



PHASE I: Letter of Intent

Last updated: 06/21/2015

Basic Contact and Application Information

Page 1

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

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

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

Proposed Charter School Name

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

School Name	C.H.O.I.C.E. T.O. Academy Charter Middle School
Grades Served (K-5, .6-8, 9-12, etc.) During Initial Term	5-8
Number of Students During Initial Term	460

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

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

	First and Last Name	Best Phone Number (###-###-####)	Email Address
Proposed/Current Board Chair	Courtney Rodriguez	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Public/Media Contact Person	Kimberly Mackey	917-270-3531	choicetoacademy@gmail.com

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

www.choicetoacademy.org

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

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

Proposed Management Company	(No response)
Partner Organization 1	(No response)
Partner Organization 2	(No response)

Proposed Board Chair Signature

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



Date

2015/06/20

Thank you for completing this form.

C.H.O.I.C.E. T.O. Academy Charter Middle School

a. Applicant Group Information

- a. **Applicant Group Information:** See Table 1
- b. **Applicant Group Qualifications and Proposed Roles:** See Table 1
- c. **Public Contact:** Choicetoacademy@gmail.com
- d. **Application History:** The applicant group submitted an LOI in January 2014 and in the Spring of 2014. NYSED invited us to submit a full application in the spring of 2014, but we opted to re-apply during this round.

b. Proposed Charter School Information

- a. **Proposed School Name:** C.H.O.I.C.E. T.O. Academy Charter Middle School (CTA or CHOICE T0)
- b. **Proposed School Location:** CTA proposes to open in Community School District (CSD) 19, in the East New York section of Brooklyn in a private facility.
- c. **Planned Grades and Enrollment:** CTA will reach capacity in Year 4 to serve 460 students in Grades 5-8.

	Number of Students				
	Year 1 2015-16	Year 2 2016-17	Year 3 2017-18	Year 4 2018-19	Year 5 2019-20
Grade 5	115	115	115	115	115
Grade 6		115	115	115	115
Grade 7			115	115	115
Grade 8				115	115
TOTAL	115	230	345	460	460

- d. **Proposed Management and/or Partner Organization:** Not applicable
- e. **Proposed School Mission:** CHOICE TO Academy’s mission is to enable all Children to Have Opportunities to Inspire Challenge and Empower Themselves and Others; thus making a positive “CHOICE TO...” make a difference in themselves, their families and their community.
- f. **School Overview:** We strongly believe that creating a “*culture of achievement*” and excellence will be key in getting our scholars to re-invest in themselves, their education, their families and their communities. Our scholars will be provided a solid foundational knowledge in core academic disciplines and then challenged to discover and explore these core disciplines, as well as others, to enhance their learning. Four essential “*Pillars of Excellence*” will be built throughout our school and assist our scholars with achieving personal and academic excellence. The action steps are the following:
 - 1. **Knowledge:** Elevating and broadening their academic knowledge;
 - 2. **Scholarship:** Taking ownership of their learning;
 - 3. **Leadership:** Improving themselves socially and academically by holding themselves to the highest of standards; and,
 - 4. **Empowerment:** Improving their community, both in school and at home, by taking one positive step every day to better their own lives and the life of another person.

The Key Design Elements of CTA are:

Standards Based Curriculum and Instruction with a Culturally Responsive Theme: Beginning with the NYS Common Core Standards, teachers will plan thematic units of study around our “CHOICE TO” themes of “Opportunity,” “Inspiration,” “Choices” and “Empowerment.” Scholars will read, explore and respond to these themes through writing, project development, technology applications and media literacy; and implement them through community outreach. CTA teachers will employ the research-based instructional practices

termed the ***Gradual Release of Responsibility Model*** by Pearson and Gallagher¹. This will enable our scholars to receive tailored instruction in a more individualized way and learn through apprenticeship.

Targeted Scholar Support or Enrichment: Scholars needing additional support in Math or ELA will be identified and culled into teacher led remediation or enrichment groups to assist scholars with making gains to achieve learning goals and grade level expectations.

Strong Behavioral Expectations and Personal Responsibility: Whole Brain Teaching² practice will be employed school-wide coupled with Sean Covey's *7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens*³ to assist with building students' self-identity and personal leadership which will promote their ability to exemplify the traits of a CTA scholar.

2X per Week Scholar Caucuses and Leadership Seminar: Two distinct "caucuses" will be programmed into our scholars' weekly schedule; one Academic and one Social. Both caucuses will be aimed at assisting scholars to meet their academic and personal goals. Leadership Seminars teach students the qualities of leaders and then have them demonstrate those qualities in their families and the community.

