



Charter Schools Institute
The State University of New York

Summary of Findings and Recommendations

*Application to establish the
New Visions Charter High School
for Advanced Math and Science*

September 14, 2010

Executive Summary

The New Visions Charter High School for Advanced Math and Science (“New Visions – Math and Science”) application was submitted to the Charter Schools Institute (the “Institute”) by lead applicant and community resident Julia Chun on May 3, 2010. The school would be located in New York City Community School District (“CSD”) 7 (Bronx) in public school space granted by the New York City Department of Education (the “NYCDOE”). New Visions – Math and Science would open in September 2011 with 125 students in 9th grade. The school would open with five classes of 25 students and add one grade level each year until the school’s fourth year when it would reach a 9th – 12th grade high school configuration with 566 students. The school’s mission would be, “to prepare vulnerable young people to graduate with a Regents diploma through a rigorous curriculum that is grounded in the principles of positive youth development.”

The application for New Visions – Math and Science was submitted simultaneously with the application for the New Visions Charter High School for Humanities with the same proposed board of trustees and in partnership with New Visions for Public Schools, Inc (“New Visions”) a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization with authority to do business in New York. Each school proposes to contract with New Visions for charter management services and would base its academic programs on the same rigorous New York State (“State”) curriculum, but would address its unique themes (math and science, and humanities, respectively) through interdisciplinary anchor projects. The applicants for these schools and representatives from New Visions have indicated that the approval of both schools would allow for peer interaction such that each school would be able to share best practices and resources with the other in an effort to harness best practices and build a network model.

The Institute recommends that the Board of Trustees of the State University of New York (the “SUNY Trustees”) approve the charter application for the New Visions Charter High School for Math and Science.

Background and Description

The Institute conducted a rigorous review of the 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 curriculum. The application has also been subject to a fiscal and legal soundness review conducted by the Institute staff. Pursuant to its review protocols, the Institute has met with the applicant, proposed board of trustees 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. The Institute also conducted additional due diligence with respect to the proposed partner organization, New Visions, including, but not limited to, extensive fiscal and legal document review, a review of the effectiveness of educational services provided by New Visions, and an interview with the organization’s leadership. Further, SUNY Trustee Pedro Noguera had an opportunity to interview the lead applicant and founding board members.

The key design elements of New Visions – Math and Science are:

- use of effective research-based curricula and assessments to diagnose students’ needs and tailor instruction accordingly;

- Board of Regent’s sequence of courses in all applicable subject areas;
- core focus skills mapped to Common Core Standards;
- established link between in-school experience, college and job-related skills development;
- student access to courses at local colleges and universities;
- student internship opportunities;
- structured collaboration with peer schools in the New Visions network;
- development of a community asset map to guide service learning opportunities for students; and
- extended school day and year including a three-week mandatory summer program.

New Visions – Math and Science’s academic program is designed to stimulate student’s creativity and to develop their ability to learn through an inquiry process. The schools would be modeled after the New Century High Schools and the work of other charter management organizations around the country. The proposed school would offer the Board of Regents’ sequences in all areas that include the core focus skills being mapped to the Common Core Standards in English language arts, social studies, mathematics, and science. The school's curriculum would also include physical education, art, Spanish and a College and Career Readiness course.

The school would have an extended school day and year that includes a three-week summer school program for struggling students and a four-week, credit bearing summer bridge program for entering 9th and 10th grade students. The school founders also anticipate providing courses at local junior colleges and universities, and establishing the link for students between in-school experience, college and job-related skills development. The school would implement a trimester schedule with the school day starting at 8:30 a.m. and ending at 4:30 p.m. with classes lasting 60 minutes. All students would also attend mandatory remediation or enrichment classes during the first 45 minutes of each school day. After-school activities would occur between 4:30 p.m. and 6:00 p.m.

To prepare teachers for inquiry-based instruction and to ensure the engagement of the full school community, teachers at the school would participate in a cohort inquiry team. The cohort inquiry team would systematically study the connection between the pedagogical strategy the team believes best meets student needs and actual student outcomes. In other words, the cohort inquiry team would analyze both qualitative and quantitative student data to understand student needs; design, implement and refine effective learning strategies in collaboration with colleagues; and evaluate student progress based on evidence from student work. This formal and systematic inquiry work would become the basis for professional development and essential to certifying teachers through the schools’ embedded teacher leadership certification program. In addition, representatives of the cohort inquiry teams would join the principal, assistant principal and other key instructional and operational staff on the school-wide organizational inquiry team that would meet monthly. The

organizational inquiry team would analyze and coordinate the various streams of inquiry across the school to determine the best use of resources and whether the school is on track to meet its goals.

