vital to a democracy: gathering, using and interpreting evidence; chronological reasoning and causation; comparison and contextualization; applying geographic reasoning; understanding economics and economic systems; and engaging in civic participation. To embed moral values in such outcomes, S2 will partner with Facing History and Ourselves ("FHAO") on anchor units and assessments for their three-year curriculum. FHAO's acclaimed strategies integrate history, literature, and ethics to advance the knowledge, values, and skills that strengthen democracy.

Students will master five key content standards: U.S. and New York history; world history; geography; economics; and (with special emphasis) civics, citizenship, and government. Also receiving their special attention among the unifying themes are these five: individual development and cultural identity; development and transformation of social structures; power, authority, and governance; civic ideals and practices; and science, technology, and innovation.

Co-curriculars include physical education, foreign language (through online programming with online instructor), Adolescent Issues (planned by ESH), and electives developed by cPaths (see below). Three innovative curricular elements of S2 are Forum (which alternates with Debate Workshop); Personalized Learning Time intervention/enrichment block used to address students' unique needs on an individual and small-group basis; and CityPathways.

Students will meet alternating Mondays for Forum or Debate Workshop. This time will provide opportunities for students to address important school, community, and social issues through research and writing tackling a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences as recommended in the ELA standards. FHAO will collaborate with staff in identifying topics and providing engaging resources around selected themes. S2 will also use curriculum resources from New

York City Urban Debate League, a program that empowers underserved students while immersing them in public speaking, research techniques, civics, and law. Debate classes will provide time for argument development while Forum will allow students to present their arguments and ideas; both require students to make decisions and solve real-world problems. Cases will require students to collaborate in small groups, conduct evidence-based discussions, communicate their ideas orally and in writing, and address complex issues of social importance. As students wrestle with issues, educators will collect anecdotal evidence, videotape and audio record dialogues for later transcription, and use school-wide debate rubrics to monitor student performance. To enhance the public and democratic dimensions of Forum, parents will have an open invitation to attend, and they will occasionally host guest facilitators. All students, including at-risk learners, benefit as they integrate oral and written language while providing structured opportunities to research and write about topics important to adolescents.

Meeting four days per week, PLT will give educators an opportunity to respond to student needs for Tier II and Tier III instruction in small groups determined by diagnostic assessments (NWEA MAP) and teacher observations in the classroom. For most students, PLT will focus on foundational proficiencies. In ELA, listening and reading comprehension and vocabulary development will be addressed in small group instruction. Guided reading groups for struggling readers, literature circles, and independent reading for proficient and advanced students will also be a part of PLT. In addition, all students will use myON Digital Literacy Program, which offers thousands of digital titles based on student interest and levels, read aloud audios, informational text aligned with STEM, and teacher assessment reports that track Lexile growth. In math, small group instruction will be explicit and systematic. This includes providing models of proficient problem solving, verbalization of thought processes, guided practice, corrective feedback, and frequent cumulative review. When appropriate, students will use computer-based math fluency practice such as Concord Consortium and IXL Math. Educators will also provide dedicated ELL and SWD services during this block. The various personalized offerings will meet on a pre-established schedule and will be coordinated by teachers.

S2 believes that CityPathways will expose students to a broad range of enrichment through high-quality community based organizations and teaching artists—personnel referred to as Coaches. A sample cPaths learning cycle is “I am an Alphabet,” exploring how the natural world is impacted by the environment and how they as individuals are shaped by forces in their environment. This is linked to the previously-referenced Social Studies Essential Question, “Does geography determine development?” bridging towards the Essential Question “To what degree does geography determine culture?” Teaching artists from the Bronx Museum of the Arts will come to the school once a week and students will go to the museum once a week, making several visits to the “Trees are Alphabets” exhibit by E.J. McAdams, which considers how sun, rain, wind, and soil constantly transform the shapes of trees. Students will engage in action research examining their everyday environment—and their own lives—through the lens of change. They will use the museum’s MediaLab to create a multi-media timeline of an object in their environment, depicting influences upon it, as a mid-point project and a digital chronology of important events in their own lives as a culminating project.

Equinox Sports Club. To enhance their health and fitness program and provide students with highly trained specialists, S2 has created a partnership with Equinox Sports Clubs of New

York. They have committed to providing S2 with two instructors for four hours per week to work with their students to provide a rigorous physical education experience. Trainers will plan with their part-time health and fitness teacher to develop physical education curriculum and lesson plans.

Students will be required to attend two summer programs, SummerFocus and SummerBridge. The two-day SummerFocus session will offer students an opportunity to meet staff and peers in small group and individual sessions; take interest surveys; undergo social, emotional, and mental health screening with an ESH advisor; take exams to establish pre-instructional baselines; and obtain resources to enrich summer experience such as passes to museums. Returning 7th and 8th grade students will also participate in Focus. They will complete assessments and surveys, participate in interviews with staff, and receive summer assignments. They will also engage in small group discussions introducing incoming 6th grade students to S2. Midyear transfer students will participate in assessments, surveys, and interviews whenever they arrive.

During the eight-day SummerBridge unit, students will; build relationships with educators and peers in community building activities; engage in mindful awareness practices such as meditation and learn about academic mindsets; establish adolescent-friendly norms, criteria, rubrics and checklists for being community-minded; participate in scaffolded versions of Debate and Forum; learn about school rules, values, and expectations through role play and creative activities; learn about CityPathways programs and participate in mini-units that preview upcoming courses; practice routines for trips and travel to a cultural institution in preparation for the various educational trips during the school year; and become acquainted with S2's grading system and student-led conference structure, which will be incorporated into PrimeTime Advisory during the year.

S2's comprehensive assessment systems will help their administration and teachers adjust teaching and learning practices to improve student performance. By regularly assessing student understanding, S2 will identify strategies to increase student learning, enable teachers to make strategic changes to the curriculum, and enhance communication with students and families about academic progress. Their ED and AD will coordinate the implementation of state, city, and internal assessments including those mandated by the NYS testing program. S2 will conduct the following types of assessments: formative and curriculum-based assessments, diagnostic and interim assessments, and summative assessments. By using data driven instruction to improve academic outcomes and putting reporting structures in place through quarterly reports to the Board of Trustees detailing aggregate student performance, measuring progress against their Achievement Goals, and presenting next steps for the instructional leadership team, S2 will analyze and use the corresponding student achievement data to enhance instruction. At the conclusion of the year, an annual report will include aggregated student test data, enrollment and retention statistics, and promotion statistics.

In the same way S2 asks students to give and receive feedback, they will build opportunities for reflection and improvement into their program through data analysis and surveys. Their Parent and Family Association will offer an organizational structure for parents and guardians to advance their ideas to S2 leadership. As part of their Student-led Conferences, parents and guardians will participate in brief surveys to provide feedback about communication, engagement, school culture (including safety and environment), and instructional programs.

In addition to this and the student feedback received in Forums, S2 will also use data gathered from annual NYCDOE School Surveys, which garner opinions on communication, family engagement efforts, school safety, and quality of instruction, to assess and improve family and student satisfaction.

Special Populations and Related Services

S2 will support all levels of learners within a structured environment designed to maximize student time on task with academically rigorous content. Staff will be hired and professionally developed with this lens, inclusive of professional development in Universal Design for Learning (UDL). S2 structures like Personal Learning Time (PLT) are designed to ensure customization to student needs at all levels. The S2 curriculum is designed to challenge all students to do their best academically, particularly the most vulnerable students: SWDs, ELLs, and students at risk of academic failure.

Based on average student performance of CSD 9 and 10, the school anticipates that a significant proportion of students will enter one or more years behind grade level. To identify incoming students at risk of academic failure, the school will administer computer-based reading and math diagnostic assessments during SummerFocus and SummerBridge sessions. Students who are academically low achieving will be identified through triangulated assessments (See Section 2D and Figure 2.1) as well as through observations and early classroom performance.

S2's design incorporates instructional practices that meet the needs of all learners, cultivating an environment where students take academic risks, have the supports and interventions necessary to meet standards, and a learning community that values safety and closeness. This is the essence of an effective Response to Intervention (RTI) system: setting up tiers of instruction and a network to support students wherever they are in the learning process. In addition to four Core teachers, ESL and special education teachers, the school will hire an Academic Intervention teacher part-time in Year 1, with the expectation of being full time beginning Year 2.

