



Charter Schools Institute  
*The State University of New York*

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Summary of  
Findings and Recommendations

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*Application to establish on Staten Island  
The New World Preparatory Charter School*

September 9, 2009

## **Executive Summary**

The application for New World Preparatory Charter School (“New World”) to be located in Staten Island, New York was submitted to the Charter Schools Institute (the “Institute”) by lead applicant John P. Tobin on May 4, 2009. The applicant and founding team propose to open New World in September 2010; the school will serve 125 students in sixth grade in its first year and grow to serve 375 students in sixth through eighth grades during the term of its charter. The mission of the proposed charter school is to provide an exceptional education to students by employing research-proven strategies and to graduate students with a strong academic foundation, an awareness of the needs of others, and social and emotional readiness to succeed in high school and graduate from college. New World 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”). It would be the first SUNY authorized charter school on Staten Island.

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

## **Background and Description**

The application to establish the New World Preparatory 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 The application was withdrawn at that time, and the applicant used the Institute’s feedback to revise and further develop the application prior to resubmitting it as part of the summer 2009 cycle. 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. Pursuant to its review protocols, the Institute has met with the founding board and the other members of the founding team. 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. Lastly, member(s) of the Board of Trustees’ Charter Schools Committee have had an opportunity to interview the lead applicant and proposed board of trustees.

The New World Preparatory Charter School would open in September 2010 with a maximum enrollment of 125 students in 6<sup>th</sup> grade. In each of the following two years, the school would grow by one grade (125 students in each grade) to the proposed maximum student enrollment of 375 students in 6-8<sup>th</sup> grades for the charter term. The founders envision expanding the school in subsequent charter terms to include 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grades.

The proposed New World Preparatory Charter School would be located close to the Statue of Liberty and designed to symbolize a “golden door” where diversity is not just accepted, but celebrated. The school’s key design elements would include: academic rigor and relevance; personalization; strong professional development; and engaging families and the larger school community as critical partners. In particular, the school’s curriculum would be research-based and align with the state’s 28 learning standards. The school would have an extended school day with more time on task to master academic

subjects.

One unique feature of the proposed charter school is that its board has chosen a social justice framework as a strategy for engaging students in a curriculum that has relevance to their lives and interests. Therefore, in addition to the core subject areas of English language arts, mathematics, science and social studies, the school's academic program will also include Spanish, health, physical education and consumer sciences, career development and occupational studies, and the arts (music, theater, and visual arts). Social justice issues from current events, local situations and content specific connections will be selected by teachers and included in their curriculum maps in order to be incorporated in each unit plan as appropriate.

The New World Preparatory Charter School's academic program would also provide structured time to support the social and emotional needs of each student. Students at all grade levels would participate in an "advisory program." The advisory program would function to further develop relationships that support learning. Each teacher would be assigned a group of approximately 18 students that s/he would advise over the student's three years at the school.

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, 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 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 been eligible for renewal have been renewed: one was awarded a short term (2 year) renewal followed by a subsequent full (5 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 charter school managed by VSI, New Covenant Charter School, is eligible for renewal this fall after receiving a one-year renewal with conditions from the Charter Schools Committee

The school'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 schools.

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

1. *John Tobin* (lead applicant) – Former New York City Department of Education teacher, coach, Dean, Assistant Principal, Principal, Administrative Superintendent, and Executive Assistant to three Chancellors.
2. *Araceli Arizmende* – Parent, active member of Spanish speaking community, member of the advisory board of Las Senoras del Centro, Las Senoras de Santa Maria domestic workers collective and of the Congregational Committee of St. Paul’s Church Latino Community.
3. *Reverend Michael Flynn* – Pastor of Mount Carmel St. Benedicta Parish, which includes a grammar school, Pastor of St. Mary of the Assumption Catholic Church on Staten Island. Involved in the founding of EPNE (Estudios Pastorals para la Nueva Evangelizacion), a mobile school for Hispanic Lay Leadership. Graduate of St. Peter’s College in Jersey City.
4. *Carin Guaresci* – Professor of Literacy and Project Manager of the New Teacher Academy for Wagner College in Staten Island. Regional Literacy Coordinator for Voyager Expanded Learning centered in Dallas, TX. Several years teaching experience including Supervising Teacher for the Columbia University Teachers College, Consultant for Community School District 23, ALTA Trainer/Consultant for the Administrator Leadership Training Academy, and more.
5. *Beverly Peterson* – Specialist Professor at Monmouth University. Filmmaker. Former Adjunct Professor at Hunter College.
6. *Reverend Terry Troia* – Executive Director for Project Hospitality. Former Residential Manager, Association for Children with Retarded Mental Development.
7. *Emma Vidals* – Founder, Board Member, and current Vice President of El Centro del Inmigrante. Founder, Board Member, President of Las Senoras de Santa Maria Domestic Workers Collective, member of Committee Guadalupano Committee through St. Mary’s of the Assumption Church, member of Association Tepeyac, Staten Island representative to a city-wide Mexican not-for-profit, and more.
8. *Peter Weinman* – Various legal experiences as an Associate at Gaines & Fishler, LLP., Corash & Hollender, and Lee & Amtzis, Zucker & Kwestel, LLP; member of New York and New Jersey bars.
9. *Denis Kelleher* – Founder and CEO of Wall Street Access, a diversified financial services organization.
10. *John (Jack) C. Minogue* – GED teacher at and treasurer of the Staten Island Employment Education Consortium, a computer training program. Also a sports reporter/columnist for the Staten Island Advance. Retired in January 1994 from the New York City Board of Education’s Auxiliary Services for High School division.
11. PTO President (*ex officio*, non voting).

