

PHASE I: Letter of Intent

Created Tuesday, February 10, 2015

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Applicant groups and Existing Education Corporations interested in submitting an application to establish Regents-authorized charter schools are asked to complete this brief information sheet. The Department will use this information to plan and coordinate peer review panels with appropriate expertise to evaluate all application materials.

Please indicate whether an Applicant Group or an Existing Education Corporation is submitting this Round 1 Letter of Intent.

Applicant Group LOI to establish a single, brand new charter school

Proposed Charter School Name

(Please write out the formal and full name for the school you proposed, and include the words "charter" and "school" in the proposed name(s)).

School Name	Exploration Elementary Charter School for Science and Technology
Grades Served (K-5, .6-8, 9-12, etc.) During Initial Term	K-5
Number of Students During Initial Term	475

Proposed or Current Board Chair and Public Contact information, including mailing address, phone number, and email address.

(The entire chart may not be visible on your screen. Use the "tab" key to move from column to column. The first column will remain static as you do so).

	First and Last Name	Best Phone Number (###-###-####)	Email Address
Proposed/Current Board Chair	Kevin Williams	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Public/Media Contact Person	Kevin Williams	585-615-7211	kwillia2@rochester.rr.com

If available, please provide the URL to the website established for the proposed school or existing education corporation.

(No response)

Proposed Management and/or Partner Organization(s), such as a charter or educational management company or a university, academic program partner, or whole school change partner.

(See pages 45-46 of the application kit for definitions and guidance as only "substantial" partnerships should be listed here).

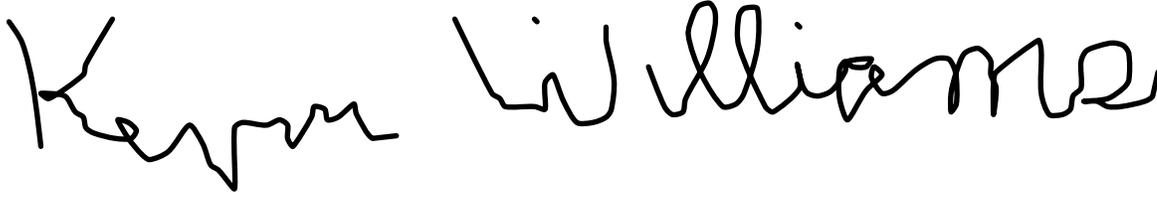
Proposed Management Company
Partner Organization 1
Partner Organization 2

Lead Applicant(s) Signature and Date

Use your PC mouse or your mobile device stylist to sign your name below.

Lead or Co-Applicant listed in section c above.

(Internet Explorer may not support this feature. Open the portal using Google Chrome, Firefox, or Safari).

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ken Williams". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "W".

Date Signed (Lead or Co-Applicant)

2015/02/10

Thank you for completing this survey so that the Department may plan its review panel accordingly.

I. Applicant Information

a. Applicant Group Information: Please see Table 1 in Attachment A.

b. Applicant Group Roles and Experiences: Please see Table 1 in Attachment A.

c. Public Contact: Dr. Kevin Williams is the proposed Board Chair and can be reached by phone at 585-615-7211 or by email at kwillia2@rochester.rr.com.

d. Application History: Kevin Williams, Carlos Cong, Michelle Swanger-Gange, Joseph Saia, Lisa Hiley, and Christopher Potter submitted a letter of intent to open Exploration Charter School for Science and Technology (“Exploration”) NYSED Charter School Office in July of 2014 but were not invited to move forward with the full application.

II. Proposed Charter School Information

a. Proposed School Name: Exploration Elementary Charter School for Science and Technology.

b. Proposed School Location: City of Rochester. We are considering several buildings, including 180 Raines Park, Rochester, New York 14613.

c. Planned Grades and Enrollment: Exploration will open with kindergarten and first grade. We will have a total of 75 kindergarten students and a total of 100 first grade students, with 25 students per class. We plan to add one additional grade of 75 students each year until we reach grade six. Capacity and growth for the proposed charter term will be as follows:

Operating Year	Academic Year	Grades Served	Total Students
1	2015-2016	K, 1	175
2	2016-2017	K, 1, 2	250
3	2017-2018	K, 1, 2, 3	325
4	2018-2019	K, 1, 2, 3, 4	400
5	2019-2020	K, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5	475

d. Proposed Management and/or Partner Organizations: Not applicable.

e. Proposed School Mission: Exploration’s mission is to engage learners, their families, and the community in the processes of scientific inquiry and the use of innovative technology to develop the social, emotional, and academic tools necessary to thrive in school and today’s global world.

