



New York State Education Department Charter School Office

Summary, Findings, and Recommendation

*Application in response to the
New York State Education Department 2011 Request for Proposals to
Establish Charter Schools Authorized by the Board of Regents
to establish the proposed*

New Dawn Charter High School

September 6, 2011

Summary of the New Dawn Charter High School

Name of Charter School	New Dawn Charter High School
Lead Applicant	Sara Asmussen
District of Location	NYC CSD 15 (Sunset Park)
Opening Date	Summer/Fall 2012
Projected Charter Term	September 13, 2011 through June 30, 2017
Management Company	None
Partners	Borough of Manhattan Community College/The City of the University of New York’s College Now Program and Lutheran Hospital
Projected Enrollment and Grade Span during Charter Term	Opening with 30 students in grade 9 and 40 students each in grades 10, 11, and 12 in 2012-13, growing to 500 students (80 students in grade 9 and 140 students in grades 10, 11, and 12) in 2015-16.
Maximum Enrollment and Grade Span	500 students in grades 9 through 12 in 2016-17
Mission Statement	“New Dawn Charter High School will provide over-aged and under-credited students 15-21 years of age living in Sunset Park, including those who are English Language Learners and those with special needs, the opportunity to return to school and obtain a high school diploma through a rigorous NYSED standards-based education program. Within the framework of the education program, three programs will be offered: 1) Interventions for those with fewer than 11 credits, and for those with 11 or more credits: 2) Internships in the community and 3) College enrollment.

The school is designed as an academic intervention model predicated on the assumption that students enrolled have already failed at a traditional school. The key elements of the school’s design include:

- a literacy-rich general education program
- an intensive Grade 9 intervention program for students with fewer than 11 credits
- a daily advisory to address social-emotional needs
- a community internship program
- balanced instruction integrated into the workshop model
- a pre-college program following completion of internships
- a longer school year of at least 200 days beginning Year 2
- a daily common planning time and professional development
- a regularly embedded professional development in the classroom

The proposed charter school calendar includes 180 days of instruction the first year. In the second year, students will attend school year round for an extended school year of at least 200 school days. The daily schedule is structured to offer a longer school day, beginning at 9:00 a.m. and ending at 5:00 pm, with seven 50-minute periods of instruction and one 85-minute period for Advisory daily. Thus, the length of the school day is nine hours, or six hours and 25 minutes of organized instruction (31 hours 15 minutes per week), which exceeds the 5.5 hours of instruction per day required by Education Law 2852(2)(n).

The proposed charter school will offer two basic educational programs (an Intensive Grade 9 Intervention and a General Education Program). All students in the Intensive Grade 9 Intervention Program will be required to attend school every day. The Intensive Grade 9 Intervention will include the following expectations of students: 1) attendance in ELA, math, science, and social studies for four periods prior to lunch; 2) participation in a series of advisories which lead students through the process of self-acceptance and responsibility to community; 3) participation in Art and Gym/Health; 4) completion of a Student Individual Learning Plan (ILP) with the help of advisors and counselors, and 5) completion of at least one semester in a pre-college preparation program offered through CUNY.

Students in the General Education Program will participate in six classes and one Advisory during the day and in the Community Internship Program. The internships are aligned with the academic curriculum and Student ILP, exposing students to the soft skills necessary to succeed in the world of work (i.e., timeliness, dress, social behavior, work norms). Internships provide the “carrot” to return to school, and anecdotal data from alumni from Wildcat Academy suggests that students developed a skill set that made the transition to adulthood easier.

The schedule for students in the General Education Program, who are participating in the New Dawn Internship Program will attend school year round (except for the first year of operation during which time there will be no internships), attending school one week and working on an internship the next week and attending school full time during the summer. The students in the College Now program will attend school every week, attending college on Saturdays and/or 8th period and in the summer. Students will meet all requirements for graduation as specified under NYSED Part 100 Regulations.

When hiring staff, the proposed school will comply with all requirements of New York State Education Law. The hiring of general education teachers will be in accordance with Article 56, Section 2854(3)(a-1), and all special education teachers will be New York State certified in special education and will be “highly qualified” as defined by NCLB and IDEA. To retain staff, the proposed school will offer competitive salaries and benefits, professional development opportunities, and incentives.

The proposed school has developed an aggressive teacher recruitment campaign, which will include advertisements in print media and internet job search engines, participation at college fairs, and advertising through the charter school community. Working at the proposed school will require not only the entrepreneurial spirit necessary to work at any charter school, but the willingness to work with an at-risk, struggling group of students. The proposed school will work with Hunter College and other institutions of higher education to identify teachers who have the skills and capacities to work effectively in a transfer school.