The board of trustees of New Visions – Math and Science would contract with New Visions as the school’s management organization. New Visions founded the New Century High School Initiative in 2002 and has worked with the NYCDOE to open 89 small New Century high schools. Independent evaluations of those schools have found that the schools graduated more students on time than did larger New York City public schools serving demographically similar populations of students. For example, the application stated that in 2009 the graduation rate for New Century High Schools was 72.6% as compared with 62.7% from other schools city-wide. In addition, in 2007, New Visions was selected by the New York City Schools’ Chancellor to serve as a Partnership Support Organization (PSO). As a PSO, New Visions for Public Schools provides instructional and operational support to a network of 76 schools serving over 35,000 students in all five boroughs. New Visions would provide New Visions – Math and Science with back-office support and fundraising assistance, as well as leadership and teacher development, curriculum design, testing and assessment, instruction for students with special needs (including students with disabilities and students who are English language learners), and college and career readiness. Over the school’s initial charter period, New Visions would be paid a management fee of approximately 8% of the school’s per pupil revenues. (As with all management contracts, the Institute will review the final contract pursuant to the charter and on behalf of the SUNY Trustees).

New Visions – Math and Science’s by-laws indicate that board membership can range from five to eleven members. The proposed initial members of the school board of trustees are set forth below.

1. **John Sanchez** – Executive Director of East Side House Settlement in the Bronx.
2. **Mirza Sanchez-Medina** – Principal of Manhattan Bridges High School. Former Assistant Principal of the Martin Luther King Jr. High School.
3. **Arisleyda Urna** – Founding Principal of the Academy for Language and Technology. Previously served as a professional developer and as a native language arts teacher.
4. **Ariel Flores** – Educator for Lincoln Center Institute. Chair of the Junior Board of the Enterprise Foundation. Former elementary school teacher.
5. **Caroline Kennedy** – New Visions board member.
6. **Gary L. Ginsberg** – Executive Vice-President of Time Warner, Inc. Former Executive Vice President of Global Marketing and Corporate Affairs at News Corporation. New Visions board member.
7. **Vacant** – Seat reserved for the parent of an enrolled student.
8. **Vacant** – Seat reserved for a representative of a Bronx community organization.
9. **Ronald Chaluisan** – ex officio, non-voting trustee – Vice President, New Visions Charter Unit. Previously Director of Small Schools for New Visions. Former Founding Principal of the New York City Museum School.

New Visions – Math and Science anticipates being granted facility space by the NYCDOE. The founding team stated that they have been in contact with the NYCDOE, and the NYCDOE has provided a letter of support to the applicant. The application did not include alternative space plans should NYCDOE not be able to identify public school space for the proposed school. If the school does not secure NYCDOE space it may have to take a planning year in order to find suitable private facilities.

The fiscal impact of New Visions – Math and Science 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
125 (2011-12 school year – year 1)	\$13,527	\$1,690,875	\$18.447	0.009%
566 (2015-16 school year – year 5)	\$15,225	\$8,617,213	\$19.403	0.044%

The calculations assume that there will be an annual increase in per-pupil aid of three percent in each year of the proposed 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 charter period, illustrates the maximum impact of the 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 fiscal impact of the proposed school on both the New York City School District 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 comment from these entities.

Evidence in support of New Visions – Math and Science included numerous letters from local elected officials, community groups, community members, and charter schools, as well as over 70 signatures from community members in favor of opening the school. Examples include the support of the following individuals and organizations, as presented in the application: Bronx City Councilmember Maria del Carmen Arroyo, Manhattan City Councilmember Robert Jackson, New York State Senator Jeffrey K. Klein, Bronx City Councilmember Annabel Palma, Bronx City

Councilmember Joel Rivera, Amber Charter School (authorized by the SUNY Trustees), Bronx Community College, BronxWorks, Dream Yard, East Side House Settlement, FECS Heal and Human Services System, New Settlement Apartments, Southeast Bronx Community Organization Development, Inc., and the Woman’s Housing and Economic Development Corporation.

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 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 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) would 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 comprehensive plan to assess student achievement through the use of State tests, externally-verifiable standardized tests and other diagnostic assessments;
 - design elements to support students “at-risk” of academic failure;
 - the staffing of classes with highly qualified teachers;
 - the presentation of an academic program with a strong focus on English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies, as well as physical education, art, Spanish, and college and career readiness courses;
 - the use of increased opportunities for “inquiry” and “challenge based” learning opportunities through math and science focused projects to encourage the use of varied and innovative teaching methods;
 - the conscientious support of teachers through the use of cohort inquiry teams;
 - the inclusion of embedded teacher and leadership certification programs to create professional opportunities for teachers;
 - the modeling of best practices used by other successful traditional public schools and practices by successful charter management organizations; and
 - a commitment to providing an educational program focused on outcomes, not inputs.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on its review and findings, the Institute recommends that the SUNY Board of Trustees approve the application for the New Visions Charter High School for Advanced Math and Science to open in the Bronx in September of 2011.

New Visions Charter High School for Advanced Math and Science

Basic Identification Information

Lead Applicant(s):	Julie Chun
Management Co.:	New Visions for Public Schools, Inc.
Other Partners:	None
Location (District):	New York City Community School District 7
Student Pop./Grades:	Opening with 125 students in 9 th grade; growing to 566 students in 9 th through 12 th grades
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.