



# New York State Education Department Charter School Office

## **Charter School Application Summary, Findings, and Recommendation**

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*Application in response to the  
New York State Education Department 2012 Request for Proposals to  
Establish Charter Schools Authorized by the Board of Regents  
to establish the proposed:*

**Brilla College Preparatory Charter School**

June 2012

**Summary of the Proposed Brilla College Preparatory Charter School**

<b>Name of Charter School</b>	Brilla College Preparatory Charter School
<b>Lead Applicant(s)</b>	Richard Ramirez
<b>District of Location</b>	Bronx, CSD 7
<b>Opening Date</b>	Summer/Fall 2013
<b>Projected Charter Term</b>	September, 2013- June 30, 2018
<b>Management Company</b>	None
<b>Partners</b>	None
<b>Facility</b>	Proposed lease with private landlord
<b>Projected Enrollment and Grade Span during Charter Term</b>	Opening with 196 students in grades K through 1 in 2013-14, growing to 532 students in grades K through 5 in 2017-18.
<b>Maximum Enrollment and Grade Span</b>	742 students in grades K through 8
<b>Mission Statement</b>	<i>“Brilla College Preparatory Charter School, a K-8 school in the classical tradition, helps students to grow intellectually, socially, and physically into young men and women of good character and spirit, and to be prepared for excellence in high school, college and beyond.”</i>

The vision of Brilla College Preparatory Charter School is to “bring classical education into the 21<sup>st</sup> century through implementation of an innovative blended-learning model and a scholarly school culture focused on character development.” Brilla, the Spanish word for ‘shine,’ was chosen as the school name because it “speaks to the beacon of hope and opportunity we intend to build in this community.” The goal of the school is to raise student achievement in a high poverty, predominantly Latino neighborhood in the South Bronx to a college trajectory, and to provide students who are at-risk of academic failure with teaching and learning opportunities generally not available in either public or private schools. This will be accomplished through an innovative blended learning approach which will allow more refined instructional differentiation in both computer-based and teacher-led instruction.

The school will be built on the following foundational principles: high expectations of all students and staff; a focus on academic and personal performance; character development; commitment by students, faculty and families; more time on task; and content focus on math, science and the classics of Western Civilization.

Key elements of the school’s design include:

- Early education, beginning with grades K and 1 and growing a grade level each year.
- A blended learning approach in which students will rotate between computer-based and teacher led instruction. The blended learning model was chosen because of the promising results seen in certain charter schools, such as KIPP Empower in Los Angeles.
- Classes of 28-30 students taught by a Lead Teacher and a Teaching Fellow (to reduce student/teacher ratios to about 1:15) and Learning Support Teachers with certification in special education or ESL.
- A pedagogical approach that integrates didactic instruction, coaching and student-centered discussion (Paideia).

- Extended time for literacy instruction (90 – 135 minutes per day).
- A School Principal with demonstrated success at teaching at-risk students, and a robust instructional support team which will include a Blended Learning Manager and a Student Achievement Coordinator.
- A strong and sustained emphasis on family involvement with in- and out-of-school activities.

The proposed school calendar includes 191 days of instruction. The daily student schedule is structured to offer a longer school day, beginning at 7:30 a.m. and ending at 3:15 p.m. The weekly schedule includes 585 minutes for English Language Arts instruction and 490 minutes for Mathematics instruction. In addition to the weekly instruction, students will be encouraged to attend Saturday school approximately every other week for additional remediation and enrichment, with a focus on literacy instruction. The teacher schedule is from 7:30 a.m. through 4:15 p.m. daily and includes the Summer Institute, a three week professional development program.

The Brilla College Preparatory Charter School design team has selected Core Knowledge Sequence as the school's curricular framework, for its comprehensive and cumulative structure, alignment with NYS and Common Core Standards and proven results. Other selected instructional materials include Singapore Math, Social Studies Alive!, and Full Option Science System. Arts and character education instruction will be infused throughout the curriculum. All children in the school will have scheduled daily time to engage in structured play, for a creative outlet and to promote self-regulation and autonomy.