Recruitment

The school intends to work with children who possess a broad range of perspectives and needs and serve a representative cross-section of Bronx children and meet or exceed district averages in students who are ELLs, SWDs, or who qualify for FRPL by prioritizing recruitment of these sub-groups. To bolster recruitment efforts, relationships have been established with local elementary schools as well as community and faith-based organizations and agencies that have sponsored the school into their communities and aided recruitment efforts. Specifically, the Tenant Association of a 250- unit public housing project, New Tabernacle Baptist Church, Ogden Presbyterian Church, Highbridge Voices and New Heights (after-school programs), and the Supportive Children's Advocacy Network (SCAN) will work on the school's behalf to further recruitment efforts. Additionally, the founding board includes four members who live or work in the Bronx, each of whom will work within their spheres of influence to aid recruitment of general and special populations. S2 will use a

broad spectrum of strategies to ensure that the school targets recruitment of special populations.

The school has provided a draft memorandum of understanding with ESH, which outlines specific actions that both their two S2 based staffers, and the larger 100-year-old Bronx organization will take on S2's behalf, including tapping their comprehensive support network, canvassing neighborhoods alongside S2 staff, and launching a public awareness campaign for the school.

Retention

S2's key elements were designed with retention of at-risk populations in mind. Academic and social-emotional strategies to serve and retain students, especially SWD and ELLS, are core features of the organizational mission and program. S2 intends to:

- Identify supports necessary for students early in the year during the SummerBridge and SummerFocus induction programs in July and August;
- Provide on-site ESH staff for comprehensive mental, emotional, and physical support;
- Employ relevant, interactive, proven pedagogical methods throughout the curricular program and personalize offerings to foster student investment and ownership through cPaths;
- Commit to a consistent, shared lesson design format that ensures teachers use research-based, high-yield instructional strategies and provide targeted feedback during all learning activities;
- Facilitate daily mindfulness meditation to develop social and emotional competencies;
- Provide small-group, personalized intervention and enrichment time for students four days a week that includes instruction from ESL and special education teachers and learning specialists;
- Address challenging student behaviors using frameworks (such as Collaborative Problem Solving and Guided Discipline) that feature restorative justice techniques; and
- Facilitate regular interdisciplinary data meetings between the Academic Director (AD) and educators to monitor the progress of students, especially at-risk, SWD, and ELLs, during daily professional development.

The school will use the following strategies specifically for ELL retention and achievement:

- Provide an immersion approach for ELLs with targeted language goals for learning activities, in addition to other linguistic supports designed to help ELLs access academic content;
- Employ dual-certified (general education plus ESL) and bilingual teachers; and
- Train in ELL models such as West Ed's Quality Teaching for English Learners (QTEL).

The school will use the following strategies specifically for SWD retention and achievement:

- Provide an integrated collaborative-teaching setting to support inclusion of SWDs in the universal academic program;
- Employ dual-certified (general education plus special education) teachers;
- Provide weekly progress monitoring and targeted, intensive literacy and math interventions in groups of no more than 3-5 in PLT; and
- Monitor the effectiveness of interventions and SPED program as referenced above.

Community Outreach

Beginning in September 2014, S2 began surveying local community members and leaders about their neighborhood's history, strengths, and needs through interviews, canvassing in residential neighborhoods and outside of schools, and informal and formal meetings with church leaders, daycare centers, and everyday residents. S2 representatives also spoke, listened, and networked at Community Board and Community Education Council (CEC) meetings, spoke with charter leaders, and visited every Community Board and Education Council meeting operating in districts 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10. S2 also facilitated four Town Hall-style public meetings, launched a public media campaign consisting of a website, newspaper coverage, and an interview, and connected with faith based organizations, politicians, community based organizations, and public schools.

School Governance and Leadership

The founding team consists of three leadership positions – Board Chair/President, Secretary, and Treasurer. The Board Chair presides over meetings and the Secretary is responsible for minutes of every meeting. The board will have four standing committees (Governance, Finance, Community Outreach, and Accountability) and create ad hoc committees as needed for tasks such as hiring, nominating, evaluation leader or partners, or fundraising. The board of trustees will have between five and fifteen member with staggered five year terms. They bring a combination of charter management and board experience, expertise in education, non-profit management, youth development, social work, finance, law, and management consulting. The initial board of trustees will include twelve members. They are:

- **Michael Pollack** is the proposed Board Chair. He is responsible for leading a global team in the Corporate and Investment Bank for J.P. Morgan. Prior to that, he was a Managing Director and Divisional CFO at Citigroup where he led the reengineering of the capital markets operations.
- **Joel Talish** is the proposed Treasurer. He is a Certified Financial Planner and Certified Investment Management Analyst with more than 25 years of investment and money management experience within the global capital markets.
- **Mindy Tucker** is the proposed Secretary. Mindy is the Chief Financial Officer of Meritage Properties, LLC. Mindy brings over 27 years of experience in corporate finance and investor relations, including debt and equity financings, mergers and acquisition, strategic planning and corporate development.
- **Daniel Diaz** is the Assistant Executive Director of Programming for East Side Settlement (ESH), one of S2's partners. He has taken on multiple leadership roles within ESH's school and community-based programs.

- **Walter Rendon** is the founder and CEO of Educational Achievement, LLC, and works as an educator and consultant for the New York City Department of Education. He has nearly 20 years of business and educational experience.
- **Jay Shuttleworth** is a faculty member at Columbia University’s Center for the Core Curriculum, and brings to the board 17 years of teaching experience from secondary to post-graduate levels.
- **Scott Levenson** is a successful entrepreneur who oversees centralized business functions of Private Prep, one of the leading personalized education services in New York.
- **Hiram Ratlif** currently serves as the senior pastor at the New Tabernacle Baptist Church in the Bronx, NY, and has extensive experience in designing and facilitating initiatives for at-risk youth.
- **Scott Gottlieb** is the Vice Chairman of CBRE. He has a nearly two-decade record of assisting corporate clients in meeting their real estate needs helping landlords to market and lease office space.
- **Michelle DeLong** is the founding Secretary of the Board of Trustees of the Children’s Aid College Prep Charter School. She’s spent several years as an attorney both in a law firm and as a federal prosecutor in the Eastern District of New York.
- **Evonne Capers** is a Bronx native who currently serves as the Tenant Association President for the Twin Parks Apartments complex in District 10 of the Bronx. She also has experience with American Telephone and Telegraph and the United States Postal Service.
- **Aaron Listhaus** is the Executive Director for National Programs at the Hebrew Charter School Center. He has 27 years of experience as a public school educator and has held the positions of teacher, principal, leadership coach, new school developer and charter school authorizer.

The leadership team for the school includes an Executive Director who will report directly to the board and be held accountable for all aspects of the school. This person will directly supervise the Academic Director, the Business Director, the ESH Lead Advisor, and CSBM. The Academic Director and Business Director will respectively supervise the instructional and operations teams.

School Staffing Plan

The hiring process for all individuals will involve a careful screening process. For instructional staff, group and/or individual interviews, demonstration lessons, written responses to a problem-based situation, and activities that gauge a candidate’s collaboration skills will be

utilized. Potential leaders will participate in the interview process with a focus on instructional leadership, data analysis skills, and strength in designing and leading adult professional development. Non-instructional staff will participate in a screening process inclusive of a group and/or individual interview, demonstrated experience with the skills relevant to their job duties, role-plays, and ability to work in an environment in which families will be a frequent presence.

To effectively retain teachers, S2 plans to provide a highly professional work environment that fosters continuous improvement through targeted professional development and feedback. In addition, 80 minutes of daily common planning time and supportive critical feedback will be provided. Finally, the school will offer competitive salaries and a 5% salary match for retirement.

Instructional staff will be formally evaluated twice per year by the Executive Director or other designee. The Danielson Framework for Teaching is the selected evaluation tool. Evidence of teachers supporting student growth will draw from multiple measures of achievement, including standardized test scores and performance levels on teacher-generated, standards based rubrics. Teachers with significant performance shortfalls will be provided a Teacher Improvement Plan by the ED that outlines specific objectives, strategies, and deadlines for improvement.

Facility

S2 will seek to co-locate in a NYC Department of Education facility within CSD 9 or 10. If space is unavailable, the school will secure private space that fits the needs of their school and students. Three options for private space include a large school in University Heights, an office building in the Marble Hill Community, and a vacant religious school in the Fordham Community.

