

## **I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **Mission**

Rochester Career Mentoring Charter School's (CMCS) mission is a model secondary small school offering a community of diverse learners in the City of Rochester a personalized 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade high school that engages each student in career exploration, college preparation, and rigorous academic standards. Our charter school will graduate every student with a Regents diploma and the academic and technical skills needed for today's workforce and/or entrance into college.

### **Key Design Elements**

To support our mission, our charter offers unique features including:

#### **1.) Personalization:**

- **Individual Learning Plans:** Recognizing the variety of student, academic needs, learning styles, and career interests, the school will develop Individual Learning Plans (ILP) for each student. These plans will also acknowledge any special academic needs to include those required to support English Language Learners and students with disabilities. ILP's will be developed in 9<sup>th</sup> grade in conjunction with the student, his or her parents/guardians, and the teacher-advisor.
- **Wrap Around Advisement:** Students will be paired with a teacher /advisor in a one-to-fourteen-eighteen ratio configuration. These pairings will provide student daily advisement across the school day and as needed beyond school hours to offer academic and social supports to students.

**2.) Teachers as Curriculum Designers:** Utilizing a project-based learning model, such as the one offered by Buck Institute for Education (bie.org), teachers will build and develop the academic skills of learners through student-driven projects across the curriculum.

**3.) Career Internship:** Student internships will provide site-based learning, a means to acquire and demonstrate a command of the concepts and skills learned through interactive activities. At the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade level, students will engage in the Career Choices framework which will provide foundational skills and experiences. CMCS 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders will engage in internship projects with an expert mentor across various career fields. A Coordinator of Internship will pool together several resources, work sites, and mentors and align them with each student's career interest and choice. In addition, our students will participate in the nationally recognized Hillside Work-Scholarship Connection which will provide mentors and internship placements.

**4.) Enrichment Block and Student Support:** An enrichment block built into our master schedule allows for individualized academic support for all students. Students needing extended time to complete tasks will do so after school with our Hillside Work-Scholarship Tutorial Program and other tutorial programs.

### **School Governance**

Rochester Career Mentoring Charter School (CMCS) is governed by a 9-member Board of Trustees (BOT). It is the responsibility of the BOT as a collective body to advance, promote,

and facilitate the mission, goals, and objectives of the CMCS. As prescribed by Education Law, Section 2853(1) (f), the Board of Trustees shall have final authority for all policy, budget, and operational decisions of the CMCS. The founder of the charter will act as the Chief Executive Officer and will report directly to the BOT. **Dennis Francione**, founder and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Career Mentoring Charter School, is a retired Rochester City School District Principal and city resident who has created and implemented a small high school design with the support and resources of the Rochester City School District and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Dennis served as a teacher and school administrator for 35 years, having spent 31 years in the City School District. He worked on project-based activities with the National Center on Education and the Economy, participated in Atlas Communities, and organized and implemented communication studies programs in two separate high schools.

The CMCS Board of Trustees is comprised of leaders, parents, and city residents who represent a purposefully broad professional spectrum. **1. Dr. Jeannine Dingus-Eason**, Assistant Professor of Educational Leadership at St. John Fisher College, is President of the Board. She is a city parent who is knowledgeable about urban school reform, teacher quality, and culturally relevant pedagogy. **2. Kevin McCormick**, Vice-President of the Board, is the Senior Vice President of Informational Technology at Rochester Midland Company. Mr. McCormick brings expertise in organizational development, finance, and student career exploration and was a member of a Design Team to create a model small high school for the City School District. **3. Eugenio Cotto, Jr.**, a city resident, is Secretary of the Board. As Executive Director of Group 14621, a Community Based Organization, he has been active for 36 years, assisting city residents with civic engagement. His work has also included student recruitment, and providing internship opportunities. **4. Ellen Tomasso**, a city resident and lawyer in Rochester, provides guidance in the areas of charter school law and governance. Her children have attended city schools. **5. Connie Felder** is the Deputy Director of Rochester Works, Inc., a federally funded non-profit representing the local Workforce Investment Board which provides workforce preparation services and programs for youth, adults, and employers. **6. Dianne Spang**, Director of K-12 Programs at Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) has worked with Rochester public schools on college readiness programming including GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs), STEP (Science, Technology and Entry Programs), and Liberty Partnerships Program. She also was a member of a Design Team to create a model small high school for the City School District. **7. Roderick Green** is the Executive Director of the Hillside Work-Scholarship Connection, an exemplary program targeting academic enhancement, career readiness skills, mentoring, and college scholarships for Rochester youth. **8. Marci Miller**, Rochester Regional Vice President for the Empire State Chapter of Associated Builders and Contractors, Inc., will serve in an advisory capacity and facilitate our board in matching students with member companies that will provide internship opportunities within the building trades. **9. Christine Hill**, a city resident and retired Rochester City School District's Director of Special Education, secondary assistant principal and former charter school administrator, provides knowledge of the critical components of special education, ELL, and charter school operations.

**II. STUDENT POPULATION**

**A. Student Enrollment**

<b>Projected</b>	<b>Enrollment</b>	<b>Table</b>			
	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
<b>9<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>80</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>10<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>80</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>11<sup>th</sup></b>		<b>80</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>12<sup>th</sup></b>			<b>80</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>320</b>

**B. Target Populations**

Rochester Career Mentoring Charter School (CMCS) will recruit students from the City of Rochester. The Rochester City School District is the third largest urban school system in New York State. The Rochester City School District serves approximately 32,000 K-12 students. The ethnic composition at the K-12 level is as follows: 65% African-American, 22% Hispanic, 11% white, 2% Asian and 0.4% American Indian/Alaskan Native. About 10% of the district’s enrollment is made up of English Language Learners (ELL). The share of students with disabilities in Rochester is 16%, higher than the state’s ratio of 13%.