Blended learning will permit personalized lessons at appropriate instructional levels by integrating adaptive computer-based instruction with teacher-led instruction in the classroom. Hybrid Learning Management System will be used for instructional management, lesson design and modification and assessment information. Because of continual and rapid change in the field of education technology, digital content providers will be selected by school leaders and faculty as the program is launched and evaluated on an on-going basis.

Data will be used to assess and inform learning plans, instructional practices, teacher effectiveness, professional development and to maintain a respectful, trusting culture. The school will use a comprehensive assessment system to drive all decisions about curriculum and instruction. It will include a combination of teacher-developed and standardized assessment instruments, including the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) Measures of Academic Progress (MAP). In the classroom, teachers will differentiate instruction and use multiple instructional methodologies informed by diagnostic, formative, benchmark and summative assessments. Based on assessment data, at-risk students (defined as performing below grade level) will receive 4.5 hours per week of targeted individual instruction.

Brilla College Preparatory Charter School will be located in the Mott Haven neighborhood of the South Bronx, which is predominantly Latino and low-income. The founders state that they have conducted extensive community outreach in Mott Haven and the South Bronx community and have met with nearly two dozen organizations and stakeholders, as well as elected officials and the local community board. The applicant provides letters of support from the Archdiocese of New York - Office of the Superintendent of Schools, Hunts Point Alliance for Children, and the Bronx YMCA.

The draft Admissions and Enrollment Policies submitted with the application establish enrollment preferences in accordance with the NYS Charter Schools Act. Brilla College Preparatory Charter School will give a preference to students residing in the district of location and siblings of student enrolled in the school and a weighted preference for at-risk children (defined as eligible for the federal free and reduced price lunch program). The founding group understands and is committed to meet required enrollment and retention targets for special student populations and will use strategic recruitment to assure that the school attracts a diverse and representative population. They intend to monitor the enrollment data carefully and

will consider incorporating additional preferences or changes to the academic program, if necessary, in order to meet student needs. New students will only be admitted in grades K-2, as space permits. The founding group believes that the school's positive culture and strong family engagement policies will help to maintain a rate of student attrition at 5% or less.

The founding group for Brilla College Preparatory Charter School consists of nine individuals, seven of whom will transition to the initial board of trustees. The group has a broad range of expertise in education, administration, grant writing, law, financial planning, not-for profit governance/management, community engagement, family involvement and charter school start-up, replication, and governance.

As required, the applicant has provided a set of draft by-laws and a draft code of ethics. Additionally, a School Trustee Background Information form, Statement of Assurance and resume or curriculum vitae is provided for each of the seven individuals who will compose the school's initial board of trustees.

