

FULL APPLICATION SUMMARY

Proposed Charter School Name	Exploration Elementary Charter School for Science and Technology						
Proposed Board President Name	Dr. Kevin Williams						
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Public Contact Name	Dr. Kevin Williams						
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Public Contact Telephone Number	585-615-7211						
District of Location	City of Rochester						
Opening Date	August 15, 2016						
Proposed Charter Term	2016-2021						
Proposed Management Company or Partners	N/A						
Projected Enrollment and Grade Span During Charter Term	Projected Enrollment Table Over the Charter Term						
	Grades	Ages	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
	K	4-5	100	75	75	75	75
	1st	5-6	75	98	75	75	75
	2nd	6-7		73	100	75	75
	3rd	7-8			75	100	75
	4th	8-9				75	100
	5th	9-10					75
Totals		175	246	325	400	475	
Projected Maximum Enrollment and Grade Span	K-6; 550 students						
Mission Statement:							
<p>The mission of Exploration Elementary Charter School for Science and Technology (Exploration) is to engage students, 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 in today's interconnected world.</p>							

Exploration is situated within the context of a scientifically advanced and interconnected world with an absolute desire to prepare all students with the critical thinking, collaborative, social, linguistic, and mathematical skills to create the next generation's innovations and/or to fully participate in the global world. Exploration's academic program balances explicit instruction in core content areas with innovative opportunities, allowing students time to explore, research, direct, experiment, and interact with knowledge as they approach new information with excitement, a sense of inquiry, and confidence to promote academic achievement and life-long learning.

Exploration is guided by key design elements that are interwoven through the academic program, community connections, and commitment to all students and families that will co-create the vibrant and successful school community.

- Cross-Cutting Curricular, Scientific Inquiry, and Lab-Based Learning Opportunities:** Exploration is committed to school and community learning experiences for students and families that will foster habits and dispositions known to be important in our global and 21st Century world, such as critical thinking, constructing explanations, communicating information, planning, effective execution of tasks and experiments, and obtaining and evaluating information for application. Science inquiry is the

vehicle for this deeper learning and skill development.

2. **Balanced and Differentiated Instruction & Rigorous Standards:** Exploration recognizes the need to balance students' learning and therefore will position students as active learners and emphasize deep learning/understanding through both inquiry-based learning and targeted intervention/enrichment (Taylor, 2000; Burnard, 1999). Exploration is committed to all students' attainment of rigorous academic and social standards and will provide all students supports toward mastery and success.
3. **Ongoing Professional Development and Learning:** Exploration will employ teachers, instructors, and intervention specialists/special educators who possess the same dispositions we hope to foster in our students. All staff will constantly assess, explore, examine, and improve their professional practices to ensure fidelity to the Exploration academic program and school design (Nikolic & Cabaj, 2000). Because of the science and technology base for the school design, on-going professional learning and instructional coaching is a hallmark of school staffs' professional practice and support, and is inclusive of families.
4. **Data-Driven Instruction and Accountability Aligned to Rigorous Academic Standards:** Exploration is deeply committed to the academic success of enrolled students, and is, therefore, dedicated to ensuring that all students meet or exceed the expectations set forth by the New York State CCLS. Exploration will implement data-driven instruction and programming that is regularly monitored and reviewed as identified in the assessment section.
5. **Community Connections and Partnerships:** Exploration recognizes that a strong school community (culture and climate) is critical for academic and social successes (Durlak, 2007) and is, therefore, committed to a vibrant and safe school community, as well as strong connections to the surrounding community. Exploration has an established partnership as described in the educational and organizational plan sections with the Rochester Museum and Science Center (RMSC) to co-create innovative scientific curricula as well as to access space and opportunity for underserved students to engage with real science equipment, train staff, and provide access to local science experts and collectively innovate with students and families. School-family-community partnerships are a means to strengthen and promote academic, cognitive, and social-emotional development for the students enrolled at Exploration.
6. **Serving the Diverse Needs of All Students:** Key design elements summarize the educating of ALL students. Through rigorous and data-driven instruction, scientific innovation including balanced and differentiated instruction, on-going professional learning and strong community connections and partnerships, we expect that all students will go beyond meeting learning standards to also mastering the higher-order thinking skills and competencies necessary to thrive in the 21st century. We recognize that to achieve this goal with all students, we will need to appropriately select, train, and develop our staff, engage students and their families, and differentiate instruction to meet the needs of students who are performing above and below expectations. To ensure success and fidelity, Exploration will utilize a data dashboard and regular performance measures to monitor progress while promoting mastery and success.

Exploration plans to open K-1 in August 2016 with an affiliate partnership with the Rochester Museum and Science Center in the City of Rochester and seeks to serve students in the Rochester City School District (RCSD). Exploration will ensure the objectives and charter of the school are fulfilled with a comprehensive staffing plan including a School Director, Curriculum and Instructional Staff for content areas and science/technology, Dean of Students, Intervention Specialists/Special Educators, Innovation Instructors, Family Partnership Coordinator/Social Worker and Teachers/Apprentice Teachers. The Exploration staff will engage with community partners to enhance the community-based opportunities for students and families, as well as create innovative partnerships to support science and technology programming and professional development for staff and materials.

Table of Contents

I.	Mission, Key Design Elements, Enrollment, and Community	1
A.	Mission Statement and Objectives	1
B.	Key Design Elements	2
C.	Enrollment, Recruitment, and Retention	3
D.	Community to be Served	6
E.	Public Outreach	8
F.	Programmatic and Fiscal Impact	11
II.	Educational Plan.....	12
G.	Achievement Goals	12
H.	School Schedule and Calendar	14
I.	Curriculum and Instruction.....	16
J.	Assessment System.....	24
K.	Performance, Promotion, and Graduation Standards.....	28
L.	School Culture and Climate.....	29
M.	Special Student Populations and Related Services	31
III.	Organizational and Fiscal Plan.....	36
A.	Applicant Group Capacity.....	36
B.	Board of Trustees and Governance.....	38
C.	Management and Staffing	41
C.1	Charter Management Organization	45
C.2	Partner Organization	45
D.	Evaluation	45
E.	Professional Development.....	48
F.	Facilities	51
G.	Insurance.....	52
H.	Health, Food, and Transportation Services	52
I.	Family and Community Involvement	53
J.	Budget and Cash Flow	56
K.	Pre-Opening Plan.....	57
L.	Dissolution Plan.....	58
	Attachment 1: Admissions Policies and Procedures	59
	Attachment 2: Evidence of Community Outreach	61
	Attachment 3: Sample Schedules: Staff / Student / First Year Calendar	89
	Attachment 4: Student Discipline Policy	94
	Attachment 5: Board Information / By-Laws / Code of Ethics	103
	Attachment 7: Rochester Museum and Science Center Letter of Intent/Commitment	244
	Attachment 8: Hiring and Personnel Policies	247
	Attachment 9: Budget	263

I. Mission, Key Design Elements, Enrollment, and Community

A. Mission Statement and Objectives

Mission: The mission of Exploration Elementary Charter School for Science and Technology (Exploration) is to engage students, 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 in today's interconnected world.

Objectives of Exploration: Exploration objectives are listed and align to the school mission, current and evidence-based educational practices, and the applicable New York State and federal regulations:

- Increase student achievement in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics through an extended and comprehensive academic program with school-family-community partnerships.
- Ensure that students are at (or above) grade level performance upon transitioning to middle school.
- Embed daily innovative science and technology inquiry opportunities for students to actively engage with cross-content learning through research, inquiry/questioning, critical thinking, and problem solving; ensure multiple modes of learning, oral presentation, and writing to illustrate learning.
- Balance explicit and differentiated instruction in classroom and lab-based learning experiences to provide multi-modal opportunities for learning and application of cross-curricular content. Promote a balance of student-directed and teacher-led learning across the school day and year.
- Support whole child development and school-family-community partnerships through classroom/school-based supports and linkages to existing community resources.
- Provide opportunities for students and their families to participate with science and technology experts and leaders in our community to foster 21st century skills.
- Offer comprehensive and innovative professional development (PD) and professional learning (including instructional coaching) for instructional staff, ensuring integration of best practices and current technology into Exploration's pedagogy practices, with the purpose of supporting and enhancing students' learning.

Furthering the Objectives specified in Education Law Section 2502(2): Exploration will materially further the following objectives, specified in Education Law Section 2502(2):

- **Improve student learning and achievement:** We will improve student learning and achievement by:
 - Creating and implementing a rigorous, inquiry-based, common core learning standards (CCLS)-aligned curriculum, as further outlined in the Curriculum and Instruction section;
 - Implementing ongoing assessment (summative, formative, and benchmark) to create a culture of data-driven instruction, as further explained in the Assessment System section;
 - Providing strategic and regular PD to our teachers and staff ensuring they meet the needs of all students through differentiated instruction so that all students reach their specified learning goals, as discussed in the Professional Development section; and
 - Requiring an extended school day and school year to ensure that our staff and students have adequate time to attain the goals set forth in the Achievement Goals section.
- **Increase learning opportunities for all students, with a special emphasis on expanded learning experiences for students who are at risk of academic failure.**

As outlined in our Enrollment, Recruitment, and Retention section and our Admissions Policies and Procedures section, we have implemented targeted strategies to ensure enrollment and retention of English as a new language (ENL) students, students who receive free and reduced-price lunch (FRPL), and students with special needs. We will expand learning opportunities for these students by providing a rich academic experience with unique opportunities to approach science and inquiry-based learning, including (but not limited to) our Units of Exploration, extended ELA instruction, and a strong and vibrant school culture, centered around student achievement. Additionally, we have established a unique

partnership with Rochester Museum and Science Center (RMSC) to ensure that all students are deeply engaged in scientific learning and have meaningful community-based experiences with science experts and spaces (e.g., labs). The partnership not only aligns with the school's overall mission but is linked to the critical thinking and problem solving processes prioritized along with ELA/math skills and supports the expanded learning efforts at Exploration. Finally, a comprehensive staffing model and individualized intervention/enrichment for exceptional students will ensure a rigorous academic program with differentiated supports.

- **Encourage the use of different and innovative teaching methods.**

Through partnership with the RMSC and local science experts, as well as regular professional learning, Exploration's staff will employ innovative teaching including scientific inquiries and lab-based learning providing students the opportunity to participate in unique, cross-curricular units of study founded on both the CCLS and the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). The longer school day and intentional master schedule will provide students with multiple opportunities throughout the day to collaborate with each other, particularly around problem solving and Units of Exploration, which are further discussed in the Curriculum and Instruction section, while also receiving intervention/enrichment in ELA and/or math as necessary to meet and exceed the rigorous academic standards and develop 21st Century Skills.

B. Key Design Elements

Rochester, New York is rich with an innovative and technological legacy considering contributions of Xerox, Kodak, and Bausch & Lomb corporations as well as the many institutions of higher education. Furthermore, Rochester is ripe with technological innovation that will carry us beyond the 21st century with international photonics, optics, and medical advancements. The Exploration Board and foundational partnership recognize Rochester's rich history and propose Exploration for the following reasons:

- To improve student learning and achievement;
- To increase learning opportunities for all students, with a special emphasis on expanded learning experiences for students who are at risk of academic failure; and
- To encourage the use of different and innovative teaching methods rooted in science and innovation.

To meet these goals, we will give an enrollment preference for students who reside in the Rochester City School District (RCSD). We believe that this group of students, in particular, is at the greatest risk of academic failure due to the lack of high performing schools in the RCSD, which is facing the lowest graduation rates in the entire state. Exploration's innovation and rigor via science and technology serve as the foundation for student achievement and engagement; these elements are based on successful school models in science and technology integration with academic successes apparent for all learners.

As further discussed in the Curriculum and Instruction section, the Exploration applicant group believes that to be successful in college, career, and beyond, our students must demonstrate a keen understanding of the core subject areas while also understanding how those core subject areas relate as well as the interconnected world. Exploration's key design elements, listed below, and keen focus on cross-cutting curricular innovation via targeted instruction and scientific inquiry will support students in mastering the 21st century (21C) skills required to skillfully navigate the experiences that await them upon graduation.

Cross-Cutting Curricular, Scientific Inquiry, and Lab-Based Learning Opportunities

Exploration is committed to school and community learning experiences for students and families that will foster habits and dispositions known to be important in our global and 21st century world, such as critical thinking, constructing explanations, communicating information, planning, effective execution of tasks and experiments, and obtaining and evaluating information for application. Science inquiry is the vehicle for this deeper learning and skill development (Barron & Darling-Hammond, 2008). As discussed in our Curriculum and Instruction section, we believe that the inquiry-based learning (IBL) will be the most effective way to provide our students with the 21C skills necessary to thrive in college and beyond. This

belief is aligned to our mission and has guided our curricular, instructional, and staffing decisions.

Balanced and Differentiated Instruction

Exploration recognizes the need to balance students' learning and therefore positions students as active learners and emphasizes deep learning/understanding through both IBL and targeted intervention/enrichment (Taylor, 2000; Burnard, 1999). Exploration's master schedule, staffing, and academic plan balance explicit instruction with active engagement in science and technology; in other words, Exploration will foster foundational skill development via intervention/enrichment as well as higher-order thinking via teacher- & student-led instruction, inquiry, and exploration (Kirschner, Sweller, & Clark, 2006; Bloom, 1956).

Ongoing Professional Development and Learning (PD)

Exploration will employ instructional and support staff who possess the same dispositions we will foster in students. Staff will constantly assess, explore, examine, and improve their professional practices to ensure fidelity to Exploration's school design (Nikolic & Cabaj, 2000). First and foremost, Exploration's leadership will ensure that all staff are supported via PD/coaching to challenge and support students' access to the general education curriculum. As discussed in our PD and partnership sections we have included research-based methods to promote Exploration's staff to remain rooted in innovation and best practice. Professional development topics as well as associated field-based PD for staff and instructional coaching will introduce, support, and reinforce quality implementation of key design elements and instructional programs; Exploration's partnership will support PD efforts for staff, leadership, and families.

Data-Driven Instruction and Accountability Aligned to Rigorous Academic Standards

Exploration is deeply committed to the academic success of enrolled students, and is, therefore, dedicated to ensuring that all students meet or exceed the expectations set forth by the New York State CCLS. Exploration will implement data-driven instruction that is regularly monitored and reviewed as identified in the assessment section. Exploration's assessment plan outlines the multiple and repeated measures to track students' growth and progress toward rigorous standards and includes diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments that are regularly reviewed and reflected upon (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2010; Love, 2009). All student and school data will inform class, school, and Board decisions.

Community Connections and Partnerships

The Board recognizes that a strong school community (culture and climate) is critical for academic and social successes (Durlak, 2007) and is, therefore, committed to a vibrant and safe school community, as well as strong connections to the surrounding community. Exploration has an established partnership as described in the educational and organizational plan sections with the Rochester Museum and Science Center (RMSC) to co-create innovative scientific curricula, provide space and opportunity for underserved students to engage with real science equipment, train staff, and provide access to local science experts and collectively innovate with students and families. Partnerships are a means to strengthen and promote academic, cognitive, and social-emotional development (Christenson & Shreidan, 2011; Epstein, 1986).

Serving the Diverse Needs of All Students: Our key design elements summarize our plan for meeting the needs of ALL students. Through rigorous and data-driven instruction, scientific innovation including balanced and differentiated instruction, on-going professional learning and strong community connections and partnership we expect that all students will go beyond meeting learning standards to also mastering the higher-order thinking skills and competencies necessary to thrive in the 21C. To achieve this goal with ALL learners, we will select, train, and develop staff, engage students and their families, and differentiate instruction to meet the needs of students who are performing above and below expectations. A data dashboard and regular performance measures to track progress will guide the Board and Director.

C. Enrollment, Recruitment, and Retention

Projected Enrollment: Exploration will begin with 175 students: 100 in kindergarten and 75 in first

grade, with 24-25 students per class. We will add an additional 75 kindergarten students each year (25 per class) thereafter until we reach capacity at grade 6. Following is our projected enrollment:

Grades	Ages	2016–2017	2017–2018	2018-2019	2019–2020	2020–2021
K	4-5	100	75	75	75	75
1 st	5-6	75	98	75	75	75
2 nd	6-7		73	100	75	75
3 rd	7-8			75	100	75
4 th	8-9				75	100
5 th	9-10					75
Totals		175	246	325	400	475

Proposed Application, Admissions & Enrollment Policies: Exploration’s application will require only necessary information to admit new students and is not considered a pre-registration form. The application will reflect the guidelines set forth by NYS Department of Education. Applications will be available on our website and will be distributed in hard copy to local community organizations, including (but not limited to) The Boys and Girls Club, Head Start, and Hillside Children’s Center. Families or guardians of students interested in enrolling must submit a completed application by April 1 each year. Applications, once completed, can be hand-delivered, mailed, or emailed. The school will provide email or postcard confirmation for applications received by the April 1 deadline. Applications submitted after the April 1 deadline will be added to the waitlist; the waitlist expires annually at the lottery for the next school year.

If the number of applicants exceeds the number of open seats in the school, a random lottery will be held to select the students. Preference will be given to students residing in the district of location and to students whose siblings are enrolled in the school. Students who are not selected from the lottery will be placed on a waitlist in the order in which their name is drawn from the lottery.

Filling Vacancies: In the event that vacancies become available, the waitlist students will be invited to attend the school in the open grade level(s). Students will only be added after the second quarter at the discretion of the Director and with consideration for enrollment and class/grade composition. For a more detailed description of the Exploration admissions policies and procedures, see Attachment 1.

Enrollment Size Rationale and Growth Strategy: The following is the rationale for enrollment:

- Exploration plans to enroll elementary school students from the RCSD. Since many students in the RCSD enter kindergarten behind their more affluent peers, we firmly believe that starting our school at the elementary level, providing a solid foundation, particularly targeting vocabulary development and literacy skills in the early years, will have the largest impact on students living in concentrated poverty.
- By opening in year one with kindergarten and 1st grade, we can invest our students and their families from day one. The longer school day and school year as well as the scientific foundation/habits will be a part of their school experience from the very beginning.
- We created our class sizes of 24-25 students per class, which, when accounting for our science and technology innovation instructors, will allow for a student-to-teacher ratio of 12:1 while providing sufficient funding to build a strong academic team in our founding year – essential for meeting our students’ needs through differentiation and intervention/enrichment as necessary.

And, finally, we anticipate an annual attrition rate of approximate 10%. Other charter school leaders in the Rochester community have indicated that attrition may be higher, closer to 15%, with the founding classes. By allotting 100 students in our founding kindergarten grade class and employing the retention strategies listed below, we have proactively accounted for any attrition that may occur and the implications in the

budget section. To delivery the academic program we have designed and balanced the budget with a “bubble” enrollment at the kindergarten level. From speaking with other charter school leaders, we know that it is easier to attract kindergarten students than first graders, as parents are naturally looking at placement options. Looping will accommodate the enrollment bubble and allow teachers to remain with students in subsequent grades. For example, teachers will follow the larger class from K-1, 2-3 and 4-5 until the school reaches capacity. We believe looping will benefit students and staff through sustained relationships, a deeper understanding of student talents/needs, and consistency with learning.

Meeting/Exceeding Enrollment and Retention Targets: In order to meet or exceed the enrollment and retention targets established by the Board of Regents, we are conducting ongoing recruitment and outreach at organizations that serve students who qualify for free and reduced-price lunch (FRLP), students with disabilities, and ENL students, including (but not limited to) the Monroe County Social Services, the Carlson Metrocenter, the YMCA, and Hillside Children’s Center. We also plan to have ads in or on local and Spanish language media outlets in high visibility areas. We will continue to distribute flyers in areas with the highest poverty and at refugee populations. Finally, we will reach out to families via direct mailings to Rochester City residents and going door-to-door to share Exploration information and application.

Recruitment: Recruitment and retention will be focused toward students eligible for FRLP in the RCSD. In order to reach a broad cross-section of prospective students, we are conducting an extensive outreach throughout the Rochester community and RMSC. For instance, we have shared information about Exploration in accessible formats and languages with media outlets, including radio stations, news organizations, and local parent websites. We have also contacted religious groups, community centers and organizations, as well as state and local officials to notify them of our program, the students that we are planning to serve, and means for obtaining further information. In addition to hosting various community events, we have created a separate email address and phone number, where individuals can reach us with questions or comments about Exploration; should we be granted a charter, Hillside will be asked to host additional meetings, be a distribution point for literature, and a resource to families of Exploration students.

In order to recruit students with special needs, we will continue to reach out to organizations and agencies serving children with special needs and their families to let them know we will have staff and resources available to meet the needs of students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) or Section 504 Plans (504 Plans). For example, one such agency is Hillside Children’s Center – a provider of care for youth and families with a wide range of emotional, behavioral, or life-circumstance challenges. Hillside offers mental health, child welfare, juvenile justice, special education, safety net, and developmental disabilities services to children and families throughout Central and Western New York. We have collaborated with Hillside to host a community meeting at which we offered materials about our program and addressed any questions or concerns that parents had about Exploration.

To reach families with limited English proficiency, we will translate promotional materials into Nepali, Somali, and Arabic – the most commonly spoken languages by immigrant and refugee families in the area. We will advertise in non-English media outlets, and reach out to organizations and agencies serving ENL families. We have connected, and will continue to, with local refugee organizations, including Catholic Family Center’s Refuge, Immigration, and Language Services Department, the Somali Center, and RCSD’s Rochester International School (RIA), to recruit families to the school with linguistic and cultural diversity.

Finally, in order to ensure that we reach students whose families may be less informed about available school options, we will conduct direct outreach efforts, including going to door-to-door in high poverty neighborhoods throughout Rochester to notify parents about our program, and sending out direct mailings with information about Exploration with a copy of the application to families residing in the RCSD. According to the 2010 census, poverty among families with school age children in Rochester is greater than 50%; conversations with area charter schools leads us to believe that economically disadvantaged families recognize charter schools as a public school choice for their children.

Retention: According to charter school leaders in the Rochester community, most student withdrawals result from lack of guidance and support around school policies and procedures, particularly involving academic and discipline matters. As a result, our primary retention strategy for all students is a strong academic and social emotional learning (SEL) program engaging students and their families. More specifically, we will maintain a low student-to-teacher ratio, have intervention specialists to ensure that students have a resource-rich environment and time and attention to reach mastery, have dedicated family partnership staff to support students in school and make community connections, commit a full-time nurse to monitor and meet health needs, supplement academic instruction with SEL programming, and leverage our partnership with RMSC to provide informal science learning for families outside of the school day. Ancillary staff such as social workers (e.g., family liaison) and Deans will serve as key personnel to engage and support youth and families assisting retention; additionally, culturally sensitive and responsive classroom staff will ensure retention. Staff will engage in PD around the learning styles of students in poverty as well as culturally-relevant teaching. Ease of access to the school is also a key means to foster retention; therefore, Exploration will make every effort to select a central location in the City of Rochester with access to public transportation to make it easier for parents and families to travel to the school.

In order to retain special education students, Exploration will hire the necessary teachers, both special-education and intervention, and administrators with special education certification and ensure that instruction is provided in accordance with students' IEPs or 504 plans. Special education programming and related services support (e.g., speech-language) will be provided per a student's IEP and based on identified need, impacting academic performance and growth. Regular screening, assessment, and progress monitoring is planned to benchmark performance and track growth and more fully described in the Special Student Populations section. Special education staff and school leadership will ensure students' individualized needs are met thus ensuring access to the general education curriculum.

In order to retain ENL students, Exploration will employ a TESOL teacher who will work with staff to provide appropriate instruction to students within the classroom during the ELA block and work outside of the classroom to provide English language instruction. Beyond the instructional support, Exploration will ensure that communications with families will be in the home language as evidence of the sustained commitment to school-family partnerships. We will have translators available for parent conferences and school events, so that ENL students and families can be full participants in the Exploration experience.

