Prospectus Requests

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At the Gaililli Charter School for Girls (GCSG), girls are provided the opportunity to learn in ways that are in keeping with the female learning style. In 1982, Harvard University researcher Carol Gilligan triggered an academic revolution. In her book, In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development, Dr. Gilligan theorized that girls think, interact, display leadership and make decisions in ways unique both psychologically and developmentally. The male-based model, she found, simply did not fit the way girls learn.

At GCSG, girls will be freer to participate in class discussions, which boys tend to dominate in co-educational schools. An intentional outcome is that girls will gain confidence in themselves as students. Students at GCSG will not have to live up to the expectation that they must be nice, quiet, non-athletic and passive. Educational researcher Cornelius Riordan, Professor of Sociology at Providence College, is the author of *Girls and Boys in School: Together or Separate?* He has spent years examining educational outcomes based on various school settings, and sums up his findings this way:

"Having conducted research on single-sex and co-educational schools for the past two decades, I have concluded that single-sex schools help to improve student achievement. My conclusions are based on high quality national data gathered by the National Center for Education Statistics, as well as on studies conducted around the globe (p. 20)"

The goals of the GCSG are to serve a student body that mirrors the ethnic and socioeconomic diversity of the local community. To integrate technical and academic education to prepare students for post-secondary education in both high tech and liberal arts fields. To increase the number of educationally disadvantaged students in math and engineering who succeed in high school and post-secondary education. To graduate students who will be thoughtful, engaged citizens. To provide *all* students with an extraordinary project-based education and to graduate students who will succeed in post-secondary education and be thoughtful.

Mission:
The GCSG provides a challenging, differentiated, and research-based curriculum that promotes educational and leadership opportunities for each girl in grades 5-12. It is designed so that every girl can develop the skills, knowledge, and character traits necessary for success in an ever-growing diverse global world.

Key Design Elements of GCSG:

According to Hoff (2003), "We do our kids a disservice by choosing only one pedagogy and using it all the time" (p. 8). At GCSG, our teachers will use both direct instructions (hands-on, simulations, high-level inquiry) and experiential learning techniques to engage students and to increase learning. Other key design elements are:

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy.
GCSG will use culturally relevant pedagogy to increase the academic achievement of a culturally diverse body of students. The teachers will construct ways to empower students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Ladson-Billings, 1994). In an effort to implement, teachers will create a connection between students' home and school lives (funds of knowledge), while still meeting the expectations of the charter and New York State standards. Teachers will begin the school year with home visits to meet the families and learn about students' home environments. The teachers will utilize the backgrounds, knowledge, and experiences of the students to influence their lesson planning and their methodology. Also, educator Christensen (year) advocated a culturally relevant curriculum in which students' lives are reflected within it, creates a sense of empowerment and engagement around education.

Teachers will encourage students to learn collaboratively. Students will be expected to teach each other and be responsible for each other, which are also tenets of culturally relevant pedagogy and building a culture of community. Through culturally responsive instructional and assessment techniques, our teachers will design differentiated instruction lessons that represent the cultural and linguistic strengths of their students and communities.

Differentiated Instruction.
Changing the pace, level, and type of instruction provided to students in response to individual learners' need, styles, or interests has become a major avenue of educational reform (year). At GCSG, we believe that the primary purpose of education is to ensure that all learners through multiple access points gain the skills and knowledge needed to become informed and prepared members of society. We believe that teachers should adapt instruction to students' individual preferences. When teachers differentiate instruction, they make a conscious effort to make the content area, process, and outcomes of the instruction more available to students of all races, ethnicity, language, and abilities. Differentiating the instruction allows the charter school to meet all the legal mandates of the 2001 No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act and the 2004 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) so that all students can access instruction in the least restrictive environment. According to Apple & Beane (1995), teachers who use differentiated instruction can offer their students opportunities to make choices, solve problems within a group, develop consensus, and resolve. Differentiated instruction provides both a challenging and engaging curriculum to motivate and to accelerate students academically while recognizing the diversity of the classroom. Differentiated instruction supports the multiple learning styles as stated by Gardner in 1983.

Student-centered.
The students' needs, abilities, interest, and learning styles will be put first. As described by Gloria Ladson-Billings (2009), the teachers at GCSG will act as coaches who "believe their students are capable of excellence… [while being] comfortable sharing the responsibility to help them achieve it with parents, community members, and the students themselves" (p. 26). GCSG believes in the success of all students. The students will be active participants in their own learning.

