



New York State Education Department Charter School Office

Charter School Application Summary, Findings, and Recommendation

*Application in response to the
New York State Education Department 2012 Request for Proposals to
Establish Charter Schools Authorized by the Board of Regents
to establish the proposed:*

South Bronx Classical Charter School II

June 2012

Summary of the Proposed South Bronx Classical Charter School II

Name of Charter School	South Bronx Classical Charter School II
Lead Applicant(s)	Lester Long
District of Location	Bronx, CSD 7, 8, 9, 11, 12
Opening Date	Summer/Fall 2013
Projected Charter Term	September 2013- June 30, 2018
Management Company	NA
Partners	South Bronx Classical Charter School
Facility	Seeking private or public co-location space
Projected Enrollment and Grade Span during Charter Term	Opening with 120 students in grades K through 1 in 2013-14, growing to 360 students in grades K through 5 in 2017-2018.
Maximum Enrollment and Grade Span	540 students in grades K through 8
Mission Statement	<i>“South Bronx Classical Charter School II prepares K-8th grade students in the South Bronx to excel in college preparatory high schools. Through a classical curriculum and highly-structured setting, students become liberated scholars and citizens of impeccable character who achieve proficiency in and advanced mastery of New York State Performance Standards.”</i>

South Bronx Classical Charter School II will replicate and partner with the South Bronx Classical Charter School in NYC Community School District 12. South Bronx Classical Charter School, authorized by the New York City Department of Education, opened in 2006 and currently serves 330 students in grades K through 5. The school’s charter was renewed in 2011 and revised in 2012 to serve students through grade 8.

The terms of the proposed partnership between the South Bronx Classical Charter School and the replication school, South Bronx Classical Charter School II, are described in a letter submitted with the application by C. Stephen Baldwin, founding member and board chair of South Bronx Classical Charter School. Mr. Baldwin describes his support for the prospective affiliation between the two schools and expects that the partnership will “create real and lasting synergies by leveraging the work, experience and measured success we enjoy at SBCCS, to further our impact on more families and students in our community.” He states that the partnership would allow combined and cost-effective teacher development sessions, bookkeeping and financial services, curriculum and assessment, and provide for “leadership pipelines for staff.”

The applicant provides the following information about the academic achievement and progress of the original school:

- In 2011, South Bronx Classical Charter School was the most improved public school based on the New York City Progress Report, with straight A’s; currently 97th percentile.
- Highest performing elementary school in CSD 12 for three years.
- Among New York State’s fiscally strong non-CMO charter schools, having had clean audit letters for two years.

The academic model of South Bronx Classical Charter School II will closely resemble that of South Bronx Classical Charter School. With a focus on the fundamentals of reading, writing, and math, the proposed school will offer character education, instruction in Latin beginning in third grade, and debate starting in fourth grade. Consistent with a liberal arts education, the school seeks to provide students with a diverse array of skills and appreciation in art and music. The school's objectives are to offer structure, academic rigor and "college ready" curricula to ensure college and career readiness through academic and ethical knowledge and skill.

A key design element of the school is the classical framework of the academic program. This includes a focus on a core curriculum, the development of strong literacy skills, along with numeracy skill, knowledge and an understanding of elementary facts, and a lesser emphasis on "higher level" thinking until later grades. Subjects will be explicitly and sequentially taught. Within this classical framework, the educational program is based on two principles:

- All children can achieve academic success when provided with a rigorous and organized curriculum, effective teaching, and a structured environment.
- Development of responsible, compassionate, productive citizens is a fundamental aim of education.

Additional design elements include:

- A rigorous, organized curriculum aligned with the Common Core and State Standards.
- Effective teachers, supported with extensive professional development and competitive salaries.
- A structured environment with clear and explicit expectations that will lead to the development of respectful, compassionate, and productive citizens.
- An emphasis on family engagement.

