



Charter Schools Institute
The State University of New York

Summary of Findings and Recommendations

*Application to establish the
Green Dot New York Charter School*

October 1, 2007

Executive Summary

The Green Dot New York Charter School (the “School”) proposes to open in the Bronx with 115 students in ninth grade and grow to include 420 students in ninth through twelfth grades. The School’s mission is to prepare students for success in college, leadership and life by creating a small, college-preparatory high school with a student-centered environment that unifies the efforts of family, community and school to foster life-long learning, cross-cultural competency, social responsibility and academic excellence, based on a belief that all students can go to college and that the preparation of students is the School’s professional responsibility and moral obligation. The proposed charter school reflects a unique partnership of a New York-based applicant with an academically successful, California-based charter school operator and New York City’s United Federation of Teachers Educational Foundation, Inc.

The Charter Schools Institute (the “Institute”) recommends that the Board of Trustees of the State University of New York (the “State University Trustees”) approve the charter application for School.

Background and Description

An application to establish the School in the Bronx was submitted to the Institute on June 29, 2007. The Institute conducted a rigorous review, including an extensive staff review as well as review by a panel of nationally renowned experts in the charter school arena. Pursuant to its review protocols, the Institute has met with the lead applicants and founding board members and has required the applicants to revise, clarify and otherwise amend the application in numerous respects. In addition, Co-Chairs Cox and Daniels of the State University Trustees’ Committee on Charter Schools had an opportunity to question the lead applicant and founding board members.

The School would open with 115 students in ninth grade and grow to include 420 students in ninth through twelfth grades. The founding team envisions a charter school focused on preparing students for success in college, leadership and life by creating a small, college-preparatory high school with a student-centered environment. The high school would foster academic excellence, along with life-long learning, cross cultural competency, and social responsibility, by leveraging the efforts of family, community and school. The underlying belief of the School’s founding team is that all students can go to college and that their preparation is the School’s professional responsibility and moral obligation.

The Green Dot Public Schools model is rooted in a belief that central to a school’s success is the presence of a strong teacher in every classroom and that with the right preparation and professional development, a school’s faculty is best poised to make the decisions that ensure their students’ academic success. For this reason, Green Dot Public Schools embraces a site-based decision making model in which teachers, as true professionals, take full responsibility for their students’ success. Teachers’ first and foremost responsibility is to work to ensure that every student they teach moves toward or beyond grade level. To do this, Green Dot Public Schools has developed a model in which a professional community is predicated on collaboration, reflection and feedback, and continual improvement.

Green Dot Public Schools' *Six Tenets* or set of core principles to be replicated are: 1) small, safe, personalized schools; 2) high expectations and extra-supports, such that every student takes college preparatory courses and the school provides extensive student intervention and support programs; 3) local control with extensive professional development and accountability, in which principals and teachers are the key decision makers owning all critical decisions at the school site related to budgeting, hiring and curriculum; 4) parent participation, wherein families are invited and expected to participate in their children's education experience; 5) getting dollars into the classroom through efficient operation; and 6) keeping schools open later, until at least 5:00 pm daily to provide students with after-school programs and allowing community groups to use the facilities.

In addition to the *Six Tenets*, other key design elements to be replicated include: college-preparatory curriculum; faculty office hours; one-day-a-week early student dismissal to facilitate school-wide professional development; data-driven instruction based on regular interim assessments; an elective course on the history of New York based on social and civil rights movements; formal academic intervention programs for students in English language arts and mathematics; professional learning plans for all faculty and staff; and a workload allocation for key administrative staff of 95% work responsibilities and 5% professional development activities.

The following intervention and support programs are built into Green Dot Public Schools' school model: 1) Summer Bridge Program, consisting of a two-and-a-half to five-week mandatory summer session held for incoming ninth graders; 2) Read 180, a reading intervention program, provided to students who test low in reading; 3) Math Intervention for students which provides curriculum skills classes and tutoring during math teacher office hours; 4) Curriculum Skills, designed to be a 45-minute intervention period at the end of the school day, three times per week; and 5) English language learner support, by focusing on building English fluency and writing skills.

According to data provided in its application the Green Dot Public Schools in Los Angeles have enabled students to achieve. Specifically, 78 percent of students who had entered Green Dot Schools in the ninth grade graduated; of these students a notably higher proportion attend four year-colleges as compared to their peers in selected high-achieving local districts. Green Dot Public Schools' Academic Performance Index is comparable to these selected high-achieving school districts and much higher than the Los Angeles Unified School District.

The School would be supported by a partnership between Green Dot Public Schools and the United Federation of Teachers Educational Foundation. Green Dot Public Schools would offer the following support on an in-kind basis: initially identifying the school principal, provide hiring services and guidance to the School's board of trustees, and training of the principal in a four-to-six month residency in Los Angeles during the planning year. Its ongoing support would include making a cluster leader or vice-president of curriculum and instruction regularly available, as well as providing support in implementing Green Dot Public Schools' Recommended Practices. A Green Dot Public Schools operating committee—consisting of personnel from finance, curriculum/instruction, and operations departments—would conduct monthly teleconferences with the School's principal.

The United Federation of Teachers Educational Foundation, Inc., the second partner organization, would provide complementary administrative and operating support services to the school, including financial management, procurement of resources and services, identification of high-quality teachers, management of technology and data systems, support with special

education and Section 504 coordination, securing a facility, facilitating human resource operations, and providing specialists from the Teacher Center who would work with school staff to complement professional development efforts and provide on-site, local training.

