



PHASE I: Letter of Intent

Last updated: 06/08/2015

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

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

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

	First and Last Name	Best Phone Number (###-###-####)	Email Address
Proposed/Current Board Chair	Dr. C. Nathan Edwers	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Public/Media Contact Person	Dr. C. Nathan Edwers	914-668-1210	friendshiptech2015@gmail.com

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

(No response)

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

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

Proposed Management Company	(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).

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light gray background. The signature reads "Cobbe N Edwards" in a cursive, flowing script.

Date

2015/06/08

Thank you for completing this form.

I. APPLICANT INFORMATION:

- A. **Group leader information:** Dr. C. Nathan Edwers resides at [REDACTED]. His contact information is [REDACTED].
- B. **Public Contact:** Dr. C. Nathan Edwers, friendshiptech2015@gmail.com, 914-646-3211 and bishopcnedwers@aol.com.
- C. **Applicant Group Information – See Table 1**
- D. **Founding Group/Initial Board of Trustee Information:** Same as letter C above.
- E. **Replication or Network Information:** Not Applicable
- F. **Applicant History:** First submission of LOI February 3, 2014; Rejection of LOI February 21, 2014; Second submission Of LOI June 25, 2014; Acceptance of LOI July 29, 2014; Submission of full application August 18, 2014; NYSED Authorizer Capacity interview September 30, 2014; Mount Vernon School District Public Hearing October 15, 2014; Full application withdraw November 6, 2014; Third Submission of LOI February 6, 2015; Rejection of LOI February 25, 2015; Fourth submission of LOI June 23, 2015

II. PROPOSED CHARTER SCHOOL INFORMATION

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

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

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

- F. **School overview:** Based on NYS ELA and Math assessment results of the Mount Vernon City School District students, the FTCSE founding board believes that the district has failed its students. For example, in 2013 and 2014, 82% of third and fourth graders in the Mount Vernon City School District have consistently scored at Levels I and II on the NYS Math exam. In the past two years, third and fourth grader performance on the ELA has worsened from 81% of students performing at Levels I and II in 2013 to 86% in 2014. As a result, the founding board has framed a school made up of five key design elements to address this problem. These elements, modeled after Hofstra University's research-based teaching and learning lab located in the School of Education, will foster students' growth as life-long learners and aspiring leaders, making them college and career ready. The five key design elements are:
 1. **Interdisciplinary STEM-Based Curriculum:** FTCSE's interdisciplinary curriculum will infuse STEM content and careers into rigorous Common Core ELA and math instruction and into student-centered STEM problem-based design challenges. A *MakerSpace/STEM Lab* will be equipped with appropriate science laboratory equipment and building tools for students to practice the skills and content of the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). In addition, students will participate in community projects that foster social awareness and real-world learning.
 2. **Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) and Social and Digital Consciousness:** Daily instruction will integrate reading and writing activities with technology to enhance our students' critical thinking, problem solving, and content mastery across all disciplines. Students' digital and multi-media literacy will be developed through opportunities to create video projects that will develop their written and verbal communication

¹N.Y. Education Law § 2851(2)(p).

skills. Virtual lab activities will support students' understanding of experimentation, and manipulation and control of variables.

3. **Blended Rotation Model:** Blended learning will allow students to move between computer-based and face-to-face instruction to support learning and retention in math and reading. This blend of activities will concretize and reinforce what students have learned online and vice versa while providing performance data to drive instruction and provide instructional support services.
 4. **Differentiated Instruction and Intervention Model:** Our instructional staff will be comprised of Early Childhood and/or Childhood Education teachers, Special Education teachers, and an ESL/ELL teacher(s). Instructional support staff will be comprised of certified Early Childhood and/or Childhood teachers working as teacher aides to assist in meeting individual accommodations and educational abilities. Teaching assignments will be based on two criteria: (1) using data for ability grouping, and (2) student-teacher matching based on teacher's level/area of expertise and students' needs.
 5. **TECH: Teaching Each Child Holistically:** The *Resolving Conflicts Creatively Program (RCCP)* and *Lessons in Good Character* are programs that will be used to introduce students to resolving conflicts peacefully and understanding good character. These programs will be used school-wide, including teachers and parents.
- G. Target Population/Community Served:** FTCSE is committed to improving the academic proficiencies of students living in Mount Vernon where a glaring socio-economic and academic divide exist. As of 2013, Mount Vernon Elementary Schools are not meeting NYS proficiency standards. For example, one of the highest performing schools in Mount Vernon ranked worse than 50.7% of elementary schools in the State.² FTCSE is dedicated to closing the achievement gap for these children regardless of their poverty level, English language proficiency, disability status, or race.