f. School Overview: Exploration’s desire is to prepare all students, even the youngest of students, with the critical thinking, collaborative, social, linguistic, and mathematical skills to create the next generation’s innovations and/or to fully participate in future opportunities. We believe that when students are free to explore, research, direct, experiment, and interact with knowledge, they approach new information with excitement, a sense of inquiry, and confidence that promotes academic achievement and life-long learning. Scientific inquiry provides students

with opportunities to directly investigate scientific phenomena while constructing (co-constructing and re-constructing) meaning (Cervetti, Pearson, Bravo and Barber, 2005). Stable (i.e., using current understandings to increase knowledge) and fluid (i.e., creating new concepts) scientific inquiry aligned to Common Core State Standards will build new knowledge from what students already know and believe; mediate their social interactions and environment; and formulate and modify their current concepts with new evidence. Scientific inquiries in the areas of robotics and electronics, environmental and green technologies, computer and technology, health and body sciences, arts, and engineering and design frame inter-disciplinary content and learning.

The Board has further reviewed the following curricular resources, amongst others: Fountas and Pinnell Balanced Literacy Framework, Lucy Calkins Units of Study (writing), Words Their Way (spelling), Investigations (math), Cognitively Guided Instruction (CGI), Smithsonian Science and Tech Concepts Curriculum, My World Social Studies, and Scott Foresman Social Studies. In addition, the Board is reviewing literacy and math interventions, including: Lexia Reading, Lindamood Phoneme Sequencing, Reading Mastery Leveled Literacy Interventions, Math Steps, and DreamBox Learning. Final program selections will align with the scientific inquiry framework, will provide students with multiple opportunities to read, write, speak, and listen across content areas, and apply foundational skills in order to deeply understand.

The community and culture of the school is of equal importance, as the Board recognizes students who are educated in safe and structured environments that demonstrate core social-emotional (SEL) competencies do better academically (Durlak, 2007). To accomplish the comprehensive programming, the Board is reviewing the following frameworks to establish robust SEL foundations: All Kinds of Minds, Responsive Classroom models, PATHS, and Partnership School models.

Exploration will have a longer school day (i.e., 8 hours) and school year (i.e., 195 days).

g. Target Population/Community Served: Exploration seeks to serve students in the Rochester City School District (RCSD). The RCSD has a graduation rate of 43%, and of 53 schools, only ten are in good standing; 27 are focus schools; 15 are priority schools, and one is on a local assistance plan.

III. Enrollment and retention of students with disabilities, English language learners (ELL) and students who are eligible for the free and reduced price lunch (FRPL) program

Recruitment and Enrollment

Recruitment and retention will be mission focused towards students who reside in the Rochester City School District. Our recruitment efforts will meet or exceed the proportions of target population students in the district of location (i.e. RCSD: 10% ELL, 16.5% special education, and 84% FRPL). Student enrollment will be determined through a lottery to the extent that the number of applicants exceeds the number of seats.

a. Strategies to attract and recruit students identified in the school's mission: To attract

students from RCSD, Exploration plans to continue to hold community and parent presentations at related service providers, community centers, libraries, preschools, and churches throughout Rochester. The Exploration applicant group maintains a network of established partnerships with local schools, organizations, and professionals that serve students and families from the RCSD.

b. Strategies to attract and recruit students with disabilities: In order to reach special education students, we will contact organizations and agencies serving children with special needs and their families, such as Hillside Children’s Center and EnCompass: Resources for Learning, to let them know we have staff and resources available to meet the needs of students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) or Section 504 Plans (504 Plans).

c. Strategies to attract and recruit English language learners: In order to reach families with limited English proficiency, we plan to translate promotional materials into the most commonly spoken languages by immigrant and refugee families in the area and distribute them in neighborhoods with the greatest percentages immigrant and refugee families. We will advertise in non- English media outlets and distribute materials to organizations and agencies serving ELL families.

d. Strategies to attract and recruit students eligible for FRPL: In order to attract low-income students, we will distribute materials, hold meetings, and advertise in neighborhoods with the greatest percentage of households in poverty, including the Upper Falls, Marketview Heights, Edgerton, Brown Square, and JOSANA neighborhoods. We will focus our recruitment at Head Start and similar community organizations in order to ensure sufficient enrollment of our incoming kindergarten classes each year.