Rochester is ranked 11<sup>th</sup> in the nation’s per capita for child poverty among medium/large US cities. The poverty rate is further attested to by the high percentages of students eligible for federal free or reduced-priced lunch. Approximately 84% of the Rochester City School District’s (RCSD) students are eligible for federal free or reduced-price lunch. This makes the RCSD the poorest big-city school district in the state.

**Student Recruitment Plan**

Career Mentoring Charter School (CMCS) will admit students without regard to race, creed, ethnicity, disability, or socio-economic background. We will enroll 160 students in grades 9 and 10 during our first year. Thereafter, each January the school will implement its application and enrollment process for 80 new students, including a minimum of 16% of the seats for students with disabilities and a minimum of 10% of the seats for English Language Learners (ELL). The remaining 73% of seats will be allocated equitably among the three attendance zones of the Rochester City School District’s Managed Choice Policy. Career Mentoring Charter School will recruit students equally from each zone to aid in student population diversity. If more than 80 students apply in each grade the school will conduct a lottery for each attendance zone and create a waitlist by zone in the order of the lottery results. The lottery is expected to be run each year within 10 business days after the application deadline of April 1<sup>st</sup>.

**Application Process for the School**

It is the intent of CMCS to directly mail an Information Packet to all 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grade students residing in the City of Rochester. This packet will include information on the school’s unique

instructional model, its mission and vision and services provided, as well as application materials. These materials will be provided in English and Spanish.

The additional method for recruitment of students includes:

- utilization of local print and electronic media widely available at neighborhood libraries and recreation centers
- appearances on local radio shows (including stations whose audience includes those speaking a language other than English) whose target audiences closely align with the applicant pool;
- collaboration with the County and City to provide applications and information to neighborhood organizations, clubs, agencies (Center for Youth Services, The Boys and Girls Club, Threshold) and churches. This will provide awareness of CMCS and availability of applications at their offices.
- identification of speakers cognizant of the CMCS design, vision, and mission to present at meetings, media events, etc.
- development of a web site and other social media.

### **Attracting and Retaining Students with Disabilities**

In addition to its general recruitment efforts, CMCS will employ strategies and techniques to recruit students with disabilities at a rate comparable to or greater than the percentage of the Rochester City School District. Recruitment efforts will include: (a) distribution of pamphlets highlighting information about CMCS's special education program, (b) outreach to community programs, agencies (VESID, SETRC, Lifetime Assistance Program, Learning Disabilities Association, and Youth Advocacy Programs). We will request opportunities to provide CMCS information during meetings hosted by these community agencies and service coordinators. During the application process and meetings, we will clearly identify the special education services that will be available at CMCS (c) provide meetings with members of special education staff and/or Board of Trustees with parents of students with disabilities who express interest in learning more about how CMCS will meet the needs of their child. It is our goal to retain the highest number of enrolled students with disabilities.

### **Educating Students with Disabilities**

CMCS will educate students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment with their non-disabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate and allowed by each student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) prepared by the Committee on Special Education (CSE) of the student's district of residence. CMCS will provide special education services in accordance with the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and all applicable New York State laws and regulations regarding special education and in accordance with the IEP recommended by the CSE of the students' district of residence.

CMCS is committed to providing a quality education to its students with disabilities. CMCS will hire two full-time, highly qualified, appropriately certified special education teachers. The special education teachers will work in the general education classroom with special education

students individually, in small groups, and/or provide resource room services depending on the students' IEP. In addition to providing special education services to students, the special education teacher/coordinator will serve as: (1) a liaison between the district of residence CSE and CMCS, (2) assist the Educational Leader with coordination of professional development to ensure that school personnel understand the requirements and responsibilities relating to the education of students with disabilities, (3) provide consultation and support to classroom teachers and overall school community. For related services, CMCS will request the district of residence to provide related services on site.

CMCS teachers will be knowledgeable of their roles and responsibilities of the special education students in their classes through consultation with special education teachers prior to and during the school year. CMCS will ensure that general education teachers have an opportunity to regularly meet and plan with the special education teacher to review each student's IEP, and address the unique curricular needs stated on the IEP. This includes but is not limited to accommodations (how a student accesses and demonstrates learning), adaptations (changes made to the environment, curriculum, instruction and assessment practices in order for a student to be a successful learner), services, academic strengths, needs etc. At CMCS, we envision ILPs functioning in tandem with student Individual Educational Plans (IEPs).

### **Intervention Services**

CMCS will use a Response to Intervention (RTI) process to ascertain early identification without over identification. A team of school staff members, Student Support Team, will meet to review and assess the needs and strengths of specific students who are not demonstrating success in their current educational program. Through this process; teachers develop individual intervention plans that, along with students' IEPs to ensure that students are on track to achieve at grade level and to meet the school's accountability goals. Through this process and others, CMCS will comply with its obligation under Child Find requirements of IDEA; provide appropriate notification to parents prior to referring a student's name to a CSE for potential evaluation.

CMCS understands that the school district of residence is solely responsible for convening the CSE, conducting individual evaluations and eligibility determinations of children suspected of being disabled. Moreover, for students with known disabilities, the appropriate CSE will develop or revise existing IEPs and conduct due process hearings. CMCS' participation in the development of IEPs for its students is of critical importance to both the school district and CMCS. CMCS will make available, as required by law, one of the student's general education teachers from CMCS to serve as the general education teacher member of the CSE. If CMCS is providing special education services, one of the student's special education providers will serve as the special education teacher member of the CSE.

