



Charter Schools Institute  
*The State University of New York*

## Summary of Findings and Recommendations

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*Applications to establish in Brooklyn  
the Leadership Preparatory Charter Schools  
East New York, Flatbush, and Brownsville*

April 25, 2008

## **Executive Summary**

The applications for the three Leadership Preparatory Charter Schools to be located in Brooklyn were submitted by the same applicant and founding team. The three schools include Leadership Preparatory East New York Charter School (“East New York”), Leadership Preparatory Flatbush Charter School (“Flatbush”), and Leadership Preparatory Brownsville Charter School (“Brownsville”). The founding team proposes to open East New York in August 2009 and both Flatbush and Brownsville in August 2010. Each school will open with 116 Kindergarten and first grade students in its first year. East New York will grow to serve 272 students in Kindergarten through fourth grade during the term of its charter. Flatbush and Brownsville will grow to serve 223 students in Kindergarten through third grade during the first charter terms. The mission of the proposed charter schools is to prepare students to excel in demanding, college-prep high schools and colleges and to contribute to their communities as leaders. Ultimately, the founders envision a Kindergarten through eighth grade school in each of the communities. All of the schools would be managed by the not-for-profit Uncommon Schools, Inc. (USI), which supports five charter schools authorized by the Board of Trustees in New York City, Rochester and Troy.

The Charter Schools Institute (the “Institute”) recommends that the Board of Trustees approve the charter applications for the Leadership Preparatory Charter Schools: East New York; Flatbush; and Brownsville.

## **Background and Description**

The applications to establish the Leadership Preparatory Charter Schools (East New York, Flatbush, and Brownsville) were submitted to the Institute on January 14, 2008. The Institute conducted a rigorous review, including an extensive staff review as well as 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 USI, which will serve as the educational service provider for all three schools. The Institute has assessed the capacity of USI to perform all functions required by its management contract and its capability to deliver services equitably to all three schools and found it to be sufficient and exemplary. 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’ Committee on Charter Schools have had an opportunity to interview the lead applicants and proposed board of trustees.

Each school will be structured in two age-based academies: the elementary academy (Kindergarten through 4<sup>th</sup> grade) and the middle academy (if re-chartered, 5<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grades). Although the academies would be closely integrated in the areas of curriculum development, teacher training and culture of achievement, they would each have their own teaching staff and traditions and the common board of trustees will independently hold each school to the goals outlined in their respective Accountability Plans. Ultimately, the applicant envisions each charter school will be a Kindergarten through eighth grade school.

The mission for each school is to prepare students to excel in demanding college preparatory high schools and colleges and to contribute to their communities as leaders. The applicant anticipates that

this would be achieved through the school's focused commitment to: holding all stakeholders accountable for student achievement, including both staff and parents; building a program based on the "best practices" of existing high-performing urban schools serving low-income students (i.e., high quality teachers, focus on literacy and numeracy, frequent and timely assessments, character education); and drawing on the considerable community resources available to each school.

The academic program of each school would be anchored by a focus on literacy as demonstrated in a significant time commitment to the teaching of English language arts (210 minutes daily in Kindergarten through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and 150 minutes thereafter), and the use of a research-proven, balanced literacy program that reflects the findings of the National Reading Panel (such as Open Court Reading, Waterford Early Literacy program, or SRA Reading Mastery). In addition, the staffing model provides for one lead teacher and one co-teacher for each Kindergarten through 2<sup>nd</sup> grade classroom and one lead teacher and a shared (0.5) co-teacher for each classroom grades 3<sup>rd</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup>. This is intended to allow for more one-on-one and small group instruction. The curriculum would include a systematic approach to teaching basic math facts and computational skills, using Saxon Math along with a teacher-created component, and a content and cultural knowledge-rich program in the areas of social studies, science, music and art, possibly using the Scott Foresman series. To accommodate the achievement of the ambitious goals each school has established, the founding team plans to employ the use of an extended school day and year at each school.

Because the three schools have the same applicant and proposed trustees and share the same educational service provider, the schools have chosen a managerial structure that includes a principal at each school who reports to the USI managing director who, in turn, reports to the proposed board of trustees. The principal focuses exclusively on issues of teaching and learning by serving as the instructional leader and oversees curriculum development, assessment, and student culture. The USI managing director, working in concert with the USI services team, is responsible for primarily external and non-academic functions including, but not limited to, managing the start up by designing programs and assessing program development; training, supervising and coaching the school leaders; and engendering teacher recruitment, professional development, fund development, and technology. Each school will also be served by a dean of students who works with staff to ensure a tightly and consistently enforced code of conduct and promote a positive student culture, and a director of operations who oversees all aspects of school facilities and operations. The dean of students and the director of operations both report to the principal.

