



PHASE I: Letter of Intent

Created: 06/08/2015

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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	Experiential Learning Charter School at Orenda Springs
Grades Served (K-5, .6-8, 9-12, etc.) During Initial Term	5-8
Number of Students During Initial Term	80 total students in Year 1, 120 total students in Year 2, 160 total students during each subsequent Year of Charter Term

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	David Taddeo	██████████	c ██████████
Public/Media Contact Person	Allison Ray	315-729-8492	allison_m_ray@hotmail.com

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

<http://orendasprings.com/charter-school/>

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	We do not intend to contract with a charter management organization.
Partner Organization 1	SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry
Partner Organization 2	Red House Arts Center, Inc.

Proposed Board Chair Signature

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

A large, light gray rectangular area containing a handwritten signature in black ink. The signature is written in a cursive style and reads "David Taddio".

Date

2015/06/08

Thank you for completing this form.

Letter of Intent
Experiential Learning Charter School at Orenda Springs

I.a./b.: Application Group Information

- Detailed information about the applicant group members has been uploaded in Table 1 on the charter school application webpage.

I.c. Public Contact: Allison Ray; 315-729-8492; allison_m_ray@hotmail.com

I.d. Application History:

A Letter of Intent was submitted to and accepted by the State University of New York Charter Schools Institute in 2013. Submission of a full application was postponed until spring of 2015 to allow the founding team to develop the most comprehensive and articulate plan for achieving its stated objectives as possible. Upon the SUNY Charter Schools Institute's recent decision not to solicit applications in 2015, the founding members opted to apply for a charter through Round 2 of NYSED's application cycle.

Proposed Charter School Information

II.a. Proposed school name:

Experiential Learning Charter School at Orenda Springs

II.b. Proposed school location:

Marcellus Central School District

II.c. Proposed Grades and Enrollment:

Proposed Grades and Enrollment Over the Charter Term					
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Grade 5	2 (groups) of 20	2 of 20	2 of 20	2 of 20	2 of 20
Grade 6	2 of 20	2 of 20	2 of 20	2 of 20	2 of 20
Grade 7		2 of 20	2 of 20	2 of 20	2 of 20
Grade 8			2 of 20	2 of 20	2 of 20
Total	80	120	160	160	160

II.d. Proposed Management and/or Partner Organizations:

The Experiential Learning Charter School at Orenda Springs ("ELCS") will not be utilizing a management company in its operation. Staff will report directly to the Board.

ELCS will partner with a number of prominent institutions in its community that have the resources to provide meaningful assistance to ELCS in the accomplishment of its mission. This includes the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry ("SUNY- ESF"), which has committed to assisting in the development and administration of educational programming at ELCS while offering its own ESF students meaningful learning experiences and service opportunities. ELCS is also partnering with the Redhouse Arts Center to provide its students with comprehensive programs in the fine arts, including art, drama, music and dance. The fine arts curriculum will use the natural environment at Orenda Springs and align with the Common Core Learning Standards, supporting our goal of curriculum integration. Onondaga Earth Corps (OEC), whose mission is to help youth understand the relationship between people and the

diverse ecosystems in urban, suburban and rural communities, will partner with ELCS to provide hands-on, inquiry-based community and environmental service learning projects. Lastly, a partnership with the Orenda Springs Experiential Learning Center will allow our students to learn in and from a “classroom in the woods”. ELCS students will have access to over 130 acres where they will learn and practice content aligned with, and develop self-confidence and motivation through experiential learning. Orenda Springs will offer horse riding, sustainable farming, cross-country skiing, mountain biking, orienteering, and use of their ropes course.

II.e. Proposed School Mission:

The Experiential Learning Charter School at Orenda Springs (“ELCS”) will provide a pioneering, holistic educational experience where students from socioeconomically and racially diverse backgrounds will grow together through experiential and adventure learning. Merging 21st century learning with the natural world, students will become lifelong learners and contributing members of their communities.

