



Charter Schools Institute
The State University of New York

Summary of Findings and Recommendations

*Application to establish the
Heketi Community Charter School*

September 14, 2010

Executive Summary

The Heketi Community Charter School (“Heketi Community”) application was submitted to the Charter Schools Institute (the “Institute”) by lead applicant Cynthia Rosario on May 3, 2010. This was the second time the applicant had applied to the Board of Trustees of the State University of New York (the “SUNY Trustees”) for a charter. Heketi Community plans to be located in New York City Community School District (“CSD”) 7 (Bronx), but has not yet identified a specific facility. The school is seeking space in an underutilized building in the district through the New York City Department of Education (the “NYCDOE”), but is working with a real estate development company to develop an alternative plan in the event that space is unavailable through the NYCDOE.

The school plans to open in August of 2011 with 88 students in kindergarten and 1st grade and add one grade each year culminating in 240 students in kindergarten through 5th grade at the end of the school’s initial charter term. The school’s mission would be, “to provide an exceptional educational solution, focused on preparing every student for New York City’s most competitive high schools and leadership in their chosen careers through an integrated educational design with high expectations, extensive academic and social-emotional support, and a high level of family and community engagement.”

The Institute recommends that the SUNY Trustees approve the charter application for the Heketi Community Charter School.

Background and Description

The Institute conducted a rigorous review of the application including an extensive staff review as well as a review by an external member with education experience. The application has also been subject to a fiscal and legal soundness review conducted by the Institute’s staff. Pursuant to its review protocols, the Institute has 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 applications as needed. In addition, SUNY Trustee Pedro Noguera had an opportunity to interview the lead applicant and founding board members.

The key elements of Heketi Community are:

- clear and transparent accountability;
- relentless commitment to high expectations for all;
- data-driven instruction;
- investment in social-emotional support; and
- use of an integrated Spanish Language Model.

Heketi’s educational program is based on the experience and expertise of New Leaders for New Schools and from best practices gleaned from visits to charter schools that serve similar populations as that proposed to be served by this school, such as the Girls Preparatory Charter School of the Bronx (authorized by the SUNY Trustees), Family Life Academy Charter School (authorized by the

SUNY Trustees), Bronx Charter School for Excellence (authorized by the SUNY Trustees), Mott Haven Academy Charter School, North Star Elementary Charter School in Newark, New Jersey, Capital City Charter School in Washington, D.C., and Lighthouse Community Charter School in Oakland, CA. The school would apply the tenets of programs such as Responsive Classroom, Guided Language Acquisition Design (“GLAD”), El Achieve, and project based learning. In addition, the proposed charter school would adopt an integrated Spanish Language Model to enhance students’ facility with oral language and to strengthen the likelihood of students becoming biliterate and bicultural.

The school’s proposed academic program would place a heavy emphasis on literacy education, with English language arts (“ELA”) receiving 90 – 120 minutes of instruction per day. ELA instruction would be based on the balanced literacy model and use aspects of the Teachers College Reading and Writing Workshops, the University of Arkansas at Little Rock’s Partnerships in Comprehensive Literacy, Fountas and Pinnell Guided Reading and Writing, and Wilson Foundations. The school would participate in a “Sponsor a Classroom Library” program with the goal of 100 books per student by the school’s fifth year. In terms of the school’s mathematics program, TERC Investigations has been selected as the basis of the curriculum, and the school would use the workshop model to introduce, develop, and refine key concepts and understandings. The school would also provide guided mathematics groups for struggling learners, collaborate with related organizations to provide students with financial literacy, and integrate mathematics into learning expeditions. Science instruction would be inquiry and expedition based, allowing students to learn the standards while exploring topics in depth. Social studies instruction would use Readers’ and Writers’ Workshop to incorporate content-specific resources into genre units and multiple varieties of literature. In addition, the social studies curriculum would draw upon local resources such as Ellis Island and the Museum of New York City to develop deep understanding of the content. Finally, Heketi Community’s curriculum would include art (adding music in year four) and physical activity.

The school would use Responsive Classroom as its social curriculum and the framework for its classroom management strategies, guiding teachers in using the “3 R’s: reinforcing, reminding, and redirecting” students who need interventions. Student well-being would also be supported by a full-time social worker and an instructional support and student intervention team that meets regularly to address the academic and social development needs of students. Students requiring additional assistance would receive a customized learning plan to help remediate identified issues and would serve in identifying students that may need special education services.

The Heketi Community by-laws indicate that board membership can range from five to fifteen. The proposed initial members of the school’s board of trustees are set forth below.

1. **Cynthia Rosario (Lead Applicant** and ex officio, non-voting trustee) – A product of bilingual education programs in the Bronx public school system. Currently a consultant at TurnAround For Children and former resident principal at Mott Haven Academy Charter School through the New Leaders for New Schools preparation program.
2. **Helen Spruill** – Founding teacher at Lighthouse Community Charter School in Oakland, CA, where she taught for six years and served as a coach for new teachers.
3. **Lorean Valentín** – Project coordinator for 1199’s Healthcare Education Project. Longtime resident of the Bronx and community organizer.