Ensuring Adequate Enrollment and Full Accessibility: In order to retain students from our target community, and continuously meet or exceed the enrollment targets set forth by the Board of Regents throughout our charter term, we will continue to conduct outreach and advertise throughout the Rochester community as described above. As necessary we intend to locate in a facility accessible to all, and will provide accessible instructional materials (e.g., large print books) and technology (e.g. screen magnifiers).

D. Community to be Served

The Value of Exploration: RCSD presents with an increased need for additional high quality educational options. Many schools within RCSD are low-performing and are not adequately preparing elementary students for the rigors of secondary learning or college/career. If approved, Exploration will add tremendous value to the Rochester community. Students in grades K-6 currently have no options to attend a Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM)-focused school, and there are limited options to attend high-performing elementary schools. Additionally, Exploration has a strong focus on partnerships providing additional support to our students and families in the Rochester community (see the Family and Community Involvement section). See below for additional information about the tremendous need in the Rochester community and how Exploration will serve students in the community well.

Anticipated Student Population: Exploration will recruit and serve students from the RCSD, which has the highest poverty rate among the NYS Big 5 districts. Twenty-two percent of schools in the RCSD

have a poverty rate of 90% or higher. The current student population in the RCSD¹ is as follows: 60.1% African American/Black, 25.6% Hispanic, 10.2% White, and 4.1% Asian/Native American/East Indian/Other; 84% eligible for free/reduced-price lunch; 16.5% with special needs, and 10% with limited English proficiency; and 87 different languages are spoken. Some small percentage of students from outside the district of location may enroll; we anticipate no more than 5% of students will be from neighboring districts.

Student Need in the RCSD and How Exploration Will Address These Needs: There are limited options for students to attend high-performing public schools in RCSD, and there are no public STEM elementary schools. RCSD has a graduation rate of 43%, and of 54 schools, only 9 are in good standing, 29 are focus schools, and 16 are priority schools. Furthermore, the 2013-2014 State tests² indicate that overall proficiency, or students who scored at levels three and four, is 5% in ELA and 7% in mathematics.

In order to address the need for high-performing public school options, Exploration will provide a rigorous cross-curricular program with an emphasis on science and technology. By keeping students in school for a longer day (8 hours) and a longer school year (195 days), Exploration will allow students adequate time to master grade level standards, beginning in kindergarten. Furthermore, by embedding the scientific inquiry method throughout the curriculum, Exploration will foster curiosity, critical thinking, and analysis while giving students a protocol for approaching problem solving and core subject learning. By providing lab time each day students will dive deeper into the content from literacy, math, science, social studies, and arts. Given that science and technology are allow access in our interconnected world, and that there are no opportunities that currently exist for Rochester elementary students, we believe that Exploration with the science/technology focus adds tremendous value to existing RCSD school options.

Why Rochester and Applicant Group Ability to Serve Community: We chose to open our school in the City of Rochester because we care about the city and the future of its children. We recognize the challenges that students in the RCSD are facing and are determined to change the educational outcomes that are currently plaguing it. As Rochester community members, business owners, educators, and parents, we value education – specifically, science education – and believe it is the vehicle toward ensuring Rochester’s success. We are motivated, committed, and passionate about implementing an innovative, scientific approach to learning, for even the youngest learners. Finally, the Exploration applicant group maintains strong ties with organizations throughout the Rochester community, including Hillside Children’s Center, EnCompass: Resources for Learning, the Community Place of Greater Rochester, and the YMCA, among others. This network, combined with individual Board member expertise, will help ensure that we are delivering each of our students a quality education, bolstered by community support.

Enhancing Educational Options: If chartered, Exploration will be the a primary K-6 STEM school located within RCSD limits with significant community partnership(s). We believe this option will greatly enhance and expand the educational options for students in this community. Our program will introduce students to rigorous scientific inquiry and lab-based learning in all subjects and will employ the following innovative methods: *hands-on, Units of Exploration, allowing for collaboration and implementation of the concepts explored during science and technology blocks*; cross-curricular units of study will provide students numerous opportunities to read, write, speak, and listen in core subjects; and balanced and differentiated instruction to allow all students to access the rigorous, higher-order thinking skills and dispositions, embedded in the scientific method.

Evidence of Demand: In addition to extensive community outreach endeavors, many of which were directed at parents and families (see Section E), the applicant group shared an overview document that outlined program and timeline details with parents in the community and asked them to sign a petition if

¹ <http://www.rcsdk12.org/domain/8>

² <http://data.nysed.gov/reportcard.php?instid=800000050065&year=2013&createreport=1&38ELA=1&38MATH=1&48SCI=1>

they were interested in learning more and/or potentially enrolling their children in the proposed school; 363 signatures were collected; 271 indicated support for our program, 241 reside in the target community. Parents who are both supportive of our program and reside in the target community listed a total of 402 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, 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. We are continuing our outreach and recruitment efforts, but the support garnered so far indicates that there is a strong demand and interest for a high performing elementary STEM option in the RCSD.

E. Public Outreach

The Exploration applicant group conducted extensive 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, Exploration has held meetings at community centers and various organizations in Rochester, conducted outreach efforts at community events (i.e., family meetings) throughout Rochester, held meetings with leaders of the Rochester community, and spoke with parents to seek their input on the school program and inquire about their support. A detailed list of these meetings is included below with evidence of community outreach and parent support included in Attachment 2. Feedback received at each of these events is bolded; a summary of how we incorporated this feedback into our school design follows.

- **August 5, 2015:** Exploration hosted a Parent Information Session and Focus Group at a Rochester Museum and Science Center with 5 preschool parents and 1 RCSD graduate. Parents stressed the need for schools to support students' social and emotional development and other supports for kids.
- **August 4, 2015:** Exploration hosted a Parent Information Session at a Head Start on 700 North Street in Rochester City. Preschool parents indicated they were in favor of charter school options in the city.
- **July 30, 2015:** Exploration hosted a Parent Information Session and Focus Group at a Rochester City Location (Mortimer Street, 14604) with 7 RCSD parents and 1 RCSD alumni. Feedback indicated that parents feel that more options for unique learning approaches are necessary in the City of Rochester.
- **July 29, 2015:** Exploration hosted a Parent Information Session and Focus Group at the Rochester Public Market (14609) with 6 RCSD parents and 1 grandparent. Feedback indicated that the families were in favor of the school design and location and wanted options for schools in the City of Rochester.
- **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 Monroe County Commissioner of Social Services and her leadership team, the City of Rochester Commissioner of Neighborhood and Business Development, the Monroe County Director of Planning and Development, the Children's Institute, the President of the Rochester Business Alliance, and the Executive Directors at the Wilson Foundation and the Farash Foundation.
- **August 2014:** Members of the Exploration team approached community members with children at public places throughout Rochester (i.e., public market) and provided a brief overview of the Exploration school design. A total of 55 individuals were approached. They were then asked, generally, if they had any input or feedback to help make the school better. Family responses ranged from commenting on their perspectives on science learning to their opinions of charters and public school performance, as well as their identification of areas where all schools need to improve. The following summarizes some key quotes, by theme from the interviews; all of the parents' feedback (See Attachment 2A) was incorporated into the overall school design:

Role of Science in Learning

- *"It's so important to get kids excited about science...especially girls. There is a huge deficit of women in science."*
- *"Science is a great way to grab kids' attention...technology is a necessity in today's world."*
- *"My girls went to a charter school before we moved to Rochester. It was a brilliant school. Everything was technology and it made students and parents feel like they were actually learning something."*
- *"They don't do enough science in RCSD."*

Need for School Design

- *"Sounds awesome if it incorporates art and music as well."*
- *"You need family support if the child is going to be successful."*
- *"Small class sizes are important."*
- *"A school needs to be ahead of technology, not playing catch up."*
- *"Kids who feel safe will learn better."*
- *"Serve the community."*

Questions and Concerns

- *"It looks good on paper, but would it really be different than any other school?"*
- *"My son is a science and math kid but we really didn't know that 'til 4th grade, there was no indication in the primary grades."*
- *"Are students held to the same standards? What is the student/teacher ratio? Are there after or before school programs? Would there be sports/music/drama?"*
- *"Technology is a good tool, but not very social."*
- *"How will behavior problems be addressed?"*
- *"Science is great but will it help kids pass tests?"*
- **September – October 2014:** Friends of Exploration collected 99 parent surveys about science education and school options in Rochester that **indicated parents believed schools like Exploration focusing on science education and social-emotional programming with technology skills embedded was positive. They also shared additional ways that families can engage and partner with schools (Exploration) indicating that parent meetings, texting, and newsletters would be ideal to foster home-school partnerships.** (See Attachment 2B).
- **October 2014:** The Exploration team surveyed parents to gauge interest in science focused charter schools. **Responses indicated that 90% of families were in favor of the charter school option and were looking for school options outside of the city schools.**
- **November 2014:** Held a Science FEAST (Families Engaging in Active Science-inquiry Together), where Rochester City youth and families were invited to attend an inquiry-based science fair; 53 families and 80 youth attended this event. There were 10 stations set up for kids and families to engage in scientific inquiry and exploration. Stations included: elephant toothpaste; exploding sandwich bags; flubber; mixing colors in milk; and many more. Parent resources were provided to expand scientific inquiry at home and surveys were collected as a means to gauge family's input on scientific learning and school design in elementary school. While the families and kids conducted experiments at each science lab, the volunteers hosting the labs talked with them about their experiences and perspectives. **Overwhelmingly, families were in favor of science as a vehicle for learning and referenced the fact that their children always had fun when conducting experiments.** The Science FEAST served as the foundation for the Units of Exploration embedded in the curriculum and instruction section. (See Attachment 2C).
- **December 2014:** 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. 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.**

- **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 (Attachments 2D-2E).
- **January - March 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 (See Attachments 2F).
- **January 12-13, 2015:** Established an email address (explorationcharter@e2ny.org) and website (<http://www.explorationrochester.com>) for all inquiries and communication.
- **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. (See Attachment 2G).
- **January 14, 2015-February 2, 2015:** Sent a second flyer and outreach letter, announcing the Exploration program and soliciting feedback to updated email contacts (bounced emails from initial mailing and emails that were obsolete due to staff changes) via explorationcharter@e2ny.org (See Attachments 2D-2E).
- **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 (530 Webster Avenue Rochester, NY 14609) and at the Carlson Metrocenter YMCA (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 (1337 East Main Street Rochester, NY 14609). Notice of this meeting was provided to the public on January 13, 2015.
- **January 30, 2015 (8:00 am-9:00 am):** Friends of Exploration engaged with City of Rochester residents to gain feedback and share information about the school. They went to targeted locations in the City of Rochester where groups of residents would be in attendance, and collected signatures to gauge parent support. Collected signatures at Community Circle (133 Hoover Drive, Rochester) (Attachment 2H).
- **February 3, 2015 (10:30 am-12:40 pm):** Collected signatures at Department of Human Services (111 Westfall Road, Rochester). (See Attachment 2H).
- **February 5, 2015 (11:00 am-1:00 pm):** Collected signatures at Department of Social Services (691 St. Paul Blvd, Rochester). (See Attachment 2H).
- **February 6, 2015 (8:00 am-9:00 am):** Collected signatures during Discovery Charter School Community Circle (133 Hoover Drive, Rochester). (See Attachment 2H).
- **February 7, 2015 (1:00 pm-3:00 pm):** Collected signatures at Walmart (1490 Hudson Ave, Rochester). (See Attachment 2H).
- **February 13, 2015 (9:00 am-11:00 am):** Collected signatures at Department of Social Services (691

St. Paul Blvd., Rochester). (See Attachment 2H).

- **February 24, 2015** (10:00 am-12:00 pm): Collected signatures at Walmart (2150 Chili Ave, Rochester). (See Attachment 2H).
- **March 6, 2015**
 - Created Facebook page for Exploration with link to updated webpage (See Attachment 2I).
 - Requested Eagle Dream to update Exploration webpage with new information and added link to Facebook Page (See Attachment 2E).
 - Created Ad(s) (6 ads – different photos/same text) - set up to target demographic parents of children, ages 0-3 and 4-12 in Rochester, NY to establish interest in the development of Exploration (See Attachment 2J - ran from 3/6 thru 3/13); we anticipate it will reach up to 2,500 individuals in the Rochester community.
 - Posted information directing individuals to a Public Charter Schools of Rochester Sign-Up Fair where they can receive further information on Exploration (See Attachment 2K).
- **March 7, 2015** (9:00 am-3:00 pm): Attended the Public Charter Schools of Rochester Sign-Up Fair at Ryan Community Center; Friends of Exploration joined the Rochester Charter School Expo (over 300+ attendees) to elicit feedback and gain support for Exploration. We also collected signatures indicating community support. ***Community members were in favor of Charter School options in the Rochester community and were interested in understanding how they could enroll their child in Exploration.***
- **March 7, 2015** (10:00 am-1:00 pm): Attended Community Basketball Games at 133 Hoover Drive; Friends of Exploration set up an information table at community basketball games (with 100+ attendees) to share information (in English and Spanish) and elicit feedback (signatures) from community members. We also collected signatures indicating community support.
- **March 9-11, 2015**: Created event on Exploration's Facebook page advertising focus group scheduled at Rochester Central Public Library (See Attachment 2L).
- **March 10, 2015**: Email blast announcing the upcoming information session on March 12, 2015 (went out to full email list mentioned above) at the Central Public Library.
- **March 12, 2015**: The Exploration team held an information session, open to the public, from 11:00 am-12:00 pm at The Central Library (115 South Ave, Rochester, NY). Notice of this meeting was provided to the public on March 10, 2015.
- **March 12, 2015**: Shared 250 surveys with Head Start programs in Rochester. (See Attachment 2M); 45 were returned with questions completed; ***36 out of 37 families indicated that the programmatic concepts for Exploration were promising; 38 out of 45 families indicated that the science and technology focus would support their children's academic, social, and emotional development, and would also support their children's ability to think critically and problem solve.***
- **Ongoing**: We have received 27 letters of support from individuals and organizations throughout the community, examples of which are included in Attachments 2N-2U.

The feedback listed above is reflected throughout our program design. Specifically, we have: 1) allotted additional time for science learning and lab based experiences ("Units of Exploration") than a district school; 2) we have maintained a low student-to-teacher ratio; 3) we have ensured explicit social-emotional programming and a clear and effective code of conduct to promote a safe and positive school environment; 4) we have created opportunities for students to engage with technology on a regular basis; 5) we have allotted time for art education throughout the week; and 6) we have established a school-family-community model in order to ensure strong and effective partnerships in and out of the school.

F. Programmatic and Fiscal Impact

There are currently 18,000 elementary students in Rochester who may attend one of 39 public schools,

14 public charter schools, or approximately 21 private/parochial schools. Exploration does not anticipate having a negative programmatic impact on other K-6 schools in the Rochester area. For example, the hands-on science units developed with RMSC can inform the museum's programming with other traditional and charter schools. Exploration graduates—experienced in critical thinking, collaboration, communication, personal responsibility, research, and inquiry—will be assets to the district when they return as 7th graders.

The expected fiscal impact of Exploration on the RCSD budget is less than 3/4ths of 1%. The adopted FY 2014-15 RCSD budget is \$788,259,462, premised on a projected enrollment of 28,119. In year one, Exploration expects to enroll 175 students (0.6% of current RCSD enrollment) and receive per pupil revenue of \$2,159,500 (0.3% of current RCSD budget). In year five, Exploration expects to enroll 475 students (1.7% of current RCSD enrollment) and receive per pupil revenue of approximately \$5,861,500 (0.7% of current RCSD budget). The fiscal impact on other public and non-public schools in the area cannot be defensibly calculated, but it is reasonably expected to be equally immaterial.

II. Educational Plan

G. Achievement Goals

The renewal benchmarks are the framework for our school goals. We believe that the framework will accurately measure our performance and will be a valuable tool in ensuring student achievement.

Goal 1: Exploration students will perform at or above grade level in ELA.

Student Progress Over Time (Growth)

- **Method 1 (Aggregate Growth):** Each year, under the state's growth model, the school's mean unadjusted growth percentile in ELA for all tested students in grades 4-6 will meet or exceed the state's unadjusted median growth percentile (50%).
- **Method 2 (Subgroup Growth):** Each year, under the state's growth model, the school's mean unadjusted growth percentile in ELA, for all tested students with special needs in grades 4-8, will meet or exceed the state's unadjusted median growth percentile.
- **Method 3 (Performance Index: Aggregate Growth to Proficiency):** Each year, the school's aggregate Performance Level Index (PLI) will meet the Annual Measurable Objective (AMO) as set forth in the NCLB accountability system.
- **Method 4 (Performance Index: Subgroup Growth to Proficiency):** Each year, the school's aggregate Performance Level Index (PLI), for students with special needs, will meet the AMO as set forth in the NCLB accountability system.

Student Achievement (Attainment)

- **Method 5 (Aggregate Proficiency):** By year three of the charter term, 40% of students who have sustained enrollment in Exploration for at least two years will attain a level 3 or 4 on the New York State ELA exam. By year four of the charter term, 50% of students who have been enrolled in Exploration for at least two years will attain a level 3 or 4 on the New York State ELA exam. By year five of the charter term, 60% of students who have sustained enrollment in Exploration for at least two years will attain a level 3 or 4 on the New York State ELA assessment.

Since the 2014 current statewide proficiency for ELA is approximately 31% and the Rochester proficiency for ELA is approximately 6%, we believe that the goals above are rigorous and reasonable considering the many variables that we must take into account when planning our students' academic success. As indicated by the goals above, we aim to nearly double the statewide proficiency rate in ELA by the end of our charter term. In the first two years of our charter term, our students will not take the state exams, but we will ensure that they are on track to meeting the aforementioned goals, as described further below.

- **Method 6 (Subgroup Proficiency):** By year three of the charter term, 15% of students with special needs, who have sustained enrollment in Exploration for at least two years will attain a level 3 or 4 on the New York State ELA exam. By year four of the charter term, 25% of students with special needs who have been enrolled in Exploration for at least two years, will attain a level 3 or 4 on the New York State ELA exam. By year five of the charter term, 35% of students with special needs or ELL students who have sustained enrollment in Exploration for at least two years, will attain a level 3 or 4 on the New York State ELA assessment.

Since the current statewide proficiency for ELA is approximately 31% for all students and the Rochester proficiency for ELA is approximately 6% for all students, we believe that the goals above are rigorous and reasonable, considering the many variables that we must take into account when planning our students' academic success. As indicated by the goals above, we aim to have our students with special needs and ELL populations exceed the current proficiency rate, for all students, by the end of the charter term. In the first years two years of our charter term, our students will not take the state exams, but we will ensure that they are on track to meeting the aforementioned goals, as described further below.

- **Method 7 (Similar Schools Comparison):** Each year, Exploration will exceed its predicted level of performance on the New York State ELA exam with by an effect size of at least 0.3 (performing higher than expected to a small degree), as measured by an annual comparative regression analysis, controlling for economically disadvantaged students among all public schools in New York State.
 - **Method 8 (District Comparison):** Each year, students who have sustained enrollment in Exploration for at least two years will outperform their grade level counterparts in the RCSD by 10 percentage points in proficiency, as measured by the percentage of students at levels 3 and 4 on the New York State ELA assessment.
 - **Method 9 (District Comparison, Subgroups):** Each year, students with disabilities and ELL students who have sustained enrollment in Exploration for at least two years will outperform their grade level counterparts in the RCSD by 10 percentage points in proficiency, as measured by the percentage of students at levels 3 and 4 on the New York State ELA assessment.
- Charter Specific Growth Measures*
- **Method 10: (Growth):** By the end of each year, 95% of students will have achieved their growth target in reading based on mean growth in the latest norming study for students who had a starting RIT score in the same 10 point block, as measured by performance on the Northwest Evaluation Association Measures of Academic Progress (NWEA-MAP) assessment.

Goal 2: Exploration students will perform at or above grade level in mathematics.

Student Progress Over Time (Growth)

- **Method 1 (Aggregate Growth):** Each year, under the state's growth model, the school's mean unadjusted growth percentile in mathematics for all tested students in grades 4-6 will meet or exceed the state's unadjusted median growth percentile (50%).
- **Method 2 (Subgroup Growth):** Each year, under the state's growth model, the school's mean unadjusted growth percentile in mathematics, for all tested students with special needs students in grades 4-6, will meet or exceed the state's unadjusted median growth percentile
- **Method 3 (Performance Index: Aggregate Growth to Proficiency):** Each year, the school's aggregate Performance Level Index (PLI) will meet the Annual Measurable Objective (AMO) as set forth in the NCLB accountability system.
- **Method 4 (Performance Index: Subgroup Growth to Proficiency):** Each year, the school's aggregate Performance Level Index (PLI), for students with special needs will meet the AMO as set forth in the NCLB accountability system.

Student Achievement (Attainment)

- **Method 5 (Aggregate Proficiency):** By year three of the charter term, 50% of students who have sustained enrollment in Exploration for at least two years will attain a level 3 or 4 on the New York State math exam. By year four of the charter term, 60% of students who have been enrolled in Exploration for at least two years will attain a level 3 or 4 on the New York State mathematics exam. By year five of the charter term, 75% of students who have sustained enrollment in Exploration for at least two years will attain a level 3 or 4 on the New York State mathematics assessment.

Since the current statewide proficiency for mathematics is approximately 35% and the Rochester proficiency for math is approximately 7%, we believe that the goals above are rigorous, and reasonable, considering the many variables that we must take into account when planning our students' academic success. As indicated by the goals above, we aim to more than double the statewide proficiency rate in mathematics, by the end of our charter term. In the first years two years of our charter term, our students will not take the state exams, but we will ensure that they are on track to meeting the aforementioned goals, as described further below.

- **Method 6 (Subgroup Proficiency):** By year three of the charter term, 15% of students with special needs who have sustained enrollment in Exploration for at least two years will attain a level 3 or 4 on the New York State mathematics exam. By year four of the charter term, 25% of students with special needs who have been enrolled in Exploration for at least two years, will attain a level 3 or 4 on the New York State mathematics exam. By year five of the charter term, 35% of students with special needs who have sustained enrollment in Exploration for at least two years, will attain a level 3 or 4 on the New York State mathematics assessment.

Since the current statewide proficiency for mathematics is approximately 35% for all students and the Rochester proficiency for ELA is approximately 7% for all students, we believe that the goals above are rigorous, and reasonable, considering the many variables that we must take into account when planning our students' academic success. As indicated by the goals above, we aim to have our students with special needs populations meet the current proficiency rate, for all students, by the end of the charter term. In the first years two years of our charter term, our students will not take the state exams, but we will ensure that they are on track to meeting the aforementioned goals, as described further below.

- **Method 7 (Similar Schools Comparison):** Each year, Exploration will exceed its predicted level of performance on the New York State mathematics exam with by an effect size of at least 0.3 (performing higher than expected to a small degree), as measured by an annual comparative regression analysis, controlling for economically disadvantaged students among all public schools in New York State.
 - **Method 8 (District Comparison):** Each year, students who have sustained enrollment in Exploration for at least two years will outperform their grade level counterparts in the RCSD by 10 percentage points in proficiency, as measured by the percentage of students at levels 3 and 4 on the New York State math assessment.
 - **Method 9 (District Comparison, Subgroups):** Each year, students with disabilities and ELL students who have sustained enrollment in Exploration for at least two years will outperform their grade level counterparts in the RCSD by 10 percentage points in proficiency, as measured by the percentage of students at levels 3 and 4 on the New York State mathematics assessment.
- Charter Specific Growth Measures
- **Method 10: (Growth):** By the end of each year, 95% of students will have achieved their growth target in mathematics based on mean growth in the latest norming study for students who had a starting RIT score in the same 10 point block, as measured by performance on the NWEA-MAP assessment.
- Because our students will not sit for the state assessments until third grade, Exploration will implement the NWEA MAP assessment, a nationally normed standardized assessment, to evaluate student performance in all grades and gauge our progress toward meeting the stated goals.