All teachers and staff of the proposed New Dawn Charter High School will develop individual growth goals for the year and be evaluated using the Danielson Rubric of Professional Development. All first year teachers will work towards becoming a master teacher and simultaneously become involved in the governance of the school. After a teacher has reached master teacher status and met their growth goals and been involved in the governance in the school for at least four years, he/she will be eligible to participate in continuing education towards principal certification. The daily scheduling of common planning time and professional development is an important component of teacher development. This faculty growth and development plan will benefit the school by producing engaged, master teachers, and help to retain teachers as well. Across the board raises of 5% are built into the budget, contingent on meeting annual growth goals. In addition, the proposed school has budgeted for awards of up to \$5,000 per teacher based on student outcomes.

The design for the proposed school is built on the School Improvement Engine (SIE), which is currently used by 10 or more consortium charter schools involved with the Partnership for Innovation in Compensation for Charter Schools (PICCS). PICCS is a \$10.5 million project, funded by the USED Teacher Incentive Fund. The SIE includes all curricular, assessment, student tracking tools and procedures necessary for the implementation of a data driven culture, allowing teachers to use real-time data to inform instructional decisions.

Additionally, the proposed school will be steeped in the history and experience of an existing Regents-approved transfer charter school, the John V. Lindsay Wildcat Academy Charter School. The proposed school will adopt the Wildcat curriculum, which was initially approved by the authorizer, audited by an external agency, and undergone extensive review. Under the SIE, the curriculum is digitalized so teachers can map their lesson plans directly to the curriculum and the Common Core State Standards.

Assessments align back to curriculum and learning standards for the purpose of tracking student proficiency and informing instruction. This John V. Lindsay Wildcat Academy Charter School will provide all the procedural materials (database structure, manuals, fiscal controls, compliance procedures, etc.) and educational materials (curriculum, Internship Program, tracking programs) needed for the proposed school to maintain viability.

Teachers at New Dawn, working together, will create “diary maps” (lesson plans) using the PICCS Warehouse which includes a variety of components. Using CurriculumCONNECTOR, teachers can tailor instruction to best address the needs of students. AssessmentBUILDER allows staff and administration to carefully plot assessments based on core and diary maps in CurriculumCONNECTOR, which enables teachers to grab snapshots of student performance and develop responsive instructional practices. In addition to the staff ‘drilling down’ on proficiency, administration can “drill down” on trends in specific cohort groups, based on attendance, race, lunch status, gender, among other pertinent variables.

Teachers and administrators will develop common assessments across subject areas. Teachers can diagnose the issues, prescribe best practices to impact these issues, monitor the progress and effectiveness of interventions, and finally introduce remedies or mid-course corrections when benchmarks are not met. The components of the PICCS system allow the school personnel to track the pathways of instruction to curriculum and the academic performance of students over time. Overall, this system and data derived from it will help to identify potential weaknesses in the curriculum and instruction and promote the prompt instructional delivery of appropriately targeted interventions.

The proposed school will not establish new enrollment preferences for students beyond those listed in statute. Students will be between the ages of 15 and 21, will be behind their four-year 9th grade cohort (peers with whom they started 9th grade), and will either be drop-outs, in-school truants or behind grade level struggling to remain in school—students who are over-aged and under-credited. Looking at the needs of students in specific communities within NYC, there are a number of neighborhoods, including Sunset Park, identified as in need of transfer school services. When needed services are assessed for the English Language Learners, Sunset Park, Corona, and Flushing are most in need of transfer school services.

The proposed school will be no student’s first high school and recruitment from the 8th grade will not occur. The proposed school expects to have a very large proportion of students with disabilities (24%) and a smaller proportion of English Language Learners (15%). At least 85% of the students will be eligible for free/reduced lunch. The founding group presented a detailed, substantive narrative of how the proposed school will attract and retain its students, in particular those students who are English Language Learners and those students who have disabilities.

As required, the founding group provided a set of draft by-laws and code of ethics. Additionally, a curriculum vitae or resume, a completed statement of assurances, and a completed request for information from prospective charter school board member form was provided for each founding group member proposed for a seat on the school's board of trustees once the school is chartered.

The founding group consists of nine individuals, seven of whom will transition to the Board of Trustees. This group of individual has a range of expertise in the areas of general education, special education, administration, curriculum development, law, financial planning, business management, not-for profit management, real estate, accounting, fundraising, community engagement and parent involvement. The founding group has experience with launching and operating a charter school.

