



Charter Schools Institute
The State University of New York

Summary of Findings and Recommendations

*Application to establish the
New Hope Academy Charter School*

September 8, 2009

Executive Summary

The application for New Hope Academy Charter School (“New Hope”), to be located in Brooklyn (Community School District 18), was submitted to the Charter Schools Institute (the “Institute”) by lead applicant Reverend Orlando Findlayter on January 12, 2009. The applicant and founding team propose to open New Hope in September 2010 with 168 students in Kindergarten through second grades and grow to serve 336 students in Kindergarten through fifth grades during the term of its charter. The mission of the proposed charter school is to provide a safe, structured and quality learning community where students’ creativity and potential can flourish in a program with science and technology integrated throughout its core subject areas, the arts, and various enrichment programs. New Hope would be managed by Victory Schools, Inc. (“VSI”), a for-profit management company that currently manages three schools authorized by the Board of Trustees of the State University of New York (the “State University Trustees”).

The Institute recommends that the State University Trustees approve the charter application for the New Hope Academy Charter School.

Background and Description

The application to establish the New Hope Academy Charter School was initially submitted as part of the Institute’s summer application cycle in 2008. The application was withdrawn at that time, and the applicants used the Institute’s feedback to revise and further develop the application prior to resubmitting it as part of the winter cycle in January of this year. As is its practice, the Institute conducted a rigorous review of the application, including an extensive staff review of the application’s educational, organizational, fiscal and legal soundness, as well as submitting the application to 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. In addition, the Institute has met with the founding board and the other members of the founding team several times. Due to the time that elapsed between Institute interviews, the nature of the requested revisions to the application and the staffing of the proposed charter school, the Institute was unable to schedule the final element of the review process – an interview of the lead applicant and proposed board of trustees conducted by member(s) of the State University Trustees’ Charter Schools Committee.

Additionally, for the purpose of performing due diligence, Institute staff met with the leadership and key staff members of VSI which will serve as the educational service provider for the school. The Institute has assessed the capacity of VSI to perform all functions required by its management contract and its capability to deliver services and found it to be sufficient. The Institute has required the applicant to revise, clarify and otherwise amend the applications in numerous respects.

The school’s curriculum will use scientifically proven and standards-based educational programs that emphasize literacy; higher order thinking; and multi-cultural and global awareness. Differentiated and innovative instructional methods as well as interdisciplinary teaching and project-based instruction will be used by teachers and supported by ongoing academic assessments. The school’s curriculum will be aligned with state standards and include not only the core subject areas of English language arts (135 minutes daily), mathematics (90 minutes daily), science and social studies (30-45 minutes daily), but also include instruction in health, physical education, family and consumer science, career development and occupational studies, and the arts. An additional 30 minutes daily will be

allocated for academic enrichment or intervention for students in 3rd through 5th grades. The school has identified the curricular resources to be used to provide instruction in each of these areas.

Key elements of the educational program would include the following:

- Emphasis on community partnerships and collaborations through community service experience and “hero” presentations designed to teach children how to be “agents of change” in their community;
- Interdisciplinary projects or reports (individual or classroom based) that highlight the concepts learned in science or technology will be required;
- Annual year-end science and technology fairs to showcase student work;
- Victory Schools, SUNY Downstate Medical Center and Medgar Evars College support teachers on a continuous basis to ensure that the curriculum appropriately infuses technology in lesson plans; and
- Enrichment activities infused into coursework at all levels through teacher created activities, inquiry-based learning, and web-based activities. Specific programs will include: character and leadership development, a mentoring program which will allow older students to mentor younger students in the school, and a debate program that will underscore the importance of reading, writing, listening and speaking skills.

One hundred and eighty-two days of instruction will be offered. The school day will begin at 8:00 am and end at 4:00 pm. On the first Wednesday of each month, students will be dismissed at 2:00 pm to allow for teacher professional development. During this time, teachers will receive training, collaborative planning time, and coverage when necessary so that they may meet as part of a small group, grade level, or interdisciplinary teams and discuss instructional strategies, curriculum alignment, academic performance data and/or individualized student data.

