



# New York State Education Department Charter School Office

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

---

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

Harlem Hebrew Language Academy Charter School

June 2012

**Summary of the Proposed Harlem Hebrew Language Academy Charter School**

<b>Name of Charter School</b>	Harlem Hebrew Language Academy Charter School
<b>Lead Applicant(s)</b>	Sara Berman and William Allen
<b>District of Location</b>	NYC CSD 3
<b>Opening Date</b>	August 26, 2013
<b>Projected Charter Term</b>	June 19, 2012 through June 30, 2018
<b>Management Company</b>	None
<b>Partners</b>	Hebrew Charter School Center
<b>Facilities</b>	Proposed lease with private landlord
<b>Projected Enrollment and Grade Span during Charter Term</b>	Opening with 156 students in grades K through 1 in 2013-14, growing to 446 students (78 students per grade) in grades K through 5 in 2017-18.
<b>Maximum Enrollment and Grade Span</b>	468 students in grades K through 5
<b>Mission Statement</b>	“Harlem Hebrew Language Academy Charter School will provide its students with the academic and personal foundation necessary to successfully pursue advanced studies and achieve continued personal growth as ethical and informed global citizens. In order to accomplish this, Harlem Hebrew will offer an academically rigorous K-5 curriculum which includes intensive instruction in the Hebrew language. Students in a diverse student body will also develop a strong sense of social and civic responsibility through the integration of service learning and community service across the curriculum.”

Harlem Hebrew Language Academy Charter School is designed to provide an academically rigorous elementary course of study with intensive instruction in Modern Hebrew language beginning in Kindergarten. The academic program features foreign language immersion aligned with developing understanding of the history, culture and geography of contemporary Israel within the context of the cultural history and patterns of the broader Harlem community. The applicant asserts that the school will equip students with necessary knowledge and skills to become “ethical and informed global citizens.” In addition to the academic and cognitive benefits of multiple language acquisition, the value of proficiency in Modern Hebrew is presented in the context of the increasing globalization of the world’s economies and the expansion of Israel into technological industries in New York and world-wide. The education program also features a cross-curricular service learning component with the goal of reinforcing values of citizenship and community.

The objectives of the school are to prepare students to:

- Be proficient readers, writers and speakers of the English language
- Demonstrate competency in mathematical computation and problem-solving
- Be knowledgeable about United States, New York and world history and geography and fundamental concepts of democracy
- Become proficient in their understanding and use of science, including physical and life sciences and scientific concepts including analysis, inquiry and design
- Become proficient speakers, readers and writers of Modern Hebrew

- Embody the principles of good citizenship, responsibility, respect for self and others, and service to others.

Harlem Hebrew Language Academy Charter School will be modeled on the Hebrew Language Academy Charter School in Brooklyn, NY. The Harlem school will implement a similar educational model, with some enhancements in staffing structure and schedule. Harlem Hebrew Language Academy Charter School will provide a full-time Reading Specialist and ESL teacher in Year 1 and will include daily time for professional development/planning to support teachers in implementing the school's co-teaching model. Also, the Harlem school will include distinct time for service learning in the school day schedule.

The proposed school calendar provides for 190 days of instruction. The daily schedule is structured to offer a longer school day, beginning at 8:00 a.m. and ending at 4:00 p.m. and providing 6 ¾ hours of daily instruction for students. The teacher day will commence at 7:55 a.m. and end at 4:50 p.m. (except Fridays) and will allow for embedded common planning and professional development time. Teachers will participate in two weeks of professional development in the summer, prior to the opening of school.

The instructional model of the Harlem Hebrew Language Academy Charter School features a co-teaching design: ELA and Mathematics classes will be taught by two General Education teachers; Science and Social Studies and other subjects, including Music, Physical Education and Art, will be taught by a General Education teacher with a Hebrew teacher in the classroom to integrate foreign language instruction into the academic content. Daily Hebrew language classes will be co-taught by two Hebrew teachers. There will be 26 students in each class.

Academic course curricula will be aligned to NYS Learning Standards inclusive of the Common Core and the school will use Gradual Release of Responsibility as an overarching instructional model. English Language Arts (ELA) instruction will be delivered through Teachers College Readers and Writers Workshop, with supplemental alphabetic and phonics-based instruction (*Read Well* and *Words Their Way*) and targeted intervention (*Fundations*) as needed. Hebrew language will be taught according to a curriculum developed by the Hebrew Charter School Center. Commercial programs have been selected as the curricular basis for Mathematics (*EnVision MATH*), Science (*Science*) and Social Studies. The Social Studies program will include a component titled *Culture and History of Israel and its Immigrant Communities*, developed by the Hebrew Charter School Center. The Hebrew Charter School Center and the school will collaborate with Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture to develop a 4<sup>th</sup> grade social studies curricular component with a focus on the history of immigration and migration in Harlem. The intent is to share this curriculum and aligned teacher professional development with other public and nonpublic schools in CSD 5.

