



TO: P-12 Education Committee

FROM: Elizabeth R. Berlin *Elizabeth R Berlin*

SUBJECT: Revision Recommendation for a Charter School
Authorized by the New York City Department of Education

DATE: June 4, 2019

AUTHORIZATION(S): *MaryEllen Elin*

SUMMARY

Issue for Decision

Should the Board of Regents approve the proposed revision to charter for the following charter school authorized by the New York City Department of Education Chancellor (NYCDOE Chancellor) pursuant to Article 56 of the Education Law (the New York State Charter Schools Act):

1. **Ember Charter School for Mindful Education, Innovation and Transformation**
(revision to expand to serve 968 students in K through Grade 12)

Reason(s) for Consideration

Required by State statute.

Proposed Handling

This issue will be before the P-12 Education Committee and the Full Board for action at the June 2019 Regents meeting.

Procedural History

The NYCDOE Chancellor made the charter revision recommendation being presented to the Board of Regents for approval and issuance as required by Article 56 of the Education Law.

Background Information

The charter revision recommendation set forth in this Regents item is from the NYCDOE Chancellor as the school's charter school authorizer under Article 56 of the Education Law.

Pursuant to Education Law §2852, the Board of Regents has the authority to issue charters to all charter schools in New York State. The process for NYCDOE Chancellor-authorized charter schools is as follows:

- The NYCDOE Chancellor recommends that the Board of Regents issue a charter renewal or a revision of an existing charter.
- The recommendation is sent to the New York State Education Department (the Department), and the Board of Regents has 90 days to act or the recommendation goes into effect by operation of law.
- Once a charter is received by the Department, the Board of Regents has four options:
 1. Consider the recommendation and vote on it. If the vote is affirmative, the action is effective immediately, or as otherwise recommended by the NYCDOE Chancellor.
 2. If the Board of Regents chooses not to vote in the affirmative, the recommendation is sent back to the NYCDOE Chancellor with comments. The NYCDOE Chancellor must reconsider its recommendation and can choose one of the following:
 - a) resubmit the proposed charter to the Board of Regents with modifications, provided that the applicant consents in writing to such modifications;
 - b) resubmit the proposed charter to the Board of Regents without modifications; or
 - c) abandon the proposed charter.

If the recommendation is resubmitted to the Board of Regents, the Department and the Board of Regents has 90 days to act again as outlined above or the recommendation goes into effect by operation of law.

3. The Board of Regents can defer action to a later date. The 90-day time period continues to accrue, and the proposed charter renewal will take effect by operation of law if no action is taken by the Board within the 90-day period.

4. The Board of Regents can choose not to take action on a NYCDOE Chancellor recommendation and allow the charter renewal to go into effect by operation of law 90 days after the initial submission to the Department.

We hereby request that the Board of Regents consider the concerns identified by the NYC DOE Chancellor in Attachments 1 and 2 of this Regents Item when voting on the charter revision recommendation for this NYCDOE Chancellor-authorized charter school.

Related Regents Items

Ember Charter School for Mindful Education, Innovation and Transformation

[January 2010 Initial Charter](#)

<http://www.regents.nysed.gov/meetings/2010Meetings/January2010/0110emsca2.htm>

[March 2015 First Renewal](#)

<http://www.regents.nysed.gov/common/regents/files/meetings/Mar%202015/315p12a6.pdf>

[April 2016 Revision \(expand to K-6 and increase enrollment\)](#)

<http://www.regents.nysed.gov/common/regents/files/416p12a6.pdf>

[March 2017 \(Second Renewal, name change, and enrollment expansion\)](#)

<http://www.regents.nysed.gov/common/regents/files/317p12a8revised.pdf>

Recommendations

VOTED: That the Board of Regents return the proposed charter for the **Ember Charter School for Mindful Education, Innovation and Transformation** to the New York City Department of Education Chancellor for reconsideration with the following comments and recommendations: The proposed grade level and enrollment expansion should be reconsidered based on multiple factors including insufficient evidence of academic success by the charter school in the context of academic standards; the charter school's failure to serve comparable numbers of students with disabilities and economically disadvantaged students when compared to the district of location; community opposition to the proposed expansion; and concerns about the charter school's planning process.

Timetable for Implementation

The Regents action for **Ember Charter School for Mindful Education, Innovation and Transformation** will become effective immediately.