Goal 3: Exploration students will perform at or above grade level in Science.

- **Method 1 (Absolute):** Each year, 85% of students who have sustained enrollment in Exploration for at least two years will attain a level 3 or 4 on the New York State science assessment.
 - **Method 2 (Comparative):** Each year, students who have sustained enrollment in Exploration for at least two years will outperform their grade level counterparts in the RCSD by 10 percentage points in proficiency, as measured by the percentage of students at levels 3 and 4 on the New York State science assessment.
- While we value social studies education tremendously, we have prioritized science education in order to stay laser focused on the school's mission and key design elements. Students will still receive social studies instruction and will be regularly assessed to ensure that they are mastering grade level social studies standards.*

Goal 4: Exploration will achieve an Accountability Status of "In Good Standing" each year, as measured by the NCLB accountability system.

- **Method 1:** Exploration will achieve an Accountability Status of "In Good Standing" each year, as measured by the NCLB accountability system.

H. School Schedule and Calendar

The weekly student and staff schedules and proposed school calendar are in Attachments 3(a) and 3(b) respectively. The table below illustrates daily and weekly total instructional time in each subject area:

Subject	Total Daily Instructional Time	Total Weekly Instructional Time
ELA	100	500
Math	60	300
Social Studies	50	250
Science (and Labs)	90	350
Physical Education	25	125
Art	25	125
Social Emotional Learning	50 (2x per week)	100
Intervention or Enrichment (ELA and/or Math)	50 (2x per week)	100

Length of School day and Year: As indicated on the attached calendar and weekly schedules, the Exploration school day will begin at 8:00 a.m. and end at 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The school year will begin on August 22, 2016 and continue through June 30, 2017. Exploration will have 195

instructional days with full and half days dedicated before the start and during the academic year for PD.

Intervention: Core intervention will be integrated in regular instructional blocks through whole and small groups differentiated learning techniques and supported by the classroom teacher, apprentice teacher, and special education/intervention teachers as necessary. Instructional staff will use school approved strategies and intervention programs to accelerate students' growth and development; intervention services are further described in the Special Students and Populations section. In addition to classroom based support, all students will receive 100 minutes of intervention/enrichment time each week. Classroom teachers, special education/intervention teachers, and apprentice teachers, as well as other available qualified staff, will facilitate small groups of specifically identified students to provide additional and targeted time and support in ELA and/or math using the school endorsed programs/strategies as outlined in the master schedule. Furthermore, students requiring additional intervention/supplemental instruction will receive push-in support from intervention specialists during the regular instruction periods. The master schedule dedicates time for intervention/enrichment ensuring that even students requiring additional time and support have equal access to core instruction and innovation (i.e., science labs). The composition of classroom and apprentice teachers at each grade level as well as the additional special education staff allow for reduced group sizes to meet the individual needs of students. With Exploration identified intervention programs/strategies, small groups, frequent data reviews and regular responsive grouping based on student performance the staffing structure and instructional focus ensure that the calendar, schedule, and instructional plan will support students with a wide range of needs. Students will also receive art or gym each day. The art or gym teacher will teach while other teachers will have shared planning time.

Student Groupings: Students will be grouped heterogeneously in all classes, except intervention. During intervention students will be grouped homogeneously by skill level; intervention will be provided by teachers and intervention staff (special educators). Groups will be created by the curriculum and instructional coordinator (CIC) based on baseline and benchmark testing; data will drive both grouping and instruction with regular reviews to ensure progress and growth. Teachers will be grouped as indicated in the attached Sample Weekly Teacher Schedule in Attachment 3(a).

Teacher Workday: As indicated by the school calendar and Sample Weekly Teacher Schedule, teachers will begin on August 15, 2016. The last day of school will be June 30, 2017. Students will begin on August 22, 2016, and will attend school for a half day the 1st school week; this will be the first school experience for many students so the first week's focus is on school culture, routines, rituals, expectations, and baseline observations/data collection. Even though students will have an early dismissal during the first week, teachers will stay for the full day (i.e., until 4:00 p.m.) allowing for additional planning (individual and common), connections with families, data reviews, and instructional coaching critical to the school model.

As noted in the schedule, full-time teachers will teach from 8am-4pm, Monday-Friday, with 50 minutes of planning time (individual), 50 minutes of common grade level planning time and/or PD (discussed further below), and 30 minutes for lunch each day. Part-time teachers (i.e., innovation, gym, and art teachers) will teach in either the morning or afternoon, Monday-Friday. Furthermore, the master schedule provides time for collaboration and coaching during the instructional day or all staff. The CIC and Director will use responsive coaching and individual data reviews with teachers to enhance instructional practices.

Teachers will have five consecutive days of PD (Summer Institute) from August 15-20 from 8:00 am-4:00 pm. In addition, teachers will receive ongoing PD throughout the year through monthly PD at staff meetings (60 minutes/month), weekly PD at scheduled grade-level meetings/common planning time (100 minutes/week), and full day PD as indicated in the proposed calendar. Annual professional development for all instructional staff will also be provided by CIC and Director using on-going and responsive instructional coaching at times indicated in master schedule. Additionally, and more fully described in the PD section, Exploration staff will embed in authentic contexts to engage with experts in the science and technology fields during the school year, as supported by the building substitute, to inform their instructional practices.

For example, through the job shadowing opportunities or resident scientist program a teacher would spend a day shadowing the work processes with a software engineer and then in turn have him/her as a guest during science/innovation lab time. These PD elements will be supported by the partnership with RMSC and their access to experts in the field via their Technical Advisory Group (TAG).

I. Curriculum and Instruction

Mission and Educational Program Design: 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 in today's world. In order to attain this mission, we must begin with what it means to thrive in the interconnected world, as it exists today, and will exist, once our students graduate. First and foremost, we recognize that our students must reach proficiency in all subject areas as measured by the NYS testing program. It is important to note that as we seek to prepare our students to succeed in the 21C we welcome the accountability that accompanies charter schools; however, we know that knowledge alone will not suffice. "Today's life and work environments require far more than thinking skills and content knowledge. The ability to navigate the complex life and work environments in the globally competitive information age requires students to pay rigorous attention to developing adequate life and career skills.³" For our students to succeed in the 21st century they must master the following critical competencies^{3,4}: *Critical Thinking and Problem Solving, Initiative and Entrepreneurialism, Curiosity and Imagination, Collaboration Across Networks and Leading by Influence, Effective Oral and Written Communication, Agility and Adaptability, and Accessing and Analyzing Information*. Exploration's curricular choices and instructional practices are built upon the dual purpose of ensuring key foundational skills and knowledge of the core subject areas are mastered and ultimately ensuring all students demonstrate critical 21C skills to succeed in our interconnected and innovative world.

Ensuring Alignment with Common Core Learning Standards and the NYS Testing Program: While our curricular resources are aligned to the CCLS, we recognize the New York State Board of Regents has adopted additional standards. Exploration's Director and curriculum coordinators will work at the outset of each year to make sure that the curricula and all the aforementioned resources are aligned with the New York State's expectations. That said, we will also expect our teachers to be very familiar with the New York State Learning Standards and the New York State Testing Program. Through the rigorous backwards planning approach, we will ensure alignment and in-depth exposure to all requisite grade level standards.

Curriculum and Instructional Framework

Curriculum: Exploration's instructional framework and curricular choices are explicitly linked to the key design elements (i.e., scientific inquiry, cross-curricular, literacy and technology resource rich) to support students' access to the general education curriculum. To supplement the curricular choices listed below, Exploration will develop innovative science and technology curricula in partnership with the experts at the RMSC; this iterative and innovative curriculum development process also is described below.

ELA/Literacy: Exploration will place a heavy emphasis on literacy instruction and will follow the Fountas & Pinnell Balanced Literacy Framework. All students will spend a minimum of 100 minutes per day engaging in reading, writing, phonics, and vocabulary instruction. The first 80 minutes will take place during the literacy block and the final 20 minutes will be spent on research and writing at the end of each day. In addition, students will receive up to 100 additional minutes of literacy interventions each week, as needed, during the Walk to Intervention, where students are grouped by reading level across grade level, to receive targeted reading instruction and support. See Attachment 3(a) for more information about the daily student schedule. Key elements of Exploration literacy instruction are listed below; these will be facilitated by the

³ http://www.p21.org/storage/documents/P21_Framework_Definitions.pdf

⁴ <http://www.tonywagner.com/7-survival-skills>

instructional teams including teachers, apprentice teachers, and special education/intervention teachers:

- **Interactive Read-alouds:** Teachers will model fluent reading, comprehension skills and strategies, and expose students to a variety of texts.
- **Guided Reading:** Teachers will read leveled texts in flexible student groups, based on assessed reading levels, and coach students on reading strategies and practices.
- **Independent Reading:** Students will select books at their assessed reading level and read independently to: practice decoding, develop comprehension, and improve reading fluency.
- **Phonics and Word Study:** Teachers will deliver mini lessons and strategies for improving phonemic awareness, spelling, and grammar.
- **Writing and Vocabulary Instruction:** Teachers will lead a mini-lesson with a clear objective, and students follow with independent practice utilizing the introduced writing skill. Teachers then conference with students to coach them on their writing development, either individually or in small groups.
- **Computer-based Learning:** Students will engage in skill building exercises and/or use computer library databases to engage in independent or shared reading practices. For example, students will engage with leveled readers using RazKids.com (Reading A-Z resources on-line).
- **Research Skills:** Teachers will lead a mini-lesson with a clear research objective, and students practice that research skill in the library and on the computer. Teachers observe and conference with students to coach them on research strategies.

Our teachers will draw on a variety of resources to create rich and exciting literary experiences for our students. Specifically, we have selected leveled readers aligned to the CCLS, and tied to the NGSS units of study. As part of our integrated approach to instruction, we will include explicit phonics instruction and targeted guided reading support, using the Fountas & Pinnell Phonics and Word Study Lessons. Students will have writing instruction each day, guided by the Lucy Calkins Units of Study and Vocabulary for the Common Core; they will also have a writing block after each lab period, where they have the opportunity to debrief their Unit of Exploration in their science notebook. Prompts for this writing block will be created by the Science and Technology Curriculum Coordinator (STCC) and will align to the Lucy Calkins Units of Study for Opinion, Information, and Narrative Writing. Resources for literacy instruction will include:

- The American Reading Company, Leveled Reading Sets: Leveled, Common Core-aligned and thematic texts for guided and independent reading.
- Fountas & Pinnell Phonics and Word Study Lessons: Research-based phonics and word study lessons that guide students along a comprehensive continuum of skills, including early literacy concepts, phonological and phonemic awareness, letter knowledge, letter/sound relationship, word meaning, high-frequency words, spelling patterns, word structure, and word-solving actions.
- Vocabulary for the Common Core (Robert J. Marzano): Resources and PD that will help teachers incorporate Common Core vocabulary into teaching and student learning in order to help students access and understand complex texts.
- Units of Study for Opinion, Information, and Narrative Writing⁵ (Lucy Calkins): Research-based, Common Core-aligned writing curriculum, based on the following principles:
 - There are fundamental qualities of all good writing, and students write well when they learn these qualities as well as the specific qualities of different genres, or types, of writing;
 - Using a writing process to teach the complex task of writing increases student achievement;
 - Students benefit from direct instruction, guided practice, and independent practice;
 - To write well, writers need ample time to write daily with clear expectations for stamina and volume;

⁵ <http://www.heinemann.com/shared/onlineresources/E00871/UoSWResearchBase85x11.pdf>

- A successful curriculum provides differentiated instruction for students of all ability levels and support for English language learners; and
 - Writing and reading are joined processes, and students learn best when writing and reading instruction are coordinated.
- STC Literacy Series⁶: Texts and writing prompts aligned to the STC Science Curriculum (see below), CCLS, and NGSS. Provides opportunities for writing to persuade, explain, and convey real or imagined experiences, following a lab-based experience.

Mathematics: Students will have a 60-minute math block each day, divided between the TERC Investigations program and Cognitively-Guided Instruction (CGI). Students will also receive up to 100 additional minutes per week in math intervention, as needed, as indicated on Attachment 3(b). Exploration will use Investigations as our primary resource for math instruction in grades K-6. We selected Investigations because it is aligned to the CCLS, but also because it aligns well with our mission and curriculum framework. Specifically, each unit is divided into Investigations that focus on a “set of related mathematical ideas, coordinating students’ work in hands-on-activities, written activities, and class discussion over a period of several days.” The Investigations program includes four kinds of activities:

- Activities, including manipulatives, math games, and computer-based skill building;
- Whole Class Discussions, during which students compare methods and results and share conclusions;
- Math Workshop – a structure in which students work on a set of related activities; and
- Assessments, during which students are assessed through either written activities or observations.⁷

The Investigations’ focus on exploring math concepts and ideas through hands-on activities and discussion, while meeting cross-curricular goals of speaking, listening, and writing is aligned to our mission and the key elements of our curriculum framework.

For specific instruction around in math problem-solving skills, we have chosen to use CGI, which includes a similar exploratory and collaborative approach. CGI establishes a problem-solving framework in which students are presented with a single word problem and then asked to solve the problem independently. The teacher observes students as they attempt to solve the problem, and selects three students, each of whom have employed a different strategy, to determine the correct answer. The three students present their strategies, starting with the least sophisticated strategy and ending with the most sophisticated. The students listening are invited to ask the student presenters questions about their chosen problem-solving method, and student presenters are required to explain and justify their chosen approach.

Similar to Investigations, CGI presumes that students bring math concepts to the classroom and presents opportunities for them to test what they know and build on that foundation in a collaborative, student-centered manner. Both approaches will foster the use of the problem-solving skills embedded in our scientific method framework.

We will use JumpStart – an online math program for students in grades K-6 who need additional practice with addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division. JumpStart will serve as an intervention tool and will be used during class time and Walk to Intervention.

Science: Exploration will use the following overarching principles to build the science curriculum. 1) aligns to NYSL and NGSS standards; 2) includes scientific and innovative dispositions as measured by performance based Units of Exploration rubrics; 3) provides differentiated and cross-curricular instruction that is skills-based and inquiry-infused; it is also research-informed and writing intensive; 4) includes Units of Exploration and Assessment for physical science, life science, earth and space, and engineering and technology; and implement instructional strategies that encourage open inquiry and exploration.

As indicated by the steps above, NGSS and the NYSL are the foundation for the science curriculum,

⁶ <http://www.carolinacurriculum.com/STC/common-core-state-standards.asp>

⁷ <http://investigations.terc.edu/components/tour/>

but we will also infuse school-based Scientific and Innovative Dispositions including but not limited to:

- Understanding of basic Unit of Exploration concepts
- Understanding and application process and critical thinking skills
- Demonstration of the cycle of learning
- Asking and answering critical and scientific questions
- Defining problems and explaining solutions/answers
- Developing and using models
- Investigating and researching topics
- Planning and carrying out explorations
- Analyzing and interpreting data/information from explorations
- Using mathematical and computational skills in explorations
- Obtaining and evaluating information in explorations

We plan to draw on the STC curriculum in our science lessons and for our Units of Exploration, but we will also use components of the STC literacy curriculum during ELA, when applicable. Each STC unit is based on a four-stage learning cycle that is grounded in educational research and practice:

I. First, students **focus** on what they already know about a topic.

II. Next, students **explore** a scientific phenomenon or concept, following a well-structured sequence of classroom investigations.

III. Third, students **reflect** on their observations, record them in journals, draw conclusions, and share their findings with others.

IV. Finally, students **apply** their learning to real-life situations and to other areas of the curriculum.⁸

The science curriculum will also include the Units of Exploration – a unique design element that Exploration has included in the schedule each day – that allows for lab-based learning experiences, where students can access the science and technology content directly. For example, if kindergarten students were studying Forces of Interaction: Pushes and Pulls as listed in NGSS table below, the Unit of Exploration would build on the following core idea, K-PS2-1:

Plan and conduct an investigation to compare the effects of different strengths or different directions of pushes and pulls on the motion of an object. [Clarification Statement: Examples of pushes or pulls could include a string attached to an object being pulled, a person pushing an object, a person stopping a rolling ball, and two objects colliding and pushing on each other.] [Assessment Boundary: Assessment is limited to different relative strengths or different directions, but not both at the same time. Assessment does not include non-contact pushes or pulls such as those produced by magnets.]

The STCC, therefore, would provide materials and the opportunity, for students to engage with this concept in a hands-on way. For example, a teacher might pose a question to the group, inquiring, “What happens when you push or pull an object harder?” Students could use the provided materials to set up their experiment, research the answer to this question, and then summarize that answer through whatever data points they collect. In order to ensure that this process is meaningful for all students, teachers will be expected to implement the differentiated, balanced approach to instruction, as designed below. Teachers will also have detailed holistic rubrics aligned to the Units of Exploration, so that they can ensure student mastery of the objective in a concrete way. As discussed further in the PD section, teachers will receive training on these rubrics and will engage in several norming exercises to ensure reliable implementation.

As discussed above, students will have a daily writing block during which they will be expected to write about the experience and what they learned cross-curricularly. They will be expected to tie in content from other subject areas, and hone the writing strategies that they learned during Writer’s Workshop.

Vertically Integrated Science and Technology Curriculum Development: Innovation and technology are key elements of the Exploration mission and overall school design. To remain current and inventive

⁸ <http://www.ssec.si.edu/curriculum/about-our-curriculum>

Exploration plans to supplement the above identified curricula with a co-developed and vertically integrated curriculum developed in partnership with the Rochester Museum and Science Center (RMSC). The working scientists at RMSC will partner with the Exploration curriculum staff to co-develop supplemental science and inquiry curricula (i.e., Units of Exploration) for use by the innovation instructors during the lab times blocked on the master schedule. This curriculum will be rooted in the idea that guided research and exploration opportunities in the areas of science and technology provide students meaningful social/collaborative learning opportunities involving technology and critical thinking that they will need in order to navigate the complex work environment in our increasingly interconnected world.

Through partnership with RMSC and its working scientists we will have dedicated space(s) and access to materials at the museum for authentic science learning. This combined with the lab learning space(s) at Exploration as well as off-site community locations (e.g., botanical gardens) will give students comprehensive access to objects and materials. Overall, the following are key elements of the curricula:

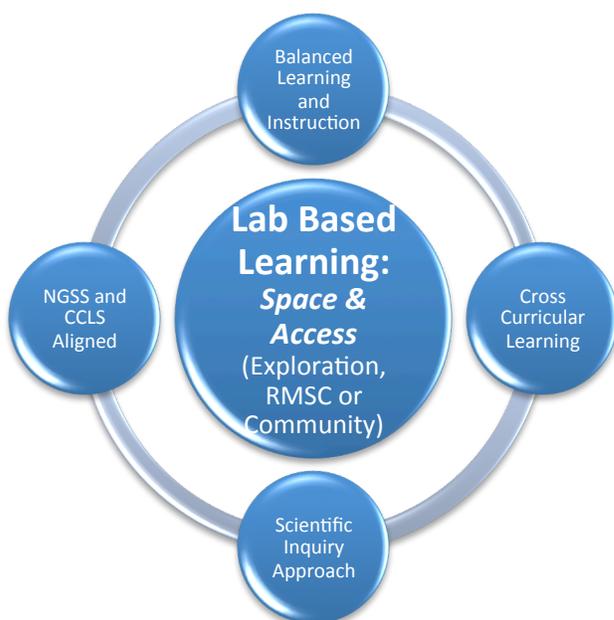
1. **Scientific Inquiry Approach.** We believe that scientific inquiry fosters the critical skills of curiosity and imagination in our students. Scientific inquiry provides students with opportunities to directly investigate scientific phenomena, while constructing (co-constructing and re-constructing) meaning (Cervetti, Pearson, Bravo and Barber, 2005). Stable (using current understandings to increase knowledge) and fluid (creating new concepts) scientific inquiry aligned to CCLS will all students to build new knowledge from what they already know and believe, mediate their social interactions and environment, and formulate and modify their current concepts with new evidence.

Because our students will have experience with the scientific method beginning in kindergarten, they will become familiar with important science skills – asking questions, testing assumptions, implementing and executing hands-on experiences, researching information, and analyzing and interpreting data early in their academic career. We believe that by instilling this approach at a young age, and providing meaningful opportunities for practice, our students will become life-long learners and critical thinkers in whatever area of study they choose to pursue in the future.

2. **Lab-Based Learning.** In order to foster the 21st century skills of critical thinking, problem solving, initiative, and collaboration, we plan to include daily science and technology lab-based learning (LBL) opportunities. LBL is based on central tenets of project-based learning including active engagement in learning with essential questions, youth voice, and collaborative creation of products of learning and

growth. LBL provides an innovative approach to learning that teaches a multitude of strategies critical for success in our global and innovative world. Students and teachers assume ownership and direction of learning within science and technology-based LBL times as they glean new, viable technology skills and other critical 21st century skills that ultimately promote proficiency as communicators, thinkers, innovators, collaborators, and problem solvers today and into tomorrow's world. LBL opportunities will be supplemented and enhanced through regular use and access to technologies (e.g., computers, Tesla coils, iPads).

3. **Cross Curricular Opportunities** (especially for reading, speaking, writing, and listening). In order to instill the skills of



effective oral and written communication, and accessing and analyzing information, the NGSS, New York State Learning Standards (NYSLS), and the CCLS will guide all units of instruction. The NGSS will serve as the foundation of each unit and for identifying “cross cutting concepts.” Cross-cutting concepts are core ideas in science and technology that will help Exploration’s students deepen their learning and coherent view of the scientific world and include: *patterns, cause/effect, scale/proportion/quantity, systems/models, energy and matter, structure and function, and stability and change* Curriculum coordinators will use the NGSS to map units of study for all core subject areas, so that students are learning and mastering all NYSLs and CCLS, with science as the guiding principle.

4. **Balanced Instructional Approach.** Exploration recognizes the need to balance instructional opportunities and differentiate processes, products, and content for all students so they can achieve high levels. Through a balance of explicit instruction with active engagement in science and technology experiences, Exploration staff will foster both foundational skill development and higher-order thinking via teacher- and student-led instruction, inquiry, and exploration (Kirschner, Sweller, & Clark, 2006; Bloom, 1956). Exploration’s academic program will position students as active learners and emphasize deep learning and understanding through a balanced approach (Taylor, 2000; Burnard, 1999). Furthermore, the learning and instruction will be balanced with a rigorous academic focus and a conscious inclusion of activities and strategies to promote social-emotional competencies (e.g., collaboration, communication, self-management). All opportunities for learning and engagement will further include social learning opportunities (e.g., group discussions) and digitally/technologically based options (e.g., wiki’s, digital portfolios, blended learning).

In partnership with RMSC, foundations for collaborative and living curriculum development will embed rigorous scientific inquiry approaches with hands-on based learning opportunities; these are scheduled daily for students and supplemented by on-site learning with the vast resources at the RMCS. For example, when studying energy, students will have access to the Tesla Coils that can illustrate the transfer of power/energy via lightning. It is these types of explorations supplemented by meaningful lab-based learning both in the school and at RMSC that will engage and enrich the overall academic program at Exploration. Through the partnership with RMSC a small school such as Exploration is able to provide access to authentic science materials and collections. RMSC has a collection of science materials and artifacts in excess of 1.2 million. The RMSC’s physical infrastructure and our access to significant cultural collections will allow Exploration to deliver robust and meaningful instruction. In addition, we continue to develop relationships and emerging partnerships with science experts in Rochester. In this way, Exploration will have access to the rich technological legacy as well as the cutting edge innovations (such as the newly announced Photonics investment) of today’s Rochester economy.