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 School in the Square Public 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 2: Projected Fiscal Impact Upon District of Location, 2016-17 to 2020-21⁴

Year	Number of Students Enrolled in Charter School Per Year ⁵	Charter School Basic Tuition Rate ⁶	Total Charter School Basic Tuition	Estimated District Special Education Payment ⁷	Total District General Fund Budget ⁸	Percent of District Budget
2016-17	108	\$15,717	\$1,697,436	\$235,944	\$21,756,791,831	0.009%
2017-18	216	\$16,421	\$3,546,936	\$493,024	\$21,756,791,831	0.019%
2018-19	324	\$17,126	\$5,548,824	\$771,287	\$21,756,791,831	0.029%
2019-20	324	\$17,830	\$5,776,920	\$802,992	\$21,756,791,831	0.030%
2020-21	324	\$18,535	\$6,005,340	\$834,742	\$21,756,791,831	0.031%

The calculations above assume charter school basic tuition rates in the charter period (2016-17 through 2020-21) based on a trend analysis calculated by the Charter School Office and approved by the Department's State Aid Office. In order to 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.⁹

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

⁴ 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

⁵ Source: School in the Square Public Charter School Application

⁶ Source: Education Law §2856(1)(a)(iii) and NYS Education Department Office of State Aid Charter School Basic Tuition Rate Analysis

⁷ Based on 2013-14 calculated special education classification rate for the district of location, as collected by NYSED Information and Report Services

⁸ Source: The City of New York 2016 Executive Budget, http://www.nyc.gov/html/omb/downloads/pdf/erc5_15.pdf

⁹ 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.

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.

**Table 3: 2013-14 Demographic Detail for Proposed District of Location:
NYC District #9 and #10 - Bronx¹⁰**

	Total District Enrollment: NYC #9		Total District Enrollment: NYC #10	
All Students	37,248		56,972	
Economically Disadvantaged	33,698	90%	46,573	82%
Limited English Proficient	8,227	22%	11,293	20%
Students with Disabilities	7,843	21%	11,541	20%

**Table 4: 2014-15 Elementary/Middle School Academic Proficiency Rates on
NYS Assessments Based on Grade Configurations for Proposed School¹¹**

Assessments	NYC #9 Proficiency	NYC #10 Proficiency	NYS Proficiency
<i>ELA Grades 6-8 Aggregate</i>	14%	19%	32%
<i>Grade 6 ELA</i>	13%	18%	31%
<i>Grade 7 ELA</i>	12%	16%	30%
<i>Grade 8 ELA</i>	16%	22%	36%
<i>Math Grades 6-8 Aggregate</i>	15%	18%	34%
<i>Grade 6 Math</i>	18%	22%	40%
<i>Grade 7 Math</i>	15%	18%	36%
<i>Grade 8 Math</i>	13%	15%	22%

Public Hearing and Public Comment

The Department directly notified public and private schools in the region of the proposed charter school. As required by the Charter Schools Act, the NYC Department of Education (NYCDOE) conducted a public hearing on September 28, 2015, to solicit comments from the

¹⁰ Source: Student Information Repository System (SIRS) 2014-15 Report 303 BEDS Day Enrollment Verification Report by Location of Enrollment & Student Subgroup

¹¹ Source: Student Information Repository System (SIRS) 2014-15 Report 101 High School Accountability Data Verification Report; 2014-15 Report 102 Elementary/Middle-Level Accountability Data Verification Report

community concerning the proposed School in the Square Public Charter School. Out of the five members of the community that were present, one individual commented. That individual expressed opposition to the fiscal impact that charter schools have on traditional public schools and discussed the impact of granting co-locations in already overcrowded schools.

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.¹² This finding is based on the following, among other things:
 - The applicant has included in the application the information required by Education Law §2851(2).
 - The proposed charter school would meet or exceed enrollment and retention targets, as prescribed by the NYS Board of Regents,¹³ 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).
 - 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.¹⁴ 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.
 - 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;

¹² Education Law §2852(2)(a).

¹³ 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.

¹⁴ Education Law §2852(2)(b).

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 Act¹⁵ and will have a significant educational benefit to the students expected to attend the charter school.¹⁶ 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 MaryEllen Elia recommends that the New York State Board of Regents approve the proposal to establish the School in the Square Public Charter School to open in 2016 in New York, New York.

¹⁵ Education Law §2852(2)(c).

¹⁶ As applicable pursuant to Education Law §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 2015 Round 2 Request for
Proposals to Establish Charter Schools Authorized by the
Board of Regents to establish the proposed:

South Bronx Community Charter High School

November 2015

Table 1: Summary of the Proposed South Bronx Community Charter High School

Name of Charter School	South Bronx Community Charter High School
Lead Applicant(s)	Mr. Alvarez Symonette
District of Location	CSD 7 (Bronx, NY)
Opening Date	September 6, 2016
Projected Charter Term	September 6, 2016 – June 30, 2021)
Management Company	None
Partners	None
Facility	Public co-location space
Projected Enrollment and Grade Span During Charter Term	Year 1: Grade 9, 110; Year 2: Grade 9-10, 220; Year 3: 9-11, 325; Year 4: 9-12, 425
Planned Grade Span (beyond Initial Charter Term)	425 students in grades 9 through 12
Mission Statement	<p><i>“The mission of South Bronx Community Charter High School is to promote student excellence through an emphasis on academic, interpersonal and professional skills in a supportive and responsive learning environment.</i></p> <p><i>SBCCHS students graduate with a positive sense of self, ready to design and realize their futures in college, community, and career.”</i></p>

The application of South Bronx Community Charter High School (“SBCCHS”) was inspired by local and national movements like the New York City Young Men’s Initiative and My Brother’s Keeper, and the school is designed to address disparities in student outcomes. SBCCHS envisions a future where all young men and women are achieving high levels of academic success combining competency-based learning, supportive staffing, cultural responsiveness, and adaptive operations, all of which promote student excellence and empowerment.

Key Design Elements

- **Competency-Based Learning:** SBCCHS’s competency-based approach focuses on clear, actionable learning targets, such as the ability to read analytically and practice social responsibility. These competencies demonstrate academic, personal and professional readiness, and are aligned to the Common Core and are assessed through students’ fulfillment of rigorous and engaging projects. SBCCHS teachers use technology to personalize learning and support students’ movement at their own pace. Through common planning time and a team approach to teaching and learning, teachers are able to focus on a common set of competencies. Students have multiple opportunities to practice and master core critical thinking, problem solving, writing and social skills across subjects. SBCCHS draws on the demonstrated success of established competency-based programs, such Boston Day and Evening Academy in Massachusetts.
- **Supportive Staffing:** Recent and compelling research indicates that social and emotional learning complementing a rigorous academic program is critical for student success in college and beyond. SBCCHS uses a robust staffing plan that provides two adults in each classroom and includes an expanded school day. Learning coaches — staff with youth development expertise—work alongside teachers to provide one-on-one conferencing, small group tutoring, and progress monitoring. Learning coaches support students’ social and emotional skill development through the facilitation of SBCCHS’ advisory, which is focused on college, career and leadership development. Learning coaches also have an impact on student success through relationships with students that are positive and supportive beyond the four walls of a classroom. This staffing model also increases the collaborative planning time available to content teachers.
- **Cultural Responsiveness:** Meaningful engagement is the key to student retention. SBCCHS uses culturally responsive education practices to promote students’ sense of belonging, positive school culture and attendance. Culturally responsive education is predicated on the notion that students achieve when they are valued and encouraged to express their identities. At SBCCHS, this includes incorporating student choice and voice in curriculum; examining personal identity through a weekly rites of passage program that is facilitated by learning coaches; holding students accountable through restorative practices as an alternative to zero tolerance discipline; and hiring staff from the community.
- **Adaptive School Operations and Management:** SBCCHS is designed to be an adaptive learning environment. SBCCHS adheres to the principles of innovative design, and uses data and feedback from students to continually refine practices for improvement. At SBCCHS, staff will conduct improvement cycles—the regular testing of practices informed by data collection and analysis. Likewise, staff and leadership are expected to reflect on and improve their practices in intentional, collaborative and continuous ways. A growing network of high performing charter schools (including Summit Public Schools in California) employ this approach to ensure a culture of adult learning that is attuned to students’ needs.

Education Plan

Consistent with the SBCCHS mission to prepare young people for college, community and career, the school has outlined ambitious achievement goals while providing differentiated pathways and ensuring college preparedness for all students, including students with disabilities and English language learners. Teaching and learning at SBCCHS is organized around helping students to master specific knowledge and skills—academic, social and emotional—that collectively define what a student must know and be able to do in order to be college and career ready. The SBCCHS competency framework is aligned to the New York State Learning Standards, inclusive of the Common Core State Standards, in order to help students master the skills and knowledge necessary to pass PARCC-aligned Regents exams, graduate from high school, and complete at least two years of college and/or a career internship of their choice.