Ember Charter School for Mindful Education, Innovation and Transformation

Charter School Summary

Name of Charter School	Ember Charter School for Mindful Education, Innovation and Transformation
Board Chair	James Bartlett
District of location	NYC CSD 16 (Brooklyn)
Opening Date	Fall 2011
Charter Terms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial Charter: January 12, 2010 – January 11, 2015 • First Renewal: January 12, 2015 – June 30, 2017 • Second Renewal: July 1, 2017 – June 30, 2022
Current Term Authorized Grades/ Approved Enrollment	K – Grade 8/ 792 students
Comprehensive Management Service Provider	None
Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 616 Quincy Street, Brooklyn– Public Space • 833 Marcy Avenue, Brooklyn—Private Space
Mission Statement	<i>The mission of Ember Charter School is to prepare our students to become the future professionals (lawyers, doctors, scientists, entrepreneurs, etc.) who will lead our global society in the 21st Century. We will accomplish this by creating a curriculum that reaches students in multiple ways and creating a community that encourages and breeds academic achievement. Our faculty works closely with our students to identify strengths and weaknesses both academically and otherwise and develop plans to meet their needs.</i>
Key Design Elements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum • Assessments and use of data • Enrichment opportunities • Special populations • Staffing • Professional development • Supportive environment • School culture
Requested Revisions	A grade level expansion to serve kindergarten through grade 12 from their existing kindergarten through grade 8, with an enrollment expansion to serve 968 students from their current 792 students.

The Board of Regents granted an initial charter to Ember Charter School for Mindful Education, Innovation and Transformation (hereinafter “Ember Charter School”) (then Teaching Firms of America Professional

Preparatory Charter School) in January 2010. The school opened for instruction in September 2011 initially serving 228 students in K through Grade 1. Ember Charter School’s charter was subsequently renewed by the Board of Regents in 2015 and 2017 (when the name change was approved by the Board of Regents). The Board of Regents approved a revision in April 2016 to expand to Grade 6 and increase enrollment. A subsequent expansion to serve grades 7-8 and a corresponding enrollment increase was approved by the Board of Regents when the school was renewed in March of 2017.

The New York City Department of Education Chancellor recommends that the Board of Regents approve a material revision to the school’s charter to expand to serve Grades 9 through 12 with total authorized enrollment of 968.

Current Grade Levels and Approved Enrollment

	Year 1 2017 to 2018	Year 2 2018 to 2019	Year 3 2019 to 2020	Year 4 2020 to 2021	Year 5 2021 to 2022
Grade Configuration	K – Grade 7	K – Grade 8	K – Grade 8	K – Grade 8	K – Grade 8
Total Approved Enrollment	672	768	784	792	792

Proposed Grade Levels and Approved Enrollment

	2019 to 2020	2020 to 2021	2021 to 2022	2022-2023¹
Grade Configuration	K – Grade 9	K – Grade 10	K – Grade 11	K – Grade 12
Total Approved Enrollment	836	880	924	968

¹ Note: the 2022-2023 school year is not currently during the charter school’s current charter term. Permission to serve students in this academic year and in this grade level/enrollment configuration is subject to the renewal of the charter school and subsequent permission by the Board of Regents.

Table 1: Elementary/Middle School Assessment Proficiency Outcomes for All Students: School, District & State Level Aggregates

All Students	ELA					Math				
	Ember CS	CSD 16	Variance to CSD 16	NYS	Variance to NYS	Ember CS	CSD 16	Variance to CSD 16	NYS	Variance to NYS
2016-2017	40%	26%	+14	38%	+2	19%	23%	-4	44%	-25
2017-2018	48%	35%	+13	45%	+3	32%	32%	0	46%	-14

Note: Data in Table 1 represents tested students in grades 3-6 (2016-17) and 3-7 (2017-18) at Ember CS, CSD 16, and at the state who scored proficiently (level 3 or above) on each state assessment. This table was created using grade level data to generate the comparative values, the percent difference between the school's performance and the district or state averages. All values were calculated to the nearest whole number; therefore, the percent differences may show a rounded value.

Table 2: Elementary/Middle School Assessment Proficiency Outcomes for Special Populations

Subject	School Year	Students with Disabilities (Variance to the district of location)	English Language Learners (Variance to the district of location)	Economically Disadvantaged (Variance to the district of location)
ELA	2016-2017	10% (+1)	9% (+5)	38% (+14)
	2017-2018	15% (+4)	31% (+20)	47% (+13)
Mathematics	2016-2017	12% (+2)	0% (-11)	17% (-4)
	2017-2018	9% (-4)	23% (+4)	31% (+1)

Note: Data in Table 1 represents tested students in respective subgroups in grades 3-6 (2016-17) and 3-7 (2017-18) at Ember CS, CSD 16, and at the state who scored proficiently (level 3 or above) on each state assessment. This table was created using grade level data to generate the comparative values, the percent difference between the school's performance and the district or state averages. All values were calculated to the nearest whole number; therefore, the percent differences may show a rounded value.

According to the 2017-2018 school year ESEA accountability designations, Ember Charter School is *In Good Standing*.

Table 3: Student Demographics – Ember Charter School Compared to District of Location

Student Population	2016-2017			2017-2018		
	Ember CS	CSD 16	Variance	Ember CS	CSD 16	Variance
Students with Disabilities	17%	28%	-11	15%	28%	-13
English Language Learners	8%	6%	+2	11%	7%	+4
Economically Disadvantaged	90%	85%	+5	85%	88%	-3

Ember Charter School has submitted a letter to the NYC DOE regarding their intent to implement a lottery preference for SWDs and ELL/MLL students in the school's next enrollment lottery in the spring of 2020.