II.f. School Overview:

“*Orenda*” is an Iroquois word defined as “a supernatural force believed by the Iroquois Indians to be present, in varying degrees, in all objects or persons, and to be the spiritual force by which human accomplishment is attained or accounted for.” This philosophy of “*orenda*” undergirds the core belief of ELCS that within *every* student there lies the potential for great accomplishment--the potential to be the hero of their own life story. ELCS will develop this individual potential and facilitate this journey through unique learning experiences while immersing students in natural outdoor spaces and a philosophy of environmental sustainability, stewardship, and justice. Active and collaborative programming will offer an holistic and expanded educational experience for our diverse population of students, facilitating physical and mental health, inspiring exploration, increasing academic success, and developing social skills and emotional regulation. Our inclusive community will nurture empathy, well-being and interconnectedness with one another and the natural world, providing each student with the tools to reach his or her full academic, emotional, physical and spiritual potential. This school will offer an innovative educational model that is an *effective alternative* to the traditional public school system. Our school will be designed around the following core components: Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment, Character and Culture, Fitness and Health, Nature, and Leadership.

Curriculum: The Common Core Learning Standards will serve as the framework for building challenging, engaging and interdisciplinary units of study employing the Expeditionary Learning ELA and Math modules from EngageNY as a foundation, with science education curriculum from Project Learning Tree and guidance for Social Studies coming from the College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework. Fieldwork, guest field experts, and service learning will be embedded in these thematic units, building literacy and numeracy skills, and fostering 21st Century skill development. Fine arts, including dance, drama, music and art, will be integrated into the core curriculum. Given the nature-based learning environment, curricular units will have a focus on sustainability and the natural world whenever possible. Working with students and staff from SUNY-ESF, alongside other experts in the fields of science and environmentalism, students will grapple with solutions for real world issues. Students will be partners in an educational design, applying the skills and content they learn to enrich the world around them. Activities that foster 21st Century skills will be infused throughout the curriculum and daily school schedule as students learn and implement the life skills that will support healthy social, emotional and behavioral development. Ultimately, by the end of eighth grade, students

will leave this charter school prepared for the demands of high school, and equipped with the tools for success in college, career, and beyond.

Instruction: Students will participate in and contribute to purposeful, collaborative, inquiry-based lessons. This school will fuse the natural environment with 21st century technology in order to provide students with firsthand learning opportunities. Using this approach, students will be drawn back to nature through technology. Care for animals, plant cultivation, food preparation, nutrition, and exercise will offer novel and practical experiences that challenge students to understand concepts of sustainability, health, and wellness. Small class sizes will ensure that all students are supported and continually strive for excellence. The faculty and staff will customize instruction to meet the needs of a diverse group of learners, enriching the learning environment for all. Teachers will be facilitators of learning, not just deliverers of information. Acting as guides, providing support, direction and probing questions, teachers will journey with students to standards-driven and measurable destinations, allowing the students to choose their own routes and craft their own learning experiences.

Assessment: ELCS will use multiple forms of assessment to evaluate student learning. Instruction will be informed by data collected from standards-driven benchmark assessments and consistent formative assessments. The charter school will also provide authentic performance tasks and projects that require students to apply what they have learned. Rubrics will be used to clearly define tasks, provide fair and consistent grading, align with Common Core Learning Standards, and facilitate reflective learning conversations. The curriculum will also promote student evaluation of their own progress. In addition to these summative assessments, on-going formative assessment will enable teachers to monitor student growth and adapt instruction to meet the needs of a diverse learning community.

Character and Culture: Students will be encouraged to embark upon a journey where they can be the hero, face obstacles, learn and take risks within a safe and supportive community. They will benefit from engaging with culturally, socio-economically, and geographically diverse peers and staff. To help students overcome challenges, life skills such as perseverance, courage, empathy, and integrity will be consistently demonstrated and reinforced. Real and exciting challenges including adventure-learning initiatives, community service, animal care, garden cultivation, collaboration on and presentation of projects, and the study of complex texts will provide opportunities to apply these lifeskills. Students will also be involved in making guided choices about curriculum. Current research supports our professional experience that children are highly motivated to participate in these purposeful activities. Through carefully planned and customized experiences, students will develop a passion for learning and a strong work ethic. This school will be designed to promote an understanding of both the intrinsic and academic rewards that comes from hard work and self-motivation. Additionally, parents and families will be an essential part of this school culture. Family involvement will include student-led conferences and end-of-unit culminating events.

Fitness and Wellness: Regular exercise has positive effects on the functioning of the brain, including information processing and memory. Fitness activities will be integrated throughout the daily routine as students hike, ski, snowshoe, or bike to their classrooms. Yoga, other kinesthetic exercises and mindfulness activities will be incorporated into our days. Time spent in the garden and kitchen facilities will empower students to gain an appreciation of how choices about food and lifestyle affect their well-being.