The three schools will have the same board of trustees, nine of whom are currently board members for the original Leadership Preparatory Charter School (authorized by the Board of Trustees and chartered in August 2005). The intent of maintaining a common board of trustees is to ensure that East New York, Flatbush, and Brownsville not only draw on the programmatic strengths of Leadership Preparatory, but also draw on the experience and expertise of its primary governing body. The additional members of the proposed board of trustees' backgrounds and expertise reflect a variety of talents and skills. Based on Institute staff's conversations with the proposed trustees, they appear to clearly understand the roles and responsibilities of a board of trustees, have the ability to ensure the appropriate and effective operation of the proposed charter schools, and are willing and able to maintain the community identity, individuality and integrity of each school. To that end, the proposed board of trustees has established cross school processes based upon a committee structure that looks to ensure consistency in governance, finance, development and program. Should a conflict of interest regarding resources arise between or among the schools, the board proposes to employ a decision making process that identifies key factors and the impact of those factors on student

achievement. The outcome of the process is to ensure that each school has the resources that are needed to succeed and that resources are allocated equitably. The Institute has identified very few areas where such a conflict might arise.

The proposed board recognizes and appreciates the role of USI 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 core members of the proposed boards, who served on the original Leadership Preparatory Charter School board, have also demonstrated a willingness to hold USI accountable as evidenced by the board's negotiation of increased technology services for its school.

The proposed initial members of the board of trustees are set forth below. The first nine individuals are currently trustees for Leadership Preparatory Charter School. These individuals have worked together over the past three years to formulate the aforementioned applications.

- Carrie Abramson – Former Manager of Strategy, Management and Assistance for the Robinhood Foundation. Previous to that position, she served as the Engagement Manager for McKinsey and Company.
- Gail Brousal – Head of High School at Saint Ann's School in Brooklyn, New York.
- Caroline Curry – Managing Director for Eagle Capital Management, L.L.C.; previously an Equity Analyst for Elm Ridge Capital both in New York, New York.
- Ben Esner – Deputy Director of Independence Community Foundation in Brooklyn, New York.
- Ruth Meyler – Former Accreditation Coordinator and Chief of Staff for the Gateway Charter High School in San Francisco, California.
- Renee Muir – Director Health Programming/World Academy for Total Community Health at the Brownsville Multi Service Family Health Center in Brooklyn, New York.
- Tokumbo Shobowale – Vice President for Strategic Planning, Policy and Program Development for the New York City Economic Development Corporation.
- Dyrnest Sinckler – Executive Vice President of Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Company; previously Deputy Commissioner of Management and Budget Division of the Department of Investigation for the City of New York.
- Jeff Wetzler – Senior Vice President of Teacher Preparation, Support, and Development, and Chief Learning Officer for *Teach for America*; formerly a Senior Team Leader for the Monitor Group, an international professional services firm.

The remaining proposed trustees for all three schools include the following individuals.

- Richard Buery – President, Executive Director and co-founder of Groundworks, Inc. (non-profit organization for social and workforce development); adjunct lecturer at Baruch College of Public Affairs.
- Michael Hall – Senior Regional Program Consultant with TIAA-CREF, Inc., formerly a regional investor education specialist with Charles Schwab.
- Mathew Klein – Executive Director of the Blue Ridge Foundation (provides seed money and institutional support to start-up nonprofits in New York City).
- John King – Managing Director for Excellence and Preparatory networks for Uncommon Schools, Inc; founding director of Roxbury Preparatory Charter School (Roxbury, Ma.).
- Joseph Lewis – Vice President of the Investment Banking Division (risk solutions group) for Lehman Brothers.

The principals of the three charter schools will serve as ex officio members of the proposed board.

Uncommon Schools, Inc., on behalf of the founding team of the proposed East New York, Brownsville and Flatbush schools, is working to identify appropriate facility space for the three Leadership Preparatory Charter Schools in each of the intended locations. Uncommon Schools, Inc. has a strong record of working closely with the New York City Department of Education to access underutilized school district space, as well as pursuing alternatives to conventional lease/purchase arrangements that include securing unused parochial space and partnerships with other school-facilities organizations. In the event that school district space is not available, the founding team has included a contingency strategy in its financial planning that would provide funding to secure space on the open market.