### **Description to Attract and Retain English Language Learners:**

To reach English Language Learners (ELLs), CMCS will work with the Rochester community and Rochester City School District to identify the major languages spoken other than English. Once this information has been compiled, CMCS will target the areas of highest ELL concentration and provide information about CMCS to the people in those areas in their

languages. Also, we will distribute information to local clergy whose congregations are non-English speakers. We will display and provide CMCS materials in different cultural centers, including but not limited to Puerto Rican Youth Development Center, American Action League, and Urban League, etc. We also will invite families and students to our recruitment events which will include open houses prior to and during the enrollment process. Native speakers or translators will be available to facilitate these events. We will emphasize the availability of resources for ELL students.

The first step in our recruiting for ELL process will be to screen records of incoming CMCS students from the RCSD database. The protocol set by State, Assessment, and Reporting Office will be followed under the NYS Education Department. An administration of the Home Language Questionnaire (HLQ) will be given by the school's ESL designee. If little or no English is spoken, the designee will conduct an informal interview in the student's native language and English and then will administer the Language Assessment Battery- Revised (LABR). Cut scores on the LABR will determine appropriate placement. Students are placed at beginning, intermediate or advanced language proficiency levels according to LABR data. The NYSESLAT will be administered annually to determine students' proficiency. Each student's Individual Learning Plan will outline learning goals and concrete steps needed to become proficient in English and provide support while learning the course curriculum. ESL students, as with all students, will be assessed quarterly in the areas of math, reading and writing. This data will be used by the Teacher Advisor to revise the student's Individualized Learning Plan to ensure English language acquisition.

Each student enrolling in CMCS will complete the HLQ and the NYS Identification Process as necessary. All core content instructional staff will receive professional development providing them with techniques and strategies for teaching language across all content areas. ELL students will attend and participate in core content classes alongside their peers with the requisite support and material accommodations. Such material accommodations may include state glossaries, the use of the internet to provide journal articles in the student's native language in support of their English acquisition and other appropriate materials. Like the general population at CMCS, ELL students will have easy access to all appropriate technology, will be assigned a lap top and will be required to keep an electronic journal to support ELL students in further developing English writing skills.

Students, who are limited English proficient as determined by the NYS Identification Process, will meet or exceed the amount of ELL mandated by their proficiency level. Additionally, core content teacher advisors will receive professional development on techniques and strategies for teaching language across content areas.

CMCS firmly believes that educational access and opportunity be offered to all students. ELL students enrolling in and attending CMCS will be taught using a variety of teaching styles to reach all students. These efforts will ensure that students can fully communicate both academically and socially. As speakers, readers and writers, ELL students will work with informational texts and other electronic media both independently and in class by using

established criteria set forth in the curriculum. Through literacy-based activities, students will gain an understanding of the materials studied and relate texts to their own lives, applying what they have learned to diverse social, historical and cultural content. The instructional pedagogies and materials used will enable students to reach the required proficiency level needed to graduate from high school.

CMCS will comply with all applicable state and federal laws and regulations, including Title III of NCLB, and the school will administer all mandated state tests of ELL students (i.e. NYSELAT).

CMCS will comply with all applicable laws including Title VI of the Federal Civil Rights Act of 1964 (as amended) and the federal Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974.

This charter high school will provide all necessary staff and any specialized curricular materials to enable ELL students to achieve proficiency and attain the high standards established for all students in the school. In addition, CMCS will ensure that no ELL students will be excluded from curricular and extracurricular activities and events based on an inability to speak and understand the language of instruction. ELL students will not be assigned to Special Education because of their lack of English proficiency.

### **Student Educational Plans and Monitoring Student Progress**

Prior to 9<sup>th</sup> grade entry, students along with parents and teacher advisors will develop Individual Learning Plans (ILP) to frame academic, social, and career development goals. ILPs will encompass specific short-term and long-term goals including course schedules, career interest assessments, and college readiness assessments. For example, each ILP will include career exploration profiles intended to track students' pathways into career-based internships.

At the beginning of the school year, entering 9<sup>th</sup> graders will meet individually with parents and teacher-advisors to develop ILPs. Across all grade levels, students and teacher-advisors will frequently review information compiled in their students ILPs to reassess self-identified goals and progress in meeting those goals. Teacher-advisors play an essential part in the formulation of ILPs and the monitoring of student progress. During the daily advisory period, teacher-advisors will provide daily one-on-one conferencing, facilitate student leadership forums, and conduct parent conferences. Advisor periods will allow teacher-advisors to meet individually with students to review academic and social progress and to conduct annual credit audits with students to ensure progress towards graduation. Additionally, in an effort to monitor individual and collective student progress, teacher-advisors will distribute feedback surveys to inform teacher-advisory practices, instructional and extra-curricular programs.

In addition to teacher advisors, teachers across content areas will have access to students' ILPs and will also track student progress via the ILP. Teachers will take action at the first sign that a student is having problems in classes. This will include consultation between teachers, parents and the students' Learning Plan Team to put academic and/or behavioral strategies into place and to monitor the student's performance. If the student fails to make adequate progress, the teacher

will confer with the student's teacher-advisor and Learning Plan Team. If the Learning Plan Team determines the student learning needs require support /intervention beyond previous efforts, then a referral will be submitted to the CMCS's Student Support Team (SST). The SST will be designed to focus on those students who are not succeeding despite program intervention. The SST will conduct meetings every two to four weeks in which school teachers and administrators will meet to review cases of students who are not succeeding due to academic and/or behavioral issues. The SST will work to ensure success for every child. It will accomplish this through positive, solution-focused collaboration between educators, families and appropriate community members.