Leadership: Teachers will work together to guide the instruction and plan interdisciplinary units. Targeted professional development will occur through ongoing collaboration with colleagues. It is envisioned that the school will be a model for best practices in teaching, ranging from units that could be adapted and implemented in more traditional schools to instructional practices that could be applied to many different learning environments. In addition, ELCS students will learn and demonstrate leadership skills as they facilitate other school groups who visit Orenda Springs, assisting them in on-site activities such as ropes challenge courses, horse riding, cross-country skiing, hiking nature trails, and maple sugaring. Leadership skills will be continually developed, utilized and refined.

Nature: ELCS will utilize its unique location and natural resources to provide students with an educational experience that offers them far more than rigorous academic content alone. Richard Louv's book, *Last Child in the Woods*, provides a compilation of research that demonstrates that direct exposure to nature is essential for healthy physical, emotional and spiritual childhood development, and is potent therapy for depression, obesity, and attention deficit disorders. It has been shown that "hours regularly spent by youth outdoors stimulate imagination and creativity and enhance cognitive development, helping them learn...and help youngsters develop social awareness, helping them better navigate human relations" (Tinyurl.com/OutdoorHealthBenefitsResearch). Louv also highlights the body of research that shows environment-based education dramatically improves standardized test scores, grades, problem solving, critical thinking and decision making. Aligned with this research, it is our core belief at ELCS that exposure to and engagement with nature is vital to healthy child development and benefits students physically, cognitively, emotionally and spiritually, and as a result, academically. Our school will address all of these aspects of our students' development, facilitating their success both in and beyond the classroom.

Facilities: Local architects have designed a net-zero energy building that will provide "classrooms in the woods" that students not only learn *in* but also learn *from*. Its design will incorporate the mission and vision of our school and create an exciting atmosphere that will increase students' motivation to learn. It will be one of a handful of buildings in existence to meet the Living Building Challenge, which is the most rigorous international sustainable building certification program. This unique school building will employ several methods of sustainable energy and can be used as a model to educate other groups that will tour the facility.

II.g. Target Population/Community Served:

ELCS intends to bring together students from a wide variety of socioeconomic, cultural and geographical backgrounds to facilitate an appreciation of diversity and further the character and development of its students. Our goal is to draw 50% of our student population from the Syracuse City School District and the remaining 50% from the surrounding districts. Programs will particularly benefit students at-risk whether because of disability, familial, socio-economic or other circumstances. However, these programs will also provide invaluable enrichment and opportunity for even the highest achieving students. These programs will include a unique emphasis on physical activity combined with appropriate exposure to and education about the outdoor environment, leadership development and opportunities to exercise leadership skills, and regular fitness and wellness activities. The founding members selected this target population for a focus because it is largely underserved. Extensive state data shows a significant number of at-risk students within the Syracuse City School District, as well as surrounding districts. Programs that these school districts have used to date to address these gaps have proven largely

ineffective in assisting the students with breaking an often established cycle of academic failure and behavioral issues. It is the primary goal of ELCS to assist these students in realizing success, which will enable them to garner additional academic and personal success in high school years and in life.

II.h. Replication of High Quality School Models:

The Experiential Learning Charter School will not be a replication model school.

III. Enrollment and Retention of students with disabilities, ELLs, and eligible for FRPL:

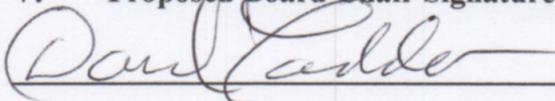
The leadership of ELCS has significant experience educating or otherwise serving students who are struggling academically and are most at risk of academic failure. Their experience provides strong anecdotal evidence that the economically disadvantaged and minority populations are most likely to comprise the significant majority of students who are struggling academically, and this anecdotal evidence is corroborated by State assessment data. Therefore, in an effort to serve such students, ELCS will promote its services and programs in communities in and around Greater Syracuse, New York, using print and radio announcements and advertisements, as well as a significant online presence, seeking to attract students who qualify for the National School Lunch Program, English Language Learners, and students with disabilities. Additionally, it will actively promote its programs to the administrators of surrounding school districts as a viable and productive alternative for students who are struggling to succeed in more traditional educational programs. ELCS will provide adequate staffing and resources, in conjunction with students' home districts, to offer students the necessary support to ensure their success.