As indicated, our teaching framework will include a scientific inquiry, lab-based, and cross-cutting (i.e., cross-curricular) curriculum that includes supports for all students. In order to establish this framework, our science curriculum will draw upon the CCLS, NGSS, NYSLs, and the curricular resources described below. For curriculum development purposes, the School Director and the Science and Technology Curriculum Coordinator (STCC) in tandem with the experts from RMSC will use a backward design format for creating innovative and current Units of Exploration. Every Unit of Exploration will begin with an outlined scope and sequence explicitly stating: CCLS alignment, essential questions, text excerpts, assessments and literacy rich and related ideas. After curriculum mapping specific Unit of Exploration (e.g., Forces and Interactions: Pushes and Pulls) will be written to further identify learning targets, vocabulary, supplemental skills, assessments and resources. Through instructional coaching and iterative curriculum development exemplar lessons for each Unit of Exploration will be written by staff and leadership and shared via digital platforms and/or grade-level meetings. It is important to note that all Units of Exploration will be developed

with regard for the Disciplinary Core Ideas (DCI) set forth in the NGSS for each grade level⁹. For example, as shown in the table on the previous page, an identified DCI in kindergarten is Forces and Interactions: Pushes and Pulls. The NGSS has identified Cause and Effect as an ELA cross-cutting concept for this DCI and suggests the following CCLS align with this DCI:

<p>ELA/Literacy</p> <p>RI.K.1 With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about key details in a text. (K-PS2-2)</p> <p>W.K.7 Participate in shared research and writing projects (e.g., explore a number of books by a favorite author and express opinions about them). (K-PS2-1)</p> <p>SL.K.3 Ask and answer questions in order to seek help, get information, or clarify something not understood. (K-PS2.2)</p> <p>Mathematics</p> <p>MP.2 Reason abstractly and quantitatively. (K-PS2-1)</p> <p>K.MD.A.1 Describe measurable attributes of objects, such as length or weight. Describe several measurable attributes of a single object. (K-PS2-1)</p> <p>K.MD.A.2 Directly compare two objects with a measurable attribute in common, to see which object has more of/less of the attribute, and describe the difference. (K-PS2-1)</p>

While the NGSS provides guidance for designing these cross-curricular units of study, the School Director and the STCC in partnership with the RMSC consultants will evaluate these suggestions and ensure full coverage and alignment across subject areas and with the CCLS and NYSLS. It is important to note, once the school opens, the School Director will supervise the STCC and the Curriculum and Instruction Coordinator (CIC) as well as the partnership with RMSC. The STCC along with RMSC consultant(s) will continue developing, implementing, and monitoring science and technology related content, including lesson plans, assessments, and Units of Exploration. The CIC will oversee ELA, math, and social studies content by reviewing teacher lesson plans and assessments, and ensuring alignment to the curriculum, the CCLS, and the NYSLS. All will provide on-going professional development and instructional coaching to ensure fidelity and quality as outlined in the PD section.

K. Forces and Interactions: Pushes and Pulls

<p>K. Forces and Interactions: Pushes and Pulls</p> <p>Students who demonstrate understanding can:</p> <p>K-PS2-1. Plan and conduct an investigation to compare the effects of different strengths or different directions of pushes and pulls on the motion of an object. [Clarification Statement: Examples of pushes or pulls could include a string attached to an object being pulled, a person pushing an object, a person stopping a rolling ball, and two objects colliding and pushing on each other.] [Assessment Boundary: Assessment is limited to different relative strengths or different directions, but not both at the same time. Assessment does not include non-contact pushes or pulls such as those produced by magnets.]</p> <p>K-PS2-2. Analyze data to determine if a design solution works as intended to change the speed or direction of an object with a push or a pull.* [Clarification Statement: Examples of problems requiring a solution could include having a marble or other object move a certain distance, follow a particular path, and knock down other objects. Examples of solutions could include tools such as a ramp to increase the speed of the object and a structure that would cause an object such as a marble or ball to turn.] [Assessment Boundary: Assessment does not include friction as a mechanism for change in speed.]</p> <p>The performance expectations above were developed using the following elements from the NRC document <i>A Framework for K-12 Science Education</i>.</p>		
<p>Science and Engineering Practices</p> <p>Planning and Carrying Out Investigations Planning and carrying out investigations to answer questions or test solutions to problems in K-2 builds on prior experiences and progresses to simple investigations, based on fair tests, which provide data to support explanations or design solutions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> With guidance, plan and conduct an investigation in collaboration with peers. (K-PS2-1) <p>Analyzing and Interpreting Data Analyzing data in K-2 builds on prior experiences and progresses to collecting, recording, and sharing observations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyze data from tests of an object or tool to determine if it works as intended. (K-PS2-2) <p>----- <i>Connections to Nature of Science</i></p> <p>Scientific Investigations Use a Variety of Methods</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scientists use different ways to study the world. (K-PS2-1) 	<p>Disciplinary Core Ideas</p> <p>PS2.A: Forces and Motion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pushes and pulls can have different strengths and directions. (K-PS2-1),(K-PS2-2) Pushing or pulling on an object can change the speed or direction of its motion and can start or stop it. (K-PS2-1),(K-PS2-2) <p>PS2.B: Types of Interactions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> When objects touch or collide, they push on one another and can change motion. (K-PS2-1) <p>PS3.C: Relationship Between Energy and Forces</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A bigger push or pull makes things speed up or slow down more quickly. (secondary to K-PS2-1) <p>ETS1.A: Defining Engineering Problems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A situation that people want to change or create can be approached as a problem to be solved through engineering. Such problems may have many acceptable solutions. (secondary to K-PS2-2) 	<p>Crosscutting Concepts</p> <p>Cause and Effect</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Simple tests can be designed to gather evidence to support or refute student ideas about causes. (K-PS2-1),(K-PS2-2)
<p><i>Connections to other DCIs in kindergarten: K.ETS1.A (K-PS2-2); K.ETS1.B (K-PS2-2)</i></p> <p><i>Articulation of DCIs across grade-levels: 2.ETS1.B (K-PS2-2); 3.PS2.A (K-PS2-1),(K-PS2-2); 3.PS2.B (K-PS2-1); 4.PS3.A (K-PS2-1); 4.ETS1.A (K-PS2-2)</i></p> <p><i>Common Core State Standards Connections:</i></p> <p><i>ELA/Literacy –</i></p> <p>RI.K.1 With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about key details in a text. (K-PS2-2)</p> <p>W.K.7 Participate in shared research and writing projects (e.g., explore a number of books by a favorite author and express opinions about them). (K-PS2-1)</p> <p>SL.K.3 Ask and answer questions in order to seek help, get information, or clarify something that is not understood. (K-PS2-2)</p> <p><i>Mathematics –</i></p> <p>MP.2 Reason abstractly and quantitatively. (K-PS2-1)</p> <p>K.MD.A.1 Describe measurable attributes of objects, such as length or weight. Describe several measurable attributes of a single object. (K-PS2-1)</p> <p>K.MD.A.2 Directly compare two objects with a measurable attribute in common, to see which object has “more of”/“less of” the attribute, and describe the difference. (K-PS2-1)</p>		

Social Studies: As another means for cross-curricular learning experiences, we have selected myWorld History, a digital resource for Social Studies instruction, that helps students to make personal connections to history. In addition to digital experiences, the myWorld History curriculum provides

⁹ <http://www.nextgenscience.org/sites/ngss/files/NGSS%20Combined%20Topics%2011.8.13.pdf>

opportunities for project-based learning and ongoing checks for understanding. This resource is aligned to the NYSLS, though it will not serve as the primary resource for social studies instruction, since we will expect teachers to draw on a variety of primary source texts for social studies instruction.

In order to select primary source texts that are appropriately complex for students at their particular grade level, teachers will utilize, among others to, the following NYS recommended websites:¹⁰ Library of Congress, National Archives, New York Online Virtual Library, Stanford History Education Group, and World Digital Library.

Social Emotional Learning: Exploration is committed to promoting social-emotional learning as a complement to academic rigor to encourage positive skill development. The master schedule dedicates time for all students to engage in social-emotional programming. We will use this time to implement the CASEL core competencies: self-management, self-regulation, peer social skills, problem solving, and peer relationships, and to reinforce the cultural and behavioral expectations at Exploration. In order to teach these skills effectively, we will rely on the PATHS curriculum that is designed for educators' systematic and developmentally appropriate implementation 2-to-3 times/week in large group settings with the purpose of teaching identified CASEL competencies. Learning objectives are identified and parent materials provided. We selected the PATHS program because multiple studies have shown it to be effective with students from our target population,¹¹ and we believe it will allow us to implement the CASEL core competencies in a meaningful way. Through explicit teaching and guided practice, students will be acutely aware of the behavioral and social expectations, and will be expected to make ongoing positive contributions to the school community, thereby promoting a positive learning environment for all students.

Instructional Practices

As indicated above, teachers will employ a balanced learning approach when implementing instruction to deliver targeted, differentiated lessons that will reach all students, using with both the identified content curricula and the innovative science-technology based Units of Exploration. The balanced learning approach is guided by evidence-based practices for high-quality instruction combining explicit instruction and active/inquiry learning, social constructivist learning and technology based learning and academic and social-emotional learning. The following are instructional practices that Exploration will employ and support via on-going professional development and instructional coaching with all staff in all learning contexts:

- **Establishing specific and measurable learning targets and how students will demonstrate progress/mastery of critical concepts.** Teachers will use backwards planning and Bloom's to create strategic, achievable, targeted, and measurable learning objectives as outlined in Section D.
- **Proximity teaching to ensure positive learning environments, effective and specific student feedback on learning and observation of independent work.** Teachers will begin every lesson with a hook and/or cross-curricular connection that invites students to engage with the question/content. Throughout the lesson, teachers will confer with students as needed, record evidence of student gaps or mastery, and provide real-time feedback to students on performance.
- **Frequent and purposeful writing, research and reflection to foster higher order cognitive processes and critical thinking/connecting.** Exploration students will receive explicit writing instruction each day while also having dedicated time to write and connect via constructed response at the end of each day as outlined in the master schedule. During this time, students will incorporate content from the science, ELA, social studies and math lessons from that day, as applicable via writing.
- **Embedded support for foundational and non-academic skills known to be critical for academic success.** Exploration recognizes the need to ensure students are performing at the highest levels as measured by the NYS testing program in the areas of ELA and math; however, foundational language

¹⁰ <http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/ronlyres/0FB9273A-474D-4D29-AFD6-D1609FE802A3/0/612SocialStudiesTextGuide.pdf>

¹¹ <https://casel.squarespace.com/guide/ratings/elementary>

and social-emotional skills development are also a central means to promote and support academic successes. Exploration will use SEL resources, such as those outlined on EngageNY practices and protocols and CASEL, to sustain language and SEL learning visually and repeatedly in content areas.

- **Recognition and reinforcement of learning through data (observation, diagnostic, formative and summative) (Cain & Laird, 2011).** Teachers will rely heavily on student achievement data to inform their practice. Teachers will be required to track students' performance quantitatively by using student mastery trackers/spreadsheets and/or the chosen student information system (i.e., PowerSchool). As further described in the Assessment section, after summative assessments, especially unit tests, the NWEA, etc., teachers will submit action plans to the Director and/or the curriculum coordinators, indicating their plans for how they will reteach the objectives that were not yet mastered.

J. Assessment System

In order to attain the ambitious achievement goals set forth in our charter, Exploration will use a variety of assessments administered across the school year to continuously monitor student progress. This will provide meaningful data to track students' proficiency and growth towards meeting the challenges of high school and college that await them. Further details about the types of assessment are discussed below.

Diagnostic and Benchmark Assessments: Exploration will use the following diagnostic and benchmark assessments. The initial assessment is diagnostic and the following assessments are for measuring student progress and benchmark student growth. The table below has further details.

Assessment, Grades, and Dates	Purpose	Ensuring Reliability and Validity	Person Administering	How Results are Collected, Analyzed, and Used by Staff
NWEA MAP, K-6, Fall, Winter, Spring	Understand where students are performing on a national level (norm referenced); ensure that we are on track towards meeting achievement goals.	Computer based assessment; both teachers and students will receive training on how to use the software. Exploration will plan for teacher professional development and hire external partners for support when administering the exam, as needed. Students will take the exam on similar computers and in similar environments.	All teachers	Results are synthesized electronically and immediately after a student completes a section. Results are analyzed to evaluate student growth and ensure progress towards achievement goals.
Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark Assessment, K-5, Quarterly	Assess student's reading ability, including fluency, accuracy, and comprehension.	Curriculum coordinators will observe administration to promote quality control amongst teachers; results will be compared to other reading data to ensure reliability.	All teachers	Teachers will grade students and enter results in tracking tool; data is used to track reading growth throughout the year and inform instruction.
Reading Inventory (e.g. BRI/ QRI-2), K-2, As needed	Assess reading comprehension skills on a deeper level with students who may be in need of intervention.	Intervention staff will receive training on administration and evaluation of this assessment each year.	Intervention Staff	Intervention staff will score the assessment and make related service recommendations, if necessary.
Kindergarten Screening, Grade K, Fall	Assess fine motor, gross motor, basic number and literacy concepts, vocabulary, and hearing.	Kindergarten teachers will receive training on proper administration and evaluation of this assessment during August professional development; the Director and the curriculum coordinator will observe implementation to make sure that teachers are normed.	All K teachers	Teachers will score assessments and use to inform instruction and any necessary intervention with kindergarten students.

Assessment, Grades, and Dates	Purpose	Ensuring Reliability and Validity	Person Administering	How Results are Collected, Analyzed, and Used by Staff
NYSITELL, K-6, Fall and Spring	Identify ELL students	The test will be administered in accordance with all state mandated requirements.	Teachers who have received training in NYSITELL	Results are submitted to NYSED; used internally to reflect on curriculum, alignment, and areas of growth.
Associate/Teacher Child Rating Scale and/or DESSA (mini) Screening, K-6, Fall & Spring, As Needed	Assess students' social/emotional needs and progress	Intervention staff will receive training on administration and evaluation of this assessment each year.	All teachers	Intervention staff will score the assessment and make related service recommendations, if necessary.
Writing Prompt, K-6, Ongoing	Assess students' ability to write; specifically evaluating their ability to brainstorm, structure, add details, and conventions.	Writing prompt responses will be scored by a group of teachers and the curriculum coordinator.	All teachers	Scores are entered into a spreadsheet in order to glean trends, which dictate professional development and further instruction.

Formative Assessments: Teachers will be expected to create clear and measurable objectives for each lesson, with a corresponding check for understanding, to ensure that the lesson objective was met. As a result, teachers will rely heavily on formative assessments to guide their own instruction and to invest students in their individualized learning goals. Teachers will use, but are not limited to, the following formative assessments listed below.

Assessment, Grades, and Dates	Purpose	Ensuring Reliability and Validity	Person Administering	How Results are Collected, Analyzed, and Used by Staff
Formative Classroom Assessments K-6 Ongoing	To assess students' understanding of topics/skills covered on an ongoing basis.	By relying on the backwards design planning method, teachers will ensure that exit tickets, quizzes, and other informal assessments are aligned to the standards and to their lessons. The curriculum coordinators will ask teachers for sample formative assessments throughout the year, so that they can verify.	All teachers	Teachers collect and grade the assessments and enter them into a student growth tracker; teachers use the data to modify lessons, re-teach, and ensure students are mastering the content and skills taught.
Informal Fountas and Pinnell Testing, K-5, Ongoing (At least monthly)	To assess students' reading fluency, growth, and comprehension and make sure they are progressing towards their reading level targets.	Director and curriculum coordinators will select a student to read with at random to ensure that his or her stated reading level is accurate. If the principal or curriculum coordinator notices a discrepancy, he or she will observe the teacher during a re-administration of the assessment to make sure the teacher is administering properly.	All teachers	Teachers grade the assessments and enter into a student growth tracker; data is submitted to the CIC each month and reviewed to make sure students are on track to reaching reading targets.
Holistic Assessment, K-6, Ongoing	Assess mastery of science standards and application at the end of each unit of study	The curriculum coordinator will create rubrics; teachers will undergo norming and professional development exercises to ensure that rubrics are implemented reliability across classrooms.	Innovation Instructors	Teachers enter rubric data into the science standards tracker. Teachers use for reteach and action planning; send results to principal and curriculum coordinator monthly in order to determine trends.

Summative Assessments: Students will be evaluated on their mastery of the CCLS and NYSLs, as measured by the exams listed below.

Assessment, Grades, and Dates	Purpose	Ensuring Reliability and Validity	Who Administers	How Results are Collected, Analyzed, and Used by Staff
New York State ELA and Math Assessments Grades 3-6, Spring	Understand how students are learning and retaining the NYS ELA and math standards.	The test will be administered in accordance with all state mandated requirements.	All teachers, grades 3-6	Results are submitted to NYSED; used internally to reflect on curriculum, alignment, and areas of growth.
New York State Science Assessment, Grade 4, Spring	Understand how students are learning and retaining the NYS science standards.	The test will be administered in accordance with all state mandated requirements.	All fourth grade teachers	Results are submitted to NYSED; used internally to reflect on curriculum, alignment, and areas of growth.
New York State Alternate Assessment, All Eligible IEP Students, Spring	Understand how students are learning and retaining the goals set forth in their Individualized Education Plan (IEP).	The test will be administered in accordance with all state mandated requirements.	All special education and intervention staff	Results are submitted to NYSED; used internally to reflect on curriculum, alignment, and areas of growth.
New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test, Grades 3-6, Spring	To assess students' English language acquisition	The test will be administered in accordance with all state mandated requirements.	Teachers who have received training in NYSESLAT administration	Results are submitted to NYSED; used internally to reflect on curriculum, alignment, and areas of growth.

Using Data to Inform Key Decisions: The assessment system is designed to have multiple units for analysis and application at the class, grade, and school levels. Explicit training and instruction will be provided to teachers during the August PD around data-driven instruction. Specific details on how community stakeholders will utilize academic achievement data to improve student outcomes are listed.

Board of Trustees: The Board will review student performance data on at least a quarterly basis, as part of the Director's report to the BOT. Such review will inform decision making on allocation of resources, assess progress toward school-wide goals, and assess the school leadership's response to challenges.

School Leadership: Directors and curriculum coordinators will be expected to use assessment data to summarize, and plan for, the following:

- Student mastery by subgroup;
- Areas of concern, due to lack of student growth/proficiency in core subjects, by classroom /grade level;
- Performance of individual teachers, with a note on how to leverage best practices;
- Areas for whole staff PD and individual teacher coaching;
- Efficacy of interventions set forth for students receiving support and special education services;
- An evaluation of program elements, such as how they are helping students master the curricular goals;
- Monitoring and reporting on progress toward meeting achievement goals; and
- Reporting progress to community stakeholders and the board.

Teachers: After administration of an assessment, teachers will meet during their common planning period the following day (or days, if necessary) to conduct an analysis of the results. Teachers will be expected to use assessment data to summarize, and plan for, the following:

- Topics that students have mastered;
- Topics that students have not mastered, and will need to be re-taught;
- Groups of students who are performing below grade level expectations who may need 1:1 support;

- Groups of students who are well on track to proficiency and need additional enrichment;
- Teacher actions that led to student mastery;
- Teacher areas of improvement, as indicated by the content that students have not yet mastered;
- A detailed re-teach plan for students (groups and individual); and
- Next steps for improving teacher actions.

Teachers will submit action plans to the Director and/or curriculum coordinators for review and feedback. School leaders will analyze the action plans to ensure that teachers have identified the correct trends, have linked student gaps to an appropriate intervention, and that teachers are focused on the most high leverage areas. School leaders will provide feedback to teachers who have been identified as needing additional support; the STCC will provide feedback on science action plans, and the curriculum and instruction coordinator will provide feedback on remaining action plans.

Students: Teachers will share student performance with each student. Students, in turn, will be expected to engage in self-reflection and analysis to identify what actions (both positive and negative) led to the outcomes and what actions they will take to improve. These reflections will take place during written self-reflections and individualized student conferences. Teachers and students will log reflections and refer back to them as a means for monitoring progress and building student investment.

Parents: Teachers will also share student performance with parents, noting an area of strength and where students stand in relation to their growth targets. Teachers will send home an area of improvement in each core subject, and strategies that parents can employ at home to help students obtain mastery, each week. Parents will be expected to:

- Monitor the child's performance, and facilitate practice and remediation at home;
- Identify ways and opportunities in which they can help their child learn; and
- Engage in communication with the Director and teacher to attain academic and social goals.

Methods for Obtaining Valid and Reliable Measures of Student Outcomes: We will make great efforts to ensure that our assessment implementation and evaluation is valid and reliable, as indicated in the assessment tables above. For instance, teachers will receive in-depth training on each assessment, and school leaders will observe implementation for quality control. Checks, such as informal Director assessment of reading level, will be in place to ensure that teachers' evaluation of student performance is reliable; in the event that it is not, additional monitoring and PD will be provided.

Furthermore, we have selected the NWEA MAP because of its validity and reliability and the significant size of the norm group that it draws upon when providing norm-referenced scores. We will rely on the rigorous design of the NWEA to help us validate our internal assessments by correlating student scores to performance on the NWEA. Finally, if necessary, we will also contract with an external partner to help us administer and evaluate assessments, particularly since so many elementary school assessments require one-on-one administration, in order to yield reliable results.

Reporting: Academic data, and other sources of critical data (e.g., enrollment, retention, behavior, social/emotional learning data) will be entered into and reviewed in the Exploration dashboard. The Exploration dashboard will serve as a guiding document for Board meetings to ensure a focus on data for decision making, success and faithfulness to charter. The dashboard includes the school's achievement goals, as well as other metrics designed to inform school governance, compliance, and fidelity to mission. Frequent discussions about the dashboard data will allow school leadership and the Board to use data for decision making and continuous improvement. In addition, the school will issue an annual report detailing student performance and other material indicators of organizational health and viability.

We will also use a quarterly report card system to inform parents of their child's academic and behavioral performance. Report cards will be distributed during designated parent-teacher conference days throughout the year, as indicated on the proposed First Year Calendar in Attachment 3b. The report card template will be shared with, and explained to, parents at the outset of each year. In addition, parents of

students receiving special education services will be kept abreast of student progress toward short- and long-term IEP goals via a performance summary will be distributed quarterly with the student's report card. All parent communication will be in the family's home language; every effort will be made to meet with parents one-on-one to discuss the child's performance.

K. Performance, Promotion, and Graduation Standards

Promotion Standards and the School's Mission: Exploration's mission is to equip our students with the academic and social skills necessary to thrive in school and the interconnected world. Therefore, to attain this mission, we must hold our students and ourselves accountable to ensuring that the instruction and enrichment we are providing is accurately and adequately setting them up to excel at Exploration and beyond. We will use performance, promotion, and graduation standards as guidance to ensure standards.

Proposed Polices and Standards for Promotion: As stated in our key design elements, Exploration will expect students to master grade level standards in core subject areas of ELA, mathematics, science, and social studies. We have set our promotion and graduation standards to reflect this expectation.

Exploration will maintain student academic data for all enrolled students in compliance with New York State regulations. We will include this information in a student information system (SIS), such as PowerSchool. The SIS will include information about academic performance in all core subject areas, as guided by the Assessment System in Section D of the Educational Plan, including (but not limited to):

- Performance on the New York State ELA, mathematics, and science exams;
- Performance on norm-referenced assessments, such as the NWEA MAP;
- Performance on summative assessments, such as unit tests;
- Annual reading growth as measured by the Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark assessment; and
- Performance on homework, projects, and other assignments, as measured by holistic rubrics.