The school day will begin with daily Morning Circle to develop community spirit where students lead an activity and the ritual of libations, to thank those who have helped them get to where they are today. An extended morning meeting will be held on Fridays to recognize student accomplishments. The typical academic day will begin at 9:00 a.m. and run until 4:00 p.m. The school will be open at 8:00 a.m. for optional study hall and breakfast will be served at 8:30 a.m. Students will typically participate in four types of activities during the school day:

- STEM and Humanities Interdisciplinary Studios (90 minutes per day, four times per week, over eight weeks);
- Selective Courses which may be teacher facilitated courses or online/independent study of 45 minutes per day, seven times per week based on student interest;
- Targeted Support which is supplemental instruction, such as additional reading support for 45 minutes per day, six to eight times per week, based on need; and
- CORE morning and afternoon check-ins with a 90-minute weekly gender-based rites of passage group and a 90 minute college and career block.

SBCCHS staff will utilize a tuning protocol to promote the continual refining of units of teaching and learning. Teachers and Learning Coaches utilize the tuning protocol during common planning periods, capitalizing on diverse expertise and points of view in order to iterate on project design and ensure high quality curriculum across all domains. Built into the digital pathway will be systems to document the efficacy of each learning experience based on student and reviewer feedback, outcome and performance data, work samples, researched best practices, implementation experiences, and other qualitative data. For example, teachers may find that certain attainments were not effectively mastered in a particular unit and decide to either modify the unit or address the competency elsewhere.

Special Populations and Related Services

SBCCHS will organize systems, structures and qualified staff in order to meet the needs of Students with Disabilities and English language learners. As with discipline, practices that stigmatize or segregate students with special needs are not effective; therefore, SBCCHS intends to use an approach based on the principles of inclusion and the Schoolwide Applications Model (SAM), which is aligned with Response to Intervention (RTI). The principles of SAM are:

- All instruction is guided by the general education program, i.e., no separate track for special needs students;
- All school resources are organized to benefit all students;
- The school proactively addresses social-emotional as well as academic issues;
- All decisions are driven by valid and reliable data;
- The school community includes students, families, teachers and staff; and
- Targeted skill building services will be provided in accordance with student need.

Like RTI, SAM uses a three-tier approach to address both academic and social-emotional issues. Given the student population the school intends to serve, it is anticipated that many students will enter below grade level and require interventions to accelerate their learning. The Targeted Support program is specifically designed to provide intense doses of targeted skill-building. This may include previewing material, learning vocabulary, practicing foundational skills to support more advanced work or receiving assistance with that advanced work. In addition, the use of technology provides students with adaptive and self-paced instruction that can be facilitated by a teacher or done independently within and outside the school building.

The advent of response to intervention (RTI) has shifted thinking towards preventative and integrated approaches. SBCCHS will use a Communities of Practice approach to facilitate the RTI process. In practice, the SWD Learning Specialist will facilitate meetings of teachers, Learning Coaches and support staff to evaluate student performance, generate strategies to address underperformance and monitor progress ensuring all students achieve their competencies within a reasonable timeframe. If student performance challenges persist, SBCCHS' SWD Learning Specialist will communicate with families about referring students for evaluation to the district Committee on Special Education (CSE). SBCCHS' SWD Learning Specialist and Learning Coaches will help parents and staff navigate the special education system. They will serve as liaisons to the CSEs and coordinate referrals and development of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). Once a student has an IEP, SBCCHS staff will analyze the best approach to implementing it and achieving the IEP goals.

SBCCHS will hire a Students with Disabilities Learning Specialist in year one who will provide the academic services mandated in a student's IEP. Because all students will participate in multiple Targeted Supports each day, students in special education are likely to receive more targeted instruction than required in their IEP. In addition, the SWD Learning Specialist will also co-teach Studio courses to provide additional support to students with IEPs within the general education classroom. Learning Coaches together with the SWD Learning Specialist will provide case management and coordinate services with community service providers.

Culturally responsive education assumes all staff will work together to accommodate linguistically diverse students through a school-wide approach. They will use students' linguistic, cultural and educational backgrounds to inform curriculum development, lesson planning and selection of materials. Classroom teachers, the literacy specialist, and Learning Coaches will participate in training and ongoing professional development activities both at the school and at other charter schools to ensure the provision of high quality, effective instruction and implementation of research-based programs for ELLs.

In accordance with CR 154-2, SBCCHS will provide a bilingual program. At least one dually certified core content teacher and at least two bilingual Learning Coaches will staff this program. SBCCHS' holistic approach provides opportunities for not only language but academic, cognitive, social and cultural process development in both the home and new language. To support academic and cognitive development, the school will provide inclusion classes for Studios with English sheltered immersion support from the ELL Learning Specialist and designated bilingual Learning Coaches.

Recruitment

The outreach will include the dissemination of materials in multiple languages as well as the holding of bilingual information sessions at different times and in various accessible public locations in the community. The school will continue working with organizations like Safe Passage and the Unaccompanied Minors Program at Catholic Charities, which serve undocumented youth in the South Bronx, as well as Mercy Center, BronxWorks and East Side Settlement House. The school will staff to oversee this recruitment process and enlist support from parents who may have access to non-English speaking communities for assistance with outreach. The school will also attend community board meetings, distribute bilingual materials and conduct information sessions with interpretation and translation services available.

SBCCHS team members and staff will continue to engage with middle school counselors and special education teachers in CSD 7 to explain the school's support model for Students with Disabilities. In addition to the school's efforts with Mott Haven Academy, a charter elementary in CSD 7 and St. Dominic's Home, which serves foster children, many of whom require and are eligible for special education services, the school will expand its contacts to other schools and communicate with counselors, area PTA groups, and others to notify parents of students with IEPs about SBCCHS.

Because most students in CSD 7 qualify for free and reduced price lunch, the majority of SBCCHS' community engagement within District 7 is apt to attract adequate representation of this population of students. Specifically, the school will continue to build on its connections to community organizers working with local tenant associations through Bronx Defenders and undertake door-to-door canvassing in NYCHA developments including: St. Mary's Park/Moore Houses, Melrose Houses, Andrew Jackson Houses, John Adams Houses, Bentances Complex and Bronxchester Houses.

Retention

SBCCHS teachers will integrate literacy across the curriculum drawing from the best practices and successful strategies of the Internationals Network for Public Schools, which has effectively supported English language learners across content areas. Instruction will follow a tiered model with SBCCHS curriculum being delivered to all students, targeted supplemental interventions being provided to students experiencing difficulty, and intensive interventions being extended to students with marked learning difficulties. Instructional teams will monitor each student's progress using data collected from assessments to develop and/or revise individualized learning goals, adjust instructional groups, and recommend

additional interventions for students who are not experiencing progress. SBCCHS's project-based approach provides both cooperative learning and individualized support to boost academic achievement for ELLs. In instances when there are students who speak the same language and one is more proficient, they may be paired or grouped so that the school can leverage peer support. Consistently however, SBCCHS bilingual staff including Learning Coaches and an ELL Specialist will provide support to general education teachers to employ successful ELL strategies including home language support and sheltered content instruction (SIOP).

SBCCHS' personalized, competency-based model provides all students with personalized learning plans. SBCCHS uses a rigorous Response To Intervention (RTI) model and all students have access to differentiated supports including assistive technology, Learning Coaches, targeted support and tutoring. In addition to these supports, students with disabilities will receive services from certified special education teachers. SBCCHS will prioritize trust building with families of SWDs. The school will recruit certified special education teachers and other professionals who believe that all students can achieve and provide specialized instruction and accommodations to identified students within a full inclusion setting.

SBCCHS will provide early college and workplace learning opportunities that will dramatically increase first generation college-going students' exposure to college and career rigor. This will support both retention and transition issues by fueling students' aspirations.

Community Outreach

South Bronx Community Charter High School has conducted broad public outreach to engage students, families, and other stakeholders in CSD 7 regarding the proposed school. Over 100 students and youth provided feedback on SBCCHS's model through focus groups, school design sessions and surveys at Montefiore Clinic, Mott Haven Library, Haven Academy, PS 5 and Girl's Prep Middle School. In summary, students unanimously agreed that a new school option is needed in the South Bronx. More than half of students surveyed responded that it was "very important" for students to be able to move at their own pace, have a clear understanding of their progress and access to an advisor who can provide personalized support. In addition, students in focus groups and design sessions emphasized the importance of caring and competent adult staff. Many parents indicated that culturally competent, bilingual staff was a high priority. Consequently, the overwhelming support from prospective families for key elements of the SBCCHS suggests strong backing for the school.