Space Learning Over Time.
Research studies have found that spacing learning over time can improve students' retention of course content. The key components of this concept is to introduce the important content, revisit that content with short quizzes, targeted homework assignments, or review activities asking students to recall key facts several weeks after the original lesson was introduced. Research studies show the act of recalling information strengthens memory and makes the information more readily available in the future (2006).

Character Building.
It is based on P.M. Forti's book, *Choosing Civility: The twenty-five Rules of Considerate Conduct*. According to Forti (2002) when we are civil, "We develop thoughtfulness, foster effective self-expression and communication, and widen the range of benign responses. Civility allows us to connect successfully with others" (p. 5).

Unique Characteristics:
GCSG is being launched to provide socio-economically underserved female students whose potential for academic success has been perceived as being jeopardized by harmful social and economic factors affecting them and their families. We recognize that all students have the potential to be successful. A highly rigorous, engaging, dynamic, and differentiated curriculum is designed to educate the whole student not just academically, but emotionally, physically, socially, and spiritually. We want to develop critical high order-thinkers and creative problem-solvers with strong social skills understanding that all students are capable of succeeding.

The curriculum will adhere to New York States Standards and offer: mathematics, science, computers, business, leadership, economics, social studies, reading, writing, foreign language, home economics, music, physical education and ethics and civility. To implement the curriculum, highly qualified, dual certified educators with New York State teaching certification will be employed. The teacher student ratio will be approximately 15 students to 1 teacher. Teachers will receive support from assistant teachers, special education consultant teachers, literacy specialists, student teachers from local colleges, community partnerships, paraprofessionals, math coaches, and parent/guardian as well as volunteers.

GCSG will offer instruction that surpasses that which is traditionally found in public schools. Ladson-Billings (1994) asserts that diverse students should be given more school work rather than less. The school-term will start August 1st and end June 30th. The school

day will be longer than a traditional public school day. A school day start at 8:00 am and ends at 6:00 pm. This will include academic classes, life enrichment classes, physical education, supervised homework session, and extra-curricular activities. Also, all students will be required to attend Saturday school twice each month for enrichment activities, community service, and field trips, as well as a two-week summer program during the month of July. Early morning tutoring services provided by our teachers will be available for students who are having trouble in literacy and math.

A rigorous system of behavior standards and a development of a school culture, which encourages students to seek academic, social, excellent

GCSG will conduct workshops for parents that will support their child's leaning and emotional development. GCSG advocates educating the whole child.

Founding Group:
The founding group's capacity to effectively launch, oversee, and govern the school is derived from their experience, knowledge, and desire to educate students. The founding group is comprised of three women with applicable and strong qualifications. Together with the seven governing board members they all have the experience to oversee and operate a school. The founding group includes:

- A retired RCSD administrator, former elementary school teacher, special educator, Special Education Professional Development Specialist, Title 1 Teacher, Academy Director with over 30 years of experience, currently a Doctoral student at the University of Rochester's Warner school focusing on writing a dissertation of differentiated instruction

- An Adjunct Assistant professor at Monroe Community College, New York State certified business teacher in the RCSD, current entrepreneur, Doctoral student at the University of Rochester's Warner school, 26 years as a systems analyst at Eastman Kodak Company

- A recent graduate (2010) from Teachers College at Columbia University with a Masters in Elementary and Inclusive Education and New York State certification in Childhood Education 1-6, currently a RCSD substitute teacher at an alternative school, math tutor at Iglesia Educational Center

II. STUDENT POPULATION

A. Student Enrollment

Anticipated Enrollment table for the first five years of operation

Grades	Projected Enrollment Table				
	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2017-2018
K					
1st					
2nd					
3rd					
4th					
5th	50	25	25	25	25
6th	50	50	25	25	25
7th		50	50	25	25
8th			50	50	25
9th				50	50
10th					50
11th					
12th					
Ungraded					
Totals	**100**	**125**	**150**	**175**	**200**

B. Target Populations

The demographic data provided on the for Rochester City School District 2008-09 is taken from District Report Accountability & Overview Report 2008-2009 is as follow:

- 82% of students eligible for free (85%) and reduce-priced lunch (7%)
- 10% Limited English Proficient
- 65% Black Students
- 22% Latino Students
- 11% White students
- 2% Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander
- 0% Multiracial

In the initial year of operation, GCSG will enroll 100 girls. The school will start with 50 fifth graders and 50 sixth graders. Each year, the fifth grade will increase by 25 female students. During the first year there will be 3 fifth grade classes and 3 sixth grade classes. Over a five-year period, the school will admit a total of 200 students.