South Bronx Classical Charter School II will use and refine curricula that were previously developed by the existing school. The planning team has conducted research on the proposed academic programs and teaching methods to assure alignment with the mission and goals of the replication school and to meet the needs of the community they will be serving. The core academic scope and sequence will be drawn from the following commercial curricula: Open Court Reading, Saxon Math, Core Knowledge History and FOSS Science. The applicant group states that curricula will be supplemented as necessary in order to best support struggling learners.

A school-wide, data-driven instructional model will help to inform decisions about curriculum and instruction. The school plans to use a combination of objective data including criterion-referenced (State tests), norm-referenced, and interim teacher-developed assessment instruments. During the capacity interview, the founding group explained how data will be used to implement tiered intervention strategies for at-risk scholars. Students assessed at the tier III level will receive targeted intensive instruction through work with the learning specialist individually or in a small group for fifty minutes per day, five days per week.

The proposed school calendar includes 191 days of instruction. The daily schedule is structured to offer a longer school day, beginning at 8:00 a.m. and ending at 4:30 p.m. Each day includes 180 minutes of English Language Arts instruction and 120 minutes of Mathematics instruction. The school will offer after-school supports in order to assist struggling students, challenge advanced students, modify behavior for some students and provide engaging activities for those who wish to be involved in soccer, karate, or dance, as a sample of offerings.

South Bronx Classical Charter School II proposes to serve students residing in the South Bronx, particularly in the Longwood, Hunts Point, Morrisania and surrounding neighborhoods. These areas are

highly diverse and the demographic statistics vary greatly. As a whole, Bronx County has the highest poverty, child poverty, murder, rape, robbery and pediatric asthma rate in New York State. The written application states that approximately 17% of the students in the neighborhoods to be served are designated English Language Learners and 16% are identified as students with disabilities.

The applicant group conducted a three-tiered campaign to solicit community input for the charter school application. All South Bronx Classical Charter School stakeholders were invited to a meeting to learn about the proposal for replication school and to provide comment and feedback. Comments and letters suggesting what improvements might be made when launching a new school are included in the application. Members of the general public, as well as neighborhood residents and elected officials, were invited to provide comments on the proposal. The applicant group also engaged outside education experts to review and comment on the proposed school design, including the academic plan. The applicant group continues to invite feedback and suggestions from the community through a public comment email address.

The Draft Admissions and Enrollment Policies submitted with the application establish enrollment preferences in accordance with the NYS Charter Schools Act: returning students, siblings and residents of CSD 3. The school plans to reserve 10% of open seats in a given year for student transfers under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) School Choice Program. In order to maintain school culture, the school intends to admit new students into Kindergarten through grade 1 each year, as space permits. The application discusses plan to meet the required enrollment and retention targets for special student populations, stating that the school will set aggressive enrollment targets and will use personalized and community-based marketing strategies to achieve the targets. The application also presents information about planned strategies to reduce student attrition through clear parent communication and transportation support for families that move some distance from the school.

The founding group for South Bronx Classical Charter School II consists of Lester Long (Executive Director of South Bronx Classical Charter School and Lead Applicant for the replication school) and four other individuals with key roles at the existing school. As required, the application includes a set of draft by-laws and a code of ethics. The replication school will be governed by a board of trustees comprised of five to thirteen individuals and the board will maintain four standing committees: Executive, Finance/Facilities, Education and Development.

Additionally, a School Trustee Background Information form, Statement of Assurance and resume or curriculum vitae was provided for each of the initial members of the board of trustees. The nine proposed initial trustees for South Bronx Classical Charter School II are the nine current trustees for South Bronx Classical Charter School. The future plan is to actively seek out additional members with experience in community development in the South Bronx. The existing group has a range of expertise in the areas of education, law, finance, fundraising, governance and management, real estate and charter school start-up and operations.