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

- **Ronald Tabano**, the CEO/Principal at Wildcat, has over 40 years of experience in education beginning as a 6th grade teacher, to teaching middle and high school social studies and ELA, to eventually becoming an Assistant Principal. He was a founding member of both the Wildcat Academy Charter School, which opened in 1992 under the NYC DOE and the first Second Opportunity School, which opened in 1997 in the Bronx. Mr. Tabano also started the first New Beginnings School in 1999 in Queens.
- **Samir Souidi**, currently works for the Population Council as a Senior Programmer and Database Developer with projects all across northern Africa. Prior to this, he worked at Wildcat as the Senior Research Analyst and was involved in many aspects of the school, including the design of the school's student data system and the scheduling program for this very educationally diverse group of students. Originally from Morocco, he is fluent in Arabic and French. In addition to his knowledge about transfer charter schools, he will act as the liaison to the Arabic communities in the neighborhood.
- **George Crowley**, CPA, was Chief Financial Officer of Wildcat Services, Corp. a multi-million dollar not-for-profit until his retirement in 2005. He was responsible for the filing of all the fiscal and legal paperwork for the conversion of the Wildcat Charter School from a DOE school to a charter school. He has also been the Vice President of Finance and Operations at Laventhol & Horwath, a large, international accounting firm.
- **Alicia A. McFarlane**, J.D., is an Assistant DA in the Narcotics Trial Bureau—Alternative Sentencing division of the Queens DA's office, and works on the Queens Youth Diversion Program. Ms. McFarlane has extensive experience with youth and family services, having served as a case worker in the past.
- **Leslie Winter**, M.P.A., M.A., is the former Executive Director of the Achilles Foundation, was formerly the Assistant Commissioner for Planning in the Division of Real Property in NYC and the Director of Real Estate Programs for NYU's Real Estate institute. He has been purchasing commercial real estate in NYC and is the chairperson or president of two economic development not-for-profits and sits on the Boards of two others. He will assist in the identification of both the temporary and permanent sites for the school.
- **Lisa DiGaudio** is the former Director of Curriculum & Instruction at Hebrew Language Academy. She joined HLA after teaching 5th and 6th grades at Merrick Charter School. Prior to this she worked on Long Island in a variety of positions, including teaching Social Studies and Resource Room for high schools. As a center director, she worked with students who had dropped out of school and were returning to night school to obtain their high school diplomas. She, a NYSED certified teacher, recently received her Initial School Building Leadership and Initial School District Leadership Certifications.
- **Frank San Felice**, Director of PICCS and Senior Partner of JPS Solutions, has extensive experience in supporting schools through the various legal, compliance, and fiscal hurdles. He has extensive experience as a school administrator, as well as District Superintendent level at Dutchess County BOCES.

Additional members of the founding group who are proposed school employees include:

- **Dr. Sara Asmussen**, the lead applicant and proposed Executive Director, is currently the Director of Compliance & Accountability at Wildcat Academy Charter School. She has responsibility for compliance and reporting, as well as all data responsibilities, which includes the school's Performance Based Incentive Plan, upkeep of the PICCS data warehouse and all student outcome tracking. She serves as the lead Data Coordinator for the PICCS project, and has extensive experience with the development and implementation of new programs and grant activities.
- **Ed Peterman**, the proposed Principal, is currently the Assistant Principal at Wildcat Academy. In 1997, he was a founding ELA teacher at the Second Opportunity School and joined Wildcat as an ELA and technology teacher in 1999. After completing State school and district leader certification, he joined the Wildcat administrative team in 2008. His current responsibilities include working with teachers to re-map the Wildcat curriculum and to develop common assessments.

One additional member of the founding group will not move forward in an official capacity but will serve in a voluntary capacity with a board committee:

- **Marco Castro**, B.A., has lived in CSD 15 for 11 years and in Sunset Park for eight years. Formerly from Mexico City, he immigrated to NYC in 1993. He is a freelance photographer who has worked for the Mexican President Carlos Salinas de Gortari, the Mexican Mission in NYC, the United Nations, and Bryant Park Corporation. He recently completed his undergraduate work in Communication and Culture at CUNY on the Mexicanization of Sunset Park which tracked the changing of the icons and culture of the neighborhood with the influx of Mexican immigrants. He will ensure that the Spanish speaking community is represented in the school.

The organizational structure of the proposed school is headed by an Executive Director with responsibility for the management and administration, who will report directly to the Board of Trustees. The heads of each of the school's four organizational components will report to the Executive Director. This roles include: the Principal, who will be responsible for the school's pedagogy, parent involvement, and student outreach and enrollment and who will have the support of an Assistant Principal; the Director of Support Services, who will have oversight responsibility for of all support services including social workers, counselors, Internship Program and College Now program; the Executive Associate, who will have responsibility for all non-academic aspects of the school including finance (until year 2 when the Director of Finance is hired), facilities, all areas of compliance, health, safety, and data systems; and the Director of Finance who will be responsible (when hired in year 2) for purchasing, accounting, payroll, and human resources.