The GCSG will serve all girls in grades 5 through 12 who live in the charter attendance zone and who submits a timely application as specified in the charter. If the number of applications exceeds the capacity of a program, class, grade level, or building, all such applicants will have an equal chance of being admitted through a random selection

process. Preference will be offered to underserved students (students who qualify for federal free or reduced-price lunch program); a sibling of a student enrolled in the start-up charter school; a sibling of a student enrolled in another local school designated in the charter; a student whose parent or guardian is a member of the governing board of the charter school or is a full-time teacher, professional, or other employee at the charter school; and students matriculate from a local school designated in the charter (§2851). We operate on an open enrollment basis and are accessible to any parent(s) or guardian(s) who agrees to enroll them and meet the previously mentioned requirements.

Student Recruitment:
The board, founding group, and staff are determined to attract, serve, and retain urban female students who have been largely underserved. We will engage in an aggressive marketing campaign. Advertising to the public will be made via multiple medias, but not just restricted to the following:

- Radio advertisements will be used to promote the charter school. The focus will be on stations frequently listened to by our targeted audience.

- Various local newspaper advertisements (e.g. Democrat and Chronicle, Parents, CITY) will be used to promote the school.

- Direct mailings to parents of eligible-aged students will be mailed.

- Flyers and brochures describing the school and its programs will be distributed to churches, community centers, and neighborhoods in the charter zone.

- Meetings will be held with potential parents and students, community leaders, and business owners at public elementary schools, community centers, public libraries, and churches.

- Social Networks will be used to promote the school.

- A web site will be created to advertise the school's mission, culture, academics, and extra-curricular activities.

- Speaking at neighborhood association meetings

- Billboard and bus panel advertisement

- Hire a part-time recruiter to attract students and solicit Communication and Rhetoric major interns from Nazareth College of Rochester to attract students

III. SCHOOL DESIGN:

a. Increase student achievement and decrease student achievement gaps in reading/language arts and mathematics

These three subjects will be integrated across the curriculum. GCSG 5th -12th grade teachers must be able to:

Reading/Language Arts

- Teach reading using two of the Basal reading programs, the "Open Court" series currently known as "Imagine It," by McGraw-Hill and "Reading Street" by Scott Foresman. These programs cover phonics awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension in a systematic, explicit, and comprehensive way. Reading will also be supplemented with other texts and reading activities.

- Offer students reading, writing, and listening assignments in a range of genres (nonfiction, fiction, essay, poetry, and graphic novels)

- Read alouds, independent reading, dyad reading, book clubs, shared reading

- Visit the library to promote using the media center and facilitating appropriate books choice

- Help parents understand the value of literacy and share strategies with the family

- Implementing elements of the Teacher College Reading and Writing Project

- Interdisciplinary lessons

- Daily allotted amount of time for reading and writing

- Constant pre- and post- assessment of students' reading skills through conferencing with student and running records

- Offer classes that concentrates solely on developing reading and writing skills (as promoted by Teachers College Reading and Writing Project)

- Enhance oral language in students by providing instructions in listening, modeling good listening behaviors, modeling read alouds with appropriate voice and inflection, giving instruction in speaking

skills and verbal and nonverbal messages

- Use vocal elements (pitch, volume, rate, quality, animation and pause) in oral presentations

- Offer opportunities to participate in role-play, interview, and impromptu speeches through leading group discussions

- Incorporate writing instruction activities: prewriting, organizing, writing, editing, rewriting, peer review and constructive criticism and in-class writing assignments, writer's workshop, journal and learning logs; writing in different forms (technical, persuasive, research, expository, narrative and poetry; grammar instruction; outlining; and Cornell note taking

- Expand students vocabulary 5-12th grade

- Prentice Hall Literature Series – Silver

- Interdisciplinary lessons

Mathematics

- Teach Scotts Foresman's 5th and 6th grade math helps students measure up to the demands for greater mathematical competencies and problem-solving.