Strong Commitment to Teacher Development and Support: CTA Leaders are committed to the success of our scholars. That success is predicated on having effective educators in each classroom. CTA will have Growing Leaders training which will represent our twice weekly teacher development sessions.

Cultivating Strong Family Partnerships: CTA will be closely linked to its families by offering a wide range of Parent Caucuses to assist families in supporting their scholar at home and improve themselves personally through its strong ties to community based organizations and social service agencies. CTA will have an "open door" policy and hands-on approach to sustaining its families through the dedicated work of our Family Leader.

Emphasis on Data, Technology and Media Literacy: CTA will be focused on providing high quality instruction by consistently reviewing students' progress with informal and formal data assessment on a daily, weekly and monthly basis. This is reflected in teachers' schedules with a Data Review period programmed for them. Students and faculty will use technology to access achievement data; utilize academic intervention and support programs; and, learn how media images of males/females, minorities, and social culture, impact self-perception and influence communities. The study of Media Literacy will help CTA students view public images of themselves and work to sustain positive images and dispel negative images.

g. Target Population /Community Served: CTA seeks to serve the highest need students in CSD 19. We will recruit students who are considered "at-risk," defined as those students currently performing 1 to 3 years below their grade level expectations, including those with learning disabilities, and who are eligible to receive free or reduced price lunch. The East New York community consists primarily of low-income housing residents, with over half of its residents receiving public assistance (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families [TANF], Home Relief, Supplemental Security Income [SSI], and Medicaid). East New York is predominantly African American with a significant Puerto Rican and Dominican population as well.⁴ As of the 201 Census, East New York was 51.4% African American, 36.7% Hispanic or Latino, 6.4% Asian, 1.9% Caucasian, and 3.6% Other. There has also been a recent influx of Bengali immigrants in the Cypress Hills section of East New York, Brooklyn.⁵ It also consists of 12 public housing complexes with over 110,000 residents.⁶

h. Replication of High Quality School Models: Not applicable

c. Enrollment and Retention of Students with Disabilities (SWD), English Language Learners (ELLs), and Students Who Are Eligible Applicants for the For the Free and Reduced Price Lunch Program (FRPL)

CTA's top priority is to recruit a diverse student body that is reflective of CSD 19's population. In this district, 86.5% of 5-8th graders are eligible for FRPL and our recruitment plans will ensure that enrolled students mirror the community. **For those identified in the school's mission**, CTA is strategically recruiting in CSD's 19, 23, and 16 which are mostly comprised of students that fall well below the poverty line and are thus eligible for FRPL and who based on NYS proficiency data are at least one to two years below grade level. More

¹ Pearson, P.D. & Gallagher, M. (1983) "The Instruction of Reading Comprehension." Contemporary Educational Psychology, 8, p. 317-344

² Bifle, Chris. (2013) *Whole Brain Teaching*. McGraw-Hill, Harper Collins.

³ <http://www.seancovey.com/teens.html>

⁴ http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/neighbor_info/bk05_info.shtml

⁵ <http://jissun.com/studybrooklyn/docs/community-district-5-brooklyn-neighborhood-report>

⁶ Ibid.

C.H.O.I.C.E. T.O. Academy Charter Middle School

than 80% of all NYS tested students in CSD 19 alone, were at Levels 1 and 2 respectively. In CSD's 23 and 16 combined, that percentage rose to over 86%.⁷

To recruit **students with disabilities**, CTA will continue to reach parents of those students by working collaboratively with the district's Committee on Special Education (CSE) to identify those families. We will also work with the Superintendents' office of CSD19, local churches, community-based organizations, local hospitals and clinics, and CSD 19's Family Advocate; all of whom work closely with parents of SWDs. We will also visit all 12 housing complexes in East NY to target these families with flyers, information sessions and application drives. **To recruit English language learners**, several of CTA's planning team have a close connection to the Hispanic/Latino communities in these districts and have thus been able to locate families, for whom Spanish is their home language, and speak with them at local churches, Laundromats, restaurants, bars, hair salons, parks, other Hispanic owned and/or operated establishments, and areas in East NY where large concentrations of Hispanic families reside. We also have materials in Spanish as well as information posted on the CTA website in Spanish. We will continue to work with the local Coalition for Hispanic Family Services in East New York for their assistance with outreach to these families. Through these efforts, we will also recruit from the small, but influential group of Bengali families that have recently moved into the East New York area and assist their children with English language acquisition.

To further ensure that we will meet our targets, CTA will host meetings and presentations at local community centers, churches, food pantries and other community based organizations that serve families of students who receive government assistance and have special needs. These efforts will allow us to recruit **students who are eligible applicants for the free and reduced price lunch program**. We will also visit the community's low-income houses and housing projects to recruit these students.