The applicant has found individuals to serve on the proposed board of trustees whose backgrounds and expertise reflect a variety of talents and skills. Based on conversations with the proposed trustees, they appear to clearly understand the roles and responsibilities of a board of trustees and have the ability to ensure the appropriate and effective operation of the proposed charter school, including providing appropriate oversight not only over the School's principal and leadership team but Green Dot Public School and the United Federation of Teachers Educational Foundation as well. The applicant is the board chair of the UFT Charter School authorized by the State University Trustees. The School's by-laws and code of ethics make clear that trustees associated with Green Dot Public Schools or the United Federation of Teachers will recuse themselves from voting on all issues involving Green Dot Public Schools or the United Federation of Teachers Educational Foundation, Inc., respectively. The proposed initial members of the board of trustees are set forth below.

1. Jeffrey T. Leeds (Lead Applicant) – Co-Founder, Leeds Equity Partners
2. Steve Barr – President, Green Dot Public Schools
3. Veronica Davey – Senior Director, The Broad Foundation
4. Charles King – Civic Leader
5. Deborah Levitzky – Education Consultant
6. Betty Rosa – Former Superintendent, Community School District 8, Bronx
7. Bonnie Steingart, Esq. – Partner, Fried, Frank, Harris, Shriver & Jacobson LLP
8. Randi Weingarten – President, United Federation of Teachers

The applicant and founding team have been working with the New York City Department of Education's (the "NYCDOE's") Office of New Schools to identify space in an existing or new public school building. Two potential sites had been identified and visited by the applicant and founding team; no final decisions had been made by the time of submitting the application. However the NYCDOE will not complete its facility and accountability analysis of district schools until mid-October. The Office of New Schools has provided a letter acknowledging its awareness and intent to locate space for the School, and will communicate with the Institute regarding facilities' decisions. In the event that the NYCDOE is unable to identify an appropriate facility for the proposed charter school, the United Federation of Teachers

Educational Foundation, Inc., one of the School’s partner organizations, assures that the Foundation will provide adequate facilities for the School.

The fiscal impact of the Green Dot New York Charter School on its district of residence, the New York City School District, will be negligible and is summarized below.

Number of Students	Per Pupil Aid	Total Dollars to Charter School from NYCDOE
115 (Year 1 – 2008-09)	\$11,023	\$1,267,645
420 (Year 5 – 2012-13)	\$11,023	\$ 4,629,660

Using the figures above for total funds to be transferred from the New York City School District to the proposed charter school, the year one figure of \$1,471,608 represents 0.01% of an estimated budget of \$16.5 billion for the New York City Schools. In year five, the figure above represents 0.03% of the estimated budget. The cumulative fiscal impact of all charter schools on the New York City School District was estimated to be 0.51% in 2005-06 according to the State Education Department. The calculations conservatively assume that there will be no increase in the per pupil aid or 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. The applicant made an assessment that the fiscal impact of each proposed school on nonpublic schools in the same geographic area would be negligible.

The Institute has notified the Chancellor of the NYCDOE as well as public and private schools in the geographic area of the proposed school and has received no comment from these entities. (Copies of the notification letters are on file in the Albany office of the Institute.)

As a demonstration of the extent of community and parent support for the establishment of the School, the application included petitions with 224 signatures of parents who would consider enrolling their son/daughter in the School set to open in September 2008.

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 (as amended) and all 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 and English language learners;

- 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 the proposed by-laws for the operation of the school's 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 that meets or exceeds the State performance standards;
 - the replication of a model that has had outstanding and demonstrable success in raising student achievement, including closing the achievement gap in California;
 - the articulation of a culture of self-evaluation and accountability at both the administrative and board level;
 - the student achievement goals articulated by the applicant;
 - an 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;
 - a 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 descriptions of programmatic and independent fiscal audits, with fiscal audits occurring at least, annually.
3. Granting 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 document that specifies how the proposed curriculum will ensure that students will meet or exceed the performance standards of the Board of Regents including the granting of Regents diplomas;
- 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;
- the staffing of classes with high-quality teachers to allow for more concentrated, focused and differentiated instruction;
- the inclusion of significant opportunities for professional development of the School's instructional staff throughout the year;
- intervention and support programs to address the needs of students at-risk of academic failure;
- an organizational structure that supports the principal in functioning as a true instructional leader; 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 of the State University of New York approve the application for the Green Dot New York Charter School to open in the Bronx in September of 2008.

Green Dot New York Charter School

Bronx, New York

Basic Identification Information

Lead Applicant(s): Jeffrey T. Leeds
 Management Co: None
 Other Partners: Green Dot Public Schools
 United Federal of Teachers Educational Fund
 Location (District): Bronx/NYC DOE Administrative
 District 7 or 8
 Student Pop./Grades: 115 9th grade students; expanding to 420
 students grades 9 - 12
 Opening Date: September 2008

School District of Proposed Location Profile

Public School Enrollment (2005-2006):	28850	
Percentages (2005-2006)	White: 5%	
	Black: 30%	
	Hispanic: 61%	
	Asian, Other: 3%	
Percentage of Public School Student Participating in Federal Lunch Program (2005-2006):	87%	
Test Scores (ELA/2007 and Math/2007) -- Percentages of Public School Students Failing to Meet the Regents Performance Standards:	<u>ELA</u>	<u>Mathematics</u>
	3 rd – 47.6	78.1
	4 th – 49.3	68.0
	5 th – 45.2	62.7
	6 th – 36.9	50.9
	7 th – 33.5	44.6
	8 th – 24.7	33.5
	Avg. 39.4	56.1

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.