



Charter Schools Institute
The State University of New York

Summary of Findings and Recommendations

*Proposal to Authorize
Achievement First – Bushwick Charter School
to Operate the Proposed
Achievement First Charter School 10;
Achievement First Charter School 11; and,
Achievement First Charter School 12*

September 25, 2014

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Executive Summary

The board of trustees of Achievement First – Bushwick Charter School (the “Education Corporation”), a not-for-profit charter school education corporation currently authorized by SUNY to operate Achievement First - Bushwick Charter School (“AF Bushwick”) and Achievement First Linden Charter School (“AF Linden”), seeks the authority to operate three additional charter schools in New York City Community School Districts (“CSDs”) 16, 27, 23 or 32, in Brooklyn. The Education Corporation would open two new charter schools in August 2015 and one in August 2016 as follows:

- Achievement First Charter School 10 (“AF Charter School 10”) would open in August 2015 with 180 students in Kindergarten – 1st grade and grow to 732 students Kindergarten – 7th grade during the charter term;
- Achievement First Charter School 12 (“AF Charter School 12”) would open in August 2015 with 92 students in 5th grade, and would grow to 795 students in 5th – 12th grades by the end of the charter term; and,
- Achievement First Charter School 11 (“AF Charter School 11”) would open in August 2016 with 180 students in Kindergarten – 1st grade and grow to 732 students Kindergarten – 7th grade during the charter term.

AF Charter Schools 10 – 12 would replicate the successful model of AF Bushwick, which opened in 2006. AF Bushwick would continue to contract with Achievement First, Inc. (“AF”), a Connecticut not-for-profit charter management organization that provides management services to multiple successful New York, Connecticut and Rhode Island charter schools, to provide services to AF Charter Schools 10 – 12. AF Bushwick and other AF-managed schools have robust college preparatory programs and a strong record of student achievement as outlined below.

The SUNY Charter Schools Institute (the “Institute”) finds the proposals for Achievement First Charter Schools 10 – 12 rigorously demonstrate the criteria detailed in the Institute’s January 2014 Request for Proposals (“RFP”) and are consistent with the New York Charter Schools Act of 1998 (as amended, the “Act”).

Based on the foregoing:

The Institute recommends that the State University of New York Board of Trustees (the “SUNY Trustees”) approve the charter proposals to authorize Achievement First – Bushwick Charter School to operate Achievement First Charter Schools 10 – 12 within the one, existing education corporation.

Background and Description

The Education Corporation submitted proposals to allow it to operate AF Charter Schools 10 – 12 to the Institute on July 7, 2014, in response to the RFP the Institute released on behalf of the SUNY Trustees on January 6, 2014.¹ While SUNY may still award a small number of charters pursuant to its original application process, amendments to the Act made additional charters available only through an RFP process. At the time of the summer cycle there were 70 charters available for charter schools outside of New York City and 12 charters available for charter schools located inside New York City per Education Law § 2852(9). The Institute received 17 proposals for charter schools to be located in New York City in response to the Summer Cycle of the 2014 RFP.

The Institute conducted a rigorous evaluation of the proposals under consideration including academic, fiscal and legal soundness reviews. In addition, the Institute engaged two independent consultants to evaluate the organizational soundness of AF and the Education Corporation. Pursuant to its protocols, the Institute as well as Trustee Joseph Belluck, Chairman of the Board of Trustees' Charter Schools Committee, conducted interviews with members of the Education Corporation's board of trustees and representatives of AF.

Mission and Key Design Elements

The mission of AF Charter Schools 10 – 12, like other AF schools, would be “to strengthen the academic and character skills needed for all students to meet and exceed their peers in city and state assessments, excel in top- tier colleges, achieve success in a competitive world, and serve as the next generation of leaders for our communities.” The schools' key design elements are as follows:

- unwavering focus on breakthrough student achievement with student performance the lead factor in school, principal and teacher evaluation; a goal of fully closing the achievement gap - not just reducing it; and, the expectation that every AF school graduate be accepted into and fully prepared to succeed in a competitive four year college;
- consistent, proven, standards-based curriculum with clear expectations for what is taught at every grade level (driven by the latest New York State standards) and curricula that are consistently implemented across the school to ensure quality instruction;
- interim assessments and strategic use of performance data including six week assessments uploaded to AF Athena, a custom-built proprietary assessment system supporting teachers and principals in determining which subjects need to be taught again and in creating data-driven instructional plans to work with the whole class, small groups, or individual students to address gaps in learning during regular “data days;”
- more time on task with a school day that runs from 7:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m., providing more than two extra hours of instruction every day beyond the traditional public school schedule; a mandatory fifteen-day summer academy; three “sacred hours” of daily reading instruction for elementary students and reading and writing instruction for middle school students; nightly homework and independent reading expectations; Saturday and after school tutoring for students who need extra support;

¹ Amendments to the Act in 2010 permit an education corporation to operate more than one school.

- principals with the power to lead, meaning total control over hiring, evaluation, and termination of all employees and, in conjunction with the Education Corporation board of trustees and AF, an ability to set the annual budget so as to best meet student and school needs;
- increased supervision of the quality of instruction supported by a site-based director of school operations, who will handle most non-instructional issues (state reporting, busing, food service, field trips, facility, etc.), thereby freeing up the principal to spend almost all of his or her time focused on instruction; a full-time academic dean and a full time dean of students starting in year one, and significant school support from AF’s efficient, high-quality start-up and back office services;
- aggressive recruitment and development of talent based on the firm belief that teacher and leader quality is the most important driver of student success; a clear teacher career pathway program; and support from AF’s central office resources to develop human resources;
- disciplined, achievement-oriented school culture exemplified by a strict, structured school with high expectations for student conduct (REACH values);
- rigorous, high-quality, focused training for principals and leaders including two years of “residency” that will include extended visits to high-performing schools and a significant amount of hands-on experience coaching teachers, analyzing data, and refining the curriculum. All teachers are offered the ability to participate in Teacher U, an outstanding teacher training program (providing full state certification and a Master’s Degree) designed by AF, KIPP, Uncommon Schools, Inc., and Hunter College; and,
- parents and community as partners through symbolic “contracts” signed at the beginning of each school year to form a three-way partnership—students, teachers, parents—that will work as a team to achieve academic breakthroughs and ensure that no student falls through the cracks and a commitment to working with the broader Brooklyn and New York communities to access resources that will enable students to succeed at the highest level.

Calendar and Schedule

The schools would feature an extended school day and year. All schools would offer at least 185 days of instruction per year. The school day would run from 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., except on Fridays when students would be dismissed at 1:50 p.m. to allow for teacher professional development. Students in elementary academies would participate in an average of 12.8 hours of English language arts (“ELA”) instruction, 5.8 hours of mathematics and four hours each of science and social studies per week.² Students in the middle and high academies would receive 14.1 hours of ELA instruction, 5.8 hours of mathematics and 4.0 hours each of science and social studies per week. All AF students also take four weekly hours of electives such as music, art and physical education at the elementary academies with the addition of a foreign language at the middle academies and a variety of electives at the high academies.

Academic Program

AF has developed a curriculum aligned to the New York State academic standards in ELA and mathematics and the state curriculum in science and social studies. The schools would implement the

² AF managed schools are organized as Kindergarten – 4th grade, elementary, 5th – 8th grade, middle, and 9 – 12th grade, high school academies.

curriculum through a combination of AF developed and commercial curriculum materials. AF curriculum fellows, who are chosen from each school's strongest teachers, drive curriculum selection and development, and base decisions on the specific needs of the individual schools and their unique student populations. The schools would use state curriculum aligned assessments created by AF to help measure student learning and adjust curriculum and instruction. Students at the elementary academies would also take Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessments to measure student reading levels and target literacy instruction, as well as the Terra Nova nationally-normed assessments to benchmark student progress in ELA and math. The high school academy would also administer the PSAT, SAT, SAT IIs and AP examinations to gauge college readiness.