The school anticipates establishing a contract with VSI to provide day-to-day operational management services, which include start-up services, such as application development, student recruitment and enrollment, material selection and distribution and technology acquisition and distribution, and ongoing services, such as professional development, financial management, principal coaching and instructional and curriculum support. The school’s board of trustees will enter into a management contract with VSI that will outline the set of services to be provided. (As with all management contracts, the Institute will review the final contract pursuant to the charter and on behalf of the State University Trustees prior to final approval).

Since 1999, VSI has generally demonstrated the capacity to assist charter schools in New York State in successfully meeting their financial reporting and operational requirements, with few exceptions. Both SUNY-authorized, VSI managed schools that have reached renewal have been renewed; one was awarded a short term (two-year) renewal and then subsequent full five year renewal (Sisulu – Walker Charter School of Harlem), and the other school was awarded a full five-year renewal (Merrick Academy – Queens Public Charter School). VSI has developed the expertise and support systems necessary to effectively provide management and operational services to its schools. The other SUNY-authorized school managed by VSI, New Covenant Charter School, will go through the renewal process this fall with VSI after receiving a one-year extension of its charter with conditions last year.

New Hope’s founding board of trustees consists of individuals who offer a diverse set of skills and experiences in areas such as education, business, law, and community leadership. Based on Institute

staff's 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. The proposed board recognizes and appreciates the role of VSI and has taken care to establish a thorough and ongoing evaluative process to ensure accountability, performance of school related functions, and maintenance of the capacity to serve the school.

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

1. *Reverend Orlando Findlayter* (lead applicant/proposed chair) – Current pastor and founder of New Hope Christian Fellowship. Former Community Center Director for the Salvation Army. Former Assistant Director of a men's veterans' shelter. Former Program Director and Administrator of a Beacon program in Brooklyn.
2. *Rowan Creary* - Certified Public Accountant (CPA) with over seven years of experience; operates a private accounting firm, R Creary CPA, in Long Island City, Queens; previously employed by Deloitte & Touche, LLP and two other top 100 firms: Mitchell & Titus, LLP and McGladrey Pullen; extensive experience performing audits and providing tax and advisory services to Fortune 500, entrepreneurial, and nonprofit organizations. Bachelor of Business Administration in Accounting from Bernard Baruch College.
3. *Xiomara Flowers* – Bilingual teacher and lead teacher for Uniondale Elementary school on Long Island, ranked one of the top ten elementary schools in the state of New York.
4. *Lee-Althea Griffith* – Currently a staff attorney with the Department of Housing Preservation and Development in New York City, where she litigates cases regarding housing in New York City Civil Court. In addition to her role as staff attorney, she currently serves as a contract attorney with The Litigation Document Review.
5. *Hugh Robert Hall* – Ordained minister, serving as Associate Pastor at New Hope Christian Fellowship. Retired after almost twenty years from the United States Postal Service, where he served in a number of capacities including administrative management at the Port Washington Post Office.
6. *Kimberly McKie* – Fraud investigator with the New York City Investigation, Revenue, Enforcement Administration, where she serves as an advisor for the Prescription Drug Fraud Division. Former Senior Fraud Investigator with the Medicaid Prescription Drug Fraud Division.
7. *Judith Rapley* – Administrative Director for The Salvation Army Social Services of Greater New York; responsible for six community-based Preventative Services programs throughout the city geared to assist children and families in the East Flatbush community. Former director of a residential facility for girls.
8. *Raymond Thomas* – Executive Director and Founder of Xposure Foundation, Inc., where he supervises the management of the Xposure Science, Technology, Finance and Employment Institute for youth in Brooklyn elementary schools and community-based programs. Former Program Director of the Building Educated Leaders for Life (BELL) at P.S. 67 and P.S. 81.
9. *Tyrone Sellers* – Founder and Chief Executive of Sellers Counting in Jamaica, Queens. Certified Public Accountant.
10. *Dr. Judith Stewart* – Principal Emeritus of P.S. 164 in Brooklyn. Currently an instructor at the Center for Integrated Teacher Education at the College of St. Rose.
11. Parent Organization president (*ex officio*).

