



# Charter Schools Institute

*The State University of New York*

## **SUNY Board Approves Application to Establish the Achievement First North Crown Heights Charter School in Brooklyn**

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Albany - Upon recommendation of the Charter Schools Institute and the Committee on Charter Schools of the State University of New York Board of Trustees, the full Board of Trustees today voted to approve the application to establish the Achievement First North Crown Heights Charter School. The school, to be located in the North Crown Heights/Weeksville area of Brooklyn (Community School District 16), will open in the fall of 2009.

The New York Charter Schools Act of 1998 initially set a cap of 100 charter schools; a cap that was met in January of 2006. In April of 2007, the New York State Legislature, with the support of Governor Eliot Spitzer, voted to raise the cap to 200 charter schools, effective July 1, 2007, as part of the 2007-08 budget process. Today's action represents the ninth new charter school approved by the State University Trustees since the cap raise.

The Achievement First North Crown Heights Charter School will initially serve 168 students in Kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> grade, growing to serve 645 students in Kindergarten through 5<sup>th</sup> grade at the end of its first charter term.

The mission of the Achievement First North Crown Heights Charter School will be to provide students with the academic and character skills they need to gain admission to top colleges, to succeed in a competitive world, and to serve as the next generation of leaders in their communities. The school plans on maintaining two teachers in every classroom, and all of the administrators—principal, dean of students, and academic dean—will teach at least one class.

To achieve its mission, the school intends to focus on the following:

1. More time on task, with a school day that runs from 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. with tutoring and enrichments opportunities available after school and on Saturdays. The school proposes an annual calendar that contains 201 instructional days, including a required Summer Academy. The instructional schedule will include 3 hours of daily reading instruction in the elementary grades and three hours daily for reading and writing instruction in the middle school grades;
2. Character education focusing on the REACH (respect, enthusiasm, achievement, citizenship, and hard work) values;
3. College focus;

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4. Rigorous, standards-based curriculum – WHAT is taught at every grade level (the New York state standards and beyond) is defined clearly and systematically so that all essential content is mastered over time;
5. Powerful use of ongoing assessments – internal interim assessments every six weeks with the results being used to inform instruction and target students in need of remediation;
6. Excellent teaching – 13 annual professional development days and weekly 2-hour sessions as well as an on-site Director of Operations handling non-instructional issues to free up the principal to spend almost all of his or her time focused on instruction. Student performance will be the lead factor in school, principal, and teacher evaluation; and
7. Parents as partners – including a parent representative on the school’s board of trustees.

The school will partner with Achievement First, Inc., a non-profit educational management organization that maintains a network of college-preparatory charter schools. Achievement First North Crown Heights Charter School will use the Achievement First model, first tested and replicated based upon the success of Amistad Academy in New Haven, Connecticut.

All applications received by the SUNY Charter Schools Institute on behalf of the State University Trustees undergo a rigorous and thorough review not only by Institute staff but by a panel of nationally renowned experts from the fields of education and other related areas, representing the charter and traditional school arenas. Pursuant to its review protocols, the Institute interviews the lead applicant and founding trustees for all submitted applications. Those applications the Institute considers moving forward—based on staff review, feedback from the external expert panels and the personal interview—move into the Request for Amendment (RFA) phase of the Institute’s review process. In this phase, the Institute makes very specific requests for amendments to the application to ensure its clarity, and educational, fiscal and legal soundness. If an application remains in the review process through the RFA phase, a second interview of the lead applicant and schools’ proposed boards of trustees is then conducted by one or more members of the State University Trustees’ Committee on Charter Schools.

There are currently 96 charter schools operating in New York State. Of those 96 schools, 43 were authorized by the State University Trustees. A recent Institute analysis of the 2006-07 state exams revealed that 74 percent of SUNY-authorized charter schools outperformed their local districts on the State exam in mathematics, and 70 percent outperformed their local districts on the State exam in English Language Arts.

In making its recommendation for approval to the State University Trustees, the Institute prepared a detailed Summary of Findings and Recommendations document that thoroughly describes each school. This document is available at: [www.newyorkcharters.org](http://www.newyorkcharters.org).

Additional details about SUNY’s application review process are available on the Institute’s website at: <http://www.newyorkcharters.org/openAppKit.htm>.

The Charter Schools Institute was created by the SUNY Board of Trustees to assist them in carrying out their responsibilities under the New York Charter Schools Act of 1998. Guided by the rigorous standards set by the SUNY Board of Trustees, the Institute’s oversight of SUNY-authorized charter schools is comprehensive, including: acceptance and evaluation of new school charter applications; ongoing oversight and evaluation of all charter schools subsequently authorized by SUNY; reporting to the public on each school’s performance and progress; and conducting a comprehensive evaluation when a school applies to renew its charter.