Summary of Public Comment

The required public hearing was held by the New York City Department of Education on April 4, 2019. Fifty-five people attended, and eight spoke. Seven were in favor of the revision and one was opposed.



**Department of
Education**

Richard Carranza, Chancellor

Attachment 1

**Richard Carranza
Chancellor**

May 31, 2019

**Tweed Courthouse
52 Chambers Street
New York, NY 10007**

Mary Ellen Elia
New York State Department of
Education
89 Washington Avenue
Albany, NY 10459

Dear Commissioner Elia:

For the 2018-19 academic year, we have reviewed renewal applications for 17 charter schools authorized by the New York City Department of Education (NYC DOE). Below you will find my recommendation for one renewal application to be included on the June Board of Regents meeting, as well as one revision request. As part of my commitment to deepening and expanding equity and excellence in New York City, we are accelerating learning and instruction, collaborating with communities, developing people, and advancing equity now. I believe one way we can be successful in these priorities is by encouraging district and charter schools to work together more intentionally and to be innovative in their practices to support all students in their communities. I also believe that all schools should serve students with disabilities (SWDs) and Multilingual Learners better.

Through our District-Charter Partnership initiative, we, as a system, are encouraging all New York City schools to collaborate for the benefit of all students. Through this collective work, we will accelerate learning by sharing successful instructional models and effective strategies that positively impact student outcomes. We have encouraged all schools authorized by NYCDOE to join District Charter Partnerships.

I remain concerned about how we are serving our most vulnerable populations. I have pushed district schools to be more proactive in their efforts to serve diverse student populations well, and I hope to see the same in charter schools throughout the City. All DOE authorized charter schools are strongly encouraged to implement a lottery preference for students with disabilities and English Language Learners. I encourage all authorizers to do the same, particularly since so few charters meet enrollment targets for these populations.

Upon careful consideration and review, the New York City Department of Education makes the following renewal recommendation:

1. **Brooklyn Charter School, NYC Community School District 14**
 - a. Recommendation: a short-term, 3-year renewal expiring June 30, 2022
 - i. In 2018, the school had a 47% proficiency for ELA and 67% proficiency rate for Math compared to 46% and 46% for the CSD and 46% and 47% citywide, respectively.
 - ii. In 2018, the school had a 22% proficiency for ELA and 33% proficiency rate for Math for SWDs compared to 17% and 19% for the CSD and 17% and 20% citywide, respectively, for SWDs.

- iii. The school is currently authorized to serve 240 students in grades K-5.
- b. The school has added preferences for English Language Learners, SWDs and Economically Disadvantaged students to their lottery. Target for ELL students is 16% and the target for SWD is 24%.

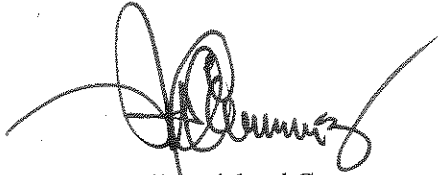
The New York City Department of Education makes the following revision recommendation:

1. **Ember Charter School for Mindful Education, Innovation and Transformation, CSD 16**
 - a. Recommendation- Allow Ember to expand to serve 968 students in grades K-12 (currently serving 792 students in grades K-8)
 - i. In 2018, the school had a 48% proficiency for ELA and 32% proficiency rate for Math compared to 35% and 32% for the CSD and 46% and 44% citywide, respectively.
 - ii. In 2018, the school had an 15% proficiency for ELA and 9% proficiency rate for Math for SWDs compared to 11% and 13% for the CSD and 16% and 17% citywide, respectively, for SWDs.
 - iii. In 2018, the school had a 31% proficiency for ELA and 23% proficiency rate for Math for ELLs compared to 11% and 19% for the CSD and 11% and 19% citywide, respectively, for ELLs.
 - b. The school will add a preference for SWDs to their lottery; the school's target for SWD is 27%.

There have been concerns about academic performance as well as operational and fiscal concerns related to a trip to South Africa during this academic year. We have investigated and found that the school was able to pay for this trip using the school's general programming budget and surpluses. Additionally, we found that all schoolwork, learning and curriculum mirrored what students would otherwise receive while at the Brooklyn location, including a regular 7-hour school day, and students with IEPs received mandated services while abroad.

Community Education Council 16 opposes all charter expansions and new charter authorizations as they are concerned about the viability of traditional public schools in CSD 16, and therefore vehemently disagrees with this recommendation. It is important to note, the school will not be sited in public space. If the Board of Regents ultimately rejects this recommendation, the NYC DOE has made placement matches to district high schools for all eighth graders.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Richard Carranza', with a large, stylized flourish extending to the left.