The proposed school has established a formal partnership with the Borough of Manhattan Community College/The City University of New York's College Now Program. College Now is a collaborative program between CUNY and NYCDOE, which aims to give students a head start in college while helping them to do better in high school. The program offers academic courses, tutoring, arts, campus tours and more, and is available to over 200 high schools at 17 CUNY campuses. CUNY will provide all curriculum materials and provide no-cost professional development for the teacher who will be in charge of the curriculum and the program at the school, as well as provide college professors who will teach college credit courses on campus. There are no tuition costs or fees (for courses, books, or activities) to the students. Additionally, the proposed school has formed a relationship with Lutheran Hospital to establish a School Health program, providing physical and mental health care services for students, on-site at the school.

Upon receiving a charter, the proposed Executive Director and Chair of the Board will begin communications with the NYCDOE to determine the availability of public school space in the Sunset

Park community, to house the school for the first two years of operation. Staff will also work with Fillmore Real Estate to identify other possible community spaces. Simultaneously, the board of trustees will start a contractual process with Civic Builders to begin the search for the permanent space for the proposed school.

Fiscal Impact on District of Location

The projected fiscal impact of the New Dawn Charter High School on its district of residence, the New York City School District (“NYCSD”), is summarized below.

Year	Number of Students Enrolled in Charter Schools Per Year ⁽¹⁾	Charter School Basic Tuition Rate ⁽²⁾	Total Charter School Basic Tuition Only	Estimated District Special Education Payment ⁽¹⁾	Total District General Fund Budget ⁽³⁾	Percent of District Budget
2012-13	150	\$13,527	\$2,029,050	\$163,350	\$19,218,074,295	0.011%
2016-17	500	\$17,199	\$8,599,500	\$592,920	\$19,218,074,295	0.048%

The calculations above assume that there will be no annual increase in the charter school basic tuition rate in year one (2012-13) and a 6.2% average annual increase each year thereafter for the remainder of the charter period (2013-14 thru 2016-17). Per the latest NYCSD Financial Status Report (FSR),⁴ dated May 2011 and published on the NYCDOE website, the NYCDOE is projecting its NYCSD budget to increase at a rate of 1.59% over the next three years. In order to conservatively avoid underestimating the fiscal impact that the charter school will have on the district going forward, the New York State Education Department (the “Department”) is assuming no growth in the NYCSD budget during the duration of the school’s charter.⁵

It should be noted that, given the nature of district-based per-pupil funding, the estimates made by the Department in conducting this analysis are subject to unpredictable financial fluctuations. For forecasting purposes, the fiscal impact of this charter school on the district in which it will be located assumes that: there will be no fluctuations in the grade levels served by existing charter schools over the course of the charter term; the charter school will be able to meet its projected maximum enrollment; all students will come from NYCSD; and, all students will attend every day for a 1.0 FTE.

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

¹ Source: New Dawn Charter School Application.

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

³ Source: New York City DOE Financial Status Report May 2011.

⁴ NYCSD’s Total District General Fund Budget includes federal special education revenue and other federal grants and/or funds provided.

⁵ 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 is likely to result from a significant reduction in the number of students attending district public schools.

Below, for your reference, please find additional data on New York City Community School District 15.⁶

New York City Community School District 15 Data

Enrollment Data	
Total District Enrollment:	25,162
Grade 9 through 12 Enrollment:	4,763
White:	21%
Black/African-American:	23%
Hispanic/Latino:	44%
American Indian/Alaskan Native:	0%
Asian/Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander:	12%
Free/Reduced Priced Lunch:	67%
English Language Learners:	16%
Students with Disabilities:⁷	14%
Graduation Rate	
Graduation Rate for 2005 Cohort:	57%

2009-10 State Assessments (% proficient)		
Grade level	English Language Arts	Mathematics
Cohort 9-12	63%	61%

Public Hearing and Public Comment

As required by the Charter Schools Act, the NYCDOE held a hearing on Thursday, May 26, 2011 in CSD 15, to solicit comments from the community concerning the proposed charter school. One member of the community spoke at the hearing, and voiced support for the proposed charter school. The Department directly notified the NYCDOE Chancellor, as well as public and private schools in the region, of the charter school application, and issued an open call for written public comment via the State Education Department Charter School Office website. The Chancellor was contacted by letter and invited to comment directly.