The applicant seeks to site the Harlem Hebrew Language Academy Charter School in the Harlem section of CSD 3 (between 122<sup>nd</sup> and 110<sup>th</sup> Streets and Morningside and Fifth Avenues) and to target student recruitment efforts in that area. According to information presented in the application, the percentages of special populations of students are significantly higher in that area than in CSD 3 as a whole:

The Draft Admissions and Enrollment Policies submitted with the application establish enrollment preferences in accordance with the NYS Charter Schools Act: returning students, siblings and residents of CSD 3. The founding group understands and is committed to meet required enrollment and retention targets for special student populations. The application presents a comprehensive and multifaceted plan for strategic recruitment to assure that the school enrolls a diverse and representative population. Also, the school's academic program is organized to provide individualized instruction, which is expected to meet the needs of children in special student populations and to contribute to a high rate of student retention.

The applicant group presented documentation of extensive public outreach conducted in CSD 3 over the past 18 months. The group documents a large number of meetings and informational presentations and states that through this year-long outreach process, relationships have been fostered with 30 local community-based organizations and ten clerical organizations and churches as well as families and elected officials and bodies, including Community Boards 7 and 10 and Community Education Council 3. Several letters of support from churches, elected officials, Community Board 7 and the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, are provided with the application.

Hebrew Charter School Center, a 501(3)(c) not-for-profit corporation, will partner with the Harlem Hebrew Language Academy Charter School to provide curriculum development, teacher training and on-site coaching and data management services to the school through the third year of the school's operation. These services will be provided at no cost to the school. The mission of the Hebrew Language Charter Center is to promote the development and sustainability of the Hebrew charter school movement by supporting a network of excellent schools that serve diverse populations of students, foster strong interpersonal relationships, advance overall academic and social/emotional well-being, and promote high levels of Hebrew language proficiency and understanding of the culture and history of Israel and its immigrant communities.

A Letter of Commitment from the Hebrew Charter School Center describing the terms of the proposed partnership was presented with the application. The Center has committed \$800,000 in grants to the Friends of Hebrew Language Academy Charter School, Inc. to support the costs of these services.

The founding group of Harlem Hebrew Language Academy Charter School consists of twelve individuals including residents and community leaders in CSD 3 and Harlem, as well as representatives of the Hebrew Charter School Center, Friends of Hebrew Language Academy Charter Schools, Inc. and interested private philanthropic organizations. Nine members of the founding group and one additional individual will form the initial board of trustees for the school. The group has a range of expertise in the areas of charter school start-up and governance, fund-raising and philanthropy, law, real estate, community outreach and engagement, education and parent involvement.

As required, the applicant has provided draft by-laws and code of ethics. The draft by-laws establish the number of trustees as between five and 15, who may serve no more than three successive three-year terms. The board of trustees will be organized in four standing committees: Executive Committee (chaired by Board Chair), Finance Committee (chaired by Treasurer), Board Development Committee and Education Committee. A School Trustee Background Information form and Statement of Assurances, as well as a curriculum vitae or resume form was provided for each prospective trustee.

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

- **William Allen (Co-Lead Applicant)** is involved with youth programming in Harlem and is an adjunct professor at Monroe College and at John Jay College of Criminal Justice. He has served as a trustee for the Sisulu-Walker Charter School in Harlem since 1999. Mr. Allen has been designated as Board Vice-Chair of Harlem Hebrew Language Charter School.
- **Linda Aristondo** is an Assistant Prosecutor in Jersey City, NJ and has served as Counsel in various settings since 1982. She brings legal and non-profit governance experience to the board of trustees.
- **Sara Berman (Co-Lead Applicant)** is Founder and Board Chair of the Hebrew Language Academy Charter School in Brooklyn. She also serves as the Board Chair of the Friends of Hebrew Language Academy Charter Schools, Inc. and the Board Chair of the Hebrew Charter School Center, and on the board of The Steinhart Foundation for Jewish Life as well as other philanthropic and cultural organizations. Ms. Berman will serve as Board Chair of Harlem Hebrew Language Academy Charter School.

- **Daniel Cohen** is a real estate mortgage officer with expertise in real estate investment and acquisitions. He will bring real estate financing and facilities development expertise to the Harlem Hebrew Language Academy Charter School board.
- **Rabbi David Gedzelman** is the Executive Vice-President of The Steinhardt Foundation for Jewish Life and serves as a non-voting officer of the board of the Hebrew Charter School Center, Board Vice-Chair of the Hebrew Language Academy Charter School, board officer of Friends of Hebrew Language Academy Charter Schools, Inc., as well as with other organizations. He will serve as Board Secretary of Harlem Hebrew Language Academy Charter School.
- **Lisa Lippman** is a New York City real estate broker and serves on the board of Success Academy Upper West Side Charter School.
- **Basil Smikle, Jr.** is a consultant with expertise in politics, community outreach and public relations, and doctoral candidate at Columbia University (Education and Politics).
- **Andrew Suzman** is a senior investment counselor, finance expert and philanthropist.
- **Reverend Michael A. Walrond, Jr.** is the Senior Pastor of the First Corinthian Baptist Church and a member of the Harlem Upper West Side Clergy Fellowship.
- **Celia Wickham** is a retired education/counseling professional with extensive community organizing experience. Ms. Wickham is a lifelong Harlem resident.