Chancellor Richard Carranza
New York City Department of Education

cc: Allison Armour-Grab, Renee Rider, David Frank, Karonne Jarrett Watson, Susan
Megna, Karin Goldmark, Melissa Harris, Laurie Hazeley

Verone Kennedy
Executive Director
Office of Charter School
Partnerships and
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New York, NY 10038

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October 5, 2018

Chairman James Bartlett
Managing Partner Rafiq Kalam Id-Din
Ember Charter School
616 Quincy Street, 3rd Floor
Brooklyn, NY 11221

Dear Chairman Bartlett and Managing Partner Kalam Id-Din,

Since the New York City Department of Education (“NYCDOE”) Office of School Design and Charter Partnerships (“OSDCP”) first learned of Ember Charter School for Mindful Education, Innovation and Transformation’s (“Ember”) intention to provide a study abroad opportunity to its 7th and 8th grade students, we recognized the value such an experience would provide to the students and families that Ember serves. Given the considerable nature of a study abroad trip, OSDCP advised Ember leadership that any such trip was subject to advance review and approval by OSDCP. As Ember’s authorizer, we wanted to collaborate with Ember to develop proper structures and supports to help Ember realize its mission.

Therefore, OSDCP was surprised to learn from the New York State Education Department that, on September 17, 2018, Ember was preparing to take its 7th and 8th grade students on an extended study abroad trip to South Africa on that same day. Upon confirming departure, OSDCP immediately contacted Ember to gather information and to share concerns, including an immediate concern about the financial viability of the trip.

To date, OSDCP still has not received information about the specifics of the trip, including the duration, scope, and destination(s). Furthermore, we are aware that, prior to commencing the trip, Ember lost substantial funding after its primary donor backed out, raising serious funding concerns. As such, OSDCP is requesting that **on or before November 1, 2018**, Ember provide the following information for review:

1. A detailed plan describing the trip, including but not limited to the persons in charge, participating grades, lodging, activities, locations to be visited, plans for medical or other emergencies, the names of all adults taking part, details of departure and return, methods of transportation and carrier (both internationally and within South Africa), and insurance coverage;
2. The trip’s academic program/curriculum, including but not limited to the names and qualifications of all teachers, the subject matter, and instructional hours. Please also describe the ways in which this trip comports with the educational program set forth in Ember’s second renewal charter agreement (“charter”) and how this trip will support Ember in achieving the educational objectives set forth in the charter;
3. The names of all 7th and 8th grade students currently enrolled at Ember;
4. The names of all students participating on the trip and the parental consent forms for those students;



**Department of
Education**

Richard Carranza, Chancellor

5. The names of all students participating on the trip who currently have an Individualized Education Program (“IEP”) or Section 504 Plan. For those students who have IEPs and/or Section 504 Plans, please describe the transportation, accommodations, specialized instruction and/or services that are being provided to support their needs and comply with their IEPs and/or Section 504 Plans while abroad; and
6. The trip’s budget and all expenditures incurred in connection with the trip. Please also describe all sources of funding for the trip.

We will review your response and may request additional information if necessary. We want to reiterate that we recognize the importance of this program and look forward to working together to ensure that this program aligns with Ember’s Charter and all applicable laws and regulations.

Best,

A handwritten signature in red ink, appearing to read 'V. Kennedy'.

Verone Kennedy
Executive Director Charter School Partnerships and Authorization

Cc: Melissa Harris, Senior Executive Director, Office of School Design and Charter Partnerships
Anyeli Matos, Executive Director, Charter School Operations & Policy
Laurie Hazeley, Senior Director, Charter School Authorization



EMBER

CHARTER SCHOOLS

616 Quincy Street, 3rd Floor
Brooklyn, NY 11221
718-285-3787

www.tfoaprofessionalprep.org

Mission

Our mission is to ignite, empower and transform people traditionally labeled "at-risk" into social entrepreneurs, engineers, and global leaders through our innovative, holistic and progressive human development school model.

Vision

Our vision is to use our Teaching Firm, a unique teacher-led organizational model, to be a fun, holistic, 'college-successful', career-ready, community-centered, culturally rich and relevant incubator of exceptional human potential where we spark, nurture and unleash mindful people empowered to affect positive change in the communities we serve.

October 25, 2018

Executive Director Verone Kennedy:

Below please find responses to your inquiry questions outlined in your Letter of Inquiry dated October 5, 2018. All referenced documents are sent separately as exhibits.

1. A detailed plan describing the trip, including but not limited to the persons in charge, participating grades, lodging, activities, locations to be visited, plans for medical or other emergencies, the names of all adults taking part, details of departure and return, methods of transportation and carrier (both internationally and within South Africa), and insurance coverage.

Response: please see that attached FAQ which is responsive to most of this query. We have also separately attached a trip itinerary (including carrier information), daily schedule, student and staff participant list, accommodations and travel detail documents.

2. The trip's academic program/curriculum, including but not limited to the names and qualifications of all teachers, the subject matter, and instructional hours. Please also describe the ways in which this trip comports with the educational program set forth in Ember's second renewal charter agreement ("charter") and how this trip will support Ember in achieving the educational objectives set forth in the charter.

Response: at its core our student participants in the study abroad program will receive the exact same instruction they would otherwise receive in Brooklyn. I should also note here that the same teaching and support staff that would provide instruction and support to these students in Brooklyn are the same teaching and support staff providing instruction during the study abroad experience. This is how we guarantee that their instruction will be aligned to what they would get in Brooklyn. The teachers leading this inaugural experience are our some of Ember's most senior teachers, with two Partners (including the Founder), and two Senior Associates, all of whom collectively have nearly 75-years of teaching and leadership experience.

