



Charter Schools Institute  
*The State University of New York*

## Summary of Findings and Recommendations

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*Application to establish the Brooklyn Prospect Charter School*

April 25, 2008

## **Executive Summary**

The Brooklyn Prospect Charter School (“Brooklyn Prospect”) application was submitted to the Charter Schools Institute (the “Institute”) by Daniel Rubinstein on January 14, 2008. Brooklyn Prospect will open in August of 2009 with 88 sixth grade students and grow to serve 352 students in grades six through nine during the term of its charter. The mission of the proposed charter school is to prepare students for success in the global community by having them participate in a challenging academic curriculum and by immersing students in a culture based upon the core commitments of the International Baccalaureate’s (IB) Middle Years Program (MYP) and, in subsequent charter terms, its Diploma Programme: embracing diversity; recruiting high quality teachers; focusing on success for all students; and academic preparation with a global focus. Ultimately, the founding team envisions a sixth through twelfth grade school.

The Institute recommends that the Board of Trustees approve the charter application for the Brooklyn Prospect Charter School.

## **Background and Description**

Originally, the application to establish the Brooklyn Prospect Charter School was submitted as part of the Institute’s Summer 2007 application cycle. The application was withdrawn from consideration during that cycle, and the Institute provided a written rationale for its decision not to recommend approval at that time. The applicant subsequently revised the application in an effort to address the items identified by the Institute and resubmitted it on January 14, 2008. The Institute conducted a rigorous review of the revised application, including an extensive staff review as well as a review by a panel of nationally renowned experts in fields such as education (charter and traditional schools), school administration, charter and traditional school policy, finance, and/or curriculum. Pursuant to its review protocols, the Institute also met with the applicant and the other members of the founding team. In addition, the Institute has required the applicant to revise, clarify and otherwise amend the present application in numerous respects. Lastly, member(s) of the Trustees’ Committee on Charter Schools have had an opportunity to interview the applicant and proposed board of trustees.

The mission of the school is to prepare students for success in the global community by having them participate in a challenging academic curriculum, by immersing students in a culture based upon the core commitments of the MYP and the IB programs and encouraging them to contribute to their communities as leaders. The applicant anticipates that this mission will be achieved through the school’s focused commitment to: holding all stakeholders accountable for student achievement, including both staff and parents; creating a school environment that cultivates multicultural awareness; building a program based on the tenets of IB (i.e., recruitment of high quality teachers, continual staff development, differentiated and integrated instruction, success for all students, academic preparation in the core curricula, frequent and timely assessments); and drawing on the considerable community resources available to the school.

The school will open in August 2009 with 88 sixth grade students and will grow to serve 352 students in grades six through nine during the term of its charter. The school will be structured using the IB model. Educational requirements for students in grades six through ten (aged between 11 and 16) will be met using the IB Middle Years Program (MYP) and, eventually in a future charter term, by participating in the IB Diploma Programme. The MYP has a global focus and interdisciplinary approach (e.g., team teaching, ongoing professional development, and differentiated instruction) and

uses project based learning experiences and service learning components. This integrated instructional delivery system will use the New York State standards (content and skills) and core curricula as the curriculum source. The curriculum source will be complemented and supplemented by commercial curriculum materials and subject programs that align with the performance standards. Additionally, the applicant plans to use the New York State assessments and the Terra Nova as the standardized testing instruments for the school. Those students who are successful in MYP will be prepared for entrance into the IB Diploma Programme as eleventh grade students. Students would be required to continue with and complete all Regents mandates while engaging in the challenging question-meta cognitive approach of IB. Of some significance, Brooklyn Prospect will not seek IB accreditation for at least two years. The intent is to establish a school-wide climate of success by devoting resources to developing and maintaining clear, well-managed academic systems and consistent classroom expectations. The school's board of trustees will hold the school to the goals outlined in its Accountability Plan. Ultimately, the applicant envisions an IB accredited charter school serving students in grades six through twelve.

The academic program would be anchored by a focus on interdisciplinary and project based instruction. The students will experience a daily schedule containing three core academic blocks, each lasting 90 minutes, and three non-academic blocks that allow for a morning break, recess, lunch and physical education. The core blocks will consist of two partnered classes (mathematics and science, English Language Arts and social studies, and art and foreign language). The time committed to the subject areas will vary within the blocks depending on student needs and demonstrated achievement in particular subject areas. The applicant believes that the teachers will be able to reinforce the interdisciplinary connections while providing ample opportunities for students to meet or exceed the performance standards. The school will also place great emphasis upon literacy development through the advisory program reading/writing tutorial services.