To recruit students who are identified in our school's mission, CTA will host meetings/presentations and provide flyers/brochures at faith-based organizations, early learning centers, libraries, local housing projects, food pantries, and local businesses; post updates on CTA's Facebook page, website, and Twitter account; list all services that will benefit SWDs and ELLs on our website and written materials; inform the CSD's Committee on Special Education as well as New York Immigration Coalition of our services and ask for assistance in community outreach. Our brochure has been translated into Spanish and we are working on translations into other languages represented in the community. Once we occupy our space, CTA will host school tours and information sessions. We will have translators available at these tours as well as during events like Open Houses and parent conferences.

Retention of SWDs, ELLs, students' identified in the mission, and students eligible for FRPL:

To retain SWDs, CTA will work closely with Dr. Gerard Costa, the founding Director at Montclair University's Center for Autism and Early Childhood Mental Health. We will utilize the center's "Relationship Based Approach" to educating children and will be the sole charter school in CSD 19 with a partnership with a nationally recognized medical school. In Year 1, CTA will employ two learning specialists; a Special Education teacher and an ELL Coordinator. Each following year of the first charter term, another learning specialist will be added. Services will be delivered in an integrated, co-teaching setting. For those students whose IEPs call for one-to-one or a small group setting, specialists will deliver those services in accordance with their IEP specifications. Students will also receive additional support via remediation classes that will offer technology-based programs such as Achieve 3000, Read 180, System 44, and Math 180.

For SWDs, IEPs will be reviewed upon receipt by the Principal, Director of School Support Services (DSSS), and Special Education Teacher in consultation with the CSE. This group will ascertain the programmatic impact of the IEP and determine how the mandated services will be met at CTA. Students with IEPs will be closely monitored by the School Support Team (SST) comprised of the Principal (or his/her designee), DSSS, Special Education teacher, General Education teacher, Social Worker and Guidance Counselor. **To retain ELLs**, the ELL Coordinator, Principal, and DSSS, will craft an Action Plan for integrated language services to be shared with and implemented by teachers with programmatic impact on that particular student. All ELL students will be instructed in the general classroom and receive language supports, as and if needed, with materials provided in their home language that will support and strengthen their acquisition of the English language; specifically academic vocabulary. ELLs requiring additional academic support will use Achieve3000, the *LBook* component of Read 180, ESL Smart, and Math 180. ELLs will be closely monitored by the ELL Coordinator, DSSS, and Family Leader.

⁷ [http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/data/TestResults/ELAandMathTestResults.\(2014\)](http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/data/TestResults/ELAandMathTestResults.(2014))

C.H.O.I.C.E. T.O. Academy Charter Middle School

In addition to the above, any CTA student who is identified as not meeting their academic and/or personal goals, will be monitored by the School Support Team. The SST will enact CTA's Response to Intervention (RTI) protocols to decide and provide interventions to accelerate the students' rate of learning and/or support the students' mental, emotional and social well-being.

For all students including SWDs, ELLs, those students identified in the school's mission, and those students eligible for FRPL, CTA will have a mentoring program that will be coordinated by the Director of School Culture (DSC), Family Leader, Social Worker and Guidance Counselor; All CTA students will be assigned a mentor who will work with CTA students to develop their goals for personal development. Mentors will work with CTA students during Social Caucus, Leadership Seminar and after-school programs. Mentors will be charged with helping students cultivate the 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens, which will assist students in developing the qualities of a CTA SCHOLAR (Self-Discipline, Committed to excellence, Hungry for knowledge, Original, Leader, Articulate, Resilient and empowered to make positive choices every day). Additional to mentors, CTA scholars will receive weekly family check-ins with their classroom teachers, and school leaders, to ensure their overall progress. Teachers will also meet with students, at least once a week, for either remediation or enrichment.

In addition to the above, a Retention Committee will be created, **for all students including SWDs, ELLs, those students identified in the school's mission, and those students eligible for FRPL**; in the winter of the first school year to identify and meet the specific needs of students and their families. The DSC and Family Leader will oversee this committee and ensure high retention of all students. CTA will also continue to include the input and assistance from community and faith based organizations, local elected officials,

IV. Public Outreach and Community Support

a. To date, the CTA planning team has engaged community based-organizations, elected officials, parents and other individuals to garner interest and seek input. Beginning in the summer of 2013, CTA engaged parents weekly by conducting at least two "walking tours" per week around the East NY, Brownsville and Bedford Stuyvesant communities, speaking with parents one-on-one. During these tours, we spoke with an average of 40-50 parents each day with outreach efforts totaling over 100 parents per week for the past 48 weeks. During these conversations, parents were encouraged to share their feedback and comments on CTA's proposed design and plan. The feedback received was overwhelmingly positive. Parents offered no suggestions or comments to improve or alter CTA's plan as proposed. Most notable, however, was that parents believed no other middle school currently existed in CSD 19 with a plan like CTA's, which intentionally addresses students' socio-emotional development and growth; fosters active family and community integration and engagement through project-based work; and has a partnership with a nationally recognized medical organization, The Center for Autism and Early Childhood Mental Health, which specializes in working with SWDs and their families.