Still, a critically important difference is the deep and powerful enhancement the study abroad experience will generate for student participants. While the daily program schedule during the study abroad experience reflects much of the same schedule students would have back in Brooklyn, the instructional schedule is in reality twice as long as it would be in Brooklyn. As you will see from the daily schedule students begin their day at 5:30am and it concludes after 9:00pm, all of it structured around the deep learning we intend to court from students.

A true rites of passage experience, this study abroad program not only enables us to achieve a critical educational objective outlined in our second renewal charter agreement (namely to provide expanded learning experiences through "[s]ubstantive learning opportunities to explore global economic, socio-political, cultural and historic matters"), it also operationalizes the commitment imbedded in our mission to nurture future social entrepreneurs, engineers and global leaders. The program description for Ember's Globalpreneurs Study Abroad reads as follows:

"Beginning in the Fall of 2018 Ember will launch its inaugural and innovative Globalpreneurs Program, a bi-annual short-term and free study abroad experience for our low income, "at-risk" upper middle school students (Grades 7 and 8) that integrates global social entrepreneurship with culturally relevant pedagogy to inspire and

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Our vision is to use our Teaching Firm, a unique teacher-led organizational model, to be a fun, holistic, 'college-successful', career-ready, community-centered, culturally rich and relevant incubator of exceptional human potential where we spark, nurture and unleash mindful people empowered to affect positive change in the communities we serve.

cultivate the next generation of innovative and community problem-solvers. This program provides students with an opportunity to learn and grow as social entrepreneurs through engaging with peers and social entrepreneurs from their host countries using design thinking to co-develop solutions to the persistent and mutual challenges they face in their communities and society at large.

With a focus on a different country each two-year cycle (e.g. Senegal, South Africa, Ecuador, etc.), students will spend 4 to 8 weeks traveling abroad with teachers and staff to meet and collaborate with local students, educators, social entrepreneurs and leaders in-country to learn, explore and design potential solutions to the social, economic and cultural problems that continue to enable the vicious cycle of generational poverty and negatively afflict historically marginalized and oppressed people and communities everywhere."

In every way this program provides students with opportunities otherwise unavailable to them, thus creating and expanding the opportunities for students from one of the least resourced communities in New York. This program is not designed to have our students visit as tourists. To the contrary, they will be engaged in deep and substantial experiential learning and real-world problem solving with peers, professionals, social entrepreneurs, civic, business and government leaders and visionaries. This level of education and instruction is only possible and available to those who can afford to travel the world, and it is our duty to make this happen for our kids too, despite the fact that their zip code attempts to dictate that they cannot and should not aspire so high.

For the additional details about the core academic instruction provided to students during the study abroad experience, please see the attached FAQ, as well as the Term 1 rubrics and programs of inquiry, which comprise our primary curriculum and instructional documents. See also the daily schedule and program itinerary.

3. The names of all 7th and 8th grade students currently enrolled at Ember.

Response: please see the attached current enrollment for grades 7 and 8.

4. The names of all students participating on the trip and the parental consent forms for those students.

Response: please see the attached list of program participants and the parent consent forms.

5. The names of all students participating on the trip who currently have an Individualized Education Program ("IEP") or Section 504 Plan. For those students who have IEPs and/or Section 504 Plans, please describe the transportation, accommodations, specialized instruction and/or services that are being provided to support their needs and comply with their IEPs and/or Section 504 Plans while abroad; and

Response: During the study abroad program all IEP students participating in the program ([REDACTED]) continue to receive the same services as required under their IEP as they would otherwise receive at our site in Brooklyn, including but not limited to our ICT setting, speech and counseling services. Speech services are deployed and accessed via live video stream from Brooklyn, while all other services are provided on-site at the study abroad program by appropriate and highly qualified Ember staff.

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Ember Globalpreneurs Program

Frequently Asked Questions

Greetings Ember family! We have thoughtfully considered questions you may have considering the Ember Globalpreneurs study abroad and rites of passage program. Below are the answers to FAQ's we anticipate. If you have any additional questions feel free to email either of our trip leaders Brother Rafiq (Rafiq@embercs.org) or Brother Kwadwo (Kwadwo@embercs.org).

Program Description

Beginning in the Fall of 2018 Ember will launch its inaugural and innovative Globalpreneurs Program, a bi-annual short-term and free study abroad experience for our low income, "at-risk" upper middle school students (Grades 7 and 8) that integrates global social entrepreneurship with culturally relevant pedagogy to inspire and cultivate the next generation of innovative and community problem-solvers. This program provides students with an opportunity to learn and grow as social entrepreneurs through engaging with peers and social entrepreneurs from their host countries using design thinking to co-develop solutions to the persistent and mutual challenges they face in their communities and society at large.