School Governance and Leadership

The founding team consists of seven individuals, all of whom will serve as members of the school's initial board of trustees. A School Trustee Background Information form, Statement of Assurance, Disclosure of Financial Interest form, resume, transcript, three letters of reference, and confirmation of background check and clearance was provided for each of the seven 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 board represents a diverse group of professionals with experience in education, education technology, teaching, child psychology, youth development and family services, political science, financial, and nonprofit management.

The initial members of the Board of Trustees are:

- **Alvarez Symonette, Board Chair** – Alvarez Symonette is the Head of Business Development for Continental Grain Company, a 200 year-old private investment firm, and serves as a member of the firm's internal investment group. Mr. Symonette held various leadership positions in the non-profit and education fields including serving as a Managing Director, Teacher Support & Development at Teach for America, Inc., and as the Director of Educational Services at Teaching Matters, Inc. Prior to those roles, Mr. Symonette taught high school history for 5 years. He currently serves on the Board of Directors of the North Star Fund, a 37 year-old non-profit organization, and also serves as a Management Committee member for the New York Hedge Fund Roundtable. Mr. Symonette received his BA from the University of Pennsylvania; his Master's in Education from Harvard University; and completed coursework at the London School of Economics.
- **Michael Busch, Founding Member, Trustee** - Michael Busch is Associate Director of the Office of Student Success at the Colin Powell School for Civic and Global Leadership, The City College of New York, where he also teaches in the departments of Political Science and International Studies and the Master's Program in International Relations. He oversees student advisement and academic support services for the college's division of social sciences, manages a portfolio of student fellowship programs, and directs social science undergraduate research at the school. Previous to his work in higher education, Mr. Busch was in the inaugural cohort of the New York City Teaching Fellows program, and taught elementary and middle school in the Bronx and Harlem. He holds a Bachelors of Arts in Liberal Arts from St. John's College and a Master's of Science in Early Childhood Education from Lehman College. He is currently a doctoral candidate in Political Science at the Graduate Center, City University of New York.
- **Kate Del Priore, Founding Member, Trustee** – Kate Del Priore is the founding Managing Director of School Programs for Schools That Can NYC, a chapter of the national nonprofit organization, Schools That Can (STC). STC unites leaders to expand quality urban education and close the opportunity and skills gap. Previously, Ms. Del Priore served as the founding Director of Partnerships for Schools That Can and the Executive Director of Schools That Can NYC. Ms. Del Priore started her career in education as a Teach For America Corps member teaching middle school math in southwest Philadelphia. She subsequently taught middle and high school math at Mastery Charter Schools. In 2006, Ms. Del Priore joined Bridgewater Associates' Recruiting Team, where she helped to develop more efficient hiring practices. After a year, she returned to the education sector to focus on developing professional learning communities via Schools That Can. Ms. Del Priore holds a Bachelor of Science in Political Science and Communication Studies from Northwestern University and a master of science in Urban Education from the University of Pennsylvania.

- **Brandon Corley, Founding Member, Trustee** –Brandon Corley is the co-leader of EPIC South High School in South Ozone Park, Queens. Previously he was a mathematics teacher at the James Baldwin School: A School for Expeditionary Learning. Mr. Corley has worked with the Children’s Defense Fund Freedom Schools program since 2004 in various capacities. His role as co-founder and Project Director of the “World Famous” Bethel-Imani CDF Freedom Schools site in Chicago and the Imani-Harambee CDF Freedom Schools site in Milwaukee. Currently, he is an advisory board member for Mature Cradle, Inc. Through this work he has directly served communities in Champaign and Chicago, Il, as well as Milwaukee, Wi, Mt Vernon, NY, New Orleans, La, and Philadelphia, Pa. He is a graduate of Chicago State University with a Bachelor’s in Mathematics/Secondary Education
- **Paul Ortiz, Founding Member, Trustee** – Paul Ortiz is Director of JASA’s Community Guardian Program where he manages a court appointed guardianship program that services 550 incapacitated clients that are in need of a legal guardian. Mr. Ortiz has also worked in the housing field for 18 years developing and operating supportive housing for special needs populations in NYC. Mr. Ortiz also served as Executive Director for Crotona Naval & Marine Cadet Corps, a youth & community development organization that worked with youth ages 8 - 18 year old in leadership development in Bronx, New York. Mr. Ortiz received: a Bachelor’s of Professional Studies, Human Services Concentration from Audrey Cohen College; a Master’s in Public Administration from Metropolitan College of NY; and studied Social Work at Adelphi University.
- **Jane Kehoe Higgins, Founding Member, Trustee** – Jane Kehoe Higgins is the Director of the New York City Writing Project (NYCWP), a program of the Institute for Literacy Studies at Lehman College, City University of New York supporting teachers committed to teaching literacy in New York City schools. In 1993, Ms. Higgins was one of eight founding faculty members at the High School for Leadership and Public Service in lower Manhattan, part of an early effort to create new, small learning communities in New York City. In addition to her work as an English teacher, Ms. Higgins created a college advising and counseling program at the school to help parents and students navigate the roads that lead to college and career. In 2004, Ms. Higgins left the school to provide district-wide professional learning and curriculum support to urban schools around the country. Ms. Higgins holds a Bachelor’s of Arts in Philosophy from Franklin and Marshall College and a Master’s of Arts in English Education
- **Melanie Hartzog, Founding Member, Trustee** – Melanie Hartzog leads the Children’s Defense Fund-New York Office and has extensive policy and advocacy expertise in the not-for-profit and government sectors. Previously, Ms. Hartzog was the Family Services Coordinator in the New York City Office of the Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services. She also served as Project Director for the Young Men’s Initiative. Ms. Hartzog also served as the Deputy Commissioner for Early Childhood Services at New York City’s Administration for Children’s Services and led a social services unit in the Mayor’s Office of Management and Budget. Additionally, she was Director of Policy and Advocacy for the Human Services Council of New York City, Inc. She has a Master’s of Science from the New School’s Milano School of International Affairs, Management and Urban Policy and Bachelor of Arts from Eckerd College

School Staffing Plan

The school's staffing plan is aligned with its mission, objectives, key design elements, educational program, budget, and planned enrollment. The SBCCHS Board of Trustees will report to the New York State Board of Regents and hires and supervises the Executive Director. The Executive Director will hire the Academic Director and Youth Development Director. These three positions will comprise the senior leadership team of the school; each leader is responsible for a discrete set of responsibilities that demand deep expertise while also sharing responsibility for various school functions.

Facility

The founding board will seek co-location in a DOE building in CSD 7. However, the founding board has an alternative plan to house the school in a private facility in the event that co-location space is not provided.

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 South Bronx Community Charter High 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 2: Projected Fiscal Impact Upon District of Location, 2016-17 to 2020-21¹⁷

Year	Number of Students Enrolled in Charter School Per Year ¹⁸	Charter School Basic Tuition Rate ¹⁹	Total Charter School Basic Tuition	Estimated District Special Education Payment ²⁰	Total District General Fund Budget ²¹	Percent of District Budget
2016-17	110	\$15,717	\$1,728,870	\$240,313	\$21,756,791,831	0.009%
2017-18	220	\$16,421	\$3,612,620	\$502,154	\$21,756,791,831	0.019%
2018-19	325	\$17,126	\$5,565,950	\$773,667	\$21,756,791,831	0.029%
2019-20	425	\$17,830	\$7,577,750	\$1,053,307	\$21,756,791,831	0.040%
2020-21	425	\$18,535	\$7,877,375	\$1,094,955	\$21,756,791,831	0.041%

The calculations above assume charter school basic tuition rates in the charter period (2016-17 through 2020-21) based on a trend analysis calculated by the Charter School Office and approved by the Department's State Aid Office. In order to 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.²²

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.

¹⁷ 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

¹⁸ Source: South Bronx Community Charter High School Application

¹⁹ Source: Education Law §2856(1)(a)(iii) and NYS Education Department Office of State Aid Charter School Basic Tuition Rate Analysis

²⁰ Based on 2013-14 calculated special education classification rate for the district of location, as collected by NYSED Information and Report Services

²¹ Source: The City of New York 2016 Executive Budget, http://www.nyc.gov/html/omb/downloads/pdf/erc5_15.pdf

²² 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.