The applicant and founding team have identified a facility to lease at One Teleport Drive, Staten Island, New York. The building is owned by The Nicotra Group, L.L.C. The proposed facility is an existing, newly constructed building which will be built out according to the specifications of the proposed charter school. The founding team intends to enter into a ten-year lease with an option to extend the lease for an additional five years. The applicant and founding team have made arrangements to terminate the lease at the end of any given academic year with 90 days’ notice.

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

<b>Number of Students</b>	<b>Per Pupil Aid</b>	<b>Total Dollars to Charter School from NYCDOE</b>	<b>Total Budget for NYCDOE ( in billions)</b>	<b>% of Total Budget</b>
120 (2010-11 School Year- year 1)	<b>\$12,443</b>	<b>\$1,928,806</b>	<b>17.3</b>	<b>0.009%</b>
360 (2014-15 School Year - year 5)	<b>\$14,557</b>	<b>\$5,481,984</b>	<b>19.9</b>	<b>0.027%</b>

The calculations conservatively assume that there will be a modest (4%) increase in per pupil aid over the life of the proposed charter school 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.

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 NYCDOE as well as private schools in the geographic area of the proposed school and as of September 9, 2009, had received no comment from these entities. (Copies of the notification letters are on file in the Albany office of the Institute.)

As a gauge of parent and community support, the founding team gathered petitions and received letters of support from a variety of community partners. The group collected 125 signatures from parents of children of the appropriate age to attend the proposed charter school, should it be authorized. In addition, the application included numerous letters of support from community based organizations (such as Catholic Charities, Community Health Center of Richmond, ElCentro Del Inmigrante, Project Hospitality, Jewish Community Center of Staten Island, St. Philips Baptist Church, and the Staten Island Immigrants Council to name a few), an educational institution (Wagner College) and several legislators, including New York City Councilmen (Kenneth C. Mitchell and Vincent M. Ignizio), members of the State Assembly and Senate (Michael J. Cusick, Matthew J. Titone, Lou Tobacco and Andrew J. Lanza), as well as the Congress of the United States (Michael E. McMahon).

### **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 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 the 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 Board of Trustees of the State University of New York approve the application for New World Preparatory Charter School to open in Staten Island.

# New World Preparatory Charter School

## Basic Identification Information

Lead Applicant:	John P. Tobin
Management Co.:	Victory Schools, Inc.
Other Partners:	None
Location (District):	Staten Island, New York
Student Pop./Grades:	Opening with grades 125 students in 6 <sup>th</sup> grade and growing to include 375 students in 6 <sup>th</sup> – 8 <sup>th</sup> grades
Opening Date:	September 2010

## School District of Proposed Location Profile

New York City School District 31			
Enrollment (2007-08):		56,327	
Percent (2007-08):			
White:		54%	
African-American:		16%	
Hispanic:		22%	
Asian, Other:		8%	
Percent Participating in Federal Lunch Program (2007-08):			
Free Lunch:		37%	
Reduced Price Lunch:		10%	
Percent Proficient on State Exams (2008-09)			
English Language Arts		Mathematics	
Grade	Percent Proficient	Grade	Percent Proficient
3	75.9	3	93.1
4	75.5	4	88.4
5	82.3	5	91.3
6	76.3	6	81.4
7	79.4	7	85.5
8	63.2	8	75.5

Source: demographic data is from the New York State Accountability and Overview Report 2007-08; test data are from the 2008-09 results released on the State Education Department website.