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

To meet or exceed enrollment and retention of targeted requirements for subpopulations of students as required by charter school law, FTCSE will attract African American, Spanish, Portuguese, other ethnic groups and low income students and families utilizing aggressive marketing campaigns via radio, local newspapers, social media venues, our webpage, flyers, daycares, preschools, community centers, libraries, apartment complexes, churches, supermarkets, community outreach, and house meetings. Collaboration with early intervention programs will facilitate the sharing of our goals, expectations, and curriculum for all students inclusive of ELL and special needs students. Our recruitment and retention efforts will include:

Enrollment of Those Identified in the School's Mission:

FTCSE will recruit from Mount Vernon district pre-school programs, community-wide childcare educational centers that have graduated their Pre-k children and families with children in elementary school. FTCSE will admit students through a lottery process without regard for race, creed, ethnicity, disability, or socio-economic background.

Recruitment of Students with Disabilities:

FTCSE will recruit students with disabilities utilizing our outreach, marketing and advertising efforts cited above. Preschool programs that serve students with disabilities will be targeted as feeder institutions by FTCSE. New York State Early Intervention programs and the Westchester Early Childhood Direction Center will support and serve as network partners for special needs and ELL children within the Mount Vernon community. FTCSE will ensure that all outreach includes an explanation of services to support students with disabilities with special mention of our inclusionary model of educating children with disabilities. We will cater to the needs of these students with appropriate facilities and aids.

Recruitment of English Language Learners:

FTCSE will recruit English Language Learners (ELL's) students utilizing recruiting materials in multiple languages, translators at recruiting events and bilingual staff members. Our recruitment will target the Mount Vernon Spanish and Portuguese communities as well as agencies that focus on families where English has become their second language. We will also work with the Bilingual Technical Assistance Center (BTAC) for support with recruiting ELL's. We will distribute information to local clergy whose congregations are non-English speakers. We will recruit bilingual teachers who will reflect and promote ethnic diversity.

Recruitment of students who are eligible applicants for the free and reduced priced lunch programs:

²Mount Vernon School District Report Card 2012-13.

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

Retention of Those Identified in the School’s Mission:

We will retain students by engaging their families in our general education program during the regular academic year, summer academy, and Saturday clubs. Students and their families will be engaged in conferences, workshops, family nights, adult academy and visitations. Collaborating with community and cultural organizations, we will provide students and families wraparound services such as tutoring, before and aftercare services, music and the arts and mental health services in addition to targeted assistance to at-risk, struggling and ELL students. FTCSE is committed to establishing and maintaining a trusting relationship with families to promote children’s learning and development in a positive parents–school–teacher’s–student’s partnership.

Retention of Students with Disabilities:

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

Retention of English Language Learners:

FTCSE will retain ELL students by hiring a full time certified English as a Second Language (ESL) bilingual teacher who will deliver push in, and pull out ESL instruction and work in collaboration with school leadership and teachers to improve student’s language acquisition skills and academic performance. The ESL teacher will use the Journeys curriculum to support ELL students with targeted instruction and intervention strategies. FTCSE will provide an ESL resource center for students, their families, and school staff to share literature in diverse languages, strategies for increasing language acquisition at home and a forum for support. The resource center will be open during after school hours, and in the summer for continuous access to information in diverse languages. FTCSE will partner with the Bilingual Technical Assistance Center (BTAC) to ensure best practices and pedagogical methods will be used when working with English Language Learners.

Retention of students who are eligible applicants for the free and reduced priced lunch programs:

Retention will occur through our summer academic enrichment program that will provide free or reduced breakfast, lunch, and snacks to all eligible enrollees of the free or reduced meal program.

Ultimately, FTCSE will recruit, retain, and educate students of all abilities. FTCSE will admit students via lottery without regard to race, creed, ethnicity, disability, or socio-economic background. To monitor and track student retention, FTCSE will respectfully communicate with parents throughout the year about issues that are important to them, and to continuously monitor and measure the parents’ perceptions of the program and of their children’s safety and educational progress.