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.

**Table 3: 2014-15 Demographic Detail for Proposed District of Location:
NYC #7 - Bronx²³**

	Total District Enrollment	
All Students	20,395	
Economically Disadvantaged	18,681	92%
Limited English Proficient	3,388	17%
Students with Disabilities	4,611	23%

Table 4: 2009 Total Cohort 4-Year High School Academic and Graduation Outcomes Based on Grade Configurations for Proposed School²⁴

2009 Total Cohort 4-Year Outcome	NYC #7 Outcomes	NYS Outcomes
<i>Total Cohort Regents Results</i>		
<i>English Language Arts</i>	60%	81%
<i>Mathematics</i>	60%	84%
<i>Global History & Geography</i>	47%	78%
<i>US History & Government</i>	48%	79%
<i>Science</i>	55%	82%
<i>Total Cohort Graduation Outcomes</i>		
<i>2009 4-Year Graduation Rate</i>	51%	80%

Public Hearing and Public Comment

The Department directly notified public and private schools in the region of the proposed charter school. As required by the Charter Schools Act, the New York City Department of Education (“NYCDOE”) held a hearing on September 29, 2015 to solicit comments from the community concerning the proposed South Bronx Community Charter High School. Three members of the South Bronx Community Charter High School were present to speak about

²³ Source: Student Information Repository System (SIRS) 2014-15 Report 303 BEDS Day Enrollment Verification Report by Location of Enrollment & Student Subgroup

²⁴ Source: New York State Report Card: data.nysed.gov

the application. No members of the public were present to comment on the application for the school.

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.²⁵ This finding is based on the following, among other things:
 - The applicant has included in the application the information required by Education Law §2851(2).
 - The proposed charter school would meet or exceed enrollment and retention targets, as prescribed by the NYS Board of Regents,²⁶ 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).
 - 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.²⁷ This finding is based on the following, among other things:
 - v. 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.
 - vi. 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.
 - vii. 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

²⁵ Education Law §2852(2)(a).

²⁶ 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.

²⁷ Education Law §2852(2)(b).

- involvement; financial management; budget and cash flow; pre-opening plan; and dissolution plan.
- viii. 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 Act²⁸ and will have a significant educational benefit to the students expected to attend the charter school.²⁹ 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 MaryEllen Elia recommends that the New York State Board of Regents approve the proposal to establish the South Bronx Community Charter High School to open in 2016 in New York, New York.

²⁸ Education Law §2852(2)(c).

²⁹ As applicable pursuant to Education Law §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 2015 Round 2 Request for
Proposals to Establish Charter Schools Authorized by the
Board of Regents to establish the proposed:

**Exploration Elementary Charter School
for Science and Technology**

November 2015

Table 1: Summary of the Proposed Exploration Elementary Charter School for Science and Technology

Name of Charter School	Exploration Elementary Charter School for Science and Technology
Lead Applicant(s)	Dr. Kevin Williams
District of Location	Rochester
Opening Date	August 22, 2016
Projected Charter Term	August 22, 2016 – June 30, 2021
Management Company	None
Partners	Rochester Museum and Science Center
Facility	Private space
Projected Enrollment and Grade Span During Charter Term	Opening with 175 students in Grade K-1; growing to 475 students in Grades K-5
Planned Grade Span (beyond Initial Charter Term)	550 students, K-6
Mission Statement	<i>“The mission of Exploration Elementary Charter School for Science and Technology (Exploration) is to engage students, their families, and the community in the processes of scientific inquiry and the use of innovative technology to develop the social, emotional, and academic tools necessary to thrive in school and in today’s interconnected world.”</i>

Exploration Elementary Charter School for Science and Technology (“Exploration”) will bring an elementary science and technology-focused school to the Rochester area. The school’s academic program balances explicit instruction in core content areas with innovative opportunities built on the principles of scientific inquiry.

Key Design Elements

- **Cross-Cutting Curricular, Scientific Inquiry, and Lab-Based Learning Opportunities:** Scientific inquiry will be the vehicle for deeper learning and skill development. Exploration aims to foster habits and dispositions known to be important in this global and 21st century world, such as critical thinking, constructing explanations, communicating information, planning, effective execution of tasks and experiments, and obtaining, evaluating, and applying information.
- **Balanced and Differentiated Instruction:** The master schedule, staffing, and academic plan balance explicit instruction with active engagement in science and technology; in other words, Exploration will foster foundational skill development via intervention/enrichment as well as higher order thinking via teacher and student-led instruction, inquiry, and exploration.
- **Ongoing Professional Development and Learning (PD):** The school leadership will ensure that all staff receives support via professional development to ensure that all students have access to the general education curriculum. Professional development will introduce, support, and reinforce quality implementation of key design elements and instructional programs.
- **Data-Driven Instruction and Accountability Aligned to Rigorous Academic Standards:** Exploration will implement data-driven instruction that is regularly monitored and reviewed. Exploration's assessment plan includes diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments that are regularly reviewed and reflected upon. Exploration will use student and school data to inform class, school, and board decisions.
- **Community Connections and Partnerships:** Exploration views partnerships as a means to strengthen and promote academic, cognitive, and social-emotional development and intends to seek multiple partnerships in the region. Exploration has an established partnership with the Rochester Museum and Science Center (RMSC) to co-create innovative scientific curricula, provide an opportunity for underserved students to engage with real science equipment, train staff, provide access to local science experts, and collectively innovate with students and families.
- **Serving the Diverse Needs of All Students:** Exploration expects that all students will go beyond meeting learning standards to also mastering the higher-order thinking skills and competencies necessary to thrive in the 21st century. To achieve this goal, they will select, train, and develop staff, engage students and their families, and differentiate instruction to meet the needs of students who are performing above and below expectations. A data dashboard and regular performance measures to track progress will guide the board and director.

Education Plan

The school academic calendar consists of 195 days of instruction, beginning on or about August 22th each year and continuing through June 20th each year. The school day begins at 8:00 a.m. and ends at 4:00 p.m. In addition to math, ELA, social studies, science, art, and physical education, the daily schedule includes lab or technology, social emotional learning, and intervention or enrichment. The official day for full-time also teachers is also 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and includes 50 minutes of individual planning time, 50 minutes of common grade-level planning time and/or PD, and 30 minutes for lunch. Teachers will have five consecutive days of PD (Summer Institute) in August, monthly PD at staff meetings, and several full day PD scheduled throughout the year.

The instructional framework and curricular choices are linked to the key design elements (e.g., scientific inquiry, literacy and technology) to support students' access to the general education curriculum. To supplement their curricular choices, Exploration will develop innovative science and technology curricula in partnership with the experts at the Rochester Museum & Science Center.

For ELA/literacy, Exploration will follow the Fountas & Pinnell Balanced Literacy Framework. All students will spend a minimum of 100 minutes per day engaging in reading, writing, phonics, and vocabulary instruction. The first 80 minutes will take place during the literacy block and the final 20 minutes will be spent on research and writing at the end of each day. In addition, students will receive up to 100 additional minutes of literacy interventions each week, as needed, during the Walk to Intervention, where students are grouped by reading level across grade level, to receive targeted reading instruction and support. Students will also have writing instruction each day after the lab period. Students will also write in their science notebook using prompts created by the Science and Technology Curriculum Coordinator that are aligned to the Lucy Calkins Units of Study for Opinion, Information, and Narrative Writing.

Students at Exploration will have a 60-minute math block each day, divided between the TERC Investigations program ("Investigations") and Cognitively-Guided Instruction (CGI). Students will also receive up to 100 additional minutes per week in math intervention, as needed. Exploration will use Investigations as their primary resource for math instruction in grades K-6. Both approaches will foster the use of the problem-solving skills embedded in their scientific method framework. They will also use JumpStart – an online math program for students in grades K-6 who need additional practice with addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division - as an intervention tool.

The science curriculum will be built using the NYSLs and NGSS standards to provide differentiated and cross-curricular instruction in physical science, life science, earth and space, and engineering and technology. Additionally, the working scientists at the museum will partner with the Exploration curriculum staff to co-develop supplemental science and inquiry curricula (Units of Exploration) for use during the lab times. This curriculum will be rooted in the idea that guided research and exploration opportunities in the areas of science and technology provide students with meaningful

social/collaborative learning opportunities involving technology and critical thinking that they will need in order to navigate the complex work environment in an increasingly interconnected world.