Instruction at the elementary academies would focus on developing basic level skills with a heavy emphasis on non-fiction reading and practical writing as demanded by state standards. To ensure a love of all types of reading, AF supplements the curricular demands of state standards to include high quality children's literature selections. AF middle and high academies emphasize analytical writing throughout the content areas through an AF designed program aligned to college readiness indicators. All high school students participate in humanities courses that feature seminar style teaching to prepare students for the more rigorous learning environments of college.

In addition to core content, AF offers middle school students the opportunity to participate in a First Generation Initiative designed to support students who are the first in their family to go to college. AF high schools promote college readiness through the David Conley Framework, a research-driven approach to preparing students, who are at-risk of not graduating, to succeed in college by helping students develop key cognitive problem solving strategies, core content knowledge, "college knowledge" and self-management skills. High school students also participate in SAT prep classes and summer program pathways focused on developing college prep skills such as college application and resume writing, and interviewing.

Organizational Capacity

At full capacity, each school's daily operations would be managed by a principal for each academy. Each principal would lead an administrative team consisting of an operations manager, who would manage facility and administrative operations; academic deans responsible for supplementing instructional leadership for two to three grade level spans; deans of students, who would help promote and manage school culture, student discipline, and family outreach; and, special services coordinators, who would oversee each academy's special education and English as a Second Language programs. The principal would be a key instructional leader and oversee all teachers. AF Charter School 12 would also add alumni counselors to work with high school students to prepare them for college and track student success in college.

The Education Corporation would continue to contract with AF, a non-profit charter management organization. AF currently manages 15 schools in Connecticut, Rhode Island and New York including six approved by the SUNY Trustees. AF would continue to provide the Education Corporation with essential services that will allow the school leader to focus on instructional leadership. AF would manage program design and development; teacher recruitment; training for teachers, school leaders, and other staff; facility acquisition and financing; financial management; fund development; technology; legal counsel (for day-to-day school issues, but not for the Education Corporation board); and marketing and

advocacy. The proposed AF management agreement included in the application stipulates a fee equal to 10 percent of per pupil funding and all other revenue during the schools’ terms of authority to operate. As with all management agreements, the Institute reviews the final contract/amendments on behalf of the SUNY Trustees pursuant to the charter agreement.

The table below illustrates the operational stage of each of the nine schools currently managed by AF in New York.

School Name	Authorizer	Location in Brooklyn	Year Opened	Grades Served 2013-14
Achievement First Crown Heights Charter School	NYCDOE	CSD 17	2005	K-12
Achievement First East New York Charter School	NYCDOE	CSD 19	2005	K-12
Achievement First Endeavor Charter School	NYCDOE	CSD 13	2006	K-12
Achievement First - Bushwick Charter School	SUNY	CSD 32	2006	K-12
Achievement First Brownsville Charter School	SUNY	CSD 23	2008	K-7
Achievement First Apollo Charter School	SUNY	CSD 19	2010	K-5
Achievement First Aspire Charter School	SUNY	CSD 19	2013	K-2
Achievement First Linden Charter School	SUNY	CSD 19	2014	K-1
Achievement First North Brooklyn Charter School	SUNY	CSD 32	2014	K-1

School Performance

AF schools have consistently outperformed their respective local school districts on the state’s ELA and mathematics examinations. AF managed schools have consistently demonstrated strong performance in math. Performance in ELA has demonstrated significant improvement since the 2009-10 school year, and in recent years has been consistently strong. See Appendix A for historical assessment data for each AF school where available. Additionally, see Appendix B for information about each proposed CSD.

Governance

The by-laws of the Education Corporation indicate that the board would consist of no fewer than seven and no more than 18 trustees. In addition, AF would be the sole corporate member of the Education Corporation board. This is not a novel arrangement, and the Institute made certain that procedural safeguards were in place to help ensure the independence of the Education Corporation board. For example, no more than two trustees may be affiliated with AF. The members that serve on the board of trustees are:

1. **Dr. Deborah Shanley, Chair**, was appointed dean of the School of Education at Brooklyn College in 1998. Prior to coming to Brooklyn College she was dean of The School of Liberal Arts and Education at Medgar Evers College, CUNY, where she maintained an active research agenda on behavioral analysis and education, and introduced major curriculum changes, working in partnership with the liberal arts and science faculty and with the department of education. Her work with multiple college and community constituencies earned her a Humanitarian Award from the CUNY Consortium for the Study of Disabilities and the Medgar Evers College Worker Education Program. Her current work focuses on the uses of a variety of technological opportunities, including TV, radio, and computers, for instructional purposes.