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

- **Brian Carty** founder of De La Salle Academy, a private middle school, where he currently serves as Headmaster. His experiences include teaching, educational administration, the founding of two independent schools and serving on boards of several community-based organizations.
- **Anthony J. de Nicola** currently serves as Co-President of Welsh, Carson Anderson & Stowe, a private equity investment management firm in New York City. He has earned degrees in Economics and Computational Math from De Pauw University and a Masters in Business Administration from Harvard Graduate School of Business Administration.
- **Eric Eckholdt** is currently the Executive Director of Credit Suisse American Foundation in New York City. He is an experienced corporate banker, with additional expertise in the areas of grant writing and philanthropic initiatives. He is a graduate of Loyola University, New Orleans, Louisiana.
- **Scott W. Hamilton**, is a former charter school authorizer and currently the Managing Partner of Seton Education Partners, a non-profit organization working to recreate and revitalize inner-city education. Previously Mr. Hamilton was President of the Pisces Foundation, a philanthropy which worked closely with Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP), Teach for America, Charter School Growth Fund, and GreatSchools.net, and which backed the launching of The New Teacher Project. Mr. Hamilton has extensive experience with successful charter school start-ups and is the co-founder the KIPP Foundation, which replicates KIPP schools. He has held posts in the White House, the U.S. Department of Education and the Massachusetts Department of Education, and received his degree in Ancient Greek from the University of Pennsylvania.
- **Maryann Hedaa** is the Founder and Managing Director of the Hunts Point Alliance for Children located in Bronx, New York. Ms. Hedaa currently serves on the board of directors for two community-based agencies. Her work serving this community began as the founder and former Principal of the St. Ignatius School for Girls, which later became a co-educational school. She also founded and led Urban Adventures, an adapted Outward Bound Program for inner city youth in the Bronx.
- **Richard E. Ramirez** is the lead applicant for Brilla College Preparatory Charter School. He currently serves as an Associate Producer for National Geographic Television in New York City. His career experiences have included teaching in Washington Heights, public school administration and serving as a Talent Recruiter for Teach for America.
- **Nina Segarra** currently serves as Senior Advisor at Tonio Burgos & Associates in New York City. Her career includes positions in municipal government and the not-for-profit sector as well as serving on various Boards of Trustees. Highlights include serving as Deputy Mayor of the City of New York for seven years, and twelve years as a member of NYC Board of Education (NYC BOE). She holds the distinction of being the first Latina President of the NYC BOE and the first

sitting member with children in the public school system. She earned her Juris Doctor at New York Law School and her BA from New York University.

The organizational structure of Brilla College Preparatory Charter School is designed to separate operational duties from academic responsibilities, and to allow instructional leaders to focus the majority of their time supporting instruction. National recruitment will be conducted to identify optimal candidates to assume positions as leaders, teachers and staff for the school. The board of trustees will select a School Principal soon after the school is authorized, to afford time for participation in high quality development activities and to take the lead on outreach to the community and hiring school staff. The School Principal will ultimately be responsible for day-to-day management of the school and will assemble the instructional leadership team, including the Blending Learning Manager and the Student Achievement Coordinator. A Director of Operations will be employed in year 1 and an Assistant Principal and Business Director will be added in the school's third year of operation. The school will open with seventeen teachers and will increase to a faculty of 50 when the school is fully developed. Teachers will be offered annual letters of employment and salaries will be competitive with other New York City public schools. Strategies to retain staff include Teaching Fellow support, training, coaching, mentoring, and professional development opportunities.

The founding group has negotiated a fifteen year commitment from the Archdiocese of New York to lease a recently-closed parochial school. The lease is expected to be signed upon issuance of the charter. Currently there are 22 classrooms in the building, along with a cafeteria/auditorium, kitchen, stage, offices and restrooms. A feasibility study is being conducted to determine any renovations that may be required.

#### **Projected Fiscal and Programmatic Impact on District of Location**

The applicant provided an analysis of the fiscal and programmatic impact of the proposed school on public and non-public schools in CSD 7, indicating that the fiscal impact of the Brilla College Preparatory Charter School on NYC Department of Education public schools is expected to be nominal (less than 0.003% of the total NYC Department of Education budget and about 1.4% of the total CSD 7 budget). The impact on student enrollment of other district and charter public and non-public schools in the Community School District is also expected to be minimal. The applicant states that Brilla College Preparatory Charter School has the potential to positively impact local schools by modeling innovative programs and sharing effective practices, and creating opportunities to collaborate in areas such as professional development, parent involvement and extra-curricular activities.

The New York State Education Department ("Department") also conducted additional analysis on the projected fiscal impact of the Brilla College Preparatory Charter School on its district of residence, the New York City School District ("NYCSD"), summarized below.