The New Hope Academy Charter School plans to lease the 3rd floor of the Nazareth Regional High School, a parochial school located at 475 East 57th Street, Brooklyn, New York. This site will serve as an incubation space for a minimum of three years. The school has retained the option to either extend or terminate the lease at any time and expects build out costs to be minimal.

The fiscal impact each of the New Hope Academy Charter School on the district of residence, the New York City School District , is summarized below.

Number of Students	Per Pupil Aid	Total Dollars to Charter School from NYCDOE	Total Budget for NYCDOE (in billions)	% of Total Budget
144 (2010-11 School Year- year 1)	\$12,443	\$2,003,890	17.3	0.012%
528 (2014-15School Year - year 5)	\$14,557	\$8,541,945	19.9	0.043%

The calculations conservatively assume that there will be a modest (4%) increase in per pupil aid and over the life of the proposed charter starting in 2011-2012, with 2010-2011 remaining flat in relation to 2009-2010. The Institute’s calculations do not account for federal Title I funds or any federal or state grants that may be provided by the district and received by the School. However, each school has provided budget calculations accounting for federal Title I funds, grant revenue, or other funds provided by the district and to be received by the School in its application.

It should be noted that a 2014-15 budget was not available for the NYCDOE. An assumption of a 4.0% increase year to year was assumed using the last year provided. The applicant made an assessment that the fiscal impact of the proposed school on nonpublic schools in the same geographic area would be negligible.

The Institute has notified the New York City Department of Education as well as public and private schools in the geographic area of the proposed school, and as of September 8, 2009 had received no comment from these entities. (Copies of the notification letters are on file in the Albany office of the Institute.)

Parent and community support for the establishment of the New Hope Academy Charter School is, in part, demonstrated by the partnerships the school’s founders have created with Medgar Evers College and the State University of New York (SUNY) Downstate Medical Center. Medgar Evers College has committed to providing students with supplemental technology curriculum and programs that will give them early and meaningful exposure to the applications of technology in today’s society. Medgar Evers College will also provide professional development for New Hope’s instructional staff regarding the integration of technology into core subject areas. SUNY Downstate Medical Center has committed to assisting the school in integrating the sciences into the school’s core curriculum, as well as providing enrichment opportunities for students. In addition to those partnerships, the founding group obtained approximately 190 signatures from parents and other interested community members in support for the creation of the New Hope Academy Charter School. Finally, letters of

support were also included from New York State Senator Kevin Parker and United States Congresswoman Yvette D. Clarke.

Findings

Based on the comprehensive review of the applications, 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 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 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;
 - 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 State University 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 for the school 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;
 - staffing to allow for more concentrated, focused and differentiated instruction;
 - the inclusion of significant opportunities for professional development of 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 State University Trustees approve the application for New Hope Academy Charter School to open in New York City.

New Hope Academy Charter School

Basic Identification Information

Lead Applicant:	Rev. Orlando Findlayter
Management Co.:	Victory Schools, Inc.
Other Partners:	None
Location (District):	New York/CSD18/Region 6
Student Pop./Grades:	Opening with 168 students in grades K – 2 and growing to include 336 students in grades K – 5
Opening Date:	September 2010

School District of Proposed Location Profile

New York City School District 18			
Enrollment (2007-08):		20,175	
Percent (2007-08):			
White:		2%	
African-American:		7%	
Hispanic:		90%	
Asian, Other:		1%	
Percent Participating in Federal Lunch Program (2007-08):		72%	
Percent Proficient on State Exams (2008-09)			
English Language Arts		Mathematics	
Grade	Percent Proficient	Grade	Percent Proficient
3	67.3	3	90.1
4	70.4	4	84.0
5	73.1	5	84.9
6	66.5	6	68.5
7	67.0	7	81.1
8	50.8	8	67.8

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