For Social Studies instruction, Exploration will draw on a variety of primary source texts and resources such as myWorld History. MyWorld History is a NYSE-aligned digital resource that helps students make personal connections to history while providing opportunities for project-based learning and ongoing checks for understanding.

The school will use a variety of assessments administered across the school year to continuously monitor student progress. The assessment system is designed to have multiple units of analysis and application at the class, grade, and school levels. Explicit training and instruction will be provided to teachers during the August PD around data-driven instruction.

Diagnostic and benchmark assessments include:

- NWEA MAP, K-6
- Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark Assessment, K-5
- Quarterly Reading Inventory, K-2 or as needed
- Kindergarten Screening, Grade K, Fall
- NYSITELL, K-6, Fall and Spring
- Associate/ Teacher Child Rating Scale and/or DESSA (mini) Screening, K-6, Fall & Spring, as Needed
- Writing Prompt, K-6, ongoing

Formative assessments include:

- Classroom Assessments K-6, ongoing,
- Informal Fountas and Pinnell Testing, K-5, ongoing (At least monthly)
- Holistic assessment, K-6, ongoing

Summative assessments include:

- New York State ELA and Math Assessments Grades 3-6, Spring
- New York State Science Assessment, Grade 4, Spring
- New York State Alternate Assessment, All Eligible IEP Students, Spring
- New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test, Grades 3-6, Spring

Exploration is committed to a strong school-home-community partnership model that includes elements of the evidence-based Family Check-Up model to link students and their families to existing community resources. This ensures that intervention and prevention services are accessed and used to promote positive and productive behaviors in the school and the community. The staff will also adopt a collaborative and proactive problem-solving framework to address challenging student behaviors. This framework is adapted from Ross Greene's Collaborative Problem Solving approach, which assumes that challenging student behaviors result from reduced flexibility/adaptability, frustration tolerance, and problem solving.

The School will implement a PBIS framework that recognizes and reinforces positive behaviors and contributions. They will also implement a comprehensive discipline policy to promote a safe and orderly learning environment while addressing student behavior and discipline for the general population as well as for students with disabilities. Additionally, the master schedule dedicates time for all students to engage in social-emotional learning. To reinforce the cultural and behavioral expectations at Exploration, the school will use PATHS curriculum, a social-emotional learning curriculum designed for the systematic and developmentally appropriate implementation of the CASEL core competencies of self-management, self-regulation, peer social skills, and problem-solving.

Special Populations and Related Services

Special student populations will be supported by the classroom teaching staff, as well as additional special education and intervention teachers, the Special Education Coordinator, TESOL teacher, and the social workers, school counselors, and school leadership. Within the general education setting, Exploration will have special education teachers pushing in and will provide opportunities for small group and differentiated instruction with the instructional team. Exploration will follow the services and supports mandated on students' IEPs (Individual Education Program). The Director and a dedicated school-based intervention team will assume responsibility for all aspects of special education services. Exploration will provide the following services, as mandated on the child's IEP: additional time; a separate location; modified materials or equipment; and additional services, including push-in and pull-out intervention. Exploration will work directly with the district to accommodate and schedule related services as mandated on a student's IEP and will comply with all federal Child Find requirements requiring schools to have a clearly articulated process for identifying, locating, and evaluating students with disabilities.

For English language learners, primary classroom instruction and intervention will occur in English with modifications and accommodations, verbally and written, being appropriately and reasonably applied. ELL students will receive ELA programming supported by the TESOL teacher. Additional English language instruction will be provided in a pull-out setting by the TESOL teacher. All ELL students will receive the same content instruction as non-ELL peers.

Recruitment

Recruitment and retention will be focused toward students eligible for FRPL in the RCSD. In order to reach a broad cross-section of prospective students, the school is conducting an extensive outreach throughout the Rochester community and RMSC. For instance, the school has shared information about Exploration in accessible formats and languages with media outlets, including radio stations, news organizations, and local parent websites. The school has also contacted religious groups, community centers

and organizations, as well as state and local officials to notify them of the school's program, the students that the school is planning to serve, and means for obtaining further information. In addition to hosting various community events, the school has created a separate email address and phone number, where individuals can reach the school with questions or comments about Exploration; should the school be granted a charter, Hillside will be asked to host additional meetings, be a distribution point for literature, and a resource to families of Exploration students.

To recruit students with special needs, the school will continue to reach out to organizations and agencies serving children with special needs and their families to let them know the school will have staff and resources available to meet the needs of students with Individualized Education Program (IEPs) or Section 504 Plans (504 Plans). For example, one such agency is Hillside Children's Center – a provider of care for youth and families with a wide range of emotional, behavioral, or life-circumstance challenges. Hillside offers mental health, child welfare, juvenile justice, special education, safety net, and developmental disabilities services to children and families throughout Central and Western New York. The school has collaborated with Hillside to host a community meeting at which the school offered materials about its program and addressed any questions or concerns that parents had about Exploration.

To reach families with limited English proficiency, the school will translate promotional materials into Nepali, Somali, and Arabic – the most commonly spoken languages by immigrant and refugee families in the area. The school will advertise in non-English media outlets, and reach out to organizations and agencies serving ENL families. The school has connected, and will continue to, with local refugee organizations, including Catholic Family Center's Refuge, Immigration, and Language Services Department, the Somali Center, and RCSD's Rochester International School (RIA), to recruit families to the school with linguistic and cultural diversity.

Finally, to reach students whose families may be less informed about available school options, the school will conduct direct outreach efforts, including going to door-to-door in high poverty neighborhoods throughout Rochester to notify parents about the program, and sending out direct mailings with information about Exploration with a copy of the application to families residing in the RCSD.

Retention

The school's primary retention strategy for all students is a strong academic and social emotional learning (SEL) program engaging students and their families. More specifically, the school will maintain a low student-to-teacher ratio, have intervention specialists to ensure that students have a resource-rich environment and time and attention to reach mastery, have dedicated family partnership staff to support students in school and make community connections, commit a full-time nurse to monitor and meet health needs, supplement academic instruction with SEL programming, and

leverage the school's partnership with RMSC to provide informal science learning for families outside of the school day.

Ancillary staff such as social workers (e.g., family liaison) and Deans will serve as key personnel to engage and support youth and families assisting retention; additionally, culturally sensitive and responsive classroom staff will ensure retention. Staff will engage in professional development around the learning styles of students in poverty as well as culturally relevant teaching. Ease of access to the school is also a key means to foster retention; therefore, Exploration will make every effort to select a central location in the City of Rochester with access to public transportation to make it easier for parents and families to travel to the school.

In order to retain special education students, Exploration will hire the necessary teachers, both special education and intervention, and administrators with special education certification and ensure that instruction is provided in accordance with students' IEPs or 504 plans. Special education programming and related services support (e.g., speech-language) will be provided per a student's IEP and based on identified need. Regular screening, assessment, and progress monitoring is planned to benchmark performance and track growth and more fully described in the Special Student Populations section. Special education staff and school leadership will ensure students' individualized needs are met thus ensuring access to the general education curriculum.

In order to retain ENL students, Exploration will employ a TESOL teacher who will work with staff to provide appropriate instruction to students within the classroom during the ELA block and work outside of the classroom to provide English language instruction. Beyond the instructional support, Exploration will ensure that communications with families will be in the home language as evidence of the sustained commitment to school-family partnerships. The school will have translators available for parent conferences and school events, so that ENL students and families can be full participants in the Exploration experience.

Ensuring Adequate Enrollment and Full Accessibility: In order to retain students from the target community, and continuously meet or exceed the enrollment targets set forth by the Board of Regents throughout the charter term, the school will continue to conduct outreach and advertise throughout the Rochester community as described above. The school intends to locate in a facility accessible to all, and will provide accessible instructional materials (e.g., large print books) and technology (e.g. screen magnifiers).

Community Outreach

The applicant group conducted extensive community outreach in order to understand the needs of the community, gauge support for the school proposal, and elicit feedback to enhance the school design. Specifically, the applicant group held meetings at community centers and various organizations in Rochester, conducted outreach efforts at community events (i.e., family meetings) throughout Rochester, held meetings with

leaders of the Rochester community, and spoke with parents to seek their input on the school program and inquire about their support.

School Governance and Leadership

The founding team consists of seven individuals, all of whom will serve as members of the school's initial board of trustees. A School Trustee Background Information form, Statement of Assurance, Disclosure of Financial Interest form, resume, transcript, three letters of reference, and confirmation of background check and clearance was provided for each of the seven 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 board represents a diverse group of professionals with experience in education, child psychology, science industry, technology industry, financial, charter start-up, and board governance.