Student Retention

a. Strategies to retain students identified in the school’s mission: Our primary retention strategy for all students is a strong academic and social emotional learning (SEL) program that engages students and families. We plan to maintain a low student to teacher ratio and have reading and math coaches that will push into classrooms to ensure that students have a resource-rich environment and time and attention to reach mastery. In addition, Exploration will provide targeted professional development around the learning styles of students in poverty and provide wrap-around services to address student needs, including a full time nurse. We plan to establish partnerships with institutions that will offer family literacy programming and placement for student teachers as well. We plan to select a central location with access to public transportation to make it easier for parents to travel to the school. And finally, we plan to hire a family liaison and a social worker to determine and address student and family concerns.

b. Strategies to retain students with disabilities: In order to retain special education students, Exploration will hire the necessary teachers and administrators with special education certifications and ensure instruction is provided in accordance with students’ IEPs or 504 plans. To ensure strength in programming and school culture supporting each student regardless of learning diversity, special education programming and related services support (e.g., speech-language) will be provided per the student’s IEP and then based on identified need, impacting academic performance and growth. Regular screening, assessment, and progress monitoring will

benchmark performance and track growth. Individualized learning/intervention plans will be developed for all students who would benefit from additional support to accelerate academic growth.

c. Strategies to retain English language learners: In order to retain ELL students, Exploration will engage an ESL teacher who will work with staff to use a sheltered English approach in instruction, as well as work one-on-one or in small groups to help students acquire English. Communications with families will be in the home language, and we will have translators available for parent conferences and school events so that ELL students and families can be full participants in the Exploration experience.

d. Strategies to retain students who are eligible for the FRPL program: Please see section (a) “Strategies to retain students identified in the school’s mission.”

IV. Public Outreach and Community Support

a. Public Outreach and Community Support: The Exploration applicant group has conducted community outreach in order to understand the needs of the community, gauge support for the school proposal, and elicit feedback to enhance school design. Specifically, the Exploration team has held meetings at community centers and various organizations in Rochester, conducted outreach efforts at community events (i.e. family meetings) throughout Rochester, and held meetings with leaders of the Rochester community. A detailed list of the outreach efforts is included below:

- **January 2015:** The Exploration team created a letter and a detailed flyer explaining the proposed school overview, grade levels served, and scheduled opening, if approved. The letter specified three community events that parents and members of the community could attend to learn more about the proposed school and share their comments and questions. The letter and flyer also included a phone number and an email address that community members could call to share comments or ask questions about the proposed school, in the event that they are unable to attend the events.
- **January - February 2015:** Information about Exploration was posted on the following websites: (<http://rochester.kidsoutandabout.com/content/exploration-charter-school>), [www.http://explorationrochester.org/](http://explorationrochester.org/), and http://rochester.freeclassifieds.com/classified_ads/Community/Local_News/k_c5Y-3FUvcB26gwWGrLqg%3d%3d
- **January 13, 2015:** The Exploration team distributed the letter and the detailed flyer to 20 Rochester news outlets, 10 different City and State officials, 29 community organizations, seven local colleges and universities, five faith based organizations, and 12 existing charter schools and asked them to share the information with their constituents and solicit feedback.
- **January 27, 2015:** The Exploration team held information sessions, open to the public, from 11:00 AM- 12:00 PM at the Sully Public Library, located at 530 Webster Avenue Rochester, NY 14609, and at the Carlson Metrocenter YMCA, located at 444 East Main Street Rochester, NY 14604 from 4:30 PM – 5:30 PM. Notice of these meetings was provided to the public on January 13, 2015.

- **January 28, 2015:** The Exploration team held an information session, open to the public, from 1:00 PM – 2:00 PM at Hillside Children’s Center, located at 1337 East Main Street Rochester, NY 14609. Notice of this meeting was provided to the public on January 13, 2015.
- **December – January 2015:** The Exploration team attended Education Community Open Houses at two Rochester locations, Charles Settlement House, 431 Jay Street, Rochester, NY 14611, on December 1, 2014, and at Southwest Area Neighborhood Center, 275 Dr. Samuel McCree Way, Rochester, NY 14611 on December 3, 2014, where we shared a synopsis of the proposed charter school and Exploration team members were available to answer questions and seek input. Families indicated that they are interested in high quality option for elementary schools in Rochester that support students socially and emotionally.
- **Spring 2014 – January 2015:** Members of the Exploration team met with leaders in the Rochester community, including, but not limited to, the RCSD Superintendent, the RCSD Office of School Innovation, the RCSD Chief of Staff, the County Executive, the Commissioner of Social Services, the Commissioner of Neighborhood and Business Development, the Director of Child and Family Services, the Director of Planning and Development, the Director of Financial Assistance, the University of Rochester Warner School of Education, the President of the Rochester Business Alliance, and the Executive Committees at the Wilson Foundation and the Farash Foundation.