The nine proposed initial members of the board of trustees are described below:

- **Stephen Baldwin**, proposed Board Chair, is a founding trustee of South Bronx Classical Charter School and has served as the Board Chair since 2006. His education experience includes teaching as a New York City Teaching Fellow in a South Bronx elementary school. Mr. Baldwin has served as the Executive Director of the Learning Disabilities Association of New York and Chief of the Population Branch at the United Nations. He has earned an MS in Elementary Education from Hunter College and a Juris Doctor from Yale University Law School.
- **Kathryn Heleniak**, proposed Board Vice-Chair, has been the Vice-Chair for South Bronx Classical Charter School since 2008. She is a professor of Art History at Fordham University, a

position she has held since 1987. For the past ten years, she has been involved with a community-based non-profit organization which provides legal services to women and children in need.

- **J. Kevin Murphy**, proposed Board Secretary, is a founding trustee for South Bronx Classical Charter School and has filled the role of Board Secretary since 2006. He spent 32 years in financial management (investments, insurance, and treasury) prior to earning a Master's Degree in Elementary Education at Hunter College. Mr. Murphy has been teaching for eleven years and is currently working as a K through grade 3 math specialist in East Harlem.
- **Melissa Brown**, the proposed Board Treasurer, has been the Treasurer for South Bronx Classical Charter School since 2009. Ms. Brown is a Vice President at Barclay's Capital, serving as an Investment Banking Associate in the Restructuring and Finance Group.
- **Louisa B. Childs** currently serves as a trustee for South Bronx Classical Charter School. She currently works for a firm in New York City as part of White Collar Defense and Government Investigations and also serves as Counsel at the Dwight International School.
- **William Higgins** is a founding trustee for South Bronx Classical Charter School. His experiences include real estate development and the creation of strategic partnerships. He is a 20-year veteran of the Navy (served in Operation Desert Storm), a former FBI agent, and a former teacher in the South Bronx.
- **Larry Hirsch** is a founding trustee for South Bronx Classical Charter School. His experience includes community engagement and political advocacy. He currently serves as a Senior CPD Representative at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and has extensive experience in government support for the disadvantaged.
- **Kristi E. Jacques** has been a trustee for South Bronx Classical Charter School since 2010. A graduate of Duke University of Law, she as an Associate at King & Spalding LLP, where she specializes in business litigation and international arbitration.
- **James R. Maher, Jr.**, has been a trustee for South Bronx Classical Charter School since 2010. He serves as Vice President at BlackRock, Inc., where he focuses on Real Estate Acquisition and Finance.

The proposed board of trustees for South Bronx Classical Charter School II will employ the Executive Director of the original school, who will become a full-time employee divided equally between the two schools. The Executive Director will be supervised and supported by the board and will be ultimately responsible for the implementation of the school's mission. Three other individuals currently employed at the original school are proposed to assume the roles of School Director, Director of Business and Operations, and Literacy Coach at South Bronx Classical Charter School II. The School Director will hire additional instructional and operational support staff, including a Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Dean of Students, Special Education Coordinator, as well as teaching faculty.

The design for the operation of the school is based on the Matrix Organizational Model and structured to leverage a high level of teacher support, development and effectiveness. Organizationally, teachers will be supported by Grade Team Leaders and the Director of Curriculum and Instruction. The founding group expects that faculty and staff at South Bronx Classical Charter School II will be selected from among pool of current employees and outside recruitment. The School Director will begin the process of staff recruitment and hiring in January 2013.

As incentives to retain teachers, the school design for South Bronx Classical Charter School II incorporates competitive teacher salary and benefit packages, student tutoring support from college students and extensive professional development opportunities. First year teacher salaries will be comparable to those of the NYC Department of Education teachers, and salaries at the charter school will have the potential to increase significantly over time, based on performance. The teacher leader model

will be a support for teachers and allow for professional growth, as will a culture of professional respect, supportive administration, and high expectations.

A private facility for the school has not yet been identified. The founding group intends to request co-location facility space from the NYC Department of Education for the two to three year incubation period. However, in acknowledgement of the scarcity of suitable co-location space, the board will continue to investigate leased space for the school. They have identified a number of potential sites and are pursuing an agreement to lease space from the New York City Roman Catholic Archdiocese. The ultimate goal is to purchase/lease a building and sublease a portion to another entity, most likely another charter school.