⁶ Source: 2009-2010 New York State School Report Card (<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/irs/reportcard/2010/home.html>) and Special Education School District Data Profile for 2009-10 (<http://eservices.nysed.gov/sepubrep/>).

⁷ This figure is the available city-wide classification rate: the ratio of the count of school-age students with disabilities (ages 4-21) to the total enrollment of all school-age students in the school district, including students who are parentally placed in nonpublic schools located in the school district. The numerator includes all school-age students for whom a district has Committee on Special Education (CSE) responsibility to ensure the provision of special education services. The denominator includes all school-age students who reside in the district. In the case of parentally placed students in nonpublic schools, it includes the number of students who attend the nonpublic schools located in the school district. Source data are drawn from the Student Information Repository System (SIRS) and from the Basic Education Data System (BEDS).

Application Review Process

On January 3, 2011, as required by the New York State Charter Schools Act, the New York State Education Department (the “Department”) released the *2011 Request for Proposals (“RFP”) to Establish Charter Schools Authorized by the Board of Regents*. In this cycle, the Department could legally award 58 new charters per Education Law subdivision 2852(9), 25 of which reflect charters that were available but not awarded during the 2010 RFP cycle. The charter school application process utilized by the Board of Regents and the Department during the 2011 RFP cycle is multi-stage, and designed to ensure that any charter school applicant presented to the Board of Regents for possible approval demonstrates four essential competencies:

1. The applicant demonstrates clear understanding of the New York State Charter Schools Act and what it means to comply with the Act.
2. The applicant’s proposed school demonstrates clear alignment with the educational priorities stated in the law.
3. The applicant presents a coherent and practical design for the proposed school.
4. The applicant demonstrates the necessary experience, skill and will to manage the challenging and dynamic process of opening and operating a public charter school.

During this 2011 cycle, 100 letters of intent were received in January 2011, 80 charter school prospectuses were submitted by January 31, 2011, and after an initial review process, 37 applicants were invited to submit full applications. The Department received 36 full applications, including the application for New Dawn Charter High School.

To assess all four necessary competencies, the Department reviewed and evaluated a letter of intent, a prospectus, and a full application. The prospectus, and the educational, organizational, and fiscal plan presented in the full application were evaluated by Department and external reviewers. After determining that the written materials submitted sufficiently met application criteria, the Department staff also conducted a two-hour capacity interview with the founding group and proposed board members 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.⁸ This finding is based on the following (among other things):
 - the applicant has included in the application the information required by §2851(2)
 - the proposed charter school would meet or exceed enrollment and retention targets, as prescribed by the NYS Board of Regents,⁹ of students with disabilities, English language learners, and students who are eligible applicants for the federal free and reduced price lunch program as required by Education Law subdivision 2852(9-a)(b)(i)

⁸ Education Law §2852(2)(a).

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

- the applicant has conducted public outreach to solicit community input regarding the proposed charter school and to address comments received from the impacted community concerning the educational and programmatic needs of students in conformity with Education Law subdivision 2852(9-a)(b)(ii).
2. The applicant has demonstrated the ability to operate the proposed charter school in an educationally and fiscally sound manner¹⁰ and the four essential competencies prescribed by the Regents for charter approval noted above. This finding is based on the following (among other things):
 - The presentation of a sound educational plan in the application, which rigorously addresses the criteria outlined in the Department’s RFP in the areas of curriculum and instruction, school calendar and daily schedule, target population, assessment, and school climate and discipline.
 - The presentation of a sound organizational plan in the application, which rigorously addresses the criteria outlined in the Department’s RFP in the areas of governing body, founding group, management and operation, staffing and human resources, student recruitment, enrollment and evidence of demand, and community involvement.
 - The presentation of a sound financial plan in the application, which rigorously addresses the criteria outlined in the Department’s RFP in the areas of budget and cash flow, financial management, facility, transportation, food service, facility, and pre-opening plan.
 - An understanding of the New York State Charter Schools Act, and the skill, will and capacity to successfully launch and operate a high quality public charter school.
 3. Granting the proposed charter is likely to improve student learning and achievement, will materially further the purposes of the Act,¹¹ and will have a significant educational benefit to the students expected to attend the charter school.¹² This finding is based on the totality of the information presented in the application and during the application review process, as summarized in this document.

Recommendation

Based on the Department’s review and findings, Commissioner John B. King, Jr. recommends that the New York State Board of Regents approve the proposal to establish the New Dawn Charter High School to open in New York City in September of 2012.

¹⁰ Education Law §2852(2)(b).

¹¹ Education Law §2852(2)(c)

¹² As applicable pursuant to Education Law §2852(2)(d),