IV. Public Outreach and Community Support

In 2013, FTCSE’s founding group undertook a rigorous community outreach campaign to inform the community about our vision and goals for opening a charter school, while gathering their concerns of and interests in their children’s academic, developmental, and social progress. In March 2013, flyers were distributed to local churches and community organizations in addition to the Mount Vernon Public Library and local merchants such as supermarkets and dry cleaners. Additionally, letters of intent were sent to the Mayor and schools in the Mount Vernon District. Local religious and civic groups were informed of our intentions by group visits; the community was invited to make comments by email.

During December 2013, a comment collector and an electronic version of our press release were posted on the Mount Vernon Inquirer’s website. Two open-door community forums were held on December 30, 2013 and January 27, 2014 at the Friendship Family Life Center located at 261 E. Lincoln Avenue, Mount Vernon, NY 10552. In attendance at the first session was Dr. Iris Pagan, Commissioner of the Westchester County Youth

Bureau, who is a strong advocate for STEM programs and charter school establishment. During these community gatherings, a summary of the academic program plan was shared with the participants and surveys were distributed requesting input on specific topics, such as program design and curriculum.

On January 18, 2014, the founding group met with 20 clergypersons of the United Black Clergy (UBC) of Westchester County, a distinguished Mount Vernon Faith Based organization that has historically been in the forefront of education reform in Mount Vernon. After a lengthy discussion, the consensus was to encourage viable educational reform efforts that would uplift the children of Mount Vernon and provide them with opportunities to become college and career ready. Meetings with the local Mount Vernon PTA and Block Associations also gave favorable reception of the proposed Charter school.

We had personal discussions with community and educational stakeholders regarding their support and reservations. Discussion, feedback, testimonials, affirmations, and concerns have been received from various community members including parents, students, and professionals: Westchester County Executive, The Honorable Robert Astorino; Mount Vernon City Council members, Richard Thomas and Marcus Griffin; Interim Superintendent, Judith Johnson; Executive Director of Amani Public Charter School, Debra Sterns; New York State Senator, Jeff Klein; and Radio station WVOX 1460 FM, Mount Vernon Community Talk Show Sponsor.

Joe Parisi, editor of the Mount Vernon Inquirer wrote several articles in the Mount Vernon City newspaper regarding the proposed charter school. In an article dated February 25, 2014, Parisi wrote: *"When a community hears that a charter school has been proposed, it can incite furious opposition or adamant support. Until now, like the Amani Charter School in Mount Vernon once did, Friendship Tech Public Charter School has received positive support from the neighboring community where it is located..."* In the same article by Parisi, Bert Littlejohn, community activist and Director of Mount Vernon Family Ties, was quoted: *"I am wholeheartedly supporting your proposed charter school since we can use a second charter school in Mount Vernon."* In a letter of dated April 15, 2014, the Mayor of Mount Vernon, The Honorable Ernest D. Davis, stated the following: *"I support the rights of parents to choose the educational plan for their child or children. The path of beginning the Friendship TECH Public Charter School here in Mount Vernon is a concept I can lend my support."*

Two Community Parent Group meetings were held at the Mount Vernon Public Library on March 29, 2014 and April 26, 2014, respectively. Outreach continued with flyer distribution, a second meeting with the United Black Clergy of Westchester County, and a full write-up in the Mount Vernon Inquirer newspaper. Additional outreach included five community parent group meetings, media announcements, radio spots, and an information booth at the Friendship for Tots, Inc. Annual Funtastic Kiddie Carnival and Family Fair June 21, 2014.

The community was informed of the application process by two press releases printed in the Mount Vernon Inquirer newspaper and posted on their website. A FTCSE website and email address were created to receive community feedback. Information was disseminated about these outreach efforts utilizing e-mail blasts and door-to-door distribution. A ground team was mobilized in each housing complex to serve as community liaisons. A total of 1000 residents signed the petition expressing interest for the establishment of FTCSE.

Almost half (457) of the 1000 signatures on the petition in support of creating a K-4 charter school in Mount Vernon, expressed interest in enrolling their child/ren in FTCSE. Observations from our community outreach efforts indicated that the area of our greatest support, which is the 10550 zip code area includes the lowest performing schools. Petitions came from the following zip code areas: 10550 = 577, 10551 = 70, 10552 = 283, and 10553 = 70. Refer to "Section C: Enrollment, Recruitment and Retention" for how interested families will be notified of application process should we be awarded a charter.

