

PHASE I: Letter of Intent

Created Friday, January 30, 2015

Updated Friday, February 06, 2015

Page 1

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	Friendship TECH Charter School of Excellence
Grades Served (K-5, .6-8, 9-12, etc.) During Initial Term	K-4
Number of Students During Initial Term	315

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	Collie Edwers		
Public/Media Contact Person	Collie Edwers	914-668-1210	friendshiptechcharterschool@aol.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 stylus 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, appearing to read "Orlin D. Jones". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Orlin" and last name "Jones" clearly distinguishable.

Date Signed (Lead or Co-Applicant)

2015/01/30

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

I. APPLICANT INFORMATION:

- A. **Group leader information:** Dr. C. Nathan Edwers resides at [REDACTED] His contact information is: [REDACTED]
- B. **Public Contact:** Dr. C. Nathan Edwers, friendshiptech2015@gmail.com, 914-646-3211 and bishopcnedwers@aol.com.
- C. **Applicant Group Information – See Table 1**
- D. **Founding Group/Initial Board of Trustee Information:** Same as letter C above.
- E. **Replication or Network Information:** Not Applicable
- F. **Applicant History:** FTCSE submitted an application in 2014 and was invited to a capacity interview. The NYSED Authorizer provided a detailed assessment of our full application for future consideration. The founding group reviewed the NYSED Authorizer’s findings, began to fill in the gaps, expand the board’s capacity, and proceeded to rewrite the full application.

II. PROPOSED CHARTER SCHOOL INFORMATION

- A. **Proposed School Name:** Friendship TECH Charter School of Excellence (FTCSE)
- B. **Proposed School Location:** Mount Vernon, NY. FTCSE does not request a district facility.
- C. **Planned Grades and Enrollment in each of the years of the proposed charter term:** See Table below.
- D. **Proposed Management and/or Partner Organization(s):** Not Applicable
- E. **Proposed School Mission:** Friendship TECH Charter School of Excellence (FTCSE) will teach each child holistically by empowering all students to become aspiring leaders, life-long learners, critical thinkers, and problem-solvers through a rigorous interdisciplinary STEM academic program to be successful in competitive k-4 academic programs.

Grades	Age Range*	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
K	5-6	63	63	63	63	63
1 st	6-7	48	63	63	63	63
2 nd	7-8		48	63	63	63
3 rd	8-9			48	63	63
4 th	9-10				48	63
Totals		111	174	237	300	315

*Students’ ages may extend beyond the range specified in cases where they have been advanced or retained a grade prior to entering FTCSE.

F. School overview: The Mount Vernon Public Schools have failed to raise the Math and ELA proficiency levels of its students for the past several years. In 2013 and 14, 82% of third and fourth graders in the district have consistently scored at levels I and II on the NYS Math exam. In the past two years, third and fourth grader performance on the ELA has worsened. In 2013, 81% of students performed at Levels I and II, but in 2014 the number of students at these levels have increased to 86%.² There are five key design elements that make FTCSE uniquely positioned to identify and meet the needs of the Mount Vernon student population. These elements will foster students’ growth as life long learners and aspiring leaders, making them college and career ready. The five key design elements are:

1. **Interdisciplinary STEM-Based Curriculum:** FTCSE’s unique curriculum design will address the widening achievement gap of Mount Vernon students by preparing them for college and career readiness, empowering them as future leaders. The curriculum will infuse the Hofstra STEM Studio research-based teaching and learning lab model. STEM content and careers into rigorous Common Core ELA and math instruction with interdisciplinary inquiry, project, and problem-based STEM design challenges will be utilized. Lessons will require students’ use of their prior knowledge, technology, and community resources to solve problems and design solutions. To further broaden learning across all subject areas, a *MakerSpace/STEM* Lab will be created for students to apply the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) science and engineering practices throughout the problem-solving process, thus fostering

¹N.Y. Education Law § 2851(2)(p).