With a focus on a different country each two-year cycle (e.g. Senegal, South Africa, Ecuador, etc.), students will spend 4 to 8 weeks traveling abroad with teachers and staff to meet and collaborate with local students, educators, social entrepreneurs and leaders in-country to learn, explore and design potential solutions to the social, economic and cultural problems that continue to enable the vicious cycle of generational poverty and negatively afflict historically marginalized and oppressed people and communities everywhere.

Where is the inaugural destination?

Our inaugural destination will be South Africa. We chose South Africa for several reasons, namely its historical connection and parallels to the United States' struggle with slavery, racism and segregation. Many of the same issues plaguing the Black and Brown community in BedStuy and Central Brooklyn are also affecting Soweto and the other townships of Johannesburg and Cape Town. South Africa also offers far more developed infrastructure than other destinations in Africa, making it more likely we will be able to find appropriate accommodations and instructional space to meet the requirements for our program. South Africa is an English-speaking country and a major destination for many international travelers, particularly Black people from the United States (including a sizable community of people who have permanently relocated to South Africa), offering increased opportunities for students to make connections between their experiences in the U.S. and those they will encounter in South Africa.

Why study abroad at all?

Statistically, students who study abroad go to the most prestigious **colleges** and **universities**, with the most **scholarship** funds to support their education. These same students go on to graduate into prosperous and competitive fields and professions. Studies show that study abroad contributes to 1) social emotional development; 2) success within and on time completion through college; and 3) higher salaries and job satisfaction.

- **Emotional Development:**
 - **Big Five:** A recent study by The German University, Friedrich Schiller University, revealed that studying abroad improves emotional development of the “Big Five” personality traits: openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and emotional stability.
 - **97%** A University of Maryland Study found that study abroad increased maturity by 97%.
 - **96%** of study abroad alumni claimed an increase in self-confidence attributed to study abroad.
 - **89%** of study abroad alumni reported that study abroad facilitated a greater tolerance for ambiguity.
- **Career Readiness and Job Skills:**
 - **More Successful:** The Center for Global Education compiled data from top colleges and universities, and found overwhelmingly that students who studied abroad are more likely to graduate on time and more likely to excel academically.
 - **97%** Of study abroad students found employment within 12 months of graduation, when only 49% of college graduates found employment in the same period. That means they were twice as likely to find a job. Among study abroad alumni, 90% landed a job within six months.
 - **90%** Of study abroad alumni who applied got into their 1st or 2nd choice graduate school.
 - **84%** of study abroad alumni felt their experience helped them build valuable skills on the job market.
 - **80%** of study abroad students reported that study abroad allowed them to better adapt to diverse work environments.
 - **25%** of study abroad alumni started at higher salaries. A British study showed that study abroad graduates out-earned their peers by 17%, which translates to earning an additional \$567,500 over one’s career in the U.S.
 - Students also claimed study abroad affected career satisfaction, job skills, the selection of a career field, etc.
- **Graduation and Academic Performance**
 - **100%** greater improvement in GPA post-study abroad. Students who studied abroad saw their GPA rise twice as quickly as a result of going abroad as compared to students who stayed home according to a Georgia study.
 - **19%** more likely to graduate in time according to a UC San Diego study.

Despite all of the clearly documented benefits of study abroad, African-American students make up 14% of the population of college students in America, but only 3.4% of African-American students study abroad. Our program is intentionally designed to eliminate this opportunity gap and thereby contribute one more factor in Ember’s innovative and holistic educational and human development experience directed at disrupting the cycle of generational poverty that ensnares nearly all of the students and families we serve.

Why study abroad during the 7th and 8th grade?

More fast facts:

- Studies show the significant positive academic and career impact study abroad has on student participants.
- Our target student population (since they are neither classified as “G&T”, nor are they enrolled in wealthy private or suburban schools) have absolutely no opportunities to participate in study abroad programs.
- The boarding school-like nature of our study abroad program will enable us to have significantly more time with our study abroad participants as they will be immersed in our holistic learning environment 24/7 for approximately 4 to 8 weeks.

- Studies show that study abroad contributes to 1) social emotional development; 2) success within and on time completion through college; and 3) higher salaries and job satisfaction.

During grades 7 and 8 the New York State Social Studies standards focus conceptually on the genesis, events and effects of European colonization, thus offering an optimal time for these students to explore the central geography and context that framed the impact of the transatlantic slave trade and the widespread exploitation of the African continent by European countries. Additionally, during this time students are often asked to do research in class about the world around them, but seldom are given an opportunity to actually explore that world concretely. Fueling exploration helps to develop a lifelong curiosity and desire to learn about the world that they live in. Adolescence is a particularly integral time in a students' life, one that will shape and prepare them (vitality or otherwise) for adulthood. We seek to provide our students with every advantage we can, to empower them with an equitable educational experience to their privileged White peers. This study abroad program is designed to help us help our students close this opportunity gap and develop into global social entrepreneurs who will change the world for the better.

What are the requirements for study abroad?

All students enrolled in our 7th and 8th grades are eligible to participate.

When and for how long will students be out of the country for study abroad?

Students will study abroad for 4 to 8 weeks during the Fall Term of their 7th or 8th grade year.

Will IEP students receive mandated services during the program?