Throughout August and October 2014, The Westchester Journal News published several articles about FTCSE's submission of a formal application to the NYSED Charter School Authorizer. In early October, the Mount Vernon School District conducted a public hearing to discuss the proposed FTCSE charter school as mandated by law. On November 12, another Westchester Journal News article announced that the proposed charter schools for Peekskill and Mount Vernon had been withdraw.

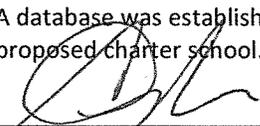
The outreach committee of FTCSE continued meetings in early 2015 with various Stakeholders and parents in the community keeping them abreast of the foundering board progress. We met with the new Superintendent of Mount Vernon School District, Dr. Kenneth Hamilton. We continued with the distribution of flyers throughout the community and held cottage meetings in various venues. At an April 27, 2015 Community Forum, FTCSE produced (500 each) invitation letters, brochures, and handouts to distribute to parents who showed the greatest interest in the newly proposed charter school. Weeks prior to the event, materials were distributed to

the Mount Vernon Library, Dole Center, Boys/Girls Club, local businesses, supermarkets, laundry centers, worship houses, parents at Saturday activity programs, community residents, posted at the Mount Vernon West and Mount Vernon East metro-north train stations and post-offices. FTCSE outreach team engaged the community in conversations to gather feedback and further their understanding of their thoughts about having a charter school in Mount Vernon. Also on Saturday, April 27, 2015, at the recommendation of parents, an impromptu overview about the proposed charter school was presented to two groups of parents (about 5 to 7 parents per group) with their children at their Saturday morning activity program. Parents witnessed a model STEM classroom setting. Afterwards, they were given a flyer and information for themselves as well as to share with their friends/family. Feedback was informative and engaging. Some of the comments we received are as follows: "How soon will the school open;" "My child is in the 3rd grade, will she be able to go 4th grade at your school;" "How long will the school day be;" "Will the kids have to wear uniforms;" "What kind of class work will be taught;" "How does my child qualify to go to your school;" "Thank you for having a brochure;" "Do you have a website;" "What made you decide to do a charter school;" "When does the enrollment process begin;" "Do I have to live in Mount Vernon" etc. The meeting was covered by The Mount Vernon Inquirer "The people's Newspaper" and the meeting was published in the June issue.

Initial Assessment of Sufficient Interest and community input:

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

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



Dr. C. Nathan Edwers, Applicant Group Leader

DATE: 6-8-15

Table 1: Applicant Group Information

Applicant Group Member Name/Email Address	Current employment	Relevant experience/ skills and role on applicant group (Key Words)	Proposed role(s) if any (Trustee, Employee, or None)	Proposed Position on the board (e.g., officer, trustee, or constituent representative)	Length of initial term	Voting Member Y/N
Dr. C. Nathan Edwers, DMin [REDACTED]	CEO/Pastor	Leadership and organization	Trustee	Chairperson	3	Y
Dorothea Muccigrosso [REDACTED]	Retired NYS Teacher	Curriculum Research Teacher	Trustee		3	Y
Paula Scarlett-Brown [REDACTED]	Educational Consultation	Principal Administration supervision Reading	Principal employee			N
Dr. D. J. Moore, DMin [REDACTED]	Senior Doctorial Mentor/ Pastor	Administration Strategic plan Research	Trustee	Secretary	2	Y
Michael A. Campbell [REDACTED]	Engineer	Budgets analysis strategy	Trustee		3	Y
Michael A. Valentine Esq. [REDACTED]	Attorney	Law, litigation Real estate	Trustee	Attorney	2	Y
Samuel N. Wilson Jr. CPA [REDACTED]	CPA	Accounting Budgeting Cash Flow	Trustee	Treasurer	2	Y
Sherri Edwers [REDACTED]	NYS Teacher	Curriculum Teaching Classroom	Trustee	Assistant Secretary	3	Y
Felicia Leary [REDACTED]	NYS Administrator/ Children Services	Children Svcs. Planning Outreach	Trustee	Community outreach Liaison	2	Y
Dr. Julia C. Caliendo, Ed [REDACTED]	Professor Hofstra U	Stem Specialist Science Lab Instruction	Trustee	Vice Chair	3	Y
Clavery's Pena [REDACTED]	Mental Health Counselor	Psychotherapy, counseling, intervention	Trustee	Special needs, Chair	1	Y
Charles J. Ray III [REDACTED]	Mathematics Professor	Math and Computer Science	Trustee	Special Advisor to the Board	1	Y