²Data NYSED.gov, accessed January 12, 2015, <http://data.nysed.gov/assessment.php?year=2014&state=>

yes.

independent (self-directed) learning experiences in addition to working cooperatively with their teachers, peers, and community while journaling throughout the day. Instructional activities will highlight various careers, particularly those in STEM, and place students in real-world situations. School trips and assemblies will align with the curriculum exposing students to the Arts, sports, culture, and STEM discipline. Local projects, such as gardening and recycling, will foster social awareness and real world learning, thereby creating an on-going communication and partnership with the greater community. Students will also participate in school-based career related learning experiences with their families and the community, such as a STEM Career Festival. Students will use written, oral, verbal, and digital communication to share their discoveries with their families and community; teachers will use paper-based and digital formative assessments, such as Keeley's *Uncovering Student Ideas in Science* and *iReady*, respectively.

2. **Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) and Social and Digital Consciousness** – Daily instruction will integrate rigorous reading and writing activities with technology to enhance students' critical thinking, problem solving, and content mastery in ELA, math, STEM, social studies, and the Arts. For example, students' mastery of content knowledge and vocabulary will be supported by interactive computer based curricula, such as Science Fusion and SmartBoards; technology will be used in conjunction with various literacy genres during instruction to develop students' writing, reading, and verbal skills. Students' digital and multi-media literacy will be developed through opportunities to create video projects on SmartTables that will develop their written and verbal communication skills while engaging in discourse and debate with their peers. Virtual lab data activities will support students' understanding of experimental design, and manipulation and control of variables, while increasing their data literacy. Additionally, MakerSpace stations will be designed to reinforce the practices of scientists and engineers as detailed in the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) by fostering skills in robotics, circuitry, mechanics, and comic book design, to name a few. Lastly, students will learn how to use social media, podcasts, and email responsibly. With the guidance of the teacher, lessons will provide students with the opportunity to Tweet their "a-ha" moments via *Twitter* with their family members while in school and share their discoveries or inventions with their peers, community, and students around the world via social media, such as *Skype*. This practice intends to develop student' social awareness to promote positive, sensitive, and knowledgeable members of the Mount Vernon community and across the global marketplace. These approaches will develop students' math and literacy skills and knowledge necessary to overcome the failing standardized test scores plaguing the Mount Vernon public schools.
3. **Blended Rotation Model:** The rotation model of blended learning will be established to allow students to move between computer-based and face-to-face instruction daily to enhance learning and retention. The rotational schedule will include computer and iPad stations in math and reading, independent reading, journaling/reading response stations, and guided teacher instruction with targeted groups in addition to their STEM inquiry and problem based tasks. Students will work online independently, thereby having control over their learning pace and path to developing new skills and content. Students will interact with the teacher and their peers through cooperative learning activities, hands-on learning centers, assemblies, and field trips. This blend of activities will concretize and reinforce what they have learned online and vice versa. The adaptive learning software, Pearson's *Envision Math* and *iReady New York*, will be used as a diagnostic and instructional tool to provide teachers with student data which not only informs teachers of how to restructure their lessons but individualized online lessons are created to address individual learning needs. The blended rotation model will ensure that FTCSE students will function on or exceed grade level proficiency in the content areas.
4. **Differentiated Instruction and Intervention Model:** Our instructional staff will be comprised of Early Childhood and/or Childhood Education teachers, Special Education teachers, and an ESL/ELL teacher(s). Instructional support staff will be comprised of certified Early Childhood and/or Childhood teachers working as teacher aides to assist in providing individual students with their necessary accommodations, to address specific educational skills and abilities. Teaching assignments will be based on two criteria: (1) using data for ability grouping and (2) student-teacher matching. The first uses authentic formative assessment data to create and deliver individualized and small group instruction based on the learning needs of students. Students will be grouped based on the Journey's 2014 Common Core Learning benchmark assessments, Dream Box Math, and daily observations as recorded by the teacher. Students

who demonstrate the greatest needs will be placed in the smallest sized groups. Every six to eight weeks, teachers will formally reassess all students and develop new ability based groups. Then, teachers' experience and expertise will be assigned to students who demonstrate the greatest need for instructional support. ESL/ELL/LEP students will be assigned highly qualified teachers who are knowledgeable in research based best practices for these subgroups.