In addition, teachers will also be expected to track attendance and participation, student behavior, and interventions provided to each student. While the teachers and intervention staff will be intimately involved in any student promotion decisions, the Director shall make the final decision on all student promotions. For students in grades kindergarten through 2, teachers will review student performance and make recommendations to the Director about promotion on a case-by-case basis, based on evidence of progress toward meeting the state standards for the student's grade level. In scenarios where a student may be meeting some of the standards, but not yet quite on grade level, the recommendation will be to promote that student and make every effort to support him or her during the summer months. However, in cases in which a first or second grade student is severely behind grade level expectations for literacy, we would likely retain that student; research indicates that third grade students who are not reading at grade level are four times more likely to drop out of high school than proficient readers.¹² Every effort will be made to support these students throughout the summer months and into the following year to promote growth.

For students in grades three through six, we will look at multiple measures of student progress, as collected in the SIS. The Dean of Students will use the SIS to monitor student progress each quarter and flag any students at risk of retention. The Dean will then provide a list of these students to the Director each quarter. The Director will meet with each student's teacher after reviewing the quarterly list to discuss concerns and interventions. The Director, Dean, and teacher(s) will track conversations, along with the student progress, in the event they are needed at the end of the year. At the end of the year, the Director will evaluate the final student retention list and will make all retention decisions on a case-by-case basis, taking the following criteria into account: student progress, with a particular emphasis on ELA and mathematics growth, attendance, behavior, effort, age, and maturity level. All retention concerns will be communicated with families each quarter and at the time of the final decision. Every effort will be made to support students who are retained throughout the summer months and into the following school year.

¹² <http://www.ncsl.org/research/education/third-grade-reading.aspx>

The same promotional criteria will apply to students with special needs and ENL students. However, if a student's IEP indicates that (s)he will be held to an alternate standard for promotion, the Director will incorporate the criteria listed in the IEP when making any retention or promotion decisions. Similarly, student performance on the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT) will be taken into consideration as well, as applicable.

Sample Promotion Standards: As discussed in the Curriculum and Instruction section, the School Director and the curriculum coordinators will create curriculum maps and units at the outset of the school year that include all CCLS, NYLS, and NGSS standards for each grade level, providing a clear sense of what students will know and be able to do by the end of each school year. Teachers will use these curriculum maps to backwards plan their lessons, ensuring full coverage of all CCLS, NYLS, and NGSS. We have created a table of these standards for grades two and six, based on the standards provided on the NYSED website. We are unable to include the table here due to constraints around space, but we are happy to provide it upon request.¹³

L. School Culture and Climate

Discipline Policy: Exploration will implement a PBIS framework that recognizes and reinforces positive behaviors and contributions; however, we recognize that a comprehensive discipline policy that is clear, developmentally appropriate, and tailored to various student behaviors and infractions will promote a safe and orderly learning environment while addressing student behavior and discipline for the general population as well as for students with disabilities. All policies and expectations will be clearly communicated to students and families to ensure they are understood and supported. The Director and the Student Special Education Support Services Coordinator (SSSC) will present these policies to staff at the Summer Institute. All Exploration policies and codes of conduct align with the Dignity for All Students Act (DASA, Education Law Article 2) to prevent bullying and recognize progressive discipline. Note: all policies will be adapted if necessary to ensure they are appropriate for students with a disability. See Attachment 4, Student Discipline Policy, for further details on the behavior expectations at Exploration.

Implementation: Establishing a Safe, Orderly, and Positive School Environment: We believe that a strong school culture and climate is created during the first weeks of school. The Exploration staff will invest time and energy during the first weeks of school to ensure that students have sufficient time to learn, practice, and fully understand procedural and behavioral expectations. We will also make sure that teachers are “ready to hit the ground running” when it comes to enforcing our student discipline policies; doing so from the first day of school will set the right tone for the remainder of the school year. One example of a school-wide effort to promote a safe, orderly and positive environment is through the adoption of “EXPLORER” expectations. These are a commonly adopted, shared and reinforced set of expectations illustrating behaviors and dispositions of students. Staff, students, community members and families will proactively understand the expectations across school contexts including classrooms, bathrooms, hallways, and buses. The following graphic shows expectations of students and will be posted at the school:

Classrooms & Labs Contribution s and Expectations	Excellent	Positive	Leader	On-task	Responsible	Eager to Learn	Respectful
	I do my best and take pride in my work.	I learn from each experience how to be better.	I listen and lead in the classroom.	I complete my work on time.	I take responsibility for my own learning and success.	Each day I am ready to learn, grown and think.	I respect my teachers and my peers.

¹³ See http://emsc32.nysed.gov/ciai/common_core_standards/pdfdocs/nysp12cclsmath.pdf and http://www.p12.nysed.gov/ciai/common_core_standards/pdfdocs/p12_common_core_learning_standards_ela.pdf

Administration: The Director and the SSSC will communicate behavior policies, outlined in the Student Discipline Policy attachment, to staff during their Summer Institute training and will provide all teachers the opportunity to practice implementing and enforcing the behavior policies during this time. For instance, the School Director will provide teachers with challenging student behavior scenarios. Teachers will role-play and/or describe how to respond appropriately, using the protocols set forth in the Exploration Student Discipline Policy. The School Director and other teachers will provide feedback in order to ensure that teachers are comfortable addressing student behavior concerns as soon as students arrive.

Teachers: Teachers will be expected to review behavior expectations explicitly with students each day for the first four-to-six weeks of school. Teachers will teach behavior policies and class routines (e.g., how and when to get up from your seat, to get in a line, sharpen your pencil, pass in your paper), until all students demonstrate mastery. When a new routine or class behavior is introduced, teachers will be expected to provide guided and independent practice, and coach students with positive reinforcements. While this exercise may require an investment of time on the front end, we believe that student ability to smoothly transition throughout the day will save valuable instructional minutes throughout the year.

Parents: Families will be notified of behavior policies and expectations during a family orientation in August. The School Director will review the Student Discipline Policy explicitly, and in detail, to ensure that parents fully understand all school expectations for them and students. Following the orientation, parents will be asked to sign and return a form indicating that they have read and fully understand the behavior policies. This form will be kept on record for the entire school year.

Evaluating a Safe and Learning Conducive School Culture and Climate: To ensure that policies and procedures are fair, relevant, and serve as a means to promote a safe and conducive learning environment, the SSSC/Director will conduct an annual assessment of key stakeholders' (instructional staff, school leadership, Board of Trustees [BOT], students, families) understanding climate/culture, discipline policies to foster the safe and orderly climate of the school to promote students' achievement.

The SSSC and/or Director will set up a system for tracking and monitoring trends in student behavior by student, class, grade level, and school. The SSSC will evaluate this tracker regularly and share trends with the School Director, in the Exploration dashboard. The School Director will use this information to provide meaningful and strategic coaching and PD to individual teachers or to all teachers, as needed. The SSSC and the School Director will use the student data to ensure that the PD and teacher coaching are effective and to indicate the need for changing and evolving interventions.

Additionally, the SSSC and/or Director will observe teachers on a regular basis to ensure that all teachers are implementing the behavior system in a manner that is fair, consistent, and effective. In the event that the SSSC or the Director discovers that there are inconsistencies in teacher implementation, the School Director will structure a school-wide PD to help teachers' norm on how and when to give rewards, consequences, and so forth. Furthermore, if the School Director notices that a teacher is struggling to implement the behavior policies effectively, (s)he will encourage that teacher to spend time observing a teacher with strong classroom management, in addition to providing ongoing coaching and PD.

Strategies Supporting a Safe and Orderly School Climate: We recognize that in order to attain the rigorous academic goals that we have set forth, we must go beyond the discipline policy to create a school culture in which students feel safe, valued, and supported. We believe the foundation of the school culture is respect for everyone in the community, including students, staff, and families. As a result, we are committed to building this foundation so that Exploration students carry on a strong character traits to contribute to future successes. The following are the preventive and evidence-based strategies:

- **Explicit Instructional Opportunities Promoting Positive School Behaviors and Social-Emotional Competencies:** To encourage positive skills development, Exploration is committed to promoting social-emotional learning (SEL) as a complement to academic rigor and have thus designed a master schedule that dedicates time for academics, innovation, and SEL. We will use allocated time implement

CASEL core competencies including: *self-management, self-regulation, peer social skills, problem solving, and peer relationships, and to reinforce the cultural and behavioral expectations at Exploration.* In order to teach these skills effectively, we will rely on the PATHS curriculum, as discussed in the Curriculum and Instruction section. This program was selected considering the substantial evidence-base showing its effectiveness with students from our target population¹⁴.

- **Positive Behavioral Supports and Management Systems:** Exploration is committed to recognizing and reinforcing positive behaviors and contributions, rather than a punitive system that focuses on negative behaviors. A Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) framework emphasizing a school-wide system of support that includes proactive strategies for defining, teaching, and supporting preferred and positive behaviors in the classroom and school will be a foundational element of Exploration's culture and climate. The PD/learning plan and assessment will track the evidence to identify the status of students' behaviors and indicate the need for changing and evolving interventions.
- **Nurture and Develop All Students' Talents and Affinities:** Exploration aims for rigorous academic standards but recognizes that students will bring pre-disposed and developed talents and preferences. In order to ensure that all children feel welcome and successful, we will expect our teachers to understand each student's learning strengths and implement strategies for maximizing those strengths, as outlined in the All Kinds of Minds framework. In order to reach and support all learners, our teachers will be expected to understand the affinities and skills that each student brings to the table so that they can effectively leverage those strengths to help students' access information and learn best. The science and technology learning as well as the community-based opportunities with RMSC will serve as ideal outlet to observe and reinforce all students' talents and affinities.
- **Engagement with the Family and Community to Promote Student-Family-Community Support and Partnership:** Exploration is committing to a strong school-home-community partnership model that includes elements of the evidence-based Family Check-Up® model to link students and their families to existing community resources to ensure that intervention and prevention services are accessed and used to promote positive and productive behaviors in school and community. The social worker(s), dedicated to Family Partnership, will be trained to focus on community and family connections/partnerships to both link families to existing community resources based on their needs and resources. Furthermore the dedicated staff will also adopt a collaborative and proactive problem-solving framework to address challenging student behaviors. This framework is adapted from Ross Greene's Collaborative Problem Solving (CPS) approach, which assumes that students' challenging behaviors result from reduced flexibility/adaptability, frustration tolerance, and problem solving; these are best addressed through a collaborative problem solving approach that includes the child, school staff/instructors, and family/adults (Greene, 2015). This is a critical element aligning with Exploration's key design element of community connections and partnerships. Through these efforts Exploration shows the value of families and community on students success; additional family-school-community partnership strategies are identified in in the Family and Community Involvement and Board Sections.

M. Special Student Populations and Related Services

Exploration's Plan for a Responsive, General Education Classroom: Exploration will enroll all students through the lottery process previously described and expects a broad cross section of students and will thus ensure that every child receives the instruction and support necessary to attain at high levels. Further, all students, including Special Education or ENL students, will be encouraged to participate in ALL school activities afforded to any student at Exploration. Included below is Exploration's general education plan for to provide all students with disabilities and those with ENL status meaningful access to participate and progress in the general education curriculum. More specifically, systematic and explicit instructional

¹⁴ <https://casel.squarespace.com/guide/ratings/elementary>

interventions will be employed as well as inclusive programs and supports through staffing and programmatic decisions such as leveled texts and associated intervention programs that provide access to the general education curriculum. Special student populations will be supported by the classroom teaching staff, as well as additional special education and intervention teachers, the Special Education Coordinator (SSSC), TESOL teacher, and the social worker(s) and school counselors as well as school leadership.

The RtI system and the established intervention/enrichment blocks in the master schedule, including the added staffing at targeted instructional times position the general education setting as supportive of all learners with differentiated supports. Within the general education setting, Exploration will have special education teachers pushing in and will provide opportunities for small group and differentiated instruction with the instructional team; it is important to note that the PD and coaching plans include training and support on intervention, enrichment, and differentiated instruction.

Students At-Risk of Academic Failure: Exploration will implement a three-tiered Response to Intervention (RtI) model to support all students and help identify students at-risk of academic failure or students in need of specialized services. The SSSC will oversee the RtI process and ensure that it is aligned to the assessment plan and driven by regular data reviews. Intervention specialists and classroom teachers will implement tiered interventions for students identified in need of additional support; tiered intervention programs are subsequently defined. Students will be identified for tiered services by classroom instructional staffs' observations of performance, as well as diagnostic and formative assessments (universal screening tools). Data will serve as evidence of a student's current level of performance, area for continued growth, and baseline for service delivery. Teachers will originate the referral to the SSSC for review of a student's current level of performance and determine if tiered supports are applicable.

The SSSC, as supported by the school-based intervention team, will review and collaborate around the identified student. Exploration's assessment plan will serve as the baseline data and an action plan (lasting for 6-8 weeks). The RtI action plan will target one specific and measurable skill and include the following information: focus of intervention service (goal); program/strategy to target identified skills focus; grouping and frequency of services; assessment/metric to measure growth and progress of targeted skills; progress monitoring opportunities; and resources needed for successful intervention. The school-based intervention team, supported by the classroom teacher, will determine the schedule for services and share with family.

After the pre-determined amount of time has passed, the school-based intervention team will review the student's progress on the targeted skill and determine if further tiered support is warranted. The action plan will be discontinued if the services have accelerated the growth at an acceptable rate (evidence from intervention), or the action plan will be modified to identify a new target and intervention. The SSSC will track the progress of all students receiving RtI services and ensure fidelity of implementation. Annually, the SSSC will evaluate the services, including frequency, type, progress, outcomes and perspectives/input.

In order to implement the RtI program and serve students in need of intervention well, Exploration has established consistent times for interventions services in the master schedule to deliver differentiated instruction to students in homogenous groups, based on their needs, to drive student growth and performance. Intervention specialists will support intervention blocks allowing for flexible grouping. Students needing additional intervention will receive push-in support during the regular ELA and math blocks.

For those students at risk of academic failure, evidence-based interventions will be identified to support their skill development and growth through the action planning of the school-based intervention team. The following outlines the tiered interventions Exploration has identified to support students referred for RtI services through the school-based intervention team:

TIER 1 Supports	Group Instruction (Class-based)	Tier 1 supports will be provided to all students in the general education classroom setting. We will expect our teachers to provide targeted and differentiated lesson plans and instruction to ensure that we are meeting the needs of all students, particularly those who may not be performing at grade level expectations. We will track student progress and identify any gaps or trends that may be hindering student performance. Through professional development and collaborative support teachers will receive training on intervention strategies in the areas of greatest need.	Guided reading Graphic Organizers (thinking maps) Tier 2-3 Vocabulary Writers Workshop
TIER 2 Supports	Supplemental Instruction (Group)	Tier 2 supports will be provided if we find that the intervention strategies listed in Tier 1 are not sufficiently impacting students' achievement. Tier 2 strategies may take place in the general education classroom or in small group sessions during the "Walk to Intervention" block. The general education teacher or the Intervention Specialist will provide the supports at this level. The general education teacher will continue to use the general education curricular resources, as outlined in the "Curriculum and Instruction" section, and the Tier 1 strategies listed, but he/she will also rely on additional strategies listed, as needed.	Classroom behavior contracts JumpStart Really Great Reading Interventions
TIER 3 Supports	Intensive Instruction (Small Group or Individual)	Tier 3 interventions will be provided in small groups of students (1-2 at a time) and are designed to provide more intensive instruction than the Tier 2 interventions. Similar to the Tier 2 interventions, Tier 3 interventions will consist of general education instruction in addition to specialized supports. Students may receive "push in" support from the Intervention Specialist or individual or small group support during the intervention block. Students requiring Tier 3 support will participate in 30-to-60 minutes of intervention at a minimum of four days per week. If assessment results indicate that students have made necessary growth, they will exit Tier 3 interventions. Tier 3 instruction will be provided by school personnel who are highly skilled or trained in the areas of academic need. We will use the resources listed, amongst others, to teach, and monitor, Tier 3 student progress. In the event the intervention resources do not meet the needs of our students, we will research and implement other intervention resources.	Multi-Sensory Strategies for writing Skillstreaming Empower writing

ENL Students: Exploration will ensure that all students, including ENL students, have access to the general education curriculum. See below for a complete description. In general, the TESOL teacher will support instruction during the ELA blocks and will provide additional pull-out English language instruction.

Gifted and Talented Students: The Exploration academic program is designed to provide enriching and deep inquiries for all students. However, we recognize that classroom-based and inquiry/innovation experiences need to be differentiated for all students, including those who are gifted and talented. Gifted and talented students are defined as those students who are performing at least one grade level ahead of current enrollment in ELA and/or math, and demonstrate a need for additional programming to challenge their intellectual growth and academic performance. Determination for gifted and talented programming will not formally begin until a student has reached the fourth grade; however, all students will be encouraged to pursue their interests beyond classwork and the inquiry-based curriculum will keep every student engaged. If a student is identified to benefit from enrichment programming, the school-based intervention team will collaborate to define opportunities to stretch the student's academic and cognitive opportunities to foster increased rates of knowledge and skill development. Families will be appropriately and reasonably engaged in identifying enrichment opportunities for students to ensure that all factors relating to child and adolescent development, as well as family and cultural considerations, are weighed in program design.

Providing Specialized Instruction to Students in Need of Special Education Services: Exploration will follow the services and supports mandated on students' IEPs (Individual Education Plans). The Director and a dedicated school-based intervention team will assume responsibility for all aspects of special education services. The school-based intervention team will be led by the SSSC and includes the following staff: Director, intervention specialists/special educators, and social worker. Exploration's CIC will oversee

referrals and documentation for services while also working with the families, in coordination with the SSSC, to communicate supports at home and school. Through the school-based intervention team's collective efforts on student's IEP, Exploration will provide specialized instruction to meet the needs of all students identified as requiring special education; regular review of plans will ensure compliance. Services will be delivered in the setting mandated on the student's IEP (e.g., classroom, therapy room) by those staff qualified to provide the service. Exploration will prioritize hiring staff members who are dually certified in elementary and special education as a means to provide the specified special education programs.

Working with the District to Ensure that Eligible Students Receive Services: The CIC will communicate with the Committee on Special Education Chair at each district of residence on IEP-related items, service provisions, and other matters of special education; communication will be documented and occur in person, over the phone or via email, as applicable and ethical. Exploration will provide the following services, as mandated on the child's IEP: *additional time; a separate location; modified materials or equipment; and additional services, including push-in and pull-out intervention.* Exploration will work directly with the district to accommodate and schedule related services as mandated on a student's IEP.

To ensure fair and adequate funding for related student services, the CIC, Director, and operations team will maintain ongoing communication with the student registrar, the finance department, and/or the CSE of each district of residence to confirm enrollment at Exploration, designate related services Exploration will provide, confirm services the district will provide, and ensure that funding has been received for related services. Exploration will maintain a line in the budget to track funding for students with IEPs, and the CIC, Director, and operations team will meet on a monthly basis to review the funding received from districts, discuss changes in enrollment and related services, and contact the districts.

Evaluating the Special Education Instructional Program: The Director and SSSC will assume the lead roles for compiling key indicators of services and supports and reporting to the school and Board. Indicators of services and supports will align to Exploration's dashboard and performance benchmarks in the areas of student learning, teaching and learning, and family engagement; reports will be disaggregated based on student populations (e.g., students with disabilities) as a means to inform and enhance services.

Identifying Students Suspected of Having a Disability: The CIC will oversee the Child Find process with the support of the school-based intervention team. Exploration will comply with all federal Child Find requirements requiring schools to have a clearly articulated process for identifying, locating, and evaluating students with disabilities. Exploration will also comply with all State Education Department regulations by submitting annual reports such as the Charter School Report Card, including information about students with disabilities. The process for identifying and supporting Exploration students in need of additional classroom- and/or school-based supports is outlined below:

- All incoming kindergarten students, and new students at other grade levels, will be screened to determine if additional support services are warranted in the classroom setting, or if a referral to CSE is applicable. Screening tools will include those assessments indicated in Exploration's assessment plan and may be supplemented by speech-language screening tools (e.g., PLS-5, CCC-2, SSIS), behavior rating scales, academic/cognitive rating scales (e.g., Brigance), or classroom observations (performance, behavior). Prior parental permission for screening will be collected.
- The school-based intervention team will review screening results, responsive strategies for support will be identified, and a plan for implementation will be established with key school personnel.
- The school-based intervention team will communicate results and responsive supports to the student's family/caregivers and elicit their feedback and support.
- If the school and/or family determine a referral to CSE is applicable and necessary, the family will be provided with the address and phone number of the CSE of the student's district of residence if the family/guardian chooses to self-refer. The Exploration staff will inform the family they will need to make a formal written request and state the specific reasons for referral.

If applicable, the school-based intervention team will follow the specified procedures for referral to CSE. The school-based intervention team will gather information and data on responsive supports and associated progress. The CIC will obtain parental permission for CSE referral and subsequently follow the procedures for CSE referral set forth by the student's district of residence. The CIC will communicate verbally and in writing with all Exploration staff on a student's scheduled CSE meeting and associated documentation/information. Exploration will ensure classroom coverage in order for the classroom teacher, and related intervention providers, to attend the CSE meeting(s).

Identifying, Assessing, and Servings ENL Students: Exploration will use the NYSED process for identifying students who are ENL students. Before the school year begins, we will administer the Home Language Questionnaire to all new students. If results from the Home Language Questionnaire indicate the only language spoken in the home is English, screening will cease. However, if results indicate that English is not the home and/or native language, the SSSC will commence an interview in English, and the native language, as applicable. We will use the results of the questionnaire and interview to determine the family's dominant language and will ensure that communication with the family is in the preferred/authorized language, whether English or otherwise. If screening results reveal that a student speaks little English or exclusively a language other than English, the New York State Identification Test for English Language Learners (NYSITELL) assessment will be administered; students scoring below benchmark proficiency levels will be eligible for ENL services.

We will make ENL instruction a priority and will strive to have ENL students achieve English proficiency as quickly as possible. Primary classroom instruction and intervention will occur in English with modifications and accommodations, verbally and written, being appropriately and reasonably applied. ENL students will receive ELA programming, as outlined in the Curriculum and Instruction section as supported by the TESOL teacher. Additional English language instruction will be provided in a pull-out setting by the TESOL teacher. All ENL students will receive the same content instruction as non-ENL peers.

ENL students will annually take the NYSESLAT as a measure of their English proficiency. Scores on the assessment will benchmark a student's proficiency level and determine if a student's performance is high enough to warrant dismissal from ENL support services. In accordance with the NCLB requirements, students who have resided in the United States for one year or longer will take the NYS ELA exams.

The school-based intervention team will monitor ENL programming. ENL progress will be monitored on an ongoing basis, as indicated in our Assessment System section, and may include the following measures used specifically to monitor English language proficiency: classroom assessments (formative), writing samples, vocabulary checklists, performance on task questions, and prompts. If results indicate that an ELL student is not making adequate progress in language and vocabulary acquisition with school-provided supports, modifications will be made to the support program in consultation with the student's family. Outcomes and progress will be reported to the student and the family.

Managing IEP Record-Keeping: The CIC will assume responsibility for maintaining the confidentiality of student records. The most recent copy of the IEP will be given to the instructional staff responsible for fulfilling the services and accommodations; all relevant support staff will be verbally updated on accommodations and supports. Any staff that will access the IEP document will sign a Chapter 408 form to be filed and maintained accordingly. All student records will be maintained in a dedicated locked cabinet with restricted access to only school personnel. A sign-out and dissemination log will be kept with student records to track access. Student information with personally identifiable information will not be shared with outside parties without prior parent/guardian written permission. The only exception to this regulation is for school district or county social service requests, when Exploration determines the requesting party has legitimate educational interests/need to know. Parents/guardians will have access to their child's records to inspect accuracy and content without undue delay and within 10 days of the parent/guardian request. Additionally, parents will be updated on their child's progress quarterly as outlined in the school calendar

via progress reports accompanying the student's report cards. Exploration staff will receive training on the legal and ethical requirements for accessing and maintaining student records with identifiable personal information, as indicated in the Professional Development section.