Projected Fiscal and Programmatic Impact on District of Location

The applicant provided an assessment of the school’s potential fiscal and programmatic impact on public and non-public schools in the area, indicating that the fiscal impact of the South Bronx Classical Charter School II on NYC Department of Education public schools is expected to be nominal (less than .01% of the total NYC Department of Education budget). The impact on enrollment in public, parochial and charter schools in the area is expected to be insignificant, as most schools are either fully enrolled, over-capacity or with waiting lists.

The New York State Education Department (“Department”) also conducted additional analysis on the projected fiscal impact of the Harlem Hebrew Language Academy Charter School on its district of residence, the New York City School District (“NYCSD”), summarized below.

Year	Number of Students Enrolled in Charter Schools Per Year¹	Charter School Basic Tuition Rate²	Total Charter School Basic Tuition Only	Estimated District Special Education Payment¹	Total District General Fund Budget³	Percent of District Budget
2013-14	120	\$14,364	\$1,723,719	\$124,680	\$19,463,873,957	0.009%
2017-18	360	\$18,265	\$6,575,399	\$311,700	\$19,463,873,957	0.035%

The calculations above assume that there will be annual increase in the charter school basic tuition rate in the charter period (2013-14 thru 2017-18) of 6.19%. Per the latest NYCSD Financial Status Report⁴ (FSR) dated March 2012 and published on the NYCDOE website, the NYCDOE is projecting its NYCSD budget to increase at a rate of 1.59% over the next three years. In order to conservatively avoid underestimating the fiscal impact that the charter school will have on the district going forward, the Department is assuming no growth in the NYCSD budget during the duration of the school’s charter.⁵

¹ Source: South Bronx Classical Charter School II Application.

² Source: Education Law §2856(1)(a)(iii) and NYS Education Department Office of State Aid Charter School Basic Tuition Rate Analysis, September 2011.

³ Source: New York City DOE Financial Status Report March 2012; <http://schools.nyc.gov/Offices/DBOR/FSR/default.htm>.

⁴ NYCSD’s Total District General Fund Budget includes federal special education revenue and other federal grants and/or funds provided.

⁵ Additional notes: While the school has included other federal grants and/or funds that may flow through the district to be received by the school in its proposed budget, this analysis does not account for these sources of potential revenue, nor does it include the value of certain services (e.g., transportation) that the district is required to provide the charter school. However, the analysis also does not account for district per-pupil expense and overall resource savings that is likely to result from a significant reduction in the number of students attending district public schools attend the nonpublic schools located in the school district.

It should be noted that, given the nature of district-based per-pupil funding, the estimates made by the Department in conducting this analysis are subject to unpredictable financial fluctuations. For forecasting purposes, the fiscal impact of this charter school on the district in which it will be located assumes that: there will be no fluctuations in the grade levels served by existing charter schools over the course of the charter term; the charter school will be able to meet its projected maximum enrollment; all students will come from NYCSD; and, all students will attend every day for a 1.0 FTE.

The specifics of the school’s enrollment composition is still unavailable; however, the Department acknowledges that the programmatic and fiscal impact of the proposed charter school on other public and private schools in the same area will also be influenced by the proportion of charter school enrollees that would have attended a same-district public or private school had it not been for the presence of this charter school.