5. **Teaching Each Child Holistically (TECH):** The Resolving Conflicts Creatively Program (RCCP), a program that introduces a value system teaching individuals how to solve conflicts peacefully, will be used school-wide. Teachers will be trained so that they may model this behavior for their students. The program fosters the development of problem solving by teaching such skills as perspective taking, negotiation, and decision-making. These problem-solving skills will further develop our students' self-esteem and provide the basis toward becoming future leaders. Lessons in character, and the elementary school character education curriculum will be adapted to help children to understand good character and conflict resolution through literature, which will further support ELA development. The curriculum is designed to extend beyond the school walls and into the child's home and community.

G. Target Population/Community Served: FTCSE is committed to improving the academic proficiencies of students living in Mount Vernon where a glaring socio-economic and academic divide exist. Based on 2010 US Census data, the city of Mount Vernon is 63% African American and 14% Latino, and the vast majority of these students are attending public schools. As of 2013, Mount Vernon Elementary Schools are not meeting NYS proficiency standards. For example, one of the highest performing schools in Mount Vernon ranked worse than 50.7% of elementary schools in the State.³ FTCSE is dedicated to closing the achievement gap for these children regardless of their poverty level, English language proficiency, disability status, or race.

III. ENROLLMENT AND RETENTION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES, ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS, AND STUDENTS WHO ARE ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS FOR THE FREE AND REDUCED PRICE LUNCH PROGRAM.

Early intervention programs will be notified of FTCSE goals, programs, and expectation for all students including ELL and special needs students. To meet or exceed enrollment and retention targeted requirements for these subpopulations of students FTCSE will attract African American, Spanish, Latino, Brazilian and other ethnic groups and linguistic groups (Spanish and Portuguese speakers) and low income students and families utilizing aggressive marketing campaigns via radio, local newspapers, social media, our webpage, flyers, daycares, preschools, community centers, the Mount Vernon Library, apartment complexes, churches, supermarkets, and community outreach house meetings.

Enrollment of Those Identified in the School's Mission: FTCSE will recruit from Mount Vernon district preschool programs and community-wide childcare educational centers that have graduated their pre-K children and families with children in elementary school. Early intervention programs will be notified of FTCSE goals, programs, and expectations for all students, including ELL and special need students. FTCSE will admit students through a lottery process without regard for race, creed, ethnicity, disability, or socioeconomic background.

Retention of Those Identified in the School's Mission: We will make every effort to retain students by engaging them and their families in our general educational program during the regular academic year and summer recess. New York State Common Core standards will become the benchmark of FTCSE's general education program, which will increase ELA and math proficiencies of all FTCSE students that exceed their grade level. We will establish home visits before school starts to engage parents in their child's education, collaborate with community organizations to provide wraparound services for struggling students and families, and provide targeted assistance to at-risk students.

Recruitment of Students with Disabilities: In addition to the outreach described above, FTCSE has identified and developed relationships with five preschool programs that serve students with disabilities as part of its marketing strategy. New York State Early Intervention programs and the Westchester Early Childhood Direction Center will support and serve as network partners for special needs and ELL children within the Mount Vernon community. FTCSE will ensure that all outreach includes an explanation of services to support students with disabilities with specific mention of our inclusionary model of educating children with disabilities.

³Mount Vernon School District Report Card 2012-13.

Retention of Students with Disabilities: FTCSE will provide an opportunity for students with disabilities to learn in the least restrictive environment. We will provide an integrated co-teaching model with a full time certified special education teacher. The teacher will apply push in and pull out methods of instruction to meet student's specific needs. A Special Education Coordinator along with teachers whose credentials reflect training in special education will provide additional targeted support and intervention to meet the needs of students with disabilities and oversee the special education program in collaboration with the school's leadership team. The Special Education Coordinator will work closely with classroom teachers to assess and monitor student growth. The Special Education Coordinator and FTCSE's leadership team will communicate with parents on a regular basis their student's progress and any IEP modification needed to provide opportunities for students to excel.

Recruitment of English Language Learners: FTCSE will distribute recruiting materials in multiple languages, and have translators at recruiting events. Our recruitment will include the Mount Vernon Spanish and Portuguese communities as well as agencies and local churches that focus on families who speak languages other than English. We will also work with the Bilingual Technical Assistance Center (BTAC) for assistance with recruiting English language learners. We will also hold bilingual informational sessions in Spanish and Portuguese allowing for ample Q&A time in families' native languages. We will add to our website links to bilingual and translated materials (school information, applications, etc.) for all families and students to access information.