Based on a review of teachers' concerns, student data and background information, the SST will identify the student's skill and/or performance gap, strengths/talents and weaknesses. The SST will estimate the size/extent of the academic skill gap between the student and on-grade level peers and determine the likely reasons for the student's learning or behavioral difficulties. Next, the SST will develop an intervention plan that will include:

1. interventions likely to meet the needs of the referred student
2. realistic but ambitious, measureable academic and/or behavioral outcome goals
3. methods to track the student's improvement during the intervention
4. specificity as to who will do what, when and how
5. a timeline to monitor student progress and follow-up
6. articulation of the roles of the Learning Team, the student, and parent/guardian in the process.

At the end of a pre-determined period of time, the intervention plan and student performance data will be analyzed to determine the effectiveness of the intervention, and whether to continue or change the intervention while continuing to monitor the student's progress. Consideration will be made regarding referring the student for special education services.

During our first year, we plan to meet this challenge by implementing a RTI Staff survey and feedback form. This will serve as a road map for the school as it implements RTI and designs professional development. We will provide professional development experiences related to: (a) sharing RTI and the problem solving process of the SST, (b) selecting the right intervention and creating intervention plans, and (c) monitoring student progress. We will establish a SST to compile an inventory of programs, service, resources and personnel that can be accessed to support RTI. We will establish roles & responsibilities of the team and process for running meetings including forms to support the process.

### **Student Supports**

- We will collaborate with the nationally recognized Hillside Work-Scholarship Connection (HW-SC) program for all students enrolled in the CMCS. A major component of this program is the involvement of Youth Advocates who partner with students to provide personal, multi-year relationships. Advocates help students develop skills and strategies to be successful across all aspects of their lives including school, work, and family. Youth

Advocates meet regularly with students to monitor academic performance, identify career goals, develop positive student habits, and overcome obstacles to learning. HW-SC connects students with tutoring provided through EnCompass, a program adept in helping students develop skills in planning, organization, time management, self-advocacy and accountability.

- Read 180, a supplemental technology-based program for students which provides a differentiated approach to reading for a wide range of struggling readers, will be implemented and utilized during extended learning time through after-school programs and/or remediation/acceleration opportunities built into the school schedule.
- CMCS will establish a Student Support Team consisting of a group of diverse, school professionals. This group will assist teachers in identifying and analyzing the nature of a student's problem(s) and selecting intervention ideas matched to the student's profile of need.

### III. SCHOOL DESIGN

#### **a. Increase student achievement and decrease student achievement gaps in reading/language arts and mathematics;**

The American education system has little time left to save its youth or to offer them any hope for a promising future. America's economy is currently posing unprecedented challenges and the employment outlook, nationwide, is bleak. What is more distressing is that America's secondary students are not adequately prepared to enter what has become a high tech and highly skilled work force. Prospects for today's youth are particularly grim when considering both national and global realities. For example, research shows that America's high school students are near dead last in their knowledge, skills, and testing of math and science where China and Japan remain on top.

The City of Rochester struggles with the lowest high school graduation rate of the Big 5 Cities at 39% (2006) with a 14% increase in 2008, which took into account summer school graduation. The district's attendance rates average 5% below the state average. Attendance for Rochester city high school students in grades 9-12 was 84.4% for 2009-10. The percentage of students earning Regents diplomas in 2009-10 was 20% and the percentage of students obtaining high honors diplomas was 8%. Of the 2,924 students who entered grade 9 in the year 2005 cohort, only 1,437 graduated three to five years later. This means that 1,487 students left schools before earning their high school diplomas. In many cases, these young people remained in our community unprepared to enter the workforce. Thus, retaining an educated population for prosperity in the local workforce and community becomes increasingly difficult.

In addition, the State Education Department has placed over half of Rochester City School District high schools on the low performing list, which mandates either the closing of the school itself, school redesign, or removal of the school's leadership. Currently, the State has identified ten low performing Rochester high schools on its Schools Under Registration Review (SURR) list. Such dismal academic and attendance rates speak to schools' failure to engage student learners.

# Rochester Career Mentoring Charter School Prospectus

January 2011

The Board of Trustees and the Charter School’s founder recognize that Rochester Career Mentoring Charter School will improve significantly all of these statistics because our charter will be the first stand alone 9<sup>th</sup>- 12<sup>th</sup> grade high school in the City of Rochester. We will meet the graduation challenges of our students directly and hold ourselves accountable for those results.