4. **Greg Greicius** – 36-year veteran of the NYCDOE and current Vice President of Educational Initiatives for Turnarond For Children.
5. **Wanda Watson** – An educator currently pursuing a Doctorate in Education in Curriculum and Teaching from Teachers College, Columbia University.
6. **Jamie Knox** – Partner in DLA Piper's Corporate group, based in New York. Jamie's clients have included many of the largest investment banks, public and private companies, private equity funds and hedge funds.
7. **Robert Reinertsen** - Realtor with Houlihan Lawrence real estate.
8. **Niki Simoneaux** – Director of Brand Marketing for IdeaSphere Inc. where she is responsible for the concept, product development, financial planning and results of two new health and wellness brands.
9. **Mark Schumer** – Co-Founder of Home Concepts, Inc. in Larchmont, NY where he supports community growth through marketing and sales nationally and internationally. Helped found a small early childhood school where he served as Chief Financial Officer and Operations Director.
10. **Kevin Crespi** – A Bronx native who attended New York City public schools. Currently a Senior Vice President at Young & Rubicam.
11. **Tina Martinez** – Operations Director at Mott Haven Academy Charter School in the Bronx.
12. **Samantha Valerio** – Director of Development and Fundraising for The Bronx Charter School for Better Learning. Previously Development Manager at Boys and Girls Club of the Pikes Peak Region.

As stated above, the school is currently working with the NYCDOE in their efforts to be granted facility space in an underutilized district building. In the event that this space is not available, the applicant has begun to work with a private real estate development company to assist in locating and securing adequate facilities.

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

Number of Students	Per Pupil Aid Rate Assumed	Per Pupil Aid Revenue Only	Total Budget for New York City (in billions)	(%) of Total NYC Ed. Budget
88 (2011-12 school year – year 1)	\$13,527	\$1,190,376	\$18.447	0.006%
240 (2015-16 school year – year 5)	\$15,225	\$3,653,942	\$19.403	0.019%

The calculations above assume that there will be an annual increase in per-pupil aid of three percent in each year of the charter period. The NYCDOE yearly budget figures were accessed from the latest, May 2010, Financial Status Report (FSR) published on the NYCDOE website. No information was available for 2015-16 so no increase in spending was assumed for that year. Using the moderately aggressive assumptions for per-pupil aid and revenue and the district's four-year operational budgeting assumptions, along with the fundamentally conservative assumption for year five of the proposed charter period, illustrates the maximum fiscal impact of the proposed school on the district.

It should be noted that the NYCDOE estimate used by the Institute in conducting its analysis is subject to unpredictable increases and decreases in any given year given the nature of per-pupil funding for the district. While the school has included in its application estimated calculations accounting for special education revenue, federal Title I funds, other federal grants and/or funds provided by the district and to be received by the school, the Institute's calculations and analysis do not account for these sources of potential revenue.

The Institute finds that the programmatic and fiscal impact of the proposed school on both the NYCDOE and nonpublic schools in the same geographic area would be minimal.

The Institute has notified the school district as well as public and private schools in the same geographic area of the proposed school and, as of the date of this report, has received no comments from these entities.

The applicant has demonstrated community support for the school through the inclusion of over 90 signatures of Bronx residents, many of whom have children who would be eligible to enroll in Heketi Community in 2011. In addition, the school presented in its application letters of support from a local business (Salsa Caterers and Special Events) and Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz, Jr. as further evidence of community interest in and support for the establishment of the proposed school that would enable the school to meet its projected enrollment.

Findings

Based on the comprehensive review of the application, discussion with an external reviewer, and interviews the applicant and the proposed board of trustees, the Institute makes the following findings required by Education Law subdivision 2852(2).

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 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, and health services;
 - an admissions policy that complies with the New York Charter Schools Act of 1998 (as amended, the "Act"), federal law and the U.S. Constitution;

- 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 New York State performance standards;
 - 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: 1) is likely to improve student learning and achievement; and 2) materially further the purposes of the Act. This finding is reflected by (among other things):
- the inclusion of a curriculum crosswalk document that specifies how the proposed curriculum will ensure that students will meet or exceed the performance standards of the Board of Regents;
 - a robust Spanish language program, offering Spanish language instruction to all students for 50 minutes each day;
 - the inclusion of E.L. Achieve and Project GLAD strategies to support English language learners;

- the inclusion of significant opportunities for professional development of the school's instructional staff throughout the year;
- an academic program that focuses on English language arts (with a strong emphasis on literacy), mathematics, history/social studies and science, as well as visual arts, music, foreign language and athletics;
- the use of individualized learning plans to address the unique needs of all students and customized learning plans to address students at-risk for academic failure; and,
- an assessment system that supports data driven instruction and accountability.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on its review and findings, the Institute recommends that the SUNY Board of Trustees approve the application for the Heketi Community Charter School to open in the Bronx in the fall of 2011.

Heketi Community Charter School

Basic Identification Information

Lead Applicant(s):	Cynthia Rosario
Management Co.:	None
Other Partners:	None
Location (District):	New York City Community School District 7
Student Pop./Grades:	Opening with 88 students in Kindergarten and 1 st grade; growing to 240 students in Kindergarten through 5 th grade
Opening Date:	August 2011

School District of Proposed Location Profile

New York City School District 7			
Enrollment (2008-09):		18,550	
Percent (2008-09):			
White:		1	
African-American:		29	
Hispanic:		69	
Asian, Other:		1	
Percent Qualifying for Free or Reduced Priced Lunch (2008-09):		89	
English Language Arts (2009-10)		Mathematics (2009-10)	
Grade	Percent Proficient	Grade	Percent Proficient
3	30.5	3	36.2
4	26.6	4	36.6
5	26.1	5	40.8
6	16.5	6	34.3
7	17.0	7	36.8
8	22.2	8	25.9

Source: demographic data is from the New York State Accountability and Overview Report 2008-09; test data are from the 2009-10 results released on the New York City Department of Education's website.