During our community outreach events, families and community representatives encouraged us to consider (1) social and environmental factors in the RCSD, which impact student performance; (2) interest in arts as part of the curriculum; and (3) importance of safe and small learning environments. As a result, we have made sure to balance science inquiry elements with direct instruction to ensure progress in core content areas. We have considered the arts as a medium for scientific inquiry and are exploring scheduling and staffing structures that will allow us to engage our students with the arts. And, finally, we have established school-embedded academic and social-emotional supports throughout our program.

b. Assessment of Parent Interest in Proposed Charter School: To assess parent interest in Exploration, the applicant group shared an overview document, which outlined program and timeline details, with parents residing in our target community. We asked them to sign a petition if they were interested in learning more and/or potentially enrolling their children in the proposed school. 214 signatures were collected, in total. 165 signatures indicated support for our program, and 149 of the 165 reside in the target community. Parents who are both supportive of our program and reside in the target community listed a total of 294 school-aged children.

Additionally, the Exploration team attended four school open houses/parent events at Rochester City Schools #19, #33, #34, and #39 between September 18 and October 10 of 2014, and spoke to parents of the children currently enrolled there. We gathered a total of 99 parent surveys on science education and school options in Rochester, which indicated that parents supported a school like Exploration because it would engage their children academically in the core learning areas, and socially and emotionally, while providing access to science and technology options that would help them succeed in the future.

V. Proposed Board Chair Signature and Date

Kevin W. Williams 2/10/2015⁵

NAME OF APPLICANT GROUP MEMBER	EMAIL ADDRESS	CURRENT EMPLOYMENT
Kevin Williams, PhD	[REDACTED]	Department Head, Materials Science Department, Eastman Kodak Company
Robert Franklin	[REDACTED]	Director of Finance & Chief Financial Officer, County of Monroe
Michelle Swanger-Gange, PhD, NCSP	[REDACTED]	Therapist, Strong Behavioral Health, Strong Family Therapy and University of Rochester Medical Faculty Group
Carlos Cong	[REDACTED]	Senior Manager, Network Services, Paychex
Joseph Saia	[REDACTED]	School Director, Discovery Charter School

BLE 1: APPLICANT GROUP INFORMATION

Minimum of 5 members must be designated as Trustees

RELEVANT EXPERIENCE, SKILLS, AND ROLE ON APPLICANT GROUP (Key Words)	PROPOSED ROLE (if any) (Trustee, Employee, Consultant, or No Continuing Role)	PROPOSED POSITION ON THE BOARD (e.g., officer, trustee, or constituent representative)
<p>Relevant Experience/Skills: management, operations, budget procurement and management, performance evaluation, career mentoring, strategy, STEM background; Role on Applicant Group: Organizational and Fiscal Plan Committee, Educational Plan Committee (STEM Focus)</p>	Trustee	Board Chair
<p>Relevant experience/skills: fiscal operations, including finance and accounting experience; organizational management, public sector and non-profit; strategic planning; performance management; Role on Applicant Group: Organizational and Fiscal Plan Committee</p>	Trustee	Chair, Finance Committee
<p>Relevant skills/experiences: extensive experience providing behavioral and collaboration consultation to schools and families; specializes in working with children with academic and behavioral concerns in school, such as learning disabilities, ADHD, and school anxiety; teaching and supervising trainees in family therapy, psychology, and medicine; Role on Applicant Group: Educational Plan Committee (SEL Focus)</p>	Trustee	
<p>Relevant experience/skills: capital and operational management; application of and access to innovative technology; strategic partnerships; Role on Applicant Group: Educational Plan Committee (STEM Focus)</p>	Trustee	
<p>Relevant experiences/skills: experienced educator; proven ability build a school culture that embraces continuous improvement for teachers and students; able to engage parents and community members as partners; management and continuous staff development; Role on Applicant Group: Educational Plan Committee</p>	Trustee	

<p>Relevant experiences/skills: sales and marketing; project management; software and programming proficiency; engineering experience; Role on Applicant Group: Education Plan Committee (STEM Focus)</p>	<p>Trustee</p>	
<p>Relevant experience/skills: planning and implementation of research and evaluation of educational programs; researches, implements and designs coordinated special education efforts; manages diverse funding sources; performance evaluation; strategic planning; grant writing; Role on Applicant Group: Educational Plan Committee</p>	<p>Advisor</p>	
<p>Relevant experiences/skills: special education; art education; differentiated instruction; implementation of alternative assessments; creation and implementation of STEM program; teacher training and professional development; Role on Applicant Group: Educational Plan Committee</p>	<p>Advisor</p>	

LENGTH OF INITIAL TERM	VOTING MEMBER (YES OR NO)
3	Yes