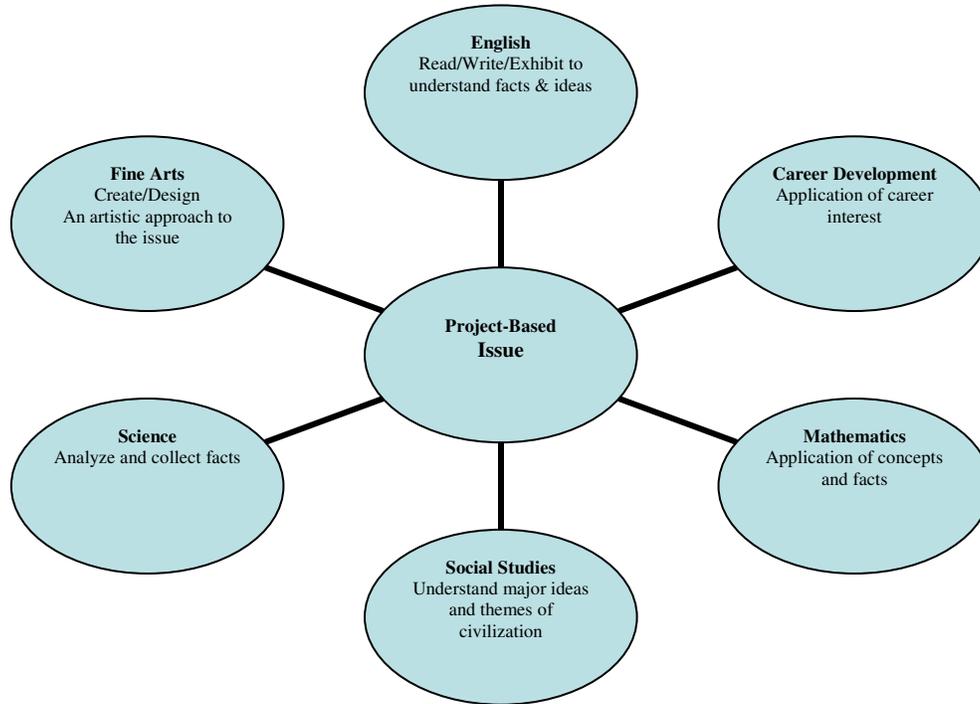
In order to increase student achievement and decrease student achievement gaps in reading/language arts and mathematics, we believe students will be more engaged by addressing their individualized learning processes. Each student will have an Individual Learning Plan that targets their academic strengths while identifying gaps in their skill sets, lack of achievement of specific NYS Common Core Standards, and establishes a four-year trajectory aiming towards graduation. Rochester Career Mentoring Charter School also will adhere to Education Law, Section 2854 (1) (d) and provide project-based learning instruction aligned with NYS Common Core Standards, required Regents courses (see below), and provision of true career exploration and attainment of job readiness skills.

EDUCATION LEVELS	GRADE	English/ Language Arts	Math	Science	Social Studies	Other Required Courses/ Other Electives Recommended Electives/ Learner Activities
	9	English/ Language Arts I	Integrated Algebra	Living Environment	Global and Geography I	Career Development & Occupational Studies
	10	English/ Language Arts II	Geometry	Earth Science	Global History and Geography II	Foreign Language Fine Arts Physical Education
	11	English/ Language Arts III	Algebra 2 Trigonometry	Chemistry	U.S. History	Internship I & II Health & Physical Education
College Placement Assessments- Academic/Career Advisement Provided						
	12	English Language Arts IV (Final Project)	Pre-calculus	Physics	Participation in Government /Economics	

As evidenced in the chart, students across grades 9 and 10 will enroll in Career Choices courses, which focus on the development and integration of personal effectiveness competencies, academic competencies, and workplace competencies. Students in grades 11 and 12 will

participate in internships to further reinforce the integration of academics and real world workplace competencies.

As demonstrated in the diagram below, students across all grade levels will demonstrate the integration of academic core subjects and the development of career and college readiness through project-based learning.



Results at similar schools across the country show increases in attendance, academic achievement, graduation rates, and very low dropout rates among students by virtue of a curricular focus on engagement of student learners through career and college readiness. For example, model schools such as High Tech High (HTH) in California serving a diverse, urban student population, has accomplished a 100% graduation rate with both its blended instructional and project-based learning approach ([www.hth.org](http://www.hth.org)). Students also have time built in their school schedule to participate in career exploration and internship activities. HTH has also produced a cohort of 97% passing on standardized high school examinations. Coupling this educational model with the personal connection students will have with their advisement teacher and business mentor, we believe our school will raise student achievement levels, increase graduation rates, and truly prepare students for success in either post-secondary education or the workforce.

Rochester Career Mentoring Charter School proposes to go beyond developing the basic academic competencies required to learn a job and be successful in higher education. In addition, our school will focus on the development of personal effectiveness and workplace competencies

through its unique design and emphasis on career exploration, preparation, and exposure to the world of work through internships and work-based challenges.

Thus, given our key features, program design, and curriculum, we anticipate that the following goals will be achieved:

- In the first year, 85% of students will meet or exceed the NYSED requirement of passing all required Regents exams.
  - Student attendance rates will be a minimum of 92% attendance in 2012-13 and will increase 1.5% each year after.
  - In 2014, the CMCS will graduate its first class of students who began in 2012-13 as 10<sup>th</sup> graders. It is expected that 85% of the initial 10<sup>th</sup> grade cohort will graduate in June 2014. In 2015, the CMCS will graduate its first class of students who enrolled in the school as 9<sup>th</sup> graders in 2012-13. It is expected that at least 90% of the initial 9<sup>th</sup> grade cohort will graduate.
- b. Increase high school graduation rates and focus on serving at-risk high school student populations (including re-enrolled drop-outs and those below grade level);**

We believe our charter will address graduation rates while serving the needs of at-risk high school student populations through personalized approaches to instruction and student support. The following section details our plan to address graduation rates and at-risk student needs.