The initial members of the board of trustees are:

- **Kevin Williams, PhD, Board Chair** – Dr. Williams is currently the Department Head, Materials Science Department, at Eastman Kodak Company. He brings expertise in science research, innovative technologies, and human resources. Dr. Williams has been a practicing scientist and leader of a world-class technology and research organization in the Rochester community for nearly 23 years.
- **Carlos Cong, Founding Member** – Mr. Cong is currently the Senior Manager of Network Services at Paychex. He has developed and implemented a wide array of innovative technologies nationwide, including Data Centers, VoIP networks, IP Networks, infrastructure environments (including computer, storage, web, and application layers), and Unified Communication's (including video and interactive collaboration technologies). Beyond Mr. Cong's professional expertise, he is also a father of a special needs child; he has used technology and different methods of learning to help his daughter advance in her education.
- **Michelle Swanger-Gagne PhD, Founding Member** – Dr. Swanger-Gagne currently serves on the faculty at the University of Rochester Medical Center's Institute for the Family. Dr. Swanger-Gagne brings expertise in working with children and adolescents with academic and behavioral concerns in schools, such as learning disabilities, ADHD, and school anxiety. Dr. Swanger-Gagne has specialized training in pediatric school psychology and family therapy.
- **Robert Franklin, Founding Member** – Mr. Franklin currently serves as the Chief Financial Officer for Monroe County. He brings a science background, but is employed in the finance/accounting field. Mr. Franklin has more than 25 years of

experience with strategic planning, organizational management, fiscal operations, and performance management for not-for-profit agencies.

- **Joseph Saia, Founding Member** – Mr. Saia is currently the School Director at Discovery Charter School. He brings expertise in urban education, school leadership, and charter school development. Mr. Saia has spent 15 years as an urban educator in the Rochester City School District and four years as the founding School Director for Discovery Charter School. He has overseen all operational and strategic aspects of opening a new charter school, has successfully written grants to support educational programs, has served as the leader on curriculum and professional development, and has overseen data-driven school practices.
- **Stephen Pasquarella, Founding Member** – Mr. Pasquarella is the President of Vincent Associates. Vincent Associates is an optical equipment-manufacturing firm. He brings expertise in budgeting, fiscal management and oversight, technology innovation, and business development.
- **Lisa Hiley, PhD, Founding Member** – Dr. Hiley currently serves as the Director of Education at EnCompass: Resources for Learning. In her current role as Director, Dr. Hiley provides academic enrichment and intervention services in school and community settings. She brings expertise in curriculum development, diagnostic assessments and program/school evaluations, professional development, and performance management/instructional coaching.

School Staffing Plan

The staffing plan is aligned with its mission, objectives, key design elements, educational program, budget, and planned enrollment. The board is currently recruiting for a director, who will report directly to the board and be responsible for day-to-day management of the school. The director will be the primary instructional leader of the school and will manage instruction with the science and technology curriculum coordinator (STCC), the curriculum and instruction coordinator (CIC), and the student special education support services coordinator (SSSC). These individuals, along with a dean of students, will comprise the leadership team. The STCC, the CIC, and the dean will be charged with helping the director plan and implement the curriculum, as well as manage and develop the teaching staff. The director, STCC, operations coordinator, and an administrative assistant will be hired during the planning year to establish the foundation for the school's culture, curriculum, and infrastructure. An operations coordinator will oversee finance, technology, and food service responsibilities. Finally, the SSSC will manage the social workers, counselors, the family liaison, and the nurse.

Facility

The School intends to locate in private space and has identified several possible options, including, a facility located at 180 Raines Park with a long history of prior use

as a non-public and parochial school serving grades K-12, and a facility located at 1001 Lake Avenue also with a history as a K-12 parochial school which currently houses an elementary school that has a planned relocation in 2016 or 2017. In both cases, the building owner is amenable to an initial three-to-five-year lease period.

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 Rochester City School District (“RCSD”), its school district of location, indicating that the fiscal impact of the Exploration Elementary Charter School for Science and Technology on the RCSD 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 the RCSD, which is summarized below.

Table 2: Projected Fiscal Impact Upon District of Location, 2016-17 to 2020-21³⁰

Year	Number of Students Enrolled in Charter School Per Year ³¹	Charter School Basic Tuition Rate ³²	Total Charter School Basic Tuition	Estimated District Special Education Payment ³³	Total District General Fund Budget ³⁴	Percent of District Budget
2016-17	175	\$13,259	\$2,320,325	\$387,494	\$543,792,510	0.498%
2017-18	246	\$13,504	\$3,321,984	\$554,771	\$543,792,510	0.713%
2018-19	325	\$13,749	\$4,468,425	\$746,227	\$543,792,510	0.959%
2019-20	400	\$13,994	\$5,597,600	\$934,799	\$543,792,510	1.201%
2020-21	475	\$14,239	\$6,763,525	\$1,129,509	\$543,792,510	1.451%

The calculations above assume charter school basic tuition rates in the charter period (2016-17 through 2020-21) based on a trend analysis calculated by the Charter School Office and approved by the Department’s State Aid Office. In order to avoid underestimating the fiscal impact that the charter school will have on the district going

³⁰ 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

³¹ Source: Exploration Elementary Charter School for Science and Technology Application

³² Source: Education Law §2856(1)(a)(iii) and NYS Education Department Office of State Aid Charter School Basic Tuition Rate Analysis

³³ Based on 2013-14 calculated special education classification rate for the district of location, as collected by NYSED Information and Report Services

³⁴ Source: Rochester CSD projected 2015-16 state aid budget, <http://www.nysed.gov/stateaid/dist/legis15/261600.HTML>

forward, the Department is assuming no growth in the Rochester City School District budget during the duration of the school’s charter.³⁵

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.

Table 3: 2014-15 Demographic Detail for Proposed District of Location: Rochester City School District³⁶

	Total District Enrollment	
All Students	30,439	
Economically Disadvantaged	26,718	88%
Limited English Proficient	3,567	12%
Students with Disabilities	5,571	18%

³⁵ 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.

³⁶ Source: Student Information Repository System (SIRS) 2014-15 Report 303 BEDS Day Enrollment Verification Report by Location of Enrollment & Student Subgroup

Table 4: 2014-15 Elementary/Middle School Academic Proficiency Rates on NYS Assessments Based on Grade Configurations for Proposed School³⁷

Assessments	Rochester CSD Proficiency	NYS Proficiency
<i>ELA Grades 3-5 Aggregate</i>	6%	32%
<i>Grade 3 ELA</i>	7%	31%
<i>Grade 4 ELA</i>	5%	33%
<i>Grade 5 ELA</i>	4%	31%
<i>Math Grades 3-5 Aggregate</i>	10%	43%
<i>Grade 3 Math</i>	13%	42%
<i>Grade 4 Math</i>	9%	44%
<i>Grade 5 Math</i>	8%	44%

Public Hearing and Public Comment

The Department directly notified public and private schools in the region of the proposed charter school. As required by the Charter Schools Act, the Rochester City School District conducted a public hearing on September 24, 2015, to solicit comments from the community concerning the proposed Exploration Charter School for Science and Technology. No proposed school representatives or members of the public were present to comment on the application for the school.

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.³⁸ This finding is based on the following, among other things:
 - The applicant has included in the application the information required by Education Law §2851(2).
 - The proposed charter school would meet or exceed enrollment and retention targets, as prescribed by the NYS Board of Regents,³⁹ of

³⁷ Source: Student Information Repository System (SIRS) 2014-15 Report 101 High School Accountability Data Verification Report; 2014-15 Report 102 Elementary/Middle-Level Accountability Data Verification Report

³⁸ Education Law §2852(2)(a).

³⁹ 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

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).

- 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.⁴⁰ This finding is based on the following, among other things:
- ix. 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.
 - x. 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.
 - xi. 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.
 - xii. 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 Act⁴¹ and will have a significant educational benefit to the students expected to attend the charter school.⁴² 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.

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.

⁴⁰ Education Law §2852(2)(b).

⁴¹ Education Law §2852(2)(c).

⁴² As applicable pursuant to Education Law §2852(2)(d).

Recommendation

Based on the Department's review and findings, Commissioner MaryEllen Elia recommends that the New York State Board of Regents approve the proposal to establish the Exploration Charter School of Science and Technology to open in 2016 in Rochester, New York.