Year	Number of Students Enrolled in Charter Schools Per Year <sup>1</sup>	Charter School Basic Tuition Rate <sup>2</sup>	Total Charter School Basic Tuition Only	Estimated District Special Education Payment <sup>1</sup>	Total District General Fund Budget <sup>3</sup>	Percent of District Budget
2013-14	196	\$14,364	\$2,815,407	\$249,360	\$19,463,873,957	0.016%
2017-18	532	\$18,265	\$9,716,978	\$664,960	\$19,463,873,957	0.053%

The calculations above assume that there will be annual increase in the charter school basic tuition rate in the charter period (2013-14 thru 2017-18) of 6.19%. Per the latest NYCSD Financial Status Report<sup>4</sup> (FSR) dated March 2012 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 Department is assuming no growth in the NYCSD budget during the duration of the school's charter.<sup>5</sup>

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 is 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.

Below, for your reference, please find additional data on New York City Community School District 7.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Brilla College Preparatory Charter School Application.

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

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

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

<sup>5</sup> 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 attend the nonpublic schools located in the school district.

<sup>6</sup> Source: 2010-2011 New York State School Report Card (<https://reportcards.nysed.gov/view.php?schedist=district&county=none&year=2011>) and Special Education School District Data Profile for 2009-10 (<http://eservices.nysed.gov/sepubrep/>).

### New York City Community School District 7 Data

<b>Enrollment Data</b>	
<b>Total District Enrollment:</b>	19,187
<b>Grade K through 5 Enrollment:</b>	7,880
<b>White:</b>	1%
<b>Black/African-American:</b>	29%
<b>Hispanic/Latino:</b>	69%
<b>American Indian/Alaskan Native:</b>	0%
<b>Asian/Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander:</b>	1%
<b>Free/Reduced Priced Lunch:</b>	90%
<b>English Language Learners:</b>	19%
<b>Students with Disabilities:<sup>7</sup></b>	14%

<b>2010-11 State Assessments (% proficient)</b>		
<b>Grade level</b>	<b>English Language Arts</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>
3	29%	34%
4	32%	41%
5	29%	40%

### Public Hearing and Public Comment

As required by the Charter Schools Act, the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) held a hearing on Thursday, May 3, 2012 to solicit comments from the community concerning Brilla College Preparatory Charter School. No comments in support or in opposition from community members were provided.

The Department directly notified the Chancellor of the NYCDOE, as well as public and private schools in the region, of the charter school application and issued an open call for written public comment via the State Education Department Charter School Office website. The Chancellor was contacted by letter and invited to comment directly. Chancellor Walcott submitted a letter in support of the Brilla College Preparatory Charter School, noting: “The NYC DOE found this proposal to be well-designed and features a rigorous educational model. Chancellor Dennis Walcott recommends this charter application to support the children of New York City.”

### Application Review Process

On January 3, 2012, as required by the New York State Charter Schools Act, the New York State Education Department (the “Department”) released the 2012 Request for Proposals (“RFP”) to Establish

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<sup>7</sup> 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).

Charter Schools Authorized by the Board of Regents. In this cycle, the Department could legally award 81 new charters per Education Law subdivision 2852(9), 49 of which reflect charters that were available but not awarded during the 2010 and 2011 RFP cycles. The charter school application process utilized by the Board of Regents and the Department during the 2012 RFP cycle is multi-stage and designed to ensure that any charter school applicant presented to the Board of Regents for possible approval demonstrates a detailed and complete school design plan that:

- includes a clear plan to meet or exceed enrollment and retention targets for students with disabilities, students who are English language learners, and students who are eligible to participate in the federal free reduced-price lunch program;
- provides evidence of public outreach that conforms to the process prescribed by the Regents for the purpose of soliciting and incorporating community input regarding the proposed charter school;
- meets all requirements set forth in the Charter Schools Act as well as all other applicable laws, rules, regulations;
- demonstrates the ability to operate the school in an educationally and fiscally sound manner;
- is likely to improve student learning and achievement and materially further the purposes of the Act; and
- would have a significant educational benefit to the students expected to attend the proposed charter school

In addition, the applicant group and founding board of trustees must demonstrate appropriate knowledge, capacity, and abilities to effectively create, maintain, and oversee a high-quality charter school.