### Personalization

- **Wrap Around Advisement:** An advisement teacher is responsible for navigating and guiding the learning process with 14-18 students for two to four years. He or she takes on aspects of administration, guidance, management, recruitment, and community outreach. Our advisement teachers will build relationships with each student and his or her family by meeting, conferencing, and visiting each student's family routinely. Though certified in one area, our advisement teachers must be able to draw on many disciplines to meet the needs of each student and to facilitate students' completion of projects and advisory activities.
- **Individual Learning Plan:** Prior to entering our charter school, prospective 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade students will meet with advisement teachers and parents to create Individual Learning Plans (ILP). The Individual Learning Plan will contain three (3) major components:
  1. Individual Student Profile – Includes a summary of each student's educational and career achievement, accomplishments, interests, skill strengths and gaps. Student profiles will include: biographical information; previous and ongoing attendance rates; credits earned; assessment scores/results; summary of career interest and learning styles inventories and Career Choices program; outcomes of assessments

- utilized to identify student academic strengths and gap; and the alignment between a student's strengths, interests and abilities.
2. Learning Goals and Success Plan – Provides each student, with the support of the student's Learning Team, who will assist students in identifying a minimum of five (5) goals per year that reflect educational, career, and personal growth interests. The Success Plan will contain:
    - i. activities, strategies, resources, and names of specific adults and programs the student will utilize to obtain each Learning Goal
    - ii. articulation of how student work will be addressed through the goals
    - iii. description of how the student will build, apply, and enhance targeted skill deficits and strengths
    - iv. timelines for accomplishing the Success Plan and method used to measure progress
  3. Student Work, Assessment Checklists & Rubrics –Includes student work that demonstrates academic rigor and completion of required projects, internship work products, and a job-readiness skill checklist that will be measured utilizing teacher-developed rubrics. For some students, an intervention plan will be incorporated into the ILP.

Everyone has different interests, needs and learning styles. Each student needs his or her own Learning Plan tailored to his or her own passions, goals and gaps. Since parents hold valuable background information and insights regarding their young adult's strengths, weaknesses, and personal experiences, they will play an integral role in shaping their child's Learning Plan and in the educational process throughout the quarter. The student's internship mentor, who knows the most about the student's area of career interest, is also involved in planning the work. All of our students are expected to pursue rigorous academic topics in the core subjects; however, the academics are embedded in activities, projects and themes that the student is passionate about. The goal is to link academic achievement as closely as possible to something that the student cares deeply about in the real world.

### **Teachers as Curriculum Designers**

Our charter school will draw upon the Rochester City School District curriculum framework as the foundation of our school pedagogy and will enhance it by offering a student-centered environment with project-based learning, career exploration and an internship program as its core. Teachers will be trained in creating a workshop setting for their classroom and will be active participants in generating projects and activities that are aligned with the NYS Common Core Standards for their students. Teachers will also receive training and resources in curriculum integration and career internship program development.

Our charter school will increase student achievement and decrease the achievement gap by arranging a learning environment that will not be confined to the school building, but will be extended beyond school walls to the home, libraries, museums, college, and the work place.

Our charter school teachers will immediately address each student's performance in the areas of English/Language Arts and mathematics. Their classrooms will be a multipurpose work center where some students will be working in small groups or teams, others working independently, and others in just-in-time instruction with their teacher. Our classroom will be equipped with computers, smart boards, televisions, DVD players, and other technology resources, to make it a media-rich learning center with research capabilities for all students.

Furthermore, students will be instructed and /or coached by more than one adult in the classroom. Our classroom could be co-taught by a subject-area teacher and special education teacher or aided by the help of the English as a Second Language teacher. Our classroom will come alive with the help of career exploration guest speakers and business mentors.

## **Career Internship**

According to a Greater Rochester Enterprise report, January 2008, Rochester is among the top twenty metropolitan areas in the United States. The region leads in high tech employment, and subsequently, achieves high rankings related to the area's living and schooling conditions.

### **HIGH TECH EMPLOYMENT & RANKINGS**

- Greater Rochester ranks 18th among all U.S. metropolitan areas for high tech employment with 65,650 workers. This places the region ahead of such high tech hotbeds as San Francisco and San Diego.
- Greater Rochester ranks 5th among all U.S. metropolitan areas for high tech employment concentration, with 147 high tech workers per 1,000 workers. This places the region about even with Austin, TX, and higher than known tech regions, such as Raleigh-Durham, Boston, and Portland.
- The Metropolitan New Economy Index ranks the top U.S. metro areas based on their structural foundations for competing in the 'new economy'. Greater Rochester placed 21st among all U.S. high tech metro areas, bolstered by top 20 rankings in workforce education, export focus of manufacturing, computer use in schools, high tech jobs, degrees granted in science and engineering, patents, academic R&D, and venture capital.

Despite Rochester's high tech development, populations of inner-city Black and Latino are not poised to fully participate in the burgeoning of technological and scientific career fields due to educational inequities. In fact, local employers, including the University of Rochester, recognize that in order to meet the growing demands of a technological and scientific-based workplace, employers must reach outside the Rochester area to fill positions. While the Board and founder do not seek to structure our school around the specific needs of employers, Rochester Career Mentoring Charter School will connect students, and the school, to the community and businesses and will provide them with greater opportunities to become employable citizens in this high tech region. Students will go out in the real world to learn, with the aid of business mentors. Community members will be invited to serve as a resource for students, providing a varied menu of options which will include workshops on job-readiness skills and career

exploration information. The school will likewise serve as an asset to the local community and its needs, giving students authentic ways to utilize skills and knowledge while contributing to the local community as valued citizens—something not done in a traditional high school setting.

Additionally, our school will draw upon the research of the Employment and Training Administration (ETA), which has partnered with businesses and educators to create competency models that demonstrate the foundational and technical knowledge, skills, and abilities required for career success in economically significant industries. These competency models are a resource for the development of curriculum and assessments that measure work-related competencies as well as recruitment and hiring of qualified job candidates. The foundational competencies identified as essential for success in a large number of occupations and industries and frequently referred to as “Work Readiness Competencies” are:

- 1) Tier 1: Personal Effectiveness of “soft skills,” often times difficult to teach and assess and which include Interpersonal Skills, Integrity, Professionalism, Initiative, Dependability and Reliability, and Willingness to Learn.
- 2) Tier 2: Academic Competencies which serve as the foundation for occupation and industry specific competencies include Reading, Writing, Mathematics, Science and Technology, Communication (Listening and Speaking), Critical and Analytic Thinking, Active Learning and Basic Computer Skills.
- 3) Tier 3: Workplace Competencies which enable individuals to work effectively within organizations and which include Teamwork, Adaptability/Flexibility, Customer Focus, Planning and Organizing, Creative Thinking, Problem Solving, Decision Making, Working with Tools and Technology, Workplace Computer Applications, Scheduling and Coordinating, Checking/Examining/Recording, and Business Fundamentals.