To accommodate the achievement of the ambitious goals the school has established, the founding team plans to employ the use of an extended school day and a modestly longer school year.

If approved, the school's organizational structure includes an executive director who will, for the first two years, be responsible for day to day operations and will report directly to the school's board of trustees. The school's proposed board of trustees has also created the position of development director, who will be responsible for leading the school's advancement program. The school's board intends to establish several director/manager positions over the term of the charter. The first would be a director of operations in year two, an academic director in year three and a business manager in year four. All directors will report to the executive director. Two support mechanisms for the board and the school are also proposed. The first is the creation of an advisory board. The members of the advisory board are potential trustees and are expected to financially support the school, arrange fundraising activities and work with the development director. The second is an organization named the New Millennium Charter Schools Foundation, which was created to provide funds and accept donations for the school.

The proposed board of trustees includes nine members. The backgrounds and expertise of the members of the proposed board of trustees reflect a variety of talents and skills. Based on conversations between Institute staff and the proposed trustees, the proposed trustees appear to clearly understand the roles and responsibilities of a board of trustees, have the ability to ensure the appropriate and effective operation of the proposed charter school, and are willing and able to maintain the community identity and integrity of the school.

The proposed initial members of the board of trustees are set forth below.

- Daniel Rubinstein – (Applicant) Founder and anticipated director of the proposed school; formerly the Head of Department of Mathematics at Collegiate Charter School in New York City (authorized by the Board of Trustees) and earlier at The SEED Public Charter School of Washington, DC.
- Luyen Chou – Formerly the Chief Product Officer for SchoolNet, Inc.; formerly the Executive Director of the Center for Integrated Learning and Teaching at Columbia University; President and CEO of LearnTech.
- Harold James Bernard – Campaign Coordinator for Services Employees International Union; formerly Executive Director of the Hip Hop Civic Engagement Project.
- Anne Burns – Executive Director and head of school at Harlem Day Charter School, New York, New York (authorized by the Board of Trustees); formerly Acting Head of the School at Columbia University.
- Pearl Rock Kane – Full professor at Teachers College, Columbia University; and Director of the Klingenstein Center for Independent School.
- Candice Olsen – Trustee for The Covenant of the Sacred Heart School; formerly a teacher of outdoor education for students ages 14-22.
- Eliza Williams Swann – Associate with Shearman and Sterling LLP of New York.
- Roger Fortune – Senior Vice President of Downtown Brooklyn Partnership (real estate).
- Elizabeth Varley Camp – Managing Director of HealthpointCapital (private equity firm); formerly Managing Director of Goldman Sachs and Co.

One of the board members is leading the search for an appropriate facility. A number of possibilities have been identified, including the New York City Department of Education (“NYCDOE”) incubation space, Thomas Aquinas School, Bishop Ford Central Catholic High School, and the Brooklyn Academy of Music. The application indicates that the space capacity utilization in NYCDOE buildings is about 76%. In the event that incubation space or any of the aforementioned sites are not available, the founding team has included a contingency strategy in its financial planning that would seek to gather funding through the New Millennium Foundation to locate and procure space on the open market.

The fiscal impact of Brooklyn Prospect on the district of residence, the New York City School District, is summarized below.

<b>Number of Students</b>	<b>Per Pupil Aid (does not include special education and federal entitlement grants)</b>	<b>Total Dollars to Charter School from NYCDOE</b>	<b>Total Budget for NYCDOE (in billions)</b>	<b>(%) of Total NYC Ed. Budget</b>
88 (2009-10 school year – year 1)	13,054	1,148,752	17.5	.007
352 (2012-13 school year – year five)	15,112	5,319,424	20.3	.026

The calculations conservatively assume that there will be a modest (5%) annual increase in per pupil aid and in the overall budget of the New York City School District over the life of the proposed charter. The Institute's calculations do not account for special education, federal Title I funds or other grants or funds provided by the district and to be received by the school. However, the school has included in the application calculations accounting for special education, federal Title I funds or other grants or funds provided by the district and to be received by the school.

The applicant made an assessment that the programmatic and fiscal impact of the proposed school on both the New York City School District and nonpublic schools in the same geographic area would be negligible.