2. **Judith Jenkins** works as legal counsel for the New York City Housing Authority (“NYCHA”). Prior to working with NYCHA, she worked as an associate with Leader & Berkon LLP and as an associate corporation counsel for the New York City Law Department. Ms. Jenkins is a graduate of Boston University School of Law and Columbia University.
3. **Matt Tartaglia** serves as president of Corr-Jensen. Prior to working with Corr-Jensen, he was a director at Deloitte, LLP in the financial services practice working with Fortune 250 financial firms. He has also spent significant time with technology startups and in technology sales. He lives in Brooklyn with his family.
4. **Lee Gelernt** has been an attorney with the American Civil Liberties Union (“ACLU”) since 1992 and works on immigration and national security issues. He currently holds the positions of deputy director of the ACLU’s national Immigrants’ Right Project and director of the Project’s Program on Access to the Courts. Mr. Gelernt is a graduate of Columbia Law School.
5. **Dr. Lee Gause** is a graduate of Howard University’s School of Dentistry where he was honored with the highest award for character, academic performance, and clinical proficiency of any dentist in his dental training program. Practicing in Manhattan since 2005, Dr. Gause holds his B.S. in biology from the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill. Dr. Gause is a participant in the Invisalign Study Club of New York and is the founder of Smile Factory, a non-profit organization that provides free dental care to people in need. He is additionally the co-founder of Smile Design Gallery, a mission based business that provides dental care to those in desperate need.
6. **Kelly Wachowicz** is a member of EKO Asset Management Partners where she leads EKO’s emerging work on sustainable fisheries investments. She has over 20 years of experience in the financial services sector. Prior to EKO, Ms. Wachowitz was managing director and COO of Alliance Bernstein’s Real Estate Fund, vice president overseeing for TimberStar, and she began her career as an investment banker and strategist with Goldman Sachs. Throughout her career, Ms. Wachowicz has integrated her commitment to public service with her professional aspirations. She served as senior vice president and director of policy and strategy for the New York City Economic Development Corporation in the first Bloomberg administration where she was responsible for designing and developing economic development policy including Lower Manhattan 9/11 transportation rebuilding efforts. She graduated Phi Beta Kappa and received a B.A. in History with honors from the University of California in Los Angeles.
7. **The Honorable L. Priscilla Hall** was named a justice of the Appellate Division, Second Department, by New York State Governor David Paterson on March 18, 2009. Prior to this appointment she served as the administrative judge of the Supreme Court, Kings County Criminal Term. She was elected to the New York Supreme Court on November 2, 1993, and has presided over criminal and civil matters. In response to the unprecedented increase in child protective complaints in New York City following the Nixzmary Brown case, she volunteered to serve in Family Court during 2006.
8. **Jonathan Atkeson** is the managing director, private equity, for the Fortress Investment Group. Prior to holding this position, Mr. Atkeson worked for Whitney & Co. LLC, J. Bush & Co. LLC and as a law clerk in the US Department of Justice. He attended Yale Law School, and the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, for his undergraduate degree.
9. **Gabriel Schwartz** is a managing member of Davidson Kempner Capital Management LP, a global institutional investment management firm, which he joined in 2009. Prior to that, he was a managing director in the Special Situations Group at Goldman, Sachs & Co. Mr. Schwartz holds a B.A. from Colgate University. He currently serves on the boards of directors of the Brooklyn Community Foundation and AF. Mr. Schwartz lives in Brooklyn Heights with his wife and two

children.