Not only must students develop the academic foundation skills for success in the world of work as well as higher education, but their ability to retain a job and move up the career ladder or complete a degree program depends on the development of good interpersonal skills and effective organization-based behaviors. Feedback from local employers supports the importance of these skills with key industries blaming the lack of skills in these key foundation areas for poor retention and recruitment challenges.

Our career development begins at grade 9, with students being introduced to our Career Choices program. This program will teach students through a myriad of projects and activities how to make decisions when selecting a career choice, how to use effective communications, and how to work with others in pairs, in groups, and/or in teams. Career Choices also allows students to prepare ahead when selecting a career interest by arranging a career planner that will extend beyond graduation. Career Choices provides the platform for building Work Readiness Competencies. During Grade 10, students foundational work place skills broaden and strengthen through projects and activities based in Tier 3.

Once we begin the career internship program at grades 11 and 12, the following elements will promote our program:

- A Coordinator of Internship will pool together several resources, work sites, and mentors and align them with each student's career interest and choice.
- Hillside Work-Scholarship Connection Youth Advocates will assist in the coordination and placement of students at their internship sites.
- Our student interns will learn in an authentic way as they contribute their time and enthusiasm to their field of interest. In addition, interns will produce, with input from their mentors, projects that will be useful to their host sites.
- Demonstration of Tier 3 Workplace Competencies through specific on-site internship assignments, projects and/or activities assigned by the hosting site mentor.

## **Enrichment Block and Student Support**

Rochester Career Mentoring Charter School will meet the needs of students at risk of academic failure or dropping out of school with the inclusion of our Enrichment Block in our Master Teaching and Learning Schedule. This block of time allows for remedial work in literacy and mathematics, tutoring, and affords special attention to students with special needs and students who are English Language Learners. The Enrichment Block will also provide eligible students an opportunity for making up incomplete or failed course credit. Enrichment also allows accelerated students to continue work on their projects and activities created during the core academic blocks.

Students will receive additional support services through collaboration with the Hillside Work-Scholarship Connection (HW-SC). This local model has been used nationally to improve student graduation rates, and improve student academic achievement through afterschool mentoring among at risk urban youth. Hillside Work-Scholarship Connection will participate in the Individual Learning Plan conferences to identify academic and social concerns and/or areas in need of support and incorporate all of this in the Learning Plan. In addition, a youth advocate will be assigned from Hillside Work-Scholarship Connection to collaborate with the advisement teacher to identify strategies for tutoring and mentoring. Youth advocates serves as the "connection" of the services needed to help a youth be successful at home, school, and work. The advocate acts as a liaison between systems and a consistent source of support in the lives of youth for many years. The long-term support is the second key to HW-SC's successful outcomes with at-risk youth. The model allows time for trusting relationships to be developed with youth and family members. In addition, long-term relationships allow time for the youth to develop the confidence and belief in self so that he/she applies the required effort to be successful.

### **c. Focus on academic achievement of middle school populations and preparation for transition to high school;**

While our charter is not a middle school, we recognize that students entering from middle schools may face transition issues, especially as our school represents a unique educational offering in Rochester. As such, our school will provide a Summer Orientation Program intended to prepare incoming middle school students for our school structure and design. The orientation

will also be used to prepare Individual Learning Plans for students with the assistance of teacher advisors, Hillside Youth advocates, and parents/guardians.

**d. Utilize a variety of high-quality assessments to measure understanding and critical application of concepts;**

Rochester Career Mentoring Charter School will administer the required Regents tests to its students in grades 9 – 12. Students are expected to graduate with a Regents diploma with a minimum of 22 credits.

Administration of minimum required Regents tests:

- Comprehensive English at grade 11
- US History at grade 11
- Global History and Geography at grade 10
- One Regents-level Mathematics (e.g. Integrated Algebra at grade 9)
- One Regents-level Science (e.g. Living Environment at grade 9)

Additional Requirements:

- PSAT in grades 10 and 11 depending on student performance
- SAT in grades 11 and 12 depending on student performance
- Foreign Language Assessment at grade 9
- Accuplacer Diagnostics – August; Grade 10, 11, 12

Rochester Career Mentoring Charter School (CMCS) will use the web-based, user friendly data assessment COMET as a key piece to its continuous improvement model and as a critical information piece in updating student's Individual Learning Plans (ILP). COMET will tell us how a student is doing in class, evaluate the results of a program, and document a return on investment for a newly funded initiative. COMET is a powerful tool for the education community, delivering answers in an easy-to-understand format. It can access the most recent student data from a variety of sources, as well as historical data and trending to insure a continuity of information when children change grades and schools. COMET is locally operated at the Children's Institute of Rochester, New York ([www.childrensinstitute.net](http://www.childrensinstitute.net)).

Our students will be assessed in each of the core academic skill areas by a combination of ongoing class work, projects, and Regents testing. In addition, reading and numeracy proficiency levels will be determined through administration of the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) and Scholastic Math Inventory (SMI). Where applicable, English Language Learners will be assessed for their language level through the Scholastic's SPI, specifically designed to identify literacy proficiency levels of ELL students.