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

Leadership Preparatory East New York Charter Schools

<b>Number of Students</b>	<b>Per Pupil Aid (including special education and federal entitlement grants)</b>	<b>Total Dollars to Charter School from NYCDOE</b>	<b>Total Budget for NYCDOE ( in billions)</b>	<b>% of Total Budget</b>
116 (2009-10 School Year- year 2)	<b>11,694</b>	<b>1,356,504</b>	<b>17.5</b>	<b>.008</b>
272 (2012-13 School Year – year 5)	<b>12,778</b>	<b>3,475,616</b>	<b>19.1</b>	<b>.018</b>

Leadership Preparatory Flatbush / Brownsville Charter Schools

<b>Number of Students</b>	<b>Per Pupil Aid (including special education and federal entitlement grants)</b>	<b>Total Dollars to Charter School from NYCDOE</b>	<b>Total Budget for NYCDOE (in billions)</b>	<b>% of Total Budget</b>
116 (2010-11 School Year – year 3)	<b>12,045</b>	<b>1,397,220</b>	<b>18.0</b>	<b>.008</b>
223 (2012-13 School Year – year 5)	<b>12,778</b>	<b>2,849,494</b>	<b>19.1</b>	<b>.015</b>

The calculations conservatively assume that there will be a modest (3%) annual increase in per pupil aid and in the overall budget of the New York City School District over the life of the proposed charters. The Institute’s calculations do not account for special education, federal Title I funds or other grants or funds provided by the district and to be received by the School. The applicant made an assessment that the fiscal impact and programmatic impact of each proposed school on the New York City School District and nonpublic schools in the same geographic area as each proposed school would be negligible.

Each school has included calculations accounting for special education, federal Title I funds or other grants or funds provided by the district and to be received by the School.

The Institute has notified the New York City Department of Education as well as private schools in the geographic area of the proposed schools and as of April 25, 2008 has received no comment from these entities.

As a gauge of parent and community support, the founding team gathered petitions and met with numerous community residents in all three proposed locations.

Leadership Preparatory East New York

The application pertaining to East New York contained a petition bearing the signatures of 420 community members (232 of whom indicated they were parents of children who might attend the proposed charter school), as well as a variety of letters from community-based organizations, such as the SCO Early Childhood Learning Center at Groundwork, New Creation Ministry, Big brothers Big Sisters of New York City, National Urban League, The Trust for Public Land, Assemblyman Hakeem Jeffries, and Family Bodega-a project of Family Justice. In addition, letters of support were also received from several foundations such as New Schools Venture Fund, Robertson Foundation, Charter School Growth Fund, Broad Foundation, and the Robin Hood Foundation. Unique to East New York, the school proposes to partner with Groundworks, Inc, an East New York based community organization. The linkages to be established will provide for community outreach, program enrichment involving youth and their families, Saturday programs, and additional support services.

### Leadership Preparatory Flatbush

The application pertaining to Flatbush contained a petition bearing the signatures of 250 community members (169 of whom indicated they were parents of children who might attend the proposed charter school), as well as letters of support from Assemblymen Karim Camara and William Boyland, Jr. The founding team has secured support from several local foundations including Hollyhock Foundation, New Schools Venture Fund, Robertson Foundation, Charter School Growth Fund, Broad Foundation, and the Robin Hood Foundation. In addition, the school plans to feature an arts and athletic enrichment program in the afternoon and is seeking to partner with local organizations to strengthen enrichment offerings.

### Leadership Preparatory Brownsville

The application pertaining to Brownsville contained a petition bearing the signatures of 260 community members (192 of whom indicated they were parents of children who might attend the proposed charter school), as well as letters of support from Assemblymen Karim Camara and William Boyland, Jr. and Senator Kevin Parker. The founding team has secured support from several local foundations including Hollyhock Foundation, New Schools Venture Fund, Robertson Foundation, Charter School Growth Fund, Broad Foundation, and the Robin Hood Foundation. In addition, the school plans to feature an arts and athletic enrichment program in the afternoon and is seeking to partner with local organizations to strengthen enrichment offerings.

## **Findings**

Based on the comprehensive review of the applications, discussion with national experts and interviews of the applicant and the proposed board of trustees, the Institute makes the following findings.