Yes, IEP students will receive mandated services during the study abroad program. Staffing for the trip will anticipate the needs of the student participants. Where necessary and appropriate we will arrange for the deployment of services via video conferencing.

During the study abroad experience will students still be in school and if so what will the curriculum be?

Students will be "in school" for the duration of the study abroad experience. While the school work and learning will mirror what students would otherwise receive in Brooklyn from a curriculum stand point, the program is purposely designed to provide a deeper, richer and more extensive educational experience than they would otherwise receive in Brooklyn. In addition to standard 7-hour instructional day, students will receive an additional 7-hours of instruction and educational experiences during the study abroad program, doubling the amount of learning exposure they would otherwise receive in our traditional instructional day in Brooklyn. A full complement of teaching and instructional specialist staff (including art and foreign language) will travel with students during the program.

What support services will students have abroad?

We will have a very similar school structure to what we have here in Brooklyn. There will be Deans Team members, Operations Team members and Instructional Staff with the primary objective of meeting the needs of students. We will also have a healthcare professional in our employ who will be available 24/7 to address any healthcare needs that arise.

What educational support will be provided for students to learn more about the study abroad experience prior to the actual trip?

The global economy and history (especially those topics centered on Africa, the Caribbean, Central and South America) are integrated subjects of inquiry here at Ember. In preparation for this study abroad experience students will have been immersed in a year-long preparation program integrated into the full established curriculum for the school. Parents will also be engaged in a series of workshops to support their orientation to our program.

Is this study abroad experience relevant to students who are not black?

Whether young Italian American students travel to Spain, or Jewish Americans students travel to China, students reap amazing results regardless where they study abroad, even when there is no ancestral connection to the country where they study (as is most often the case in study abroad programs). Students who are not of African descent will benefit greatly from traveling to Africa for a myriad of reasons, not the least of which is that it is home to some of the fastest emerging global markets, which helps us in our teaching of economically-relevant pedagogy and social entrepreneurship. Our students will also benefit from the deep relationships that we've established with various communities across the globe. Our students will have unique opportunities to interact with both high-ranking government officials, social entrepreneurs, student peers, as well as industry and civic leaders. We will continuously leverage our connections in the private, nonprofit and government sectors to provide our students a unique glimpse into the local economy, politics, global trade, and governance. Few students who travel abroad to any country will have opportunities that we will be able to provide our students.

Who are the staff members attending this initial study abroad trip?

Final decisions concerning staff have not yet been made. However, the same staff members that work with your child here in Brooklyn are eligible for this experience, including some of our most experience teachers and school leaders. Members of the Dean's Team (social workers and learning specialists), Instructional Specialists (integrated arts and foreign language), and Operations will be a part of every group that travels.

What is the educational alternative for students who may be immigration insecure or have family members who are immigration insecure, or who choose not to participate?

There will be teaching staff in Brooklyn who will be assigned to support and provide instruction to students who cannot or do not choose to participate in the study abroad program. These students will continue to receive the same holistic, high quality and rigorous instruction they would otherwise receive as a student in Ember.

How safe is travel abroad, particularly to Africa?

Like many parts of the world, there are some places that are safer and more stable than others. We will only choose destinations that provide use with an opportunity to provide a safe and secure program experience for our students and staff. We will be cognizant of challenges and issues affecting any potential destination. We should note that while cities in Europe and the United States have recently faced terrorist attacks or outbreaks of disease, many places in Africa have never experienced a single such incident.

What are the housing accommodations for students and staff?

Students will be housed in gender-based housing with students sharing rooms (like college or boarding school dormitories). Staff will be housed on the same floor as students. While they will have separate rooms, staff will be strategically assigned and positioned to monitor student behavior and needs 24/7.

How will students and staff navigate around the local destination?

Private bus transportation will be contracted to provide local transportation.

Will students have security?

While we do not anticipate hiring separate security services, we will choose both the country destination and the specific accommodations and program elements with a clear eye towards safety. We will only stay or visit areas where there is ready and ubiquitous security.

Is malaria a significant problem and if so, what preventative measures will be in place to protect students?

In some places, yes malaria can be a significant concern. To the extent we choose a destination where malaria or other urgent health matters are prominent, all participants will be required to adhere to the state department and CDC recommendations for that region. Each participant will need clearance from their healthcare professional for travel. Our accommodations will also be in reasonable proximity to a top-rated tier-one hospital facility. We will also be sure that our accommodations have access to a healthcare professional and/or service who is on-call and available 24/7 to address any healthcare need that might arise.

What happens if my child becomes ill while abroad?

We will be staying in close proximity to a major tier-one medical and trauma center. Should a student's medical condition be serious enough to require transport home, our insurance will provide for that transport along with a staff member to accompany them.

How will students be supported if/when they are having a difficult time adjusting to being abroad?

In addition to our instructional staff, there will also be deans team members (e.g. social workers) who will serve in the same capacity that they do here in Brooklyn. Their primary function will be to support students social-emotional development along with any crisis that arises.

What if my child wants to come home?