The Institute has notified the NYCDOE as well as public and private schools in the same geographic area of the proposed school, and as of April 25, 2008 had received no comment from these entities.

As a gauge of parent and community support, the founding team gathered signatures from community residents using online petitions, posted for five days in June 2007, and met with numerous community residents of the proposed location. The Brooklyn Prospect application contains the results of the petition with the responses of 440 community members who indicated they were parents/guardians of children who might consider sending their children to the proposed charter school. In addition, the school plans to continue to implementing an outreach program targeting the 23 elementary schools within Community School District 15 and use the relationship established with the Community Board to foster communications with the general public.

### **Findings**

Based on the comprehensive review of the application, discussion with national experts and interviews of the applicant and the proposed board of trustees, the Institute makes the following findings.

1. The charter school described in the application meets the requirements of Article 56 of the Education Law and other applicable laws, rules, and regulations as reflected in (among other things):
  - the inclusion of appropriate policies and procedures for the provision of services and programs for students with disabilities, English language learners, and students at risk of academic failure;
  - the required policies for addressing the issues related to student discipline, complaints, personnel matters, health services, Freedom of Information Law (FOIL), and the Open Meetings Law;
  - the inclusion of proposed by-laws for the operation of the board of trustees; and
  - the inclusion of an analysis of the projected fiscal and programmatic impact on surrounding public and private schools.
2. The applicant has demonstrated the ability to operate the school in an educationally and fiscally sound matter as reflected in (among other things):

- the provision of an educational program, based on the tenets of the Middle Years and International Baccalaureate Programs, that meets or exceeds the State performance standards;
  - the articulation of a culture of self-evaluation and accountability at both the administrative and board level;
  - the student achievement goals as articulated by the applicant;
  - the appropriate roster of educational personnel;
  - a sound mission statement;
  - a comprehensive assessment plan;
  - the provision of sound start-up, first-year, and five-year budget plans;
  - the plan to acquire comprehensive general liability insurance to include any vehicles, employees, and property;
  - evidence of adequate community support for, and interest in, the charter school sufficient to allow the school to reach its anticipated enrollment; and
  - the inclusion of procedures for programmatic and independent fiscal audits, at least annually.
3. The Board of Trustees' approval of the application is likely to improve student learning and achievement and materially further the purposes of the Charter Schools Act (as amended). This finding is reflected by (among other things):
- the inclusion of a curriculum framework document that specifies how the proposed curriculum will ensure that students will meet or exceed the performance standards of the Board of Regents;
  - a comprehensive plan to assess student achievement through the use of State tests, externally-verifiable standardized tests and other diagnostic assessments;
  - the articulation of strategies to amend and differentiate instruction where assessment data indicates such need;
  - a focus on high-quality teachers to allow for concentrated, focused and differentiated instruction;
  - the inclusion of significant opportunities for professional development of the school's instructional staff throughout the year;
  - daily blocks of time scheduled for literacy and numeracy;
  - the plan for the education of students at risk of academic failure; and
  - a commitment to providing an educational program focused on outcomes, not inputs.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Based on its review and findings, the Charter Schools Institute recommends that the Board of Trustees approve the application for the Brooklyn Prospect Charter School to open in Brooklyn in August 2009.

# Brooklyn Prospect Charter School

## Basic Identification Information

Lead Applicant(s):	Daniel Rubinstein
Management Co.:	None
Other Partners:	None
Location (District):	Brooklyn, CSD 15
Student Pop./Grades:	Opening with 88 students in 6 <sup>th</sup> grade; growing to 352 students in 6 <sup>th</sup> through 9 <sup>th</sup> grades
Opening Date:	August 2009

## School District of Proposed Location Profile

CSD 15			
Enrollment (2005-06):		24385	
Percent (2005-06):			
White:		17	
African-American:		26	
Hispanic:		46	
Asian, Other:		11	
Percent Participating in Federal Lunch Program (2005-06):		73	
Percent Proficient on State Exams (2006-07)			
English Language Arts		Mathematics	
Grade	Percent Proficient	Grade	Percent Proficient
3	67	3	86
4	65	4	81
5	63	5	75
6	55	6	63
7	52	7	59
8	48	8	49

Source: Demographic data is from the New York State Accountability and Overview Report 2005-06; test data are from the 2006-07 results released on the State Education Department website.