During this 2012 cycle, 30 letters of intent were received in January 2012 and, after an initial review process, 20 applicants were invited to submit full applications. The Department received thirteen full applications, including the application for Brilla College Preparatory Charter School.

To assess whether to recommend approval or denial of the charter application to the Board of Regents, the Department established multi-person review panels to thoroughly evaluate each full application. Each of these panels was comprised of professional expert consultants, peer reviewers who are school leaders and educators active in charter and public schools in New York, as well as qualified Department staff members. The review panel members reviewed, rated, and commented on each section of the application according to the criteria published in the Application Kit.

Department staff conducted a two-hour capacity interview with the seven initial board members of the proposed school and one additional founding group member, on Monday, April 2, 2012. Questions posed to the proposed initial trustees included general questions around New York State Charter School Law, roles and responsibilities of the school community and the board to the community and various stakeholder groups as well to as the Board of Regents as authorizer. To fully understand the proposed academic program, governance role and fiscal viability of the proposed school, targeted questions were asked to clarify information provided in the full application.

The responses demonstrated adequate knowledge and grasp of key areas. Members of the applicant group as a whole and individually demonstrated knowledge of the charter school application and the proposed school. Structures, systems, protocols and procedures are in place to permit the board to effectively govern the school. The applicants addressed questions posed with specific and detailed information that presented a clear, realistic picture of how the school expects to operate.

### **Findings**



Based on the comprehensive review of the application and of the applicant, founding group, and proposed board of trustees, the Department makes the following findings:

1. The charter school described in the application meets the requirements of Article 56 of the Education Law (as amended) and other applicable laws, rules, and regulations.<sup>8</sup> 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,<sup>9</sup> of students with disabilities, English language learners, and students who are eligible applicants for the federal free and reduced price lunch program as required by Education Law subdivision 2852(9-a)(b)(i)
  - the applicant has conducted public outreach to solicit community input regarding the proposed charter school and to address comments received from the impacted community concerning the educational and programmatic needs of students in conformity with Education Law subdivision 2852(9-a)(b)(ii).
  
2. The applicant has demonstrated the ability to operate the proposed charter school in an educationally and fiscally sound manner.<sup>10</sup> This finding is based on the following (among other things):
  - The presentation in the application of a sound description of key features that are core to the school's overall design, and which rigorously addresses the criteria outlined in the Department's RFP in the areas of mission; key design elements; enrollment, recruitment and retention; and community to be served.
  - The presentation in the application of a sound educational plan, which rigorously addresses the criteria outlined in the Department's RFP in the areas of achievement goals; school schedule and calendar; curriculum and instruction; assessment; school culture and climate; and special student populations and related services.
  - The presentation in the application of a sound organizational and fiscal plan, which rigorously addresses the criteria outlined in the Department's RFP in the areas of founding group capacity; board of trustees and governance; management and staffing; evaluation; professional development; facilities; insurance; health, food and transportation services; family and community involvement; financial management; budget and cash flow; pre-opening plan; and dissolution plan.
  - An understanding of the New York State Charter Schools Act, and the skill, will and capacity to successfully launch and operate a high quality public charter school.
  
3. Granting the proposed charter is likely to improve student learning and achievement, will materially further the purposes of the Act<sup>11</sup> and will have a significant educational benefit to the students expected to attend the charter school.<sup>12</sup> This finding is based on the totality of the

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<sup>8</sup> Education Law §2852(2)(a).

<sup>9</sup> 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.

<sup>10</sup> Education Law §2852(2)(b).

<sup>11</sup> Education Law §2852(2)(c).

<sup>12</sup> As applicable pursuant to §2852(2)(d).

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 Brilla College Preparatory Charter School to open in 2013 in New York City.