- Use a variety of approaches to teach the content such as reading and writing story problems, using visuals in problems, students talk through how to do the problem, Tessellations (educational puzzles and activities)

- Present real-world application of math concepts to make the application pertinent to students

- Diagnose and remediate the gap in prior math knowledge or identify where student has misunderstood the process

b. Increase high school graduation rates and focus on serving at-risk high school student populations (including re-enrolled drop-outs and those below grade level);

Research has shown that students dropout out of school because they are bored, unmotivated, disengaged, missed too many days of schools, and/or are failing classes. GCSG plans to reduce the dropout rate and increase graduation through early intervention with students and parents. The role of our teachers

will be to support, to nurture, and to facilitate students to grow in confidence and enjoy learning.

The school will offer homework workshops for parents, because when parents do work at home with their children, students' achievement increases (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Ho Sui-Chu & Willms, 1996). Parental/guardian involvement is a must to ensure the success of the student. Students will also have supervised homework time at the end of the day. During this time, teachers will give students needed assistance.

GCSG will make the curriculum more relevant to the lives of students. Teachers will show how what is learned in school can help students to address real life concerns. When making this connection, student engagement and sense of empowerment increases. A variety of instructional strategies will also be used. Underserved students benefit from direct instruction, hands-on learning, simulations, inquiry, technology and other strategies.

GCSG will offer rigorous expanded learning opportunities, which includes extended school days, 2-weeks of summer learning, Saturday school for enrichment activities, library activities, strong connections with students' family, and a rigorous academic program. The teachers will provide additional academic support by serving as mentors and role models. Local college students will serve as tutors.

c. Focus on academic achievement of middle school student populations and preparation for transition to high school (if applicable);

To transition from elementary to middle to high school can be a major event in the lives of parents and students. At GCSG the transition will be minimized. The intent is for the students to graduate from GCSG where the rules and procedures are reviewed each year upon entering 5th grade. In the sixth grade, GCSG will start to prepare our elementary students (5-6) for middle school (7-8) and our middle school students for high school (9-12). The transition plan will be implemented to help students and parents' experience a smooth transition as GCSG houses the elementary, middle, and high schools. Students that would have gone through the plan will be asked to participate as guides for the incoming students after the transition. A plan will also be devised for students who decide to go to a different school. The plans will address academic rigor, responsibilities, discipline, classroom location, and organization. The plan will be updated annually. The students, teachers, guidance counselors, parents, and others will evaluate the plan. Involving the entire school in the transition establishes a sense of belonging and community among those involved.

d. Utilize a variety of high-quality assessments to measure understanding and critical application of concepts;

At GCSG, a variety of high-quality assessments will be used to measure how well students are doing during the school year. Students will be assessed upon their entry in the school to measure their literacy and math skills. Both summative, formative, formal and informal assessments will be carried out to measure learning outcomes. Our teachers will use frequent and varied assessments to diagnose student learning and then refine curriculum and instruction to close the achievement gap between where the student is now and where the student should be. Assessment must be accompanied by instructional change in order for the assessment to be consequential.

Formal Assessments:

- In the beginning of the school year, GCSG will administer two detailed standardized tests to measure fifth and sixth-grade students academic abilities: the Iowa Test of Basic Skills in math and the TerraNova achievement test in English. In additionally, the students will begin to create their reflective portfolios.

- Cumulative Benchmark Assessments, which are standard-based assessments in English Language Arts and mathematics given in grades 5-6 our times a year to monitor progress toward meeting grade level.

- Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) is a set of individual administered criterion-referenced diagnostic reading assessment administered to students in grades 5-6 three times a year; New York State Assessments are given yearly to students in grade 5-6, which defines what students should learn each year. Students pursuing a New York State Regents diploma must meet standards on five Regents exams Mathematics, Living Environment, Global Studies, ELA 11, and US History.

- NYSESLAT (New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test) is a New York State test designed to measure the English language proficiency of K-12 students who have been identified as Limited English Proficient (LEP). LEP/ELL/ program students take the NYSESLAT until they achieve ELA standards that qualify them to exit the program. Students who have been in the country for less than 12 months only take the NYSESLAT. All other ELL/LEP students take both the NYSESLAT and New York State ELA Assessments Grades 5-6.

- Tests and quizzes

- **Reflective, school-wide portfolio culture**, based on eight key learning objectives essential for academic growth. Through the portfolio process, students come to understand that learning does not take place in isolated "academic segments," but rather, true learning is integrated across all disciplines and throughout a lifetime.

Informal Assessment

- Through close observation of students in the process of learning, the collection of frequent feedback on students' learning, and the design of modest classroom experiments, teachers can learn much about how students learn and, more specifically, how students respond to particular teaching approaches. Classroom assessment helps individual teachers obtain useful feedback on what