10. **Amy Arthur Samuels** is a vice president at JP Morgan Chase & Co. Prior to her current employment, she worked at Standard and Poors and Deloitte, with a focus on the financial services sector. Ms. Samuels is a graduate of the M.B.A. program at Columbia University and received her B.S. from Cornell University. Ms. Samuels grew up in Brownsville, Brooklyn.
11. **Claire Robinson** retired from a highly successful career in the finance sector, most recently with Moody's Investors Service from 1998-2014. She also worked for the Security Pacific Merchant Bank and Bankers Trust Company. Early in her career she worked with the National Security Agency. She is a graduate of the Columbia University Graduate School of Business. Ms. Robinson lives with her family in Brooklyn.
12. **Andy Hubbard** is a managing director with Credit Suisse. Prior to his work with Credit Suisse, he was a vice president and trader with Deutsche Bank and the director and head of product development with Kiodex, Inc. He received his B.S. from Princeton University. He lives with his family in New York City.
13. **Justin Cohen** is currently an investment analyst with Prosir Capital Management, a New York based investment fund. Prior to his work with Prosir Capital Management, he held jobs with other investment firms such as Eton Park Capital Management, Capital Z Financial Services Fund and Donaldson, Lufkin and Jenrette Securities Corporation. He is a graduate of the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania where he also received his undergraduate degree.
14. **Ambrose Wooden, Jr.** is currently a vice president in the Equities Division at Goldman Sachs. Prior to joining Goldman Sachs, he graduated from the University of Notre Dame with a degree in Finance. Mr. Wooden was also a member of the University of Notre Dame's Football Team. Outside of work, he is an active member in the New York City community where he serves as a mentor at iMentor and sits on the boards of the Adeona Foundation, Blue Engine and AF Apollo Charter School (authorized by SUNY).
15. The Education Corporation board will add a **family representative** during the coming school year.

Facilities

The Education Corporation has indicated that they will work with the NYCDOE to explore the option of using space in underutilized public schools in CSDs 16, 17, 23 or 32.³

Fiscal Impact

The fiscal impact of each school that would open in 2015, AF Charter Schools 10 and 12, on the district of residence, the New York City School District, is summarized below.

³ Please note that per a change in law, all charter schools in New York City that first commence instruction from the start of the 2014-15 school year may request co-location. The NYCDOE must offer a co-location site in a public school building or privately/publically owned facility at NYCDOE expense within the later of 30 days of SUNY's approval or five months of the school's written request.

AF Charter School 10

Expected Number of Students (A)	Basic Charter School Per Pupil Aid (B)	Projected Charter Per Pupil Revenue (C = A x B)	Public Space Facility Aid (D)*	Total Project Funding From District to Charter School (E = C + D)	New York City School District Budget (F)	Projected Impact to District (G = E / F)
180 (2015-16 school year – Year 1)	\$14,127	\$2,542,860	\$508,572	\$3,051,432	\$20,600,000,000	0.015%
732 (2019-20 school year – Year 5)	\$14,627	\$10,706,964	\$2,141,393	\$12,848,357	\$20,600,000,000	0.062%

* Reflects 20% additional funding over standard per pupil funding if the schools are unable to locate in a public facility.

AF Charter School 12

Expected Number of Students (A)	Basic Charter School Per Pupil Aid (B)	Projected Charter Per Pupil Revenue (C = A x B)	Public Space Facility Aid (D)*	Total Project Funding From District to Charter School (E = C+D)	New York City School District Budget (F)	Projected Impact to District (G = E / F)
92 (2015-16 school year – Year 1)	\$14,127	\$1,299,684	\$259,934	\$1,559,621	\$20,600,000,000	0.0076%
795 (2019-20 school year – Year 5)	\$14,627	\$11,628,465	\$2,325, 936	\$13,954,401	\$20,600,000,000	0.068%

* Reflects 20% additional funding over standard per pupil funding if the schools are unable to locate in a public facility.

The fiscal impact of the proposed school that would open in 2016 on the New York City School District is summarized below.