Students will not be sent home merely for homesickness. However, if our mental health professionals assess that a student's mental health reaches a crisis level, we will make similar arrangements as we would for a serious physical health condition.

How can I help to ensure the study abroad program is a success and what should my role be as a parent in the planning process?

While Ember will assume all financial responsibility for this study abroad experience, we will be fundraising to support the program. We encourage our families to participate fully in these efforts. We invite you to

continue to ask questions, stay informed and on top of deadlines concerning this trip (passports, vaccinations, etc.).

How often will parents be able to communicate with their children?

Our goal is to provide opportunities to communicate daily.

How will students spend their time immediately after the study abroad session?

Given the intensity of the study abroad experience, student participants will have two-weeks off after returning to Brooklyn to support their re-acclimation. They will be engaged in several substantive programs during each intersession, each designed to advance their socio-emotional development, critical thinking skills and experience with real world problem solving. During the Winter intersession of 7th Grade, students will engage in a rites of passage experience, while 8th Grade students will lead a service project. During the Spring-Summer intersession, both 7th and 8th Grade students will participate in a career exploration internship.

How will Ember pay for the expenses associated with the study abroad sessions?

With respect to the majority of expenses, Ember intends to expend the same program dollars from our per pupil on the study abroad experience as we would on a domestic educational experience in Brooklyn for our upper middle school, including but not limited to personnel, operations, curriculum materials, etc. To be sure, the study abroad experience will produce two extraordinary costs not otherwise associated with a domestic education experience: international travel and lodging. Ember intends to continue and broaden our practice of leveraging technology alongside teacher created instructional materials to produce cost savings that will permit us to afford such a program. In light of history of successful experience with this budgeting approach, which has yielded strong operational surpluses, our budget projections indicate that we will achieve the same particularly as we approach scale to middle school, giving us the ability to pay for this program component on a going forward basis. That said, Ember still intends to raise funds through grants, philanthropy, etc. dedicated to promoting international exposure for students from the U.S. to help mitigate some percentage of these expenses.

Is it legal for Ember to expend state and federal funds on the study abroad component?

Yes. In reviewing the law and consulting legal experts, we have found nothing to indicate that there are any legal impediments to using public funds to support the study abroad component of Ember's proposed educational program.¹

In examining this question, our legal team has determined that this analysis revolves around two important factors: use of state funds and use of federal funds. In both sets of analysis, we have found that as long as funds are expended within the context of achieving the programmatic goals outlined in the Ember charter, expenditures of state and federal funds on the international component are fully permissible.

¹ The one caveat to the above analysis for both state and federal use of funds is that Ember's expenditures in the international context could not be conducted with any countries and/or entities otherwise limited or prohibited from such business transactions by entities and citizens of the United States in accordance with any treaty, sanctions or other international resolution to which the United States is a signatory.

Use of state funds: even in the context of the most narrow interpretation of the existing New York State Charter Schools Act, our legal analysis has determined that it is permissible for Ember to expend its funds allocated by the state on the study abroad component. From New York State's perspective, expenditures out of the country are viewed similarly to expenditures out of state, and therefore any expenditure that would be permissible by Ember on products or services from out of state vendors should be viewed similarly as expenditures by Ember on products or services from international vendors. For example, expenditures by Ember for the purchase of a subscription from MathsPathways, a company based in Australia, for access to its online personalized math learning platform would be viewed and treated similarly to the purchase of a subscription from Dreambox Learning, a company based in Washington State, for access to its online personalized math learning platform. Similarly, the expenditures associated the cost of renting dormitory rooms from the University of Ghana for our students during their study abroad experience would be viewed and treated similar to renting dormitory rooms from the University of Virginia for our students during a college tour across the south.

In fact, under Section 2854-1(b) of the New York State Charter Schools Act, charter schools are otherwise exempted from the regulatory constraints otherwise applicable to public or private schools, even school districts except as otherwise highlighted in the Charter Act. Given that the Charter Act contains no explicit bar to expending funds in this manner, and conversely implies that public funding be expended in service to the program outlined in the proposed charter, Ember's use of funds would appear self-authorizing insofar as the various uses of such funds for student's study abroad experience would fall within the scope of achieving the program described in Ember's submitted charter proposal.

Finally, there are a wide variety of state funded colleges, universities, private and public schools that sponsor (in whole and in part) study abroad programs for students.

Use of federal funds: our analysis of the use of federal funds is similar to that of our analysis for state funds, insofar as such federal funds must be expended for and on behalf of achieving the educational program objectives as outlined in Ember's charter, particularly in meeting the needs of at-risk and vulnerable students for which the federal funds have been allocated. As Ember's entire study-abroad program is designed to meet the needs of at-risk and vulnerable students, Ember's use of funds for the study abroad experience would appear to be self-authorizing insofar as the various uses of such funds for student's study abroad experience would fall within the scope of achieving these programmatic purposes as described in Ember's submitted charter proposal.

Again, there are a vast number of federally funded colleges and universities that fund study abroad programs, often directly with federally funded student financial aid applied directly to the cost associated with the study abroad program.