Three members of the founding group will not assume a governance role but will continue to provide services for the school:

- **Maureen Campbell** is the former Principal of Hebrew Language Academy Charter School and now serves as the Regional Director of Recruitment and Outreach for the Hebrew Charter School Center. She has led the community outreach effort for the proposed school and, in her role as an employee of the partner organization, will provide support with student recruitment for the school.
- **Eli Schaap** is the Director of Education and Research at the Steinhardt Foundation. Mr. Schaap was involved in the development of the school's financial plan, community outreach and facilities plan and will continue to support the school as a volunteer in the areas of fiscal planning and budget planning.
- **Hinde Weissman** is the Director of Educational Services for the Hebrew Charter School Center. In her capacity with the Center, she will provide educational support services for the school. Ms. Weissman has extensive experience and expertise in all aspects of elementary education.

The organizational structure of the school is led by the Head of School, who will report directly to the Board of Trustees and will be supported by the Director of General Studies Curriculum and Instruction and the Director of Hebrew Curriculum and Instruction. Operational aspects of the school will be the responsibility of the Operations Manager, who will also report to the Head of School. The Year 1 teaching faculty will be composed of 17 teachers (six General Education teachers, six Hebrew teachers, one ESL teacher, one Reading Specialist, one Special Education teacher, one Music teacher, one Physical Education teacher) and will grow to an instructional faculty of 50 by the end of the first charter term. Teacher compensation will be competitive and based on a broadband system, to provide flexibility and resources to retain the most qualified candidates available. Teacher evaluation will be conducted using Danielson Framework and will provide for performance-based incentives.

The Harlem Hebrew Language Academy Charter School will be sited in a private facility in the Harlem area of CSD 3. The founding group is actively researching sites that would serve as incubator space for the first two or three years of operation, as well as seeking a permanent site for the school. Friends of Hebrew Language Academy Charter Schools, Inc. will finance all facility costs for the first three years of the school's operation and the majority of facility costs in years 4 and 5, totaling a facility finance obligation of \$2,538,143. The founding group has provided signed philanthropic commitment letters from several individuals and organizations, assuring \$2.3 million to support this obligation.

### 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 3, indicating that the fiscal impact of the Harlem Hebrew Language Academy Charter School on NYC Department of Education public schools is expected to be nominal (less than .003% of the total NYC Department of Education budget). The impact on student enrollment of non-public schools in the Community School District is also expected to be minimal. Anticipated collaborations with public and non-public schools in the district around professional development and curriculum are expected to have a positive programmatic impact on public and non-public schools in the district.

The New York State Education Department (“Department”) also conducted additional analysis on the projected fiscal impact of the Harlem Hebrew Language Academy 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	156	\$14,364	\$2,240,834	\$86,987	\$19,463,873,957	0.012%
2017-18	446	\$18,265	\$8,146,188	\$248,692	\$19,463,873,957	0.043%

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.

<sup>1</sup> Source: Harlem Hebrew Language Academy 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.

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 3.<sup>6</sup>

**New York City Community School District 3 Data**

<b>Enrollment Data</b>	
<b>Total District Enrollment:</b>	22,087
<b>Grade K through 5 Enrollment:</b>	8,759
<b>White:</b>	27%
<b>Black/African-American:</b>	29%
<b>Hispanic/Latino:</b>	36%
<b>American Indian/Alaskan Native:</b>	0%
<b>Asian/Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander:</b>	7%
<b>Free/Reduced Priced Lunch:</b>	53%
<b>English Language Learners:</b>	8%
<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	61%	64%
4	60%	69%
5	58%	66%

**Public Hearing and Public Comment**

As required by the Charter Schools Act, the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) held a hearing on May 2, 2012 to solicit comments from the community concerning the proposed charter school. Approximately 15 individuals attended the hearing. Three people spoke in favor of the proposed school and there were no comments in opposition.

---

<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/>).

<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).

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 Harlem Hebrew Language Academy Charter School, noting: “This proposal is a replication of an existing NYC DOE authorized high-quality charter school. 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 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 Harlem Hebrew Language Academy 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 eight (of ten) initial board members of the proposed school and three founding group members, on Tuesday, April 3, 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;

---

<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).

- 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 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 Hebrew Language Academy Charter School to open in 2013 in New York City.

---

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

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