1. The charter schools described in the applications meet 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, English language learners, and students at-risk of academic failure;
  - 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 of each board of trustees; and
  - the inclusion of an analysis of the projected fiscal and programmatic impact of each school on surrounding public and private schools.
2. The applicant has demonstrated the ability to operate the schools in an educationally and fiscally sound matter as reflected in (among other things):
  - the provision of an educational program for each school 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 of each school;
  - the student achievement goals for each school articulated by the applicant;
  - an appropriate roster of educational personnel for each school;
  - a sound mission statement for each school;
  - a comprehensive assessment plan for each school;
  - the provision of sound start-up, first-year, and five-year budget plans for each school;
  - the plan to acquire comprehensive general liability insurance to include any vehicles, employees, and property of each school;
  - evidence of adequate community support for, and interest in, each charter school sufficient to allow each school to reach its anticipated enrollment; and
  - the inclusion of procedures for programmatic and independent fiscal audits for each school, at least, annually.
3. The Board of Trustees' approval of each 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 of each school will ensure that students will meet or exceed the performance standards of the Board of Regents;
  - a comprehensive plan for each 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 at each school where assessment data indicates such need;
  - the staffing of Kindergarten through second grade classes with two, high-quality teachers to allow for more concentrated, focused and differentiated instruction;
  - the inclusion of significant opportunities for professional development of each school's 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 Board of Trustees approve the applications for the Leadership Preparatory East New York Charter School, Leadership Preparatory Flatbush Charter School and the Leadership Preparatory Brownsville Charter School to open in Brooklyn.

**Leadership Preparatory Charter Schools:  
East New York (Brooklyn), Flatbush and Brownsville**

**Basic Identification Information**

Lead Applicants:	Richard Buery, John King and Tokumbo Shobowale
Management Co.:	Uncommon Schools, Inc.
Other Partners:	None
Location (District):	<u>East New York (Brooklyn)</u> (CSD 19) <u>Brownsville</u> (CSD 23) <u>Flatbush</u> (CDS 17)
Student Pop./Grades:	<u>East New York (Brooklyn)</u> - 116 K-1st grade students; expanding to 272 students grades K-4 <u>Flatbush</u> - 116 K-1st grade students; expanding to 223 students grades K-3 <u>Brownsville</u> - 116 K-1st grade students; expanding to 223 students grades K-3
Opening Date:	<u>East New York (Brooklyn)</u> - August 2009 <u>Flatbush</u> - August 2010 <u>Brownsville</u> - August 2010

**Profiles of School Districts of Proposed Locations**

<b>CSD 19: Proposed Location for East New York (Brooklyn)</b>			
Enrollment (2005-06):		28915	
Percent (2005-06):			
White:		1	
African-American:		53	
Hispanic:		40	
Asian, Other:		6	
Percent Participating in Federal Lunch Program (2005-06):		91	
Percent Proficient on State Exams (2006-07):			
<b>English Language Arts</b>		<b>Mathematics</b>	
<b>Grade</b>	<b>Percent Proficient</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Percent Proficient</b>
3	46	3	77
4	47	4	70
5	49	5	64
6	36	6	60
7	31	7	47
8	29	8	37

<b>CSD 23: Proposed District of Location for Brownsville</b>			
Enrollment (2005-06):		12,584	
Percent (2005-06):			
White:		1	
African-American:		81	
Hispanic:		17	
Asian, Other:		1	
Percent Participating in Federal Lunch Program (2005-06):		88	
Percent Proficient on State Exams (2006-07):			
<b>English Language Arts</b>		<b>Mathematics</b>	
<b>Grade</b>	<b>Percent Proficient</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Percent Proficient</b>
3	41	3	73
4	40	4	63
5	42	5	53
6	42	6	61
7	38	7	54
8	40	8	41

<b>CSD 17: Proposed District of Location for Flatbush</b>			
Enrollment (2005-06):		29,428	
Percent (2005-06):			
White:		1%	
African-American:		87%	
Hispanic:		10%	
Asian, Other:		2%	
Percent Participating in Federal Lunch Program (2005-06):		83%	
Percent Proficient on State Exams (2006-07)			
<b>English Language Arts</b>		<b>Mathematics</b>	
<b>Grade</b>	<b>Percent Proficient</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Percent Proficient</b>
3	49	3	78
4	49	4	66
5	46	5	60
6	40	6	46
7	33	7	38
8	34	8	31

Source: Demographic data from the New York State Accountability and Overview Report 2005-06; test data from the 2006-07 results released on the State Education Department website.