AF Charter School 11

Expected Number of Students (A)	Basic Charter School Per Pupil Aid (B)	Projected Charter Per Pupil Revenue (C = A x B)	Public Space Facility Aid (D)*	Total Project Funding From District to Charter School (E = C+D)	New York City School District Budget (F)	Projected Impact to District (G = E / F)
180 (2016-17 school year – Year 1)	\$14,627	\$2,632,860	\$526,572	\$3,159,432	\$20,600,000,000	0.015%
732 (2020-21 school year – Year 5)	\$14,627	\$10,706,964	\$2,141,393	\$12,848,357	\$20,600,000,000	0.062%

* Reflects 20% additional funding over standard per pupil funding if the schools are unable to locate in a public facility.

The calculations above assume that the basic per pupil aid will be \$14,127 for the 2015-16 school year increasing to \$14,627 for the 2016-17 school year, after which it will remain stable during the remainder of the proposed schools’ charters. While it is likely that the New York City School District’s budget will grow over time, the Institute is being conservative by leaving it unchanged after 2016-17. Since all of the proposed schools would seek to locate in public space, the estimates reflect the 20% addition to per pupil funding that the schools would receive if suitable public space were not available. Based on these assumptions, and projections that the charter schools will have full enrollment, AF Charter Schools 10 – 12 would have minimal fiscal impact on public schools in the New York City School District.

The Institute reviewed the charter schools' proposed start-up and fiscal plans for each year of the proposed charter terms and supporting evidence as well as the Education Corporation's budgets for the other schools it operates. The Institute also reviewed AF's Business Plan and fiscal information to determine its capacity to support additional schools in New York as well as operate schools in other states. The Institute finds these budgets and fiscal plans to be sound and sufficient start-up funds will be available to the new charter schools. The Education Corporation's financial profile as reported in the SUNY Fiscal Dashboard is available at: <http://www.newyorkcharters.org/progress/fiscal-dashboard/>.

Notification and Public Comments

The Institute notified the school district as well as public and private schools in the same geographic areas of the proposed schools about the receipt of the proposals, and the proposals were posted on the Institute's website for public review. The NYCDOE held a public hearing pertaining to the proposals on September 15, 2014.

The Institute has yet to receive public comments made during this hearing. Additionally, the Institute anticipates receiving comments from the Chancellor of the NYCDOE about each of the proposed schools. The Institute will consider comments made at the public hearings, as well as any comments from the Chancellor of the NYCDOE, and will provide a summary of these comments at the October 8, 2014 Charter Schools Committee meeting. Public comments submitted directly to the Institute as of September 22, 2014 are compiled in a Summary of Public Comments found in Appendix C. All public comments were carefully reviewed and considered as part of the review process.

Preference Scoring

The RFP contained preference criteria to reflect the requirements of Education Law § 2852(9-a).

During the summer cycle of the 2014 SUNY RFP, the Institute received applications for 17 charter schools. At this time, the Institute is recommending all 17 proposals as the Institute has found that each of the proposals will result in an academically, fiscally and legally sound charter school. Per the RFP, the Institute will score and rank each proposal prior to any consideration by the SUNY Trustees. However, at the time of drafting of this report, the New York City School District (the New York City Department of Education ("NYCDOE")) had not yet submitted its comments on the proposals. As those comments may influence scoring and the Institute's recommendation, and as the SUNY Trustees must consider those comments per New York Education Law § 2857(1), the Institute will provide the SUNY Trustees any comments in an appendix to this report that will follow as soon as the Institute can review district comments and complete the scoring. The Institute will provide the preference scores and rank for each proposal in a separate document.

As the proposals for AF Charter Schools 10 – 12 met the minimum eligibility requirements set forth in the RFP and met or exceeded the Institute's high expectations for recommendation, the Institute will score and rank the proposals in relation to the 11 Preference Criteria contained in the RFP for which proposals can earn credit as described in the RFP's Scoring Rubric. The purpose of the Scoring Rubric is to rank proposals in the event that the number of proposals meeting the SUNY Trustees' requirements exceeds the maximum number of charters to be issued in 2014. In the event of a tie for the last charter available in New York City, both proposals will be rejected unless one applicant agrees to withdraw his

or her proposal for consideration in a subsequent RFP. The preference criteria include the demonstration of the following in compliance with Education Law §§ 2852(9-a)(c)(i)-(viii):