Ancillary and Support Services: As indicated in the Family and Community Involvement section, Exploration is committed to integrating a Family Check-Up® model, facilitated by the school's social worker. This model allows for school staff and families to learn from, engage with, and collectively plan for services and supports to improve students' academic, social, and emotional development. Exploration is further committed to providing extended learning programs through partnership with RMSC and other community-based organizations. These programs will provide additional time and support for students toward rigorous academic standards; extended learning programs will be co-designed and implemented by the school's leadership and community partner(s) during the school year as well as during the summer.

III. Organizational and Fiscal Plan

A. Applicant Group Capacity

Founding Group: The founding group have remained committed to the vision of Exploration into this round of submission believing in the mission and key design elements; as we submit our second full application to the authorizers we have reflected on key elements and enhanced our overall school design. The Director has not yet been identified and will be identified through a competitive process ensuring the highest quality leader is identified to carry out the charter. The following summarizes the experience, skills, and role of each of the Founding Board members, illustrating the robustness of the founding group.

- **Kevin Williams, PhD, Board Chair** – Dr. Williams is currently the Department Head, Materials Science Department, at Eastman Kodak Company. Dr. Williams has been involved in the planning stages for more than a year. He brings expertise in science research, innovative technologies, and human resources. Dr. Williams has been a practicing scientist or leader of a world-class technology and research organization in the Rochester community for nearly 23 years. He believes that what separates good practitioners from the outstanding scientists and leaders is a passion rooted from an early cultivation during the elementary phase of learning. Beyond Dr. Williams' alignment of core beliefs with Exploration's mission, positioning him as a superb Board Chair, he has numerous patents, developed strategic plans and PD, managed large budgets, served as a corporate liaison, and implemented communications plans. With Dr. Williams' science and leadership background, he will assist in curriculum development, particularly around the Units of Exploration and Board governance.
- **Carlos Cong, Founding Member** – Mr. Cong is currently the Senior Manager, Network Services, at Paychex. Mr. Cong has been involved in the planning for more than a year. He brings expertise in innovative technologies. Specifically, Mr. Cong has developed and implemented a wide array of technologies nationwide, including Data Centers, VoIP networks, IP Networks, infrastructure environments (including computer, storage, web, and application layers), and Unified Communication's (including video and interactive collaboration technologies). He has also, through leading departments of more than 200 people, developed employee retention programs, trained staff in new technologies, and developed career advancement programs. Beyond Mr. Cong's professional expertise, he is also a father of a special needs child; he has used technology and different methods of learning to help her advance in her education. With Mr. Cong's technology background and personal experiences, he will guide Exploration in its mission to explore innovative ways of learning.
- **Michelle Swanger-Gagne PhD, Founding Member** – Dr. Swanger-Gagne currently serves on the faculty at the University of Rochester Medical Center's Institute for the Family. Dr. Swanger-Gagne has been involved in the planning stages for approximately the past year. Dr. Swanger-Gagne brings expertise in working with children and adolescents with academic and behavioral concerns in schools, such as learning disabilities, ADHD and school anxiety. Dr. Swanger-Gagne has specialized training in

pediatric school psychology and family therapy. She will guide Exploration's social-emotional programming, partnerships, school culture and climate efforts, and special education services.

- **Robert Franklin, Founding Member** – Mr. Franklin currently serves as the Chief Financial Officer for Monroe County. Mr. Franklin has been involved with the planning stages for approximately three months. He brings a science background, but is employed in the finance/accounting field. Mr. Franklin has more than 25 years of experience with strategic planning, organizational management, fiscal operations, and performance management from his not-for-profit agencies. Mr. Franklin will contribute to the development and governance of Exploration in the areas of budget development, fiscal oversight, operational aspects of school opening, facilities, and grant development.
- **Joseph Saia, Founding Member** – Mr. Saia is currently the School Director at Discovery Charter School. Mr. Saia has been involved in the planning stages for approximately the past year. He brings expertise in urban education, school leadership, and charter school development. Mr. Saia has spent 15 years as an urban educator in the Rochester City School District and four years as the founding School Director for Discovery Charter School. He has overseen all operational and strategic aspects of opening a new charter school, has successfully written grants to support educational programs, has served as the leader on curriculum and PD, and has overseen data-driven school practices.
- **Stephen Pasquarella, Founding Member** – Mr. Pasquarella is the President of Vincent Associates. He has been involved in the planning stages for approximately six months. Vincent Associates is an optical equipment-manufacturing firm. He brings expertise in budgeting, fiscal management and oversight, technology innovation, and business development. Mr. Pasquarella will guide Exploration's efforts in science and technology innovation (curriculum and PD), fiscal management and compliance, and operational aspects of the school.
- **Lisa Hiley, PhD, Founding Member** – Dr. Hiley currently serves as the Director of Education at EnCompass: Resources for Learning. She has been involved with the planning and design stages for more than a year and serves as the primary author. In her current role as Director, Dr. Hiley provides academic enrichment and intervention services in school and community settings. She brings expertise in curriculum development, diagnostic assessments and program/school evaluations, PD, and performance management/instructional coaching. Dr. Hiley will advise the Exploration Board on the above-mentioned items, serving on subcommittees curriculum and assessment.

In addition to the information included above, the Founding Board collectively, have the following skills and competencies: school administration and leadership; curriculum and program development; instructional leadership and PD/learning; teacher recruitment, interviewing, and dismissal; hiring instructional and support staff (human resource management); staff retention and recognition initiatives; instructional observation, coaching, and evaluation; special education and related services delivery and oversight; testing and Title I oversight; student diagnostic and summative assessments; program evaluation; school and not-for-profit budgeting; fundraising and development; community partnerships and collective impact; social-emotional programming and evidence-based practice; school-family-community partnerships; science and technology innovation; IT services and maintenance; policy and procedure development; communications and marketing/messaging; executive and job coaching; facilities management; grant writing and development; food services and health services oversight; project management and special projects development; and children's policy development and advocacy.

In order to determine which Board members were the right fit for the various positions on the Board, we took into account the following factors:

- Knowledge and expertise, as evidenced by current and past work experience;
- Knowledge and expertise, as evidenced by past Board, governance, or management experience;
- Ability to commit and invest time in the founding, planning, and early years of the school;
- Commitment and ties to the Rochester Community;

- Appreciation for science education and education of special student populations; and
- Diversity of experiences, skill sets, and perspectives.

How the Applicant Group Came Together: The founders and advisors of Exploration joined together based on their shared passion and vision for elementary science inquiry as a catalyst for student achievement in ELA and math. The group formed through professional contacts and known passions for elementary, science, and/or social-emotional school-based programming for youth in underserved communities. As the group met, the commitment of the founding members was solidified and a founding group with vast expertise and deep capacity for school design and operation was formed. Through continued efforts, the Board has established the partnership with RMSC as a compliment to the overall school design. The Board remains committed to the effective governance of Exploration.

Planning and Writing Process: The stated key design elements served as organizing principles for the founding group’s subsequent school design. Each of the founding Board and Advisory group members contributed unique, yet complementary, expertise to propose a strong model for an elementary science and technology school in the Rochester community and the associated partnership. The applicant group met throughout 2014 and 2015 to discuss and agreed upon the final vision, key design elements, and school plan for Exploration’s application in Round 1 with subsequent reflections and partnership meetings in preparation for Round 2. Throughout this process, the applicant group met on multiple occasions to discuss strategy, purpose, and opportunity to ensure Exploration’s quality application. In addition to whole group meetings, small subsets of the Board met to discuss and review specific sections.

Primary Author: Lisa Hiley served as the primary author on the application. Education Enterprise of New York Foundation supported with the operational aspects sections of the application. For this application, SchoolWorks was a paid consultant providing content review/consultation and editing.

B. Board of Trustees and Governance

Administrative Relationship between Explorations and the Board of Regents: Our Founding Board understands the responsibility of governing a public charter school. The Board will have a performance contract with the Board of Regents that provides the school with the autonomy to design and operate its academic performance, organizational viability, and fiscal soundness.

Proposed Governance Structure: The Board will govern the school. The following table summarizes our proposed Board, voting status, and the length of their initial term.

Trustee Name	Voting	Position	Length of Initial Term
Carlos Cong	Y	Member	3
Robert Franklin	Y	Member	3
Michelle Swanger-Gagne	Y	Member	3
Stephen Pasquarella	Y	Member	3
Kevin Williams	Y	Member	3
Joseph Saia	Y	Member	3
Lisa Hiley	Y	Member	3

The Board of Trustees brings a wealth of experience from both the public and the private sector, including knowledge about finance, development, performance management, charter school oversight, academic and social emotional learning supports, special education, and innovative science and technology skills. Joseph Saia is currently the Director at Discovery Charter School in Rochester and has an ex officio (non-voting) seat; none of the other members currently serve on a charter board. For a more detailed summary of the Board qualifications, see the previous section, Applicant Group Capacity. As

indicated in the By-Laws, except for the Initial Board of Trustees, every Trustee shall be approved and elected to the Board of Trustees by the Board of Trustees. Each new Trustee shall complete and submit a Trustee Questionnaire for approval by the New York State Education Department; once approved, the Trustee will be seated and eligible to participate in the governance of the school.

Organizational Structure of the School: Exploration's organizational plan is designed to support our critical focus on academic achievement. The Board will hire the Director, who will report directly to the Board and be responsible for day-to-day management of the school. The Director will be the primary instructional leader of the school and will manage instruction with the STCC, the CIC, and the SSSC. These individuals, along with a Dean of Students, will comprise the leadership team. The Director, STCC, Operations Coordinator, and an Administrative Assistant will be hired during the planning year to establish the foundation for the school's culture, curriculum, and infrastructure. The staff structure for each year of the charter term is detailed further in the attached table and in the Management and Staffing section.

We have not yet identified a Director; however, we have initiated a search and expect to have a Director identified as soon as the charter is approved. Key qualifications include high expectations for learning, demonstrated success in raising student achievement target students, experience with start-up environments, expertise in scientific inquiry approaches, and skills managing staff in a complex organization. Responsibilities and qualifications for other key positions are provided in Attachment 8a.

Conducting and Publicizing Monthly Board Meetings: The Board will meet no fewer than 10 times per year; all meetings will be properly noticed as required by the Open Meetings Law of the State of New York. The agenda will be developed by the Chairperson in consultation with the School Director and will include a written or oral report by the School Director, a report of the Finance Committee, other committee reports as appropriate, and opportunity for public comments. Minutes will be taken at all Board and committee meetings, copies of which will be posted on our website and archived in the school office.

Promoting Parental and Staff Involvement in School Governance: The Founding Board is committed to operating a high quality school that is student-centered and believes that parent representation is a critical element in achieving this and other Exploration goals. The Trustees and the School Director will actively encourage parents to attend Board meetings and will recruit an interested parent during the first school year.

The Board will also encourage parent and staff input into the governance of the school. Board meetings will adhere to the Open Meetings Law and include an opportunity for public comment; parent and staff surveys of parents will be used as part of school oversight and the School Director's evaluation. The Board will enact and publicize a complaint policy that contains a clear process for bringing issues to the attention of the Board and for the Board to respond in a timely fashion. Board members will also regularly visit the school and attend school community events.

Roles and Responsibilities of Board Members: As indicated by our By-Laws, our Board will consist of at least five and no more than 11 voting members, ten of whom will be At-Large Trustees, and one of whom will be a Parent Representative Trustee. The At Large Trustees will be community leaders and will be representative of the Rochester community at large. The Parent Representative Trustee will be a parent or guardian of a student(s) enrolled in Exploration. This individual will be identified at the end of the first year of the charter and, after that, there shall be no less than one Parent Representative Trustee. The School Director shall serve as a non-voting ex officio member of the Board of Trustees and shall serve as a liaison with the staff of the school. All Trustees must be at least 18 years of age, strongly committed to improving public school educational opportunities for all children, and fully supportive of the Exploration mission statement, goals, and objectives. Board of Trustee roles and responsibilities include:

- Establishing the school's mission and school design
- Ensuring adequate resources for implementation of the school program

- Approving the school's annual budget
- Recruiting, hiring, and evaluating the School Director
- Approving major policies and regularly reviewing and revising them as necessary
- Preparing for, and attending, Board and committee meetings
- Making informed decisions to support the success of the school
- Monitoring program implementation and compliance with the charter agreement and relevant laws
- Facilitating long-term strategic planning
- Recruiting and orienting new Board members and assessing Board performance
- Recruiting partner organizations that will actively support the school's mission and design
- Participating as appropriate in the grievance process
- Enhancing the school's public standing

Trustee Qualifications include:

- Belief in, and support of, the mission and design of the school
- The expectation that all children can, and will, achieve academic excellence
- Demonstrated understanding of Board duties
- Willingness to attend Board and committee meetings and volunteer for Board work
- Experience and expertise in a relevant field, such as: education, human services, business, management, finance/accounting, law, government, personnel, marketing/public relations, fundraising, and/or community relations or organizing
- The capacity to examine performance data, financial documents and management reports,
- Be at least 18 years of age

As noted in our By-Laws, the Board will have at least five members and include the following officer positions: Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, Secretary, and Treasurer.

- Chairperson – The Chair is the senior volunteer leader of the Charter School who presides at all meetings of the Board and other meetings as required. The Chair is an ex-officio member of all committees of the organization, oversees implementation of Board and school policies, and ensures that appropriate administrative practices are established and maintained. Among the duties, the Chair works with the school leaders, other Board officers and Trustees, and committee chairs to develop the agendas for Board meetings, and presides at these meetings. In approval from other Board members, the Chair appoints volunteers to key leadership positions, including positions as chair of Board committees, and cultivates leadership succession; and works with the Board of Trustees in accordance with the school's By-Laws and mission, to establish and maintain systems.
- Vice Chairperson – The Vice Chair is the secondary volunteer leader of the charter school and as such, discharges the duties of the Chair as required in the Chair's absence. The Vice Chair supports the activities of the Chair, including sharing responsibilities as appropriate. The Vice Chair advises and assists the Chair on all matters relevant to the Board.
- Treasurer – Provides direction for the financial management of the school and facilitates to the Board. The Treasurer will serve as Chair of the Finance Committee, provide direction for the oversight of the school's record keeping and accounting policies, and ensure the presentation of timely and meaningful financial reports to the Board.
- Secretary – Provides direction for the keeping of legal documents, including minutes of all meetings of the Board. The Secretary certifies and keeps at the school the original, or a copy of the By-Laws, a book of minutes of all meetings of the Trustees and meetings of committees; and shall record time and place of meeting, whether regular or special, how called, how notice was given, the names of those present or represented at the meeting and the proceedings.

Board Committees: Committees of the Board shall include Executive Committee, Audit and Finance, Academic Accountability, and Human Resources, consisting of a chairperson and at least two (2) other Trustees. The Audit and Finance Committee will be responsible for the fiscal health of the school. The Academic Accountability Committee will oversee student data and monitor progress towards the school’s annual goals. The Human Resources Committee will be responsible for all human resources/personnel issues. The Board will, by resolution, designate other committees, as it deems necessary.

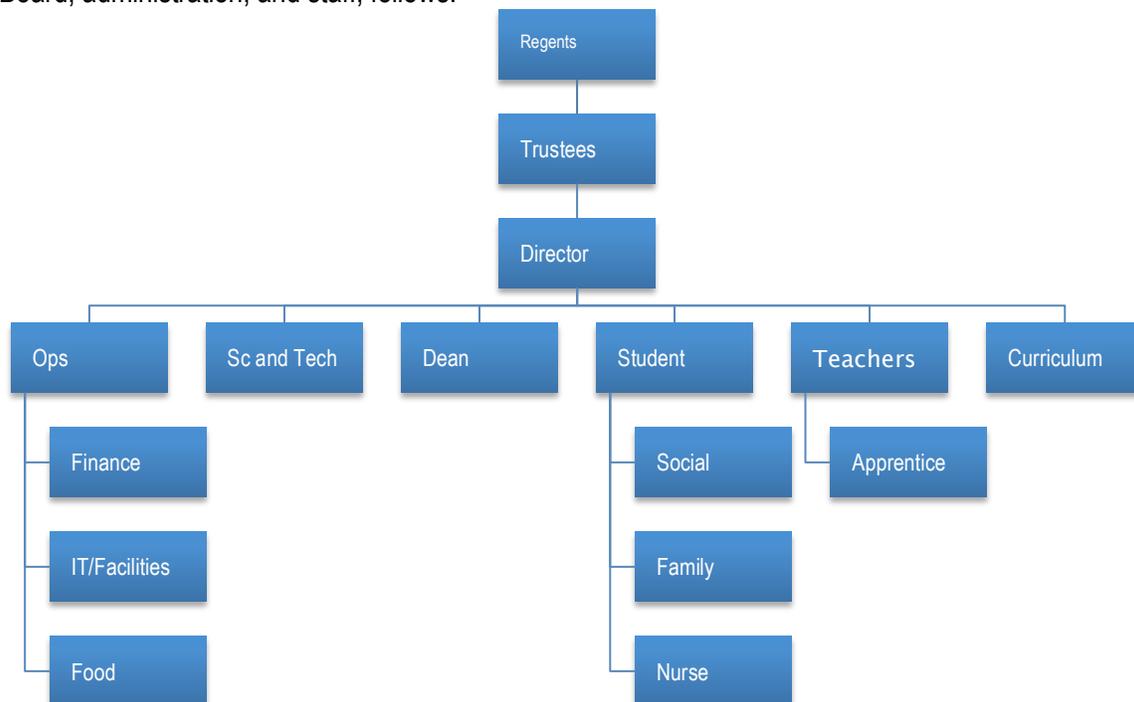
Recruitment, Selection, and Development of Board Members: As indicated above, Exploration Board members maintain great ties to individuals throughout the City of Rochester. Board members will be expected to leverage relationships, as needed, to engage other community members in the Exploration work and to fill Board seats as needed. Board members are currently engaging in this process in order to find an attorney, which we believe is a critical seat that needs to be filled on our Board in the near future.

In addition to the regular Board meetings, the Board will meet annually for a retreat, where they will discuss best practices, as indicated by the New York State charter authorizers, the Northeast Charter Schools Network, The New York City Charter School Center, and other well-regarded charter and education organizations. During this retreat, the Board will set the strategic plan for the year, with input from the Director. The strategic plan will align with the academic and fiscal measures set forth in this application.

Further, when new Board members join the Exploration Board, they will be expected to attend a New Board Member Orientation; we will share the vision and strategic plan for the school. If the new Board member will be joining a specific committee, or serve in a specific role, we will also outline and discuss the ways in which the new member can contribute, in order to achieve the goals set forth in the strategic plan.

C. Management and Staffing

The Exploration Organizational Chart, indicating our staffing structure and reporting responsibilities for the Board, administration, and staff, follows:



Organizational Structure of the School: As indicated on the above organizational chart, and further described in Attachment 8(a), the Exploration Board will report to the Board of Regents. The Board will be directly responsible for the goals set forth in the charter agreement with the Board of Regents, while the Director, who is hired and managed by the Board, will have the responsibility of implementation, oversight,

and progress toward these goals on a daily basis. As such, the Director will serve as the primary instructional leader of the school but will also manage the Operations Coordinator, Science and Technology Curriculum Coordinator (STCC), Curriculum and Instruction Coordinator (CIC), Dean, and Student Special Education Support Services Coordinator (SSSC). The Operations Coordinator will oversee finance, technology, and food service responsibilities. The STCC, the CIC, and the Dean will be charged with helping the Director plan and implement the curriculum, as well as manage and develop the teaching staff. Finally, the SSSC will manage the social workers, counselors, the family liaison, and the nurse.

Management Roles and Responsibilities of Key Administration

Following is a high level summary of the management roles and responsibilities of key administration. For a complete description, refer to Attachment 8(a), Section III.

- **School Director (Director):** The School Director is responsible to the Board of Trustees for accomplishing the school’s mission and for implementing policies of the Board. The School Director is responsible for the development and direction of curriculum, hiring, supervision, PD, and evaluation of all faculty and staff; oversight and maintenance of buildings and grounds; promoting the school among its various constituencies; maintaining appropriate liaison with school districts.
- **Operations Coordinator:** The Operations Coordinator will report to the School Director and is responsible for most non-instructional tasks, including finance, IT, facilities, and food service. The Operations Coordinator will also oversee transportation, student records, the annual student lottery, child nutrition requirements, and data reporting, among other responsibilities.
- **Science and Technology Curriculum Coordinator (STCC):** This role will develop, implement, and evaluate science and inquiry instructional programs and lab-based learning opportunities. The STCC will provide training and PD on Exploration’s innovative and lab-based programs and strategies, as well as ongoing instructional coaching for classroom staff in the application of project-based learning and innovative technologies; apply data for instructional purposes to ensure accelerated student progress in science and inquiry learning opportunities; and work collaboratively with other school leadership to ensure an innovative and evidence-based science and technology programming for Exploration.
- **Curriculum and Instruction Coordinator (CIC):** This role will develop, implement, and evaluate cross-curriculum instructional programs. The CIC will provide training and PD on Exploration’s programs and strategies, as well as ongoing instructional coaching for classroom staff and innovation instructors; apply data for instructional purposes to ensure accelerated student progress in science and inquiry; and work collaboratively with other school leadership to ensure an innovative and evidence-based cross-curricular program for Exploration students.
- **Dean of Students:** The Dean of Students is responsible for giving individualized assistance to students with academic or behavioral difficulties. (S)he will be responsible for creating behavior systems, protocols, and practices in conjunction with all other staff. (S)he will develop a strong rapport with students and families in order to promote social and emotional well-being.
- **Student Special Education Support Services Coordinator (SSSC):** Coordinate student supports and services, including those students with IEPs and with ELL status; collaborate with school and district of residence personnel to ensure that students individualized learning needs are adequately addressed and supported; engage with families to support students at home and in school while communicating necessary information; collaborate with School Director on students who present with behaviors that are detrimental to classroom performance; ensure compliance on special education, ELL, and behavioral reporting; and evaluate programming and impacts for students and families.