Graduating seniors in our charter will also be expected to demonstrate their knowledge acquisition and understanding of their career interest in a year-long, researched-based senior

project. Every senior must present his or her final project at a year-end senior exhibition which will provide evidence that the graduating senior is prepared to continue his or her career path either at college or in the work force. As graduating seniors move on, they will leave high school with a plan for reconnecting to the school campus and its students. Though students will be required to pass the New York State Regents examinations, the final project will demonstrate the student's application of knowledge and understanding of the specific skills and concepts taught throughout their high school career. The final project enables broader exhibition of each student's skills and knowledge of the subject matter and goes beyond the required standardized tests and Regents assessments. The organization of the project becomes relevant and evident during the school-wide exhibition. Student ability to explain his/her topic to the public will provide the audience and/or reviewers an understanding of how well researched and organized the project was. In addition, rubrics for measuring achievement in the final project and its presentation will be used by an assessment panel. This panel consists of the student's teacher-advisor, his/her business mentor, and another student.

**e. Increase implementation of local instructional improvement systems to assess and inform instructional practice, decision-making, and effectiveness;**

Rochester Career Mentoring Charter School teachers will provide stand alone and embedded Professional Development (PD) to all staff through a team approach that builds long term capacity building of staff skills. The PD will specifically target the development of individualized curriculum that aligns with NYS Common Core Standards. The training will begin during the summer months before school opens and continue once a month throughout the school year. Consultants will help facilitate the development of an aligned curriculum that integrates career exploration standards with NYS Common Core Standards in a student-centered environment. The Board of Trustees and the charter school founder firmly believe our PD strategy will both build the leadership capacity of all staff members and their expertise in development of personalized curriculum.

Also, Career Mentoring Charter School's Master Teaching and Learning Schedule allows for three hours each week for teachers and staff to participate in Professional Development workshops, meetings, and conferences. Teachers will be allowed to dialogue about student learning by reviewing, critiquing, and assessing student work and projects. They will be able to plan for interdisciplinary teaching by arranging and outlining school projects, activities, and events. The three-hour block will also allow teachers to dialogue with advisory students, interact with parents through conferences, review Individualized Learning Plans, and review and assess internship progress.

Additionally, Career Mentoring Charter School's yearlong calendar allows for two full days of Professional Development for teachers and staff. School will not be in session for students. These two days will enable teachers and staff to review the mission and goals of this charter school. It will allow teachers and staff the opportunity to review and discuss both the charter school's instructional progress and performance, and create action plans for improved performance.

Rochester Career Mentoring Charter School has a strong educational program, with innovations not found in the local district's traditional public schools. This program will be administered on less funding per student than the traditional public schools, and will operate in an educationally and fiscally sound manner. It is anticipated that CMCS will have a positive programmatic impact on the local school district. Its unique program fills a need of demonstrated demand and the implementation of the program in a more cost efficient measure provides the district with a source of "best practice" examples that can be replicated.

**f. Partner with low-performing, local public schools to share best practices;**

After Rochester Career Mentoring Charter School's first full year in operation, a low performing Rochester City School District high school will be identified by the Superintendent to collaborate with our charter school's 'best practices' and professional development model.

**g. Demonstrate the ability to overcome start-up challenges to open a successful school through management and leadership techniques;**

Rochester Career Mentoring Charter School timetable will include hiring of appropriate administrative and teaching staff, curriculum development, staff training, and student recruitment. As a collective group utilizing the talents and expertise of every Board of Trustees member and the founder, we will invest time and effort to open our charter school successfully. Failure in this process is not an option for us.

Expenditure assumptions include, staff and student recruitment; marketing including development of application/information materials and school website; employment of Principal for professional development; staff which will work with content area experts to develop our curriculum framework; Board of Trustees development; and initial costs for acquiring a student information data system. Additionally, we will acquire instructional materials and purchase technology hardware and software.

We will locate an appropriate building for our charter school, hire a food service, and arrange for student transportation.

There are ongoing efforts being made by members of the Board of Trustees, to secure monetary commitments from private and foundation sources both locally and nationally to support key areas in the development year. Efforts are also being made to identify areas in which local businesses may be able to make equipment and/or furnishing donations to meet some of the initial needs of the school.

**h. Demonstrate the support of the school district and the intent to establish an ongoing relationship with such district;**

Rochester Career Mentoring Charter School has received endorsements from the Rochester City School District's Board of Education President, Mr. Malik Evans and the Superintendent of Schools, Mr. Jean-Claude Brizard. In addition, the founder also has had ongoing meetings with both the Rochester City School District's Deputy Chief of School Innovation and the Deputy Superintendent of Teaching and Learning. This charter school will work collaboratively with the Rochester City School District and become part of the district's compact between city schools and charter schools.

In addition to the school district's support, several letters of endorsement have come from key politicians in the Rochester area, including one from the state senate and the assembly. Both politicians have taken a strong interest in the improvement of city schools. Further, we have received several signatures of city residents who would be willing to enroll their children in our charter school.

**i. Provide access to viable education alternatives to students in regions where there are a lack of alternatives.**

Rochester City School District does not have a unique career mentoring and internship program such as the one we are proposing with our charter. This charter school's features will be attractive to students whose interest lie in their specific dreams in a career path. It also is the goal of this charter school to serve the local community as a demonstration site, to serve as an educational site for student teacher education and to become a model for secondary school reform. Our connections with higher education institutions will also entail sustained professional development for our teachers in areas such as co-teaching, leadership, and special education.