Below, for your reference, please find additional data on New York City Community School Districts 7, 8, 9, 11, 12.⁶

New York City Community School District Data

Enrollment Data	CSD 7	CSD 8	CSD 9	CSD 10	CSD 11	CSD 12
Total District Enrollment:	19,187	30,515	34,112	55,680	37,962	22,587
Grade K through 5 Enrollment:	7880	13,569	17,151	24,936	18,936	11,156
White:	1%	6%	1%	6%	7%	1%
Black/African-American:	29%	26%	32%	19%	44%	28%
Hispanic/Latino:	69%	63%	66%	67%	42%	68%
American Indian/Alaskan Native:	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%	1%
Asian/Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander:	1%	5%	1%	8%	6%	2%
Free/Reduced Priced Lunch:	90%	84%	89%	84%	79%	91%
English Language Learners:	19%	12%	26%	22%	10%	20%
Students with Disabilities:	14%	14%	14%	14%	14%	14%

2010-11 State Assessments (% proficient)						
Assessment and Grade level	CSD 7	CSD 8	CSD 9	CSD 10	CSD 11	CSD 12
English Language Arts - Grade 3	29%	36%	31%	38%	41%	30%
English Language Arts - Grade 4	32%	41%	33%	40%	44%	35%
English Language Arts - Grade 5	29%	40%	29%	35%	44%	30%
Mathematics - Grade 3	34%	46%	39%	46%	44%	36%
Mathematics - Grade 4	41%	55%	43%	52%	57%	46%
Mathematics - Grade 5	40%	57%	45%	53%	58%	44%

Public Hearing and Public Comment

As required by the Charter Schools Act, the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) held a hearing on Wednesday, April 4, 2012 to solicit comments from the community concerning the proposed charter school. The lead applicant presented information about the school to the eleven individuals present. There were no public comments.

⁶ Source: 2010-2011 New York State School Report Card (<https://reportcards.nysed.gov/view.php?schedist=district&county=none&year=2011>) and Special Education School District Data Profile for 2009-10 (<http://eservices.nysed.gov/sepubrep/>).

The Department directly notified the Chancellor of the NYCDOE, as well as public and private schools in the region, of the charter school application, and issued an open call for written public comment via the State Education Department Charter School Office website. The Chancellor was contacted by letter and invited to comment directly. Chancellor Walcott submitted a letter in support of South Bronx Classical Charter School II, noting: “This proposal is a replication of an existing NYC DOE authorized high-quality charter school. Chancellor Dennis Walcott recommends this charter application to support the children of New York City. With limited space in the South Bronx, we recommend that they continue to look for private space. We will work with them on identifying public space options and opportunities if available.”

Application Review Process

On January 3, 2012, as required by the New York State Charter Schools Act, the New York State Education Department (the “Department”) released the *2012 Request for Proposals (“RFP”) to Establish Charter Schools Authorized by the Board of Regents*. In this cycle, the Department could legally award 81 new charters per Education Law subdivision 2852(9), 49 of which reflect charters that were available but not awarded during the 2010 and 2011 RFP cycles. The charter school application process utilized by the Board of Regents and the Department during the 2012 RFP cycle is multi-stage and designed to ensure that any charter school applicant presented to the Board of Regents for possible approval demonstrates a detailed and complete school design plan that:

- includes a clear plan to meet or exceed enrollment and retention targets for students with disabilities, students who are English language learners, and students who are eligible to participate in the federal free reduced-price lunch program;
- provides evidence of public outreach that conforms to the process prescribed by the Regents for the purpose of soliciting and incorporating community input regarding the proposed charter school;
- meets all requirements set forth in the Charter Schools Act as well as all other applicable laws, rules, regulations;
- demonstrates the ability to operate the school in an educationally and fiscally sound manner;
- is likely to improve student learning and achievement and materially further the purposes of the Act; and
- would have a significant educational benefit to the students expected to attend the proposed charter school.

In addition, the applicant group and founding board of trustees must demonstrate appropriate knowledge, capacity, and abilities to effectively create, maintain, and oversee a high-quality charter school.

During this 2012 cycle, 30 letters of intent were received in January 2012 and, after an initial review process, 20 applicants were invited to submit full applications. The Department received thirteen full applications, including the application for South Bronx Classical Charter School II.