We have given several presentations to various parent and community groups throughout CSD19 and surrounding neighborhoods in Brooklyn. We have also participated in public health fairs. Between November 2013 and January 2015, CTA has hosted numerous "Meet and Greets", school presentations, to the Adelaide Sanford Institute group (ASI), which represents a strong educational constituency in Brooklyn at Boys and Girls High School, Community Boards 5, 3, & 13 (representing East NY, Brownsville and Bedford Stuyvesant communities), Community Education Council of CSD19 & CSD 16, the Superintendent of CSD19, the Man Up Foundation, parent groups and several local politicians. In addition, a number of community members and parents attended at the aforementioned meetings. We also met individually with several local elected officials in Brooklyn who pledged their support for CTA. Members of all groups were asked for input and feedback to which we received an overwhelming amount of support for the proposed school. These conversations laid the groundwork for partnerships with several community based organizations, and a prospective partnership with the Superintendent of CSD 19.

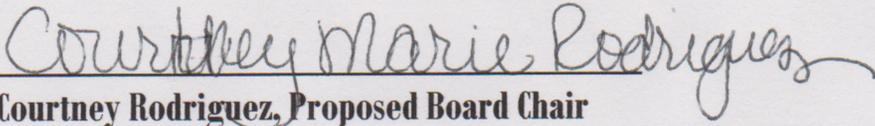
b. Based on our outreach, we have determined that there is an overwhelming demand for quality middle school options in CSD 19. We have received over 380 responses from our online survey with over 95% of respondents stating that they are "Very Likely" to send their child to CTA. Our petition of support for CTA also received over 400 signatures from community members. More than 300 petition signers were parents of school-age children eligible to apply to CTA for the 2016 school year. These parents support our mission and want to see CTA chartered. In Brooklyn alone, there were 22,772 applicants for 7,750 available charter school seats.⁸ In CSD 19, less than 15% of middle

⁸New York City Charter Center. (2014). New York Charter Schools: 2014 Enrollment Lottery Report.

C.H.O.I.C.E. T.O. Academy Charter Middle School

school students were proficient in ELA and Math last year. Based on the outreach shared above and the demand for charter options in Brooklyn, we feel strongly that CTA is sorely needed and wanted in CSD19 and the East New York community.

V. PROPOSED BOARD CHAIR SIGNATURE AND DATE SIGNED


Courtney Rodriguez, Proposed Board Chair

2/10/2015

Date

NAME OF APPLICANT GROUP MEMBER	EMAIL ADDRESS	CURRENT EMPLOYMENT
Kimberly Mackey	[REDACTED]	Education Consultant, VP of Leadership Development
Courtney Rodriguez	[REDACTED]	Attorney
Mikila Thompson	[REDACTED]	Attorney
Twana Smith-Patterson	[REDACTED]	Business Owner
Ian Arellano	[REDACTED]	Financial Planner
Shaunise Spivey	[REDACTED]	Assistant Director of Human Resources
Maria Arellano	[REDACTED]	Director of School Culture

TABLE 1: APPLICANT GROUP INFORMATION

***Minimum of 5 members must be designated as Trustees**

RELEVANT EXPERIENCE, SKILLS, AND ROLE ON APPLICANT GROUP (Key Words)	PROPOSED ROLE (if any) (Trustee, Employee, Consultant, or No Continuing Role)	PROPOSED POSITION ON THE BOARD (e.g., officer, trustee, or constituent representative)	LENGTH OF INITIAL TERM	VOTING MEMBER (YES OR NO)
Kimberly Mackey is the	Executive Director	N/A		
Courtney Marie Rodrigu	Trustee	Vice President	2	Yes
Earlier in her career, Mi	Trustee	President	2	Yes
Twana Smith-Patterson	Trustee	Secretary	2	Yes
Ian currently works for	Trustee	Treasurer	2	Yes
Shaunise has spent her	Trustee	Trustee	2	Yes
Maria has worked as an	Employee	N/A		