Retention of English Language Learners: FTCSE will hire a full time certified English as a Second Language (ESL) bilingual TESOL or Bilingual Education teacher who will deliver push-in, and pull out TESOL instruction and work in collaboration with school leadership and teachers to improve student's language acquisition skills. The TESOL teacher will use the Journeys curriculum to support ELL students with targeted instruction and intervention strategies. We will also support students' native languages in their learning with an approach that values students' bilingualism. FTCSE will provide a language resource center for students, their families, and school staff to share literature in diverse languages, strategies for increasing language acquisition at home and a forum for support. The resource center will be open during after school hours, and in the summer for continuous access to information in diverse languages. We will have a bilingual parent coordinator and bilingual members of the PTA to support teachers and families in maintaining strong and positive communication and connections for the benefit of students.

Recruitment of students who are eligible applicants for the free and reduced priced lunch programs: During our recruitment process, FTCSE will advertise to families in high need poverty areas and areas with the lowest performing schools. Poverty areas include but are not limited to Levister Towers, Ebony Gardens and The Plaza (Lefrak Housing) housing complexes, which are identified by the state of New York as low-income family units.

Retention of students who are eligible applicants for the free and reduced priced lunch programs: FTCSE will provide students in general education classes with a rigorous curriculum. To keep up with our rigorous curriculum, we will provide students with daily homework help outside of our afterschool program, which will be comprised of academic help, sports, and cultural activities. Our leadership team will collaborate with classroom teachers to provide struggling students with intensive RTI instruction, especially to those students that may not have attended Universal Pre-Kindergarten. Progress will be closely monitored and changes in instruction are based on data collected from on-going assessment. RTI represents an educational strategy to close achievement gaps for all students by preventing smaller learning problems from becoming insurmountable gaps. FTCSE will respectfully communicate and partner with parents throughout the year and continuously monitor and measure parents' perception of FTCSE programs and their child's academic and social/emotional progress.

IV. Public Outreach and Community Support

FTCSE's founding group has undertaken a rigorous community outreach campaign to inform the public about our intent to open a charter school and to solicit meaningful feedback about the academic and programmatic needs of Mount Vernon students. During our outreach campaign, which has extended past two-years, we have had personal discussions with community and educational stakeholders throughout Mount Vernon. These discussions have provided insightful feedback regarding the support and reservations of our proposed charter school. Discussion, feedback, testimonials, affirmations and concerns have been received from: The Mayor of Mount Vernon, Westchester County Executive, a Mount Vernon City Council member, Mount Vernon City Council President, Former Interim Superintendent, Executive Director of Amani Public Charter School, a New York State Senator, Editor of the Mount Vernon Inquirer, Community activist and site manager for Family Ties of

Westchester, Inc., Radio station WVOX 1460 FM, several clergy persons and several business leaders of Mount Vernon community.

Outreach began in March 2013. Five flier distributions, 5 community meetings, 3 newspaper articles written, 2 media announcements, 1 radio spot, a community fair and several email and door-to-door distributions giving information about our proposed charter school have occurred. A total of 1000 residents signed a petition expressing interest for the establishment of FTCSE. Signatures were gathered from the Mount Vernon Neighborhood Health Center, local grocery stores, the Diner, scheduled community forums and neighborhood door-to-door visits. 457 of the petition signers expressed interest in enrolling their child/ren in FTCSE. They felt that a new school for early childhood learning with a strong ELA and technology focus would be helpful as an alternative option. The area of our greatest support, which is the 10550 zip code area is also the area with the lowest performing schools. Petitions came from the following zip code areas: 10550 = 577, 10551 = 70, 10552 = 283, and 10553 = 70. Overwhelmingly our petition efforts demonstrated an interest in the development of a new elementary charter school. We asked the petitioners how long have they been a resident of Mount Vernon, would you send your child or grandchild to FTCSE and would you support FTCSE educational and community outreach efforts. We received commitments from residents who have lived in Mount Vernon long and short term who would send their children to our new charter school. The new charter school will provide an educational option for children currently attending low performing schools.

Initial Assessment of Sufficient Interest and community input:

Feedback encouraged FTCSE's founding group to adjust the original proposal by increasing the number of children to be served, including STEM as an innovative approach to learning, and placing a greater emphasis on math and ELA proficiency to ensure that the New York Common Core Learning Standards are met. The community residents were concerned about the students' behavioral issues that affect the learning environment of fellow students. Based upon several conversations with residents, a fifth key design element, TECH (Teaching Each Child Holistically), was created that would provide effective instruction, peer mediation, student participation, and parent and community involvement in conflict resolution, to prepare the scholars emotionally, socially and physically to deal with conflicts and cultural differences. Various curriculums were explored that would address the resident's concerns. Infusion of the Resolving Conflict Creatively Program (RCCP), a proven tool for urban cities like Mount Vernon would create a positive safe learning environment that teaches and prepares our future leaders for college and career readiness. The comments gathered from the community suggested that they had concerns on how a rigorous STEM program was to be implemented in the early grades. This concern caused the founding group to reconsider their proposed curriculums and the integration of the STEM approach that's appropriate for the target group of low performing children who would be included in school outreach. The founding group secured a STEM specialist that helped the group understand how a strong literacy foundation is interwoven into STEM allowing learning to become more effective in the core subjects. We rethought the educational technology tools needed to accomplish our mission and MakerSpace stations were adopted as the classroom-setting model of Hostra University STEM Lab, a proven innovative method. Because of the low New York test scores, the stakeholder wanted to know what assessment tools were to be used in the lower grades to track student achievement. An authentic formative assessment program was developed that will utilize one or more of the following methods: benchmark, IEPs, Pearson, i-Ready and the New York State ELA, Math and Science test to create and deliver individualized and small group instruction based on the learning needs of students. The Danielson rubric assessment tools will become the benchmark for evaluating our teachers' effectiveness. Overwhelmingly, the community stakeholders were concerned about New York State Common Core Standards being met. This concern was addressed by incorporating college and career awareness events, Math, ELA, and STEM curriculum. FTCSE also formed collaborative partnerships with building and block associations to maintain access and visibility in high needs areas.

A database was established to stay in contact with interested persons to inform them of updates to our proposed charter school.



Dr. C. Nathan Edwers, Applicant Group Leader

DATE: 2-6-15

TABLE 1: APPLICANT GROUP INFORMATION							
NAME OF APPLICANT GROUP MEMBER	EMAIL ADDRESS	CURRENT EMPLOYMENT	*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 None Continuing Role)	PROPOSED POSITION ON THE BOARD (e.g., officer, trustee, or constituent representative)	LENGTH OF INITIAL TERM	VOTING MEMBER (YES OR NO)
Dr. C. Nathan Edwers		CEO/Pastor	Leadership and organization	Trustee	Chairperson	3	Yes
Paula Scarlett-Brown		Educational/Consultant	Principal/reading specialist	Principal	None		No
Michael A. Campbell		Engineer	Budgets analysis strategy	Trustee	Chair of Finance	3	Yes
Michael A. Valentine Esq		Attorney	Law, litigation Real estate	Trustee	Attorney	2	Yes
Samuel N. Wilson Jr. CPA		CPA	Accounting/ Budgeting/ Cash Flow	Trustee	Treasurer	2	Yes
Felicia Leary		NYS Administrator/ Children Services	Children Svcs. Outreach	Trustee	Community outreach Liaison	2	Yes
Julia C. Caliendo		Professor Hofstra U	Stem Specialist Science Lab Instruction	Trustee	Vice Chair	3	Yes
Sherri Edwers		NYC Special Ed Teacher	Curriculum/ Special Ed	Trustee	Assistant Secretary	3	Yes
Dr. D. J. Moore		Senior Doctorial Mentor	Strategic plan Research	Compiler	None		
Dorothea Muccigrosso		Retire Prinicpal/Adj.Professor	Curriculum/Teaching Research	Advisor	Trustee	2	Yes
Virginia Chiambalero, O. P.		Retired Professor NYU	Curriculum Research	Special Advisor	Curriculum Specialist		No
Heather Homonoff Woodley		Assistant Professor	Multilingual/Multicultural	Consultant	ELL Advisor		No