To assess whether to recommend approval or denial of the charter application to the Board of Regents, the Department established multi-person review panels to thoroughly evaluate each full application. Each of these panels was comprised of professional expert consultants, peer reviewers who are school leaders and educators active in charter and public schools in New York, as well as qualified Department staff members. The review panel members reviewed, rated, and commented on each section of the application according to the criteria published in the Application Kit.

Department staff conducted a two-hour capacity interview with four (of five) members of the applicant group and five (of nine) initial board members for the proposed school on Tuesday, April 3, 2012.

Questions posed to the proposed initial trustees included general questions around New York State Charter School Law, roles and responsibilities of the school community and the board to the community and various stakeholder groups as well to as the Board of Regents as authorizer. To fully understand the proposed academic program, governance role and fiscal viability of the proposed school, targeted questions were asked to clarify information provided in the full application.

The responses demonstrated adequate knowledge and grasp of key areas. Members of the applicant group as a whole and individually demonstrated knowledge of the charter school application and the proposed school. Structures, systems, protocols and procedures are in place to permit the board to effectively govern the school. The applicants addressed questions posed with specific and detailed information that presented a clear, realistic picture of how the school expects to operate.

Findings

Based on the comprehensive review of the application and of the applicant, founding group, and proposed board of trustees, the Department makes the following findings:

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.⁷ This finding is based on the following (among other things):
 - the applicant has included in the application the information required by §2851(2)
 - the proposed charter school would meet or exceed enrollment and retention targets, as prescribed by the NYS Board of Regents,⁸ of students with disabilities, English language learners, and students who are eligible applicants for the federal free and reduced price lunch program as required by Education Law subdivision 2852(9-a)(b)(i)
 - the applicant has conducted public outreach to solicit community input regarding the proposed charter school and to address comments received from the impacted community concerning the educational and programmatic needs of students in conformity with Education Law subdivision 2852(9-a)(b)(ii).

2. The applicant has demonstrated the ability to operate the proposed charter school in an educationally and fiscally sound manner.⁹ This finding is based on the following (among other things):
 - The presentation in the application of a sound description of key features that are core to the school's overall design, and which rigorously addresses the criteria outlined in the Department's RFP in the areas of mission; key design elements; enrollment, recruitment and retention; and community to be served.
 - The presentation in the application of a sound educational plan, which rigorously addresses the criteria outlined in the Department's RFP in the areas of achievement goals; school schedule and calendar; curriculum and instruction; assessment; school culture and climate; and special student populations and related services.
 - The presentation in the application of a sound organizational and fiscal plan, which rigorously addresses the criteria outlined in the Department's RFP in the areas of founding

⁷ Education Law §2852(2)(a).

⁸ Note, the data upon which to base the enrollment and retention targets mandated by the amendments to the Act was not available at the time the statute mandated the RFP be issued. As a result, the Department evaluated the plans for student enrollment, recruitment, and retention plans of each class of student referenced in the amendments to the Act such that the Department could make the determination that the applicant would meet or exceed the enrollment and retention targets when developed. During the first year of the charter term, the Department will develop such targets and incorporate these targets into the school's charter agreement performance expectations.

⁹ Education Law §2852(2)(b).

- group capacity; board of trustees and governance; management and staffing; evaluation; professional development; facilities; insurance; health, food and transportation services; family and community involvement; financial management; budget and cash flow; pre-opening plan; and dissolution plan.
- An understanding of the New York State Charter Schools Act, and the skill, will and capacity to successfully launch and operate a high quality public charter school.
3. Granting the proposed charter is likely to improve student learning and achievement, will materially further the purposes of the Act¹⁰ and will have a significant educational benefit to the students expected to attend the charter school.¹¹ This finding is based on the totality of the information presented in the application and during the application review process, as summarized in this document.

Recommendation

Based on the Department's review and findings, Commissioner John B. King, Jr. recommends that the New York State Board of Regents approve the proposal to establish the South Bronx Classical Charter School II to open in 2013 in New York City.

¹⁰ Education Law §2852(2)(c).

¹¹ As applicable pursuant to §2852(2)(d).