Staffing Plan: See the following table for Exploration’s staffing plan over the proposed charter term.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Pre-Ops	<u>2016-17</u>	<u>2017-18</u>	<u>2018-19</u>	<u>2019-20</u>	<u>2020-21</u>

Enrollment	--	175	246	325	400	475
Grades	--	K-1	K-2	K-3	K-4	K-5

NYS Staff Categories	FTEs					
Deans, Directors, Coordinators						
School Director (Director)	0.5	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Science & Tech. Curriculum Coordinator (STCC)	0.5	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Curriculum & Instr. Coordinator (CIC)		1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Student Special Education & Support Services Coordinator (SSSC)		1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Dean of Students				1.0	2.0	2.0
Subtotal	1.0	4.0	4.0	5.0	6.0	6.0

Administrative Staff						
Operations Coordinator	0.5	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
IT Coordinator		1.0	1.0	1.0	1.5	1.5
Admin Assistant	0.5	1.0	1.0	1.0	2.0	2.0
Subtotal	1.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	4.5	4.5

Teachers – Regular		7.0	10.0	13.0	16.0	19.0
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Substitute Teacher		1.0	1.0	1.0	2.0	2.0
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Teaching Assistants		0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
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Specialty Teachers						
Technology Innovation Instructor		0.5	1.0	1.75	2.0	3.0
Science Innovation Instructor		0.5	1.0	1.75	2.0	3.0
Special Education Teachers: <i>Intervention Specialists</i>		3.0	5.0	5.0	6.0	7.0
TESOL Teacher		0.5	1.0	1.0	1.5	2.0
Apprentice Teacher		5.0	6.0	7.0	8.0	9.0
Art/Music Teacher		0.5	0.5	1.0	2.0	2.0
PE Teacher		0.5	0.5	1.0	2.0	2.0
Subtotal		10.5	15.0	18.5	23.5	28.0

Therapists / Counselors						
Family Partnership Coordinator (Social Worker)		1.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	3.0
School Counselor		1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	2.0
Subtotal		2.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	5.0

Other (Non-Instructional)						
Food Service Worker		1.0	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5
Subtotal		1.0	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5

TOTAL	2.0	28.0	36.5	44	55.0	64.0
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By creating this staffing arrangement, we have ensured that there is adequate leadership to set the vision and tone for the school, implement and monitor the curriculum, and support and develop staff. We have also ensured that the school operations will not hinder instruction by including operations in the planning year and during year one. Finally, we have included full-time teachers, including a full-time substitute teacher, several part-time teachers, and apprentice teachers to maintain a small student-teacher ratio and provide students with the individualized and differentiated instruction. We will invest in our students and our family partnerships by ensuring access to a school counselor and a family partnership coordinator from day one. As indicated in the above table, as our student enrollment grows, we will add members to each of the teams to ensure that we continue to meet the needs of our students in all areas. See Attachment 8(a) for our hiring and personnel policies, including qualifications to be used in hiring employees.

Staffing Needs and Our Educational Program: We expect students will need additional support, so we invested significant financial resources into our staffing plan to ensure students had ample opportunities to receive support and more individualized instruction. To this end, our staffing plan includes intervention specialists, apprentice teachers, curriculum coordinators, a Dean, and a SSSC, all of whom will provide additional support to students above and beyond the classroom teacher. We have also included science and technology innovation instructors to ensure that teachers and students are adequately supported in implementation and access to our science and technology curriculum – essential to our mission. And, finally, we have included adequate operations staff members.

Recruiting and Retaining Teachers: As outlined further in Attachment 8(a), we have several recruitment and retention efforts to ensure that we are finding and retaining the most talented teachers for our students. We plan to develop a Human Resources Committee on the Board that will strategically advertise for open positions and establish partnerships with top teacher graduate programs in the area. In addition to ongoing PD, planned time throughout the day for collaboration, and support staff, we believe that our competitive compensation package will assist in recruiting and retaining our teachers. We recognize that a school model with such an emphasis on innovation and technology must have robust and effective retention strategies so that staff can be trained and supported. Teacher salaries will be benchmarked against similar schools in the region and will include the following benefits:

Paid time off	Holidays
Health insurance	Dental insurance
Life insurance	Retirement plan
Section 125 plan	Short-term disability
Long-term disability	

Furthermore, Exploration will recognize staff for their dedication and hard work and will prioritize work life balance, particularly for teachers.

Addressing Human Resource Challenges: Despite our efforts, we recognize we may face challenges down the line. In the event that this challenge occurs, we plan to employ the following strategies:

- **College Partnerships:** We will establish relationships with various graduate and undergraduate programs throughout Rochester in order to reach recent graduates.
- **Flexible scheduling:** As indicated in our PD section, we will prioritize retaining our top talent. If needed, and on a case-by-case basis, we will implement flexible scheduling policies to ensure that our teachers are not forced to resign.
- **Investing in the current team:** During times of shortage, we may be able to leverage the strength of our current team by providing them with different or greater opportunities that allow for growth.
- **Recruitment director:** If the budget permits, we may employ a part-time recruitment director to conduct

ongoing outreach and recruitment in order to make sure that we have an established talent pipeline.

Using Student Assessment Data to Drive Key Human Resource Decisions: As further outlined in the Evaluation and PD sections, Exploration will use student assessment data to drive key decisions aimed at the recruitment, evaluation, retention, and support of the leaders and the teaching staff. As outlined in Attachment 8(a), we are seeking to recruit and hire high-achieving individuals with a track record of achieving academic success with students from low-income communities. Finally, student achievement data are tied closely with our evaluation plan and will guide ongoing teacher coaching and support.

C.1 Charter Management Organization

We **do not intend to contract** with a charter management organization.

C.2 Partner Organization

Exploration has entered into a partnership with the Rochester Museum and Science Center (RMSC) that is mission-aligned and value-added. Daniel Menelly serves as the public contact for RMSC. Exploration's founding board has engaged with RMSC leadership to ensure shared values and mutual benefit with the ultimate purpose of impacting students' and families' scientific learning and community-based experiences. The primary areas for Exploration and RMSC partnership are as follows: (1) shared development of a vertically integrated science and technology curriculum as described in Curriculum and Instruction section promoting a co-constructed and living STEM curricula based on the NGSS that provides youth access to the rich resources and expertise of RMSC, (2) shared professional development/learning, (3) shared space through an affiliate partnership agreement with RMSC to access science facilities and materials thus creating a hybrid model for lab and learning spaces between RMSC and Exploration and (4) joint efforts on development and expanded learning opportunities for students and families enrolled at Exploration.

D. Evaluation

Programmatic Audits: Exploration is committed to evaluation and continuous improvement to ensure student and school success. In order to track measures of growth and performance, the Exploration school leadership team, including the Board of Trustees, will review the following academic indicators that are aligned to the NYS performance standards, and tracked in the Exploration dashboard: student performance, teaching and learning systems, culture, climate, and family engagement.

The Director and Board will use this information to improve educational programming. In order to do so, the Director will ensure that instruction is implemented with fidelity. If there are trends or gaps in implementation, the Director will coach teachers, or address at school-wide PD. Once teachers are clear on what is expected, the above indicators will serve as the primary measures for evaluating efficacy. In addition to these measures, the Director may employ other indicators, such as observation and feedback from other high-performing charter school leaders throughout the country, anecdotal evidence from teacher reflections around implementation, and the school leadership team's observations.

The Director will disaggregate the student data listed above to note areas of growth, while also accounting for relevant anecdotal evidence. (S)he will use identified trends to create next steps for teacher and student interventions, as well as changes to the academic program or curricular resources. (S)he will share this information with the Board for review. The Director and the leadership team will conduct this reflection and analysis on regular basis to ensure that Exploration is on track to meeting goals. The Board will also use this information to conduct programmatic audits, and to evaluate progress toward the stated achievement goals, and will submit an Annual Report to the New York State Board of Regents in accordance with Education Law 2857(2).

Evaluating the School's Operational Effectiveness and Fiscal Soundness: Exploration will also use the dashboard to review the organizational and fiscal soundness. The data is intended for:

- **Financial Condition:** Sound and stable financial condition on key indicators (e.g., debt to asset).
- **Fiscal Management:** Operating in a fiscally sound manner with realistic budgeting and long-range

planning (e.g., allocated budget surpluses, fundraising). The Board will engage an independent firm to complete an annual audit to monitor fiscal soundness and accountability.

- **Board Oversight and Governance:** Competent stewardship and oversight of school with maintenance of policies, procedures, and goals faithful to the charter.
- **Organizational Capacity:** Well-established organizational structure, clearly-defined roles for staff/management, and successful implementation of academics and operations.

In addition, Exploration will, per regulations, engage the services of an independent auditor with relevant experience to complete an annual financial audit of all financial records applying practices generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP) and in compliance with the standards established by the U.S. Comptroller General. The auditors will provide audited financial reports pursuant to Education Law 2854 (1)(c). Exploration's first fiscal year will end June 30, 2017. Financial activity associated with school start-up will be included in the first fiscal period. Exploration's Board will ensure separation of financial duties (e.g., authorization, record keeping, custody and verification) to ensure that no single person has capacity to complete all financial tasks.

Faithfulness to Charter and Law: Exploration will also use its dashboard to review the charter school's faithfulness to the charter and the law. The data that will be tracked and used for this purpose follow:

- **Mission and Key Design Elements:** Faithfulness to mission and commitment to key design elements.
- **Enrollment, Recruitment, and Retention:** Annual progress toward enrollment and retention targets including good faith efforts to attract, recruit, and retain diverse learners.
- **Legal Compliance: Compliance with laws, regulations and provisions of the charter:** The Board will review the dashboard data at each monthly Board meeting and use it to plan strategically toward remedying any areas of growth or concern. The ongoing reflection, similar to that of the student achievement data, will ensure that the school is on track toward the stated accountability measures.

Teacher Evaluations: To ensure high-quality instruction for its students, Exploration will evaluate teachers regularly throughout the year. An annual performance review will be completed for all full- and part-time staff. The Exploration Annual Performance Review is based on the Framework for Teaching proposed by Charlotte Danielson that includes four broad dimensions: 1) *planning and preparation*; 2) *environment*; 3) *instruction*; and 4) *professional responsibility*. The Exploration leadership team assumes the responsibility for evaluating instructional staff. The elements of professional evaluation are listed below. Prior to the start of the school year and during the Summer Institute, the annual evaluation expectations (and make up of scoring), the evidence of need for and the process of establishing teacher support/improvement plans, and the student assessments applicable for performance reviews will be confirmed:

- **Instructional Observation:** Instructional observation will be completed by a supervisor at an agreed-upon time with the professional staff with the defined protocol and rubric. This will serve as an opportunity to highlight instructional practices in direct support of a youth as a catalyst for continued professional growth and reflection. Following the observation, the observing supervisor will schedule a time to discuss the results; signatures will be obtained at the time of the follow-up conversation with an opportunity for staff to respond to the observation and review in writing.
- **Professional Practice Review:** The professional practice review will be completed by a supervisor or member of the leadership team during school hours. This will serve as an opportunity to review and observe professional practices and provide collegial coaching on identified competencies for effective practices (e.g., instructional, evidence-based). The professional practice review will note various aspects of practices, identify strengths of the professional practice(s), and provide reflection question(s). The purpose of the professional practice review will be to consider the regular practices of professional staff, associated competencies, and contributions to programming,

while supplying feedback and reflection questions promoting ongoing professional growth. The professional practice review will be coupled with instructional coaching offered by Exploration staff to encourage high-quality and evidence-based efforts.

- **Annual Evaluation:** The annual evaluation will be conducted by a supervisor at the end of the program year/term. This will summarize formal and informal instructional observations and overall contributions to student growth and program success. Teachers will be provided a copy to be reviewed with the Director; teacher written response is welcomed and sign off required.

It should be noted that teachers with consistent poor (insufficient) instructional and practice ratings during interim assessments will have performance addressed immediately with additional coaching and professional development. At the end of the year and if adequate progress has not been made on a performance plan, the teacher will not be invited to return. In addition to the methods for evaluation listed above, the school leadership team will engage in ongoing conversations about student achievement data, which will drive the PD strategies outlined in that section. As discussed further in the PD section, teachers will be expected to set student achievement goals at the beginning of the year that will drive coaching and decision making thereafter. The school leadership team will also review progress toward these student achievement goals and will document progress in the practice review and the annual evaluation.

School Director Evaluations: The Board will be responsible for the evaluation of the Director. The Board and Director will meet prior to the start of each school year to establish measurable (i.e., SMART) goals. The co-created goals will serve as the foundation for the Director's annual summative evaluation. In addition to the review of the SMART goals, the Board will review and rate the Director's performance on key tasks and leadership efforts (e.g., PD, retention/recruitment of students) as well as dimensions of leadership quality and compliance (e.g., reporting and documentation, communication). The Board will use the similar rating scale for the Director as for the instructional staff (i.e., meets expectations).

Each January, the Board will review the progress toward the annual Director's goals to adequate progress. The Board will then provide a written summative evaluation of the Director no later than April 30th of each year. The results will be reviewed with the Board and the Director, with written comment from the Director permitted, prior to the presentation at the May Board meeting.

Board Member Evaluations: The Board assumes the governance responsibility. An annual evaluation to ensure Board member engagement, contribution, and effectiveness will be completed by the Board members (as a self-reflection) and by the Board as a whole (strategic goal setting and review). The member surveys/self-assessments will be coordinated with dashboard reporting to establish school goals during the summer retreat. The summer retreat will also serve as a time in which Board members are apprised of their roles and responsibilities for the governance of the school with committee metric reviewed.

Family and Student Satisfaction: Family/caregiver partnership and engagement is a key design element of Exploration. The school's staffing structure promotes regular, positive, and 2-way communication. An annual survey will be completed to elicit feedback about satisfaction and suggestions for enhancement each spring. If applicable, further focus groups/interviews will be completed to further develop programs and opportunities. The voice of the families will be considered in programmatic and school design, and the Board will review all results from family/caregiver surveys/feedback.

Partnership Evaluation: The Board is committed to a quality academic program and integral to that is the established partnership with RMSC, as well as other potential partners in the future. Annually, and with the identified partners, the Board will complete a rating of partnership measuring: common/shared vision, mutual benefits of partnership, shared values and principles, progress on established goals, outcomes and inputs to effectiveness, clarity of roles, and communication. Upon assessment and rating, the partners will review results and establish an action plan for the subsequent year to ensure continued alignment. The Board will assume governance oversight of the partnership with the Director assuming primary contact.

We will publicize family and staff survey results during our Board meeting; we will also post on our website and send a document home to parents and families that summarizes any trends identified in the survey and our plans to address those trends moving forward.

E. Professional Development

Effective Teacher Development through Evaluation and Support: The New Teacher Project (TNTP) – an organization that has done immense research to identify proven human capital management tools and resources for school leaders – guides our approach to PD. We will embrace the following strategies for effectively developing our teachers, as listed in the TNTP Teacher Talent Toolbox:¹⁵

- Clearly define exceptional instruction and differentiate teacher development: Exploration’s Summer Institute and Staff meetings will establish this foundation.
- Implement systems and processes to support and monitor improvement: Exploration’s grade level meetings and on-going instructional coaching, with individualized staff plans as applicable, will ensure a comprehensive system of support and monitoring of instructional practices.
- Make PD meaningful and effective for all teachers: Exploration’s access to partnerships, such as with RMSC, and the commitment to elements such as Resident Scientist and Job Shadowing opportunities will provide external opportunities that are challenging, meaningful, and engaging.

Ongoing PD and Training: Exploration will use the above strategies to implement effective PD sessions that are meaningful, differentiated, and targeted for teachers. Additionally, a member of the leadership team will provide observation and feedback to all instructional staff at least three times per year; they will observe teachers identified as needing more support at least once per month. These observations, coupled with student achievement data, will drive individual coaching sessions and the PD opportunities discussed further below. The inclusion of looping at the “bubble” classes will also serve as a means for on-going PD as staff will have sustained knowledge of students and curricula at other grade levels to inform Exploration’s instructional practices. Teachers will have the following set periods during the day/week/month/year to focus exclusively on PD:

1. Summer Instructional Institute (1 week prior to the start of school)

The PD training plan engages multiple school staff and instructional/innovation leaders in an ongoing cycle of learning, beginning with key topics and programs at the Summer Institute and continuing throughout the year. PD and training topics and the facilitator are listed below:

Content	Facilitator
Organizational Principles for Exploration’s Academic-Social-Global Programming: Exploring and defining the linkages between national and state standards, key concepts of dispositions of Exploration learners, classroom instructional practices, and units of study.	Director
Scientific Inquiry and Innovation Labs: Developing skills, process and critical thinking, and creating knowledge through fluid questioning, researching and exploring.	STCC
Content Area Programs and Connections: Math, ELA, Science, and Social Studies programs and supplemental materials.	Director and Curriculum Coordinators
Research Logs: Enhancing reading and writing skills through critical writing tasks.	Curriculum Coordinators
Fostering 21 st Century Skills: Linking cross-content learning and 21st Century Skill development through science-technology-society.	Curriculum Coordinators
Assessment and Growth: Exploring multiple ways of knowing, representing, expressing and showing students’ growth, development and learning (e.g., portfolios, rubrics).	Director and Curriculum Coordinators
School Expectations: Professional Performance, Staffing Structures, Performance Reviews (ratios), Committees, and Professional Learning Commitment.	Director
Data Driven Instruction: How to use assessment data to measure, and track, and reflect on student progress; how to use student achievement data to guide teacher actions and instruction.	Director

¹⁵ <http://tntp.org/teacher-talent-toolbox>

School-Family-Community Partnerships: Recognizing the contexts and environments of Exploration's students to enhance academic performance. Reviewing school code of conduct and expectations for students (e.g., cultural competency, whole child development).	SSSC and Director
Developing Strategies for Diverse Students: All Kinds of Minds Introduction and review of school adopted instructional strategies/programs (e.g., Thinking Maps).	CIC
Technology: Innovative uses of technology to foster student learning (e.g., Schoology, e-libraries, digital portfolios).	STCC
FERPA and IDEA: Ensuring student support and confidentiality.	SSSC and Director
Behavioral Expectations: Policy, Codes, Expectations of Excellence and Positive Behavioral Supports, CASEL, and the PATHS curriculum.	SSSC
Supporting Diverse Learners: School-Based Supports and Strategies (i.e., differentiation).	SSSC
School-Family-Community Partnerships: Check-Up Model and Proactive Problem Solving.	SSSC
Cognitively Guided Instruction: Overview & introduction; best practices for planning & implementation.	Director and Vendor Supported
<i>Vocabulary for the Common Core</i> : Making sure our students understand complex texts	Director and CIC
Implementing the "Units of Exploration:" Using rubrics to effectively gauge and support student progress.	STCC

Initial PD will be video-logged and modules for learning created so veteran staff can revisit common principles and new staff can be introduced to core elements. School and instructional leaders will ensure staff have a solid understanding of the above- mentioned concepts and programs through regular reviews of professional practice and the sustained professional learning activities that are subsequently described.

2. Monthly PD at scheduled staffing meetings (all grade levels)

Beyond the Summer Institute, the Director will facilitate ongoing PD and learning embedded in the 60-minute monthly staff meetings. This will ensure all grade levels engage in cross-curricular and instructional conversations to foster academic performance. Staff meetings will provide opportunities for addressing operational aspects of the school, reflecting on opportunities for continuous improvement, and providing whole school opportunities for professional learning and growth. Possible topics for ongoing school-wide professional learning and monthly staff meetings may include, but are not limited to:

- Curriculum mapping for school growth
- Opportunities to create and disseminate learning in innovative and authentic ways
- Innovative technologies and opportunities (e.g., resident scientist, materials loan)
- Celebrations of students and successes: recognizing and responding to student growth and affinities

3. Weekly PD/PL at scheduled grade-level meetings and common planning times

The Director, with the support of the STCC, CIC, SSSC, and Dean, will be responsible for supporting and monitoring teacher and staff improvement on an ongoing basis. We recognize that the key to high quality implementation, and fidelity to the Exploration school model, will be ongoing professional learning and professional practice reviews. As a result, the master schedule builds in 50 minutes of common planning time daily at each grade level to embed professional learning and instructional coaching for the Exploration staff. The leadership staff at Exploration has dedicated time in their schedules to foster the professional dialogue necessary for professional growth during this dedicated grade-level time as well.

The instructional and innovation school leaders will follow a monthly rotation of professional learning as follows; each topic will be covered in a two-day rotation as the master schedule permits on a monthly basis:

- **Data Reviews:** Capturing and applying evidence of student learning across content areas and interventions.
- **Cross-content connections and curriculum mapping:** Planning and implementing to ensure that connections are evident to students and teachers.
- **Instructional Practices:** Review of current instructional practices to ensure alignment and best-practice

implementation (e.g., 21st century skills, text types).

- **Learning Environments:** Student level reviews to ensure staff know students as learners and support their strengths/affinities in classroom and lab-based instruction.

The leadership team will employ innovative means beyond the common planning/professional learning time to engage with staff in professional practice reviews and professional learning opportunities (e.g., video modeling). Professional learning is not intended to be a static time in a teacher's schedule but, rather, an ongoing process of learning and development. Sustained dialogue and reflection will be encouraged through the comprehensive professional learning and PD plan. Instructional coaching and reflection on student achievement data will be the vehicle for refining and enhancing instructional practices of Exploration staff in order to improve student performance. As they coach staff, the leadership will focus on observable and professional practices, using a common language (e.g., Danielson Framework).

4. Full Day PD, as scheduled on the proposed monthly calendars

In addition to the above, the School Director will host whole school PD/learning at the scheduled conference days as indicated on proposed first year calendar in Attachment 3(b).

5. Innovative and Authentic Science and Technology-Based PD/PL

Exploration recognizes the critical need for the staff to not only embrace and demonstrate the 21st century skills the school looks to foster in students through the academic program, but to show a greater awareness of current scientific practices, innovations, and habits. To foster that awareness and application of current advancements, innovation, and research, Exploration will include two unique methods for developing staff: 1) resident scientist program; and 2) job shadowing opportunities. These are further opportunities for Exploration to establish and leverage community partnerships to develop and challenge instructional staff. Resident scientists will be identified by the science and technology innovation instructors to provide demonstrations and supports during lab-based learning times and are aligned to applicable Units of Exploration. For example, a physics professor from a local university would join a Unit of Exploration on solar systems during the science inquiry block. Further, job shadowing opportunities will provide Innovation Instructors and classroom teachers opportunities to embed for at least one day annually with a member of the community engaging in innovative science and technology. For example, an innovation instructor will join a team of engineers developing cutting-edge radio technologies to observe their processes, products, and applications of 21C skills. Beyond these specific and innovative means to develop staff, additional conferences and trainings will be sought. For example, the STC science curriculum offers week-long summer PD at the Smithsonian as an opportunity for science educators to learn from staff scientists.

6. Instructional Coaching

Regular (i.e., no less than 1x/month) instructional coaching will be provided by the school and curricular leadership staff to promote staff's utilization of evidence-based instruction practices. Instructional coaching will be provided by the school and curricular leadership in one-on-one and small group settings with all Exploration teachers. Evidence of professional practice for instructional coaching will be gathered through teacher's self-identified goals, classroom observations, data reviews, and student work/portfolios. Instructional coaching will be sustained and practice focused across the school year to challenge and support Exploration teachers' excellence. For those staff receiving poor reviews on teacher evaluations and other metrics, additional instructional coaching will be provided and performance plans established with measurable goals; these will be reviewed and updated at agreed upon intervals with the Director.

Evaluating the PD and Training Plan: Student achievement data will be the most influential measure in evaluating the efficacy of the PD and training program. The main purpose for our ongoing PD and training will be to increase student academic gains. Therefore, if student growth does not follow from PD endeavors, we will first ensure that teachers are implementing instructional tools and techniques effectively, and then determine whether our approaches for developing and training teachers should continue. While

academic data will be very influential, we will also solicit staff feedback to ensure relevance.

Preparing Teachers to Address the Needs of All Students: Our training and PD sessions will include sessions to train teachers on addressing the needs of students identified as at risk of academic failure, students with disabilities, and ENL students. The school-based intervention team will lead sessions during the Summer Institute and throughout the school year, during monthly staff meetings, and whole school PD days. They will be responsible for monitoring the student achievement data for these subgroups throughout the year as well, and identifying trends around successes and areas of growth. They will use successful trends to glean best practices and share those best practices during school-wide PD. Similarly, they will troubleshoot areas of growth, and take the lead in problem solving strategies for how our staff will improve. These strategies might include observing strong teacher instruction at our school or elsewhere, reviewing the instructional training provided during the Summer Institute, addressing a knowledge gap about a particular area of student need, particularly for students with disabilities and ENL students, and making sure that teachers are using student data effectively to inform reteach and further instruction.

Creating a Professional Climate through Ongoing Teacher Planning and Collaboration: We will establish a professional climate by providing ample opportunities for collaboration to build strong and productive work relationships and to create a team atmosphere. According to TNTP, “teachers are a school’s most valuable resource, and it can take up to 11 hires to find a teacher of comparable quality when a top performer leaves¹⁶.” As a result, we will strive to retain our most irreplaceable teachers.