- increasing student achievement and decreasing student achievement gaps in reading/language arts and mathematics;
- increasing high school graduation rates and focusing on serving specific high school student populations including, but not limited to, students at risk of not obtaining a high school diploma, re-enrolled high school drop-outs, and students with academic skills below grade level;
- focusing on the academic achievement of middle school students and preparing them for a successful transition to high school;
- utilizing high-quality assessments designed to measure a student's knowledge, understanding of, and ability to apply, critical concepts through the use of a variety of item types and formats;
- increasing the acquisition, adoption, and use of local instructional improvement systems that provide teachers, principals, and administrators with the information and resources they need to inform and improve their instructional practices, decision-making, and overall effectiveness;
- partnering with low performing public schools in the area to share best educational practices and innovations;
- demonstrating the management and leadership techniques necessary to overcome initial start-up problems to establish a thriving, financially viable charter school; and,
- demonstrating the support of the school district in which the proposed charter school will be located and the intent to establish an ongoing relationship with such school district.

The Institute is recommending the approval of all 17 proposals received pursuant to the RFP, including the proposals for AF Charter Schools 10 – 12, but is, as noted above, awaiting the receipt of district comments, which will inform the final scoring and ranking of the proposals. The final scores and rankings for all 17 proposals will be available at the October 8, 2014 Charter Schools Committee meeting.

Findings

Based on the comprehensive review of the proposals and interviews of the applicant and the Education Corporation's board of trustees, the Institute makes the following findings for each proposed school.

1. The charter school described in the proposal 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 ("ELLs");
 - the required policies for addressing the issues related to student discipline, personnel matters and health services;
 - an admissions policy that complies with the Act, federal law and the U.S. Constitution;

- the inclusion of by-laws for the operation of the Education Corporation’s board of trustees; and,
 - the inclusion of an analysis of the projected fiscal and programmatic impact of the school on surrounding public and private schools.
2. The applicant has demonstrated the ability to operate the school in an educationally and fiscally sound manner 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 anticipated enrollment;
 - the inclusion of descriptions of programmatic and independent fiscal audits, with fiscal audits occurring at least, annually;
 - the inclusion of a school calendar and school day schedule that provide at least as much instruction time during the school year as required of other public schools; and,
 - the inclusion of methods and strategies for serving students with disabilities in compliance with federal laws and regulations.
3. Granting the proposal: a) is likely to improve student learning and achievement, and materially further the purposes of the Act set forth in Education Law § 2850(2); and b) would have a significant educational benefit to the students expected to attend the proposed charter school within the meaning of Education Law § 2852(2)(d). This finding is reflected by (among other things):
- the high level of student achievement attained by students at AF managed charter schools;
 - the staffing of classes with high-quality teachers to allow for more concentrated, focused and differentiated instruction;
 - the inclusion of significant opportunities for professional development of the school’s instructional staff throughout the year;
 - the inclusion of tutoring during and after school, as well as on Saturdays, for students at-risk of academic failure;

- an organizational structure that supports the principal in functioning as a true instructional leader; and,
 - a commitment to providing an educational program focused on outcomes, not inputs.
4. The proposed charter school would meet or exceed enrollment and retention targets, as prescribed by the SUNY Trustees, of students with disabilities, ELLs, and students who are eligible applicants for the federal Free and Reduced Price Lunch (FRPL) program as required by Education Law § 2852(9-a)(b)(i).
 5. The applicant has conducted public outreach for the school, in conformity with a thorough and meaningful public review process prescribed by the SUNY Trustees, 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 § 2852(9-a)(b)(ii).
 6. The Institute has determined that the proposal rigorously demonstrates the criteria and best satisfies the objectives contained within the RFP, and, therefore, is a “qualified application” within the meaning of Education Law § 2852(9-a)(d) that should be submitted to the Board of Regents for approval.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on its review and findings, the Institute recommends that the SUNY Trustees approve the proposals to grant the Education Corporation the authority to operate Achievement First Charter Schools 10 and 12 in August 2015, and Achievement First Charter School 11 in August 2016.