IV. Public Outreach and Community Support:

The ELCS originating Board has conducted consistent and continuous outreach through mixed media formats and outlets within the communities of the school's target population for three consecutive years with overwhelmingly positive results and feedback. Outreach efforts have included multiple public informational meetings; presentations to local community organizations including the Rotary Club and the Marcellus Central School District Board of Education; meetings with local community, education and business leaders; and face-to-face and online public surveys. As of 06/23/15, news coverage of our proposed charter school appeared on YNN, and in the Syracuse Post-Standard and the Skaneateles Journal.

Existing Syracuse area charter schools are few in number and have experienced consistently high demand for enrollment. The Syracuse Academy of Science Charter School experiences an annual demand for enrollment of 300% and the Southside Academy Charter School consistently experiences full enrollment and utilizes their waiting list policies and procedures. The strong demand for effective alternatives to existing educational programs in Syracuse and surrounding suburbs is apparent and supported by our own findings. Of the 226 respondents to our on-line survey, 76% indicated that they would enroll their child/choose to attend our charter school. Representatives from local educational institutions such as SUNY ESF, local businesses and community organizations have expressed their desire to participate in the development and implementation of our charter school, providing further evidence of the community support that exists.

V. Proposed Board Chair Signature and Date



6/22/15

TABLE 1: APPLICANT GROUP INFORMATION

*Minimum of 5 members must be designated as Trustees

NAME OF APPLICANT GROUP MEMBER	EMAIL ADDRESS	CURRENT EMPLOYMENT	RELEVANT EXPERIENCE, SKILLS, AND ROLE ON APPLICANT GROUP (Key Words)	PROPOSED ROLE (if any) (Trustee, Employee, Consultant, or None Continuing Role)	PROPOSED POSITION ON THE BOARD (e.g., officer, trustee, or constituent representative)	LENGTH OF INITIAL TERM	VOTING MEMBER (YES OR NO)
Robert Broddus	[REDACTED]	Educator at Skaneateles CSD	Physical Education	Trustee	Trustee	1 year	Yes
Mary Beth Elko	[REDACTED]	Educator,	Project-Based Learning, Expeditionary Learning Design, Educational Leadership	Employee	None	N/A	N/A
Ioane Etuale	[REDACTED]	Tree Crew Supervisor, Onondaga Earth Corps	Environmental Education, Management, Mentoring	Trustee	Trustee	1 year	Yes
Greg McGee	[REDACTED]	Assistant Professor, Environmental & Forst Biology SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry	STEM education, student leadership development, curriculum coordination and assessment	Trustee	Trustee	1 year	Yes
Kelly O'Connor	[REDACTED]	Special Counsel at Hinman, Howard & Kattell, LLP	Disability Benefits & Workers Compensation; Residential Real Estate, Appellate Practice	Trustee	Trustee	1 year	Yes
John Powers	[REDACTED]	Executive Director at Orenda Springs Experiential Learning Center; School Counselor at Syracuse City SD	Science Education, School Counseling, At-Risk Youth Specialist, Adventure-Based Educator	Facilities Manager	None	N/A	N/A
Olga Powers	[REDACTED]	General and Special Educator at West Genesee CSD	General Education, Special Education, Equine Program Management	Employee	None	N/A	N/A
Allison Ray	[REDACTED]	Adventure-Based Counselor at Orenda Springs Experiential Learning Center	School and Mental Health Counseling, Adjunct Instructor at Syracuse University, Group Facilitation, Writing and Editing	Employee	None	N/A	N/A
Dennis Robillard	[REDACTED]	Data Analyst at Syracuse City School District Department of Pupil Personnel Services	Teacher Development, Educational Management, Strategic Vision Planning (Applicant Group Role: Lead Proposal Developer)	Employee	None	N/A	N/A
Becky Rochin	[REDACTED]	Retired Elementary Educator	Elementary Education, School Leadership	Trustee	Secretary	1 year	Yes
Roberta Schnorr	[REDACTED]	Professor, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, SUNY Oswego	Special Education, Effective Practices for Diverse Learners (Universal Design for Learning), Literacy	Trustee	Trustee	1 year	Yes
David Taddeo	[REDACTED]	Retired School Administrator (Assistant Superintendent of Schools for Instruction, Marcellus CSD)	School Administration (Principal and Assistant Superintendent), Special Education, School/Family/Community Relations	Trustee	President	1 year	Yes
Kevin Wade	[REDACTED]	Vice President of Client Service at Harbridge Consulting Group	Financial analysis, benefit consulting, management of client service relationships	Trustee	Treasurer	1 year	Yes