Since elementary school teachers generally teach all core subject areas, creating differentiated and meaningful cross-curricular lesson plans each day can be extremely demanding on teacher time and energy, particularly for new teachers. As a result, we have created a 50-minute period each day for teachers to engage in common planning by grade level, in order to promote shared resources, lesson planning, and assessment strategies. Additionally, the STCC will plan all lessons and assessments for the science blocks, including the Units of Exploration, so that teachers can spend the majority of their time on planning for ELA and mathematics. Furthermore, the school leadership team will use these shared planning blocks to disseminate best practices and assist with any teacher planning or programming concerns.

F. Facilities

Based on planned enrollment and staffing, Exploration anticipates the following facility requirements in its first charter authorization period; the budget allocates funds for renovation and compliance (e.g., accessibility for individuals with disabilities) as required for school opening:

19 classrooms (1 classroom per max of 25 students in K-5)	10 program & administrative offices
2 computer labs	3 intervention rooms
2 science labs	Gym & locker rooms
1 art room	Faculty break room
Kitchen & cafeteria	Family Resource Room

Several potential sites to house the school have been investigated in the City of Rochester, including:

1. A facility located at 180 Raines Park with a long history of prior use as a non-public and parochial school serving grades k-12. There is a 40,000 square foot building with sufficient facilities space to accommodate Exploration as constructed through the initial charter period.
2. A facility located at 1001 Lake Avenue also with a history as a parochial school serving grades K-12. It currently houses an elementary school with an enrollment of approximately 200 students; this school has a planned relocation in either 2016 or 2017. The facility is approximately 101,000 square feet and has sufficient facilities to accommodate Exploration, even with the presence of the existing school.

In both cases, the building owner is amenable to an initial three-to-five-year lease period, but cannot

¹⁶ <http://tntp.org/teacher-talent-toolbox/explore/retaining-top-talent>

commit to a lease until such time as the charter is granted to Exploration. It is the intention of the building owner to make the improvements necessary to meet SED requirements. Additionally, Exploration has allocated \$75,000 in the budget for building renovations as detailed in the school budget. Based on the review of available facilities and pricing, Exploration anticipates that a lease cost including renovations of approximately \$17,000/month in Year 1 is appropriate. This is reflected in the budget.

G. Insurance

Exploration is prepared to secure the insurance coverage, which approximates the following and is consistent with policies obtained by similar charter schools:

General Liability	\$1,000,000 per occurrence; \$3,000,000 aggregate
Umbrella Liability	\$5,000,000
Property	\$250,000
Business Income with Extra Expense	\$500,000
Directors & Officers Liability	\$1,000,000
Automobile (non-owned)	\$1,000,000
Workers' Compensation & Employers' Liability	\$1,000,000
Student Accident	\$50,000
Catastrophic Student Accident	\$1,000,000

The anticipated annual premium for such coverage is approximately \$40,000 and is provided for in the appropriate sections of the operating budget.

H. Health, Food, and Transportation Services

Health Services: Exploration will make every effort to select a central location in the City of Rochester and the Rochester City School District (RCSD). Accordingly, RCSD will likely be responsible for providing a nurse to treat students who are ill or injured, supervise disbursement of medication, and maintain student health records. All such responsibilities will be conducted consistent with the established policies and protocols maintained by RCSD to promote student well-being and the security of confidential information; a summary of key practices to be implemented is provided below.

As part of the annual school registration process, parents/guardians must submit updated student health status information for the upcoming school year, as well as a Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and photo release forms. Student health records will be maintained in locked file cabinets accessible by authorized staff only. Secured information will include all records pertaining to student visits to the nurse, medication administration authorizations, and proofs of immunization.

All students will be required to comply with NYS immunization requirements prior to, and during, their period of attendance at the school. Parents/guardians must provide updated documentation of all currently-required immunizations. Consistent with NYS Public Health Law, waiver of such requirements may be provided pursuant to physician certification that such immunization may be detrimental to the student's health, or the parent/guardian holds genuine and sincere beliefs contrary to such immunizations.

Clear and strict policies will be maintained by the school regarding the safe and secure administration of medication. All prescription and non-prescription over-the-counter (OTC) drugs must arrive at the school in original containers with appropriate patient and drug administration labeling, and a written order from a licensed prescriber and authorization from the parent/guardian will be required to administer all such drugs. All medications will be administered by the nurse or licensed practical nurse under the direction of the nurse. Other staff may be designated and trained by the nurse to assist self-directed students to administer their own oral, topical, and inhalant medication. A minimum of two staff members will maintain current certification in CPR and the use of an AED and Epi-pens; defibrillators and first aid kits will be located throughout the building.. The Operations Coordinator will assume those responsibilities of the nurse, which can be delegated at such time as the nurse may not be on site.

Food Services: Exploration recognizes the vital role healthy meals play in academic success, especially given the low-income population from which the school will draw its students (Rochester Central School District has the highest poverty rate among the five largest school districts in New York State).

To that end, we intend to contract with one of several established non-for-profit school meal providers in the area to provide daily breakfast, lunch, and snack. Key selection criteria will include (but not be limited to) the ability to meet all nutritional requirements, menu options, cost, logistics, capability, and experience. Private providers with demonstrated school food services capabilities will not be excluded from the procurement process to ensure the most cost-effective food service solution is achieved.

As indicated in the facilities section (F) the school will be located in a building formerly occupied by a school. We will hire staff with Level 1 and 2 Food Service Certifications to serve meals. We intend to participate in the Federal and State Free and Reduced-Price School Meals/Milk Program. It is anticipated that the majority of our students will qualify for this program through the direct certification process administered by NYSED. For those that do not qualify, we will send the application for the Free and Reduced-Price School Meals/Milk Program to the student's parent/guardian for completion to prove eligibility. Families of full-paying or reduced lunch-eligible students will be billed in advance each month based on estimated participation. Adjustments for differences between estimated and actual participation will be accounted for in the following month's billing. Students with recognized dietary restrictions will be served meals at no additional cost. Students will not be required to participate in our food service program, and can elect to bring their own food to school.

Privacy will be strictly maintained relative to students' free and reduced price lunch status. We will complete and submit the Meals Served Report form to the NYS Child Nutrition Program on a monthly basis. It is anticipated that the population of low-income students at the school will warrant participation in the Community Eligibility Provision (universal lunch program), which allows all students to eat free of charge.

Transportation Services: Exploration will make every effort to select a central location and draw the greatest majority of the student population from the City of Rochester. As such, the RCSD will be responsible for providing transportation services to students who provide proof of City residency and meet the busing eligibility criteria established in NYS Education Law Section 3635. Students who are residents of other municipalities and meet the established busing eligibility criteria will similarly be transported by their respective school district. Students who do not meet the established busing eligibility criteria will be responsible for arranging their own transportation to the school. Special education students will be provided transportation services consistent with their IEPs. The school will work closely with the CSEs to ensure that appropriate transportation accommodations are provided on a case-by-case basis.

Because Exploration will be operating on an extended school year, student transportation will need to be secured for those periods when the public schools are not in session. This is anticipated to be a period of approximately 14 days annually, for which an appropriate allocation is provided in the school budget based on enrollment projections and current provider rates. A procurement process will be undertaken to select the most qualified vendor from among the several companies located in the area which provide such services. The Operations Coordinator will be responsible for coordinating all transportation. This includes but is not limited to submitting the required eligibility forms to the appropriate school district transportation departments, coordinating communication with students' families concerning bus stop location and estimated pick-up and drop-off times, and promoting bus safety awareness and rules with students.

I. Family and Community Involvement

Exploration aims to create an atmosphere and climate where everyone values and privileges families, the community, and partnership (See C.2). The activities listed in the subsequent section are examples of methods to deeply embed the value of positive and two-way partnership informing the school model and include everyone from teachers, to leaders, to school support staff, and embed regular and sustained focus

on the importance of including, engaging, and partnering with families and the community at-large.

Vision for Community Involvement

Community Organizations: Exploration’s vision for community engagement/partnership centers around three main elements of the school: 1) *innovative science and technology programming*; 2) *social-emotional programming*; and 3) *academic support and learning*. Exploration intends to leverage existing partnership and relationships to establish additional and meaningful partnerships to fulfill the school’s charter. The following table explains the two-pronged strategy for community partnerships. As Exploration opens and the existing partnership flourishes, the Board and Director will explore additional complementary partnerships in the following professional areas as well as with families.

Scientific and Innovation Partners	SEL Partnerships	Academic Support Partnerships
<p>Purpose: To engage with innovative organizations/ companies to inform the academic programming and family partnership opportunities at Exploration.</p> <p>Activities: Materials lending/sharing, Resident Scientist Program during Lab-Based Learning, Job Shadowing as PD/PL for staff, curriculum development consultation</p> <p>Possible Partners: Museum and Science Center, Medical Center, Sweet Water, Cisco, Windstream, US Geological Society, Prove Your World, Time Warner</p>	<p>Purpose: To create a vibrant and safe school community with strong connections to the neighborhoods considering intergenerational poverty and rampant crime in Rochester through connections to existing community resources.</p> <p>Activities: Family Check Up Model, recreation program referrals, library program referrals, mental health program referrals, family programming.</p> <p>Possible Partners: Hillside Children’s Center, Medical Center, Rochester Public Library, City of Rochester Recreation.</p>	<p>Purpose: To identify community-based or community-partnered programming to supplement students’ academic program.</p> <p>Activities: Extended learning, tutoring and academic support</p> <p>Possible Partners: Rochester Public Library, City of Rochester Recreation, Greater Rochester Summer Learning Association, Great School for All</p>

Parent and Family Involvement: Exploration’s vision for parent-family engagement/partnership includes a rigorous academic program, as well as robust social-emotional programming and authentic engagement activities to promote high levels of satisfaction and positive attitudes towards school. Exploration believes that providing opportunities to “strengthen relationships and promote the identification and development of actions that are uniquely meaningful and worthwhile to the families and educators” will enhance overall parent-family engagement and boost positive attitudes toward school (Christenson and Shreidan, 2011, p. 75). Family/caregiver involvement and family-educator partnerships are developed through collaborative communication and are considered crucial to impact the students’ academic performance. Overall, Exploration leadership and staff will apply the following structure in working/communicating with families to ensure that positive and two-way relationships are established.

Step 1	Discuss the student’s and family strengths and areas of need/consideration at formal and informal opportunities (e.g., parent conferences) to establish rapport and shared understanding.
Step 2	Prioritize the desires and the needs of the student (and the family) to promote progress toward rigorous academic standards with recognition of the student’s development and context (family, neighborhood, etc.)
Step 3	<i>Define shared</i> goals using language such as “we, our, us, shared, partner” to ensure that families and school staff are working collaboratively toward the same successes with recognition of previous supports/efforts to foster success
Step 4	<i>Remain</i> committed to open, positive and two-way communication with school and family to ensure supports, programs, and services are differentiated and appropriate.

Strategy: Exploration’s strategy for school-family-community partnership embeds programming and various opportunities to integrate and promote positive and two-way communication with families. The school leadership and staff will go beyond traditional ways of family engagement to ensure that the school is an open and supportive space that all families, regardless of their own school experiences or perspectives, feel welcome, comfortable, and contributory. School leadership and staff are committed to establishing connection with families at the start of each school year and will continue seeking efforts to share successes, areas of progress, and opportunities for continued growth (both student and school-

based programming). The following are the ways Exploration will engage with and learn from families:

- **Co-Decision Making Framework:** Exploration staff and leadership will commit to a co-decision making framework as a means to include, engage, and partner with families in school programming and opportunities. Families will be regularly invited to co-create and inform school programming.
- **Traditional Methods for Family Engagement:** Exploration will include standard methods for communicating with and engaging with families such as report cards, parent-teacher conferences, and regular correspondence with teachers and school staff.
- **Dedicated Student and Family Support and Engagement Staff:** Full-time employees are dedicated to supporting students' academics, social-emotional competencies, and behavior in the school setting and connecting with families on influencing factors and community-based opportunities.
- **Integration of a Family Check-Up Model:** The purpose of the family check-up model, as previously described in the partnership section, is to learn from, engage with, and collectively plan for services and supports that improve a student's social behavior and emotional adjustment in the school and community settings (Dishion, Brennan, Shaw McEachern, Wilson, & Jo, 2014).
- **Dedicated Family/Caregiver space in the school:** It is important that families recognize Exploration as a place for their learning but also a resource for families; see facilities allocation for family space.
- **Family/Caregiver Representation on the Board:** The Board members are committed to eliciting parent/caregiver voice in the design and implementation of the school. After the charter is issued, the Board will identify a parent representative in the first year of operations to serve on the board.
- **Professional Development/Learning in School-Family-Community Partnerships for Exploration Staff:** Ongoing professional learning opportunities will ensure instructional and support staff have strong underpinnings in strategies and methods to practice positive and two-way family engagement/partnership. PD/Learning will include culturally and linguistically sensitive training and recognition of the (informal) curriculum of the home as an influence on school learning.

Financial Management

The Exploration Board of Trustees is specifically comprised of several individuals with financial and management credentials necessary to appropriately and effectively structure, guide, and monitor the financial practices and performance of the school. Principal among these Board members are Robert Franklin (Monroe County CFO), Stephen Pasquarella (President of Vincent Associates), and Kevin Williams, PhD, (Department Head, Materials Science, Kodak Research Laboratories).

Guided and overseen by these individuals, Exploration will engage the services of a qualified and experienced management consultant to provide its financial management systems and capacity, including:

- **Establishing and maintaining an accounting system consistent with generally accepted accounting principles**, including but not limited to recommending financial policies and procedures for Board adoption, creating a chart of accounts, and operationalizing the adopted policies and procedures.
- **Establishing accounts payable and accounts receivable processes**, including segregation of duties to ensure funds are safeguarded and properly deposited, establishing controls to ensure that all receipts and expenditures are properly recorded, and identification of payments and receipts in sufficient detail to support preparation of monthly financial reports.
- **Establishing and maintaining a payroll system** using a known and established payroll services provider, including (but not limited to) establishing the payroll schedule and process, posting and reconciling payroll, and all year-end reporting and documentation requirements.
- **Establishing and managing the purchasing process**, including (but not limited to) recommending purchasing policies for Board adoption and conducting procurements which support school needs consistent with adopted policies.
- **Ensuring that grant requirements are fulfilled**, including adherence to grant restrictions and reporting

requirements.

- **Conducting routine daily and monthly accounting processes**, including (but not limited to) processing deposits and disbursements, posting revenue and expense, reconciling bank statements, and closing the books.
- **Managing monthly, quarterly, and annual reporting** to all constituents including the Board, school leadership team, and NYSED as required.
- **Supporting conduct of annual independent audit process** in accordance with government auditing standards, including (but not limited to) selection and engagement of an independent CPA firm to conduct the audit, establishment of necessary financial controls, preparation of all requested schedules and analyses, and coordinating with auditors to support successful completion of audit.

The Board will review all audits, including meeting with the auditor without management consultant and school staff present, and monitor all efforts by school leaders to address any found deficiencies. The finance and accounting functions identified above will be conducted by the management consultant in conjunction with and under the oversight of the Board, School Director, and Operations Coordinator(s). It is not anticipated that the school will hire staff to perform these functions.

Tracking and safeguarding of student information including enrollment, attendance, performance, eligibility for free and reduced-price meals, and special education and ENL services will be performed by school staff (Director and Operations) under the oversight of the Board. Established software packages and other mechanisms known to be currently in use by other schools for such purposes will be employed.

J. Budget and Cash Flow

Proposed Budget & Cash Flows: The Exploration budget is informed by reviewing the budgets of several local charter schools as they relate to the specific requirements of Exploration. The budget components, estimates, and assumptions were reviewed, challenged, and validated by Board members with strong financial and management credentials, including Robert Franklin (Monroe County CFO), Stephen Pasquarella (President of Vincent Associates), and Kevin Williams, PhD, (Department Head, Materials Science, Kodak Laboratories).

Conservative estimates were employed throughout the budget development to ensure the integrity and viability of the projections, as well as to incorporate an appropriate measure of financial resiliency in the event of unforeseen operating challenges. For example, the following conservative approaches were employed in constructing the estimates for the two largest revenue and expense categories:

1. **Per-Pupil Revenue:** No increase in the current (FY 2014-15) Rochester Central School District reimbursement rate is assumed over the five-year period.
2. **Personnel Costs:** Estimates include a 2% salary and wage contingency in addition to a 3% annual inflation assumption. The 2% contingency is available for annual performance incentives or to relieve budget stress as necessary.

At such time as charter status is conferred by NYSED, Exploration will also pursue securing a line of credit as a standby mechanism for addressing potential liquidity issues.

Ongoing Budget Management

Going forward, the School Director and Operations Coordinator of Exploration will be responsible for developing and maintaining the annual budget and the 5-year budget forecast. The management consultant will support this process as needed. Each spring, an annual budget for the upcoming fiscal year and an updated five-year budget forecast will be developed for Board consideration and adoption. These documents will be based on current year-to-date actual data and year-end projections, as well as a careful assessment of anticipated changes in operations and the operating environment which will impact revenues and expenditures in the upcoming budget and forecast period.

The budget construction philosophy will continue to be one of conservatism with respect to revenue

and expenditure projections in order to protect the current and long-term financial sustainability of the school. The Finance Committee of the Board will review the budget and five-year budget forecast and recommend a final budget and forecast for Board adoption no later than May, prior to the start of the next fiscal year. The Finance Committee will review and report budget performance to the Board on a monthly basis. The review will include adopted budget vs. actual performance, projected year-end performance, and cash flow and balance statements. Key indicators to be reviewed will include:

- **Near Term Indicators:** *current ratio; unrestricted cash on hand; and enrollment variance*
- **Sustainability Indicators:** *total margin; debt-to-assets (if applicable); cash flow; and debt coverage (if applicable)*

Any significant variances from budget or other concerns identified in the review process will be assessed and reported to the Board for action as warranted. Materiality thresholds for budget amendment action will be established in the financial policies and procedures adopted by the Board.

K. Pre-Opening Plan

Domain	Action	Start Date	End Date	Responsibility
Governance	Recruit School Director	December 2015	January 2016	BOT
Governance	Ratify bylaws and code of ethics	Feb 2016	Feb 2016	BOT
Governance	Appoint board officers	Feb 2016	Feb 2016	BOT
Facility	Identify facility for school	Feb 2016	March 2016	BOT
Facility	Conduct facility negotiations and execute lease	March 2016	April 2016	BOT
Operations	Obtain 501c3 status	Jan 2016	May 2016	BOT
Facility	Renovation: identify needs, secure contractor, establish timeline, complete punch list	March 2016	July 2016	BOT, D
Finance	Approve fiscal policies and procedures	March 2016	April 2016	BOT
Recruitment	Recruit students: develop and disseminate materials, host open-houses, door-to-door marketing	Feb 2016	Apr 2016	D, BOT
Finance	Contract with provider to establish payroll and other financial systems	Feb 2016	Mar 2016	BOT, D
Operations	Contract with provider for operations support (operations coordination [OC] human resources, IT, other)	Jan 2016	Mar 2016	BOT, D
Staffing	Recruit Science & Technology Curriculum Coordinator	Jan 2016	Feb 2016	D
Staffing	Recruit Student Success Coordinator	Feb 2016	Mar 2016	D
Staffing	Recruit school staff: draft job descriptions, post positions, interview candidates, check references	Feb 2016	July 2016	D, STC, SSC, OC
Staffing	Hire school staff: salary negotiations and offer letters	Mar 2016	Jun 2016	D, OC
Academic	Research and secure professional development	Mar 2016	Jun 2016	D
Academic	Research and secure curriculum resources	Mar 2016	Jun 2016	D
Academic	Research and secure standardized assessments	Mar 2016	Jun 2016	PR, STC
Technology	RFP for technology infrastructure	Mar 2016	Jun 2016	OC
Recruitment	Hold lottery: secure system with preferences, conduct lottery, inform parents	Apr 2016	Apr 2016	D, OC, BOT
Operations	Obtain student records: obtain permission from parents, contact previous schools, etc.	Apr 2016	Jul 2016	OC, SSC
Finance	Approve budget for FY16-17	Apr 2016	Apr 2016	BOT
Operations	Secure food services: coordinate vendor evaluation of kitchen capacity, solicit proposals, select vendor	Apr 2016	May 2016	OC

Domain	Action	Start Date	End Date	Responsibility
Operations	Secure transportation: contact RCSD and other districts of residence, provide required information, inform parents of options	Apr 2016	Jul 2016	OC
HR	Finalize staff handbook and personnel policies	Apr 2016	Jun 2016	BOT, D, OC
Operations	Develop and distribute student handbook	May 2016	June 2016	D, OC
Technology	Install technology infrastructure	May 2016	July 2016	OC
HR	Complete fingerprinting and background checks	May 2016	Jul 2016	OC
Academic	Prepare school calendar and distribute to families	May 2016	May 2016	D, OC
Facility	Obtain Certificate of Occupancy	Jun 2016	Jun 2016	OC
Recruitment	Conduct open houses for admitted students	Jun 2016	Jul 2016	D, STC, SSC, OC
Academic	Contract with Related Service Providers	Jun 2016	Aug 2016	SSC
Academic	Conduct home visits	Jun 2016	Aug 2016	D, STC, SSC
Operations	Secure insurance policies	Jun 2016	Jul 2016	OC
PD	Prepare Summer Institute materials	Jun 2016	Aug 2016	D, STC, SSC
Finance	Complete Initial Statement of Financial Controls	Jul 2016	Jul 2016	OC
HR	Complete staff fingerprints and background checks	Jul 2016	Jul 2016	OC
Operations	Secure IEPs and student records	Jul 2016	Aug 2016	SSC, OC
Operations	Create a draft SAVE plan and submit it to SED	Jul 2016	Aug 2016	OC
Operations	Purchase AEDs and train staff	Jul 2016	Aug 2016	OC
PD	Conduct Summer Institute	Aug 2016	Aug 2016	D, STC, SSC
PD	Develop staff growth plans	Aug 2016	Aug 2016	D
Academic	Create lesson plans for first weeks of school	Aug 2016	Aug 2016	D

Key: BOT=Board of Trustees; D=Director; OC= Operations Coordinator; SSC=Student Success Coordinator; STC=Science & Technology Curriculum Coordinator

L. Dissolution Plan

The school will work closely with appropriate NYSED representatives to develop and implement a dissolution plan ensuring an orderly closure and dissolution, including compliance with the applicable requirements of Education Law §§ 219 and 220 and any Closing Procedures specified by NYSED. The dissolution plan will include a process for transferring students and records, including IEPs, health and immunization, attendance, and report cards. Prior to dissolution, the school will conduct meetings for parents to provide information about the dissolution and support decisions making regarding selection of educational programs for their children, including RCSD, charter schools, and nonpublic schools.

The Board will designate one trustee and one school employee to oversee the closing of the school from an operational and financial perspective. After an employee termination date is established, the school will notify all employees of termination of employment and/or contracts, and notify benefit providers of pending termination of all employees. Employees will be notified of eligibility for NYS Unemployment Insurance pursuant to any regulations of the NYS Department of Labor. The dissolution plan will provide that all property the school has leased, borrowed, or contracted be returned. The return of such property will conform with contractual prearrangement, where applicable, or will be done with reasonable promptness. The school will accumulate a reserve fund of \$75,000 by setting aside \$25,000 each year for three consecutive years, beginning with the pre-operations year, to cover debts in the case of the school's dissolution. In the event of dissolution of assets in excess of those necessary to meet liabilities, all remaining assets of the school shall be transferred to another charter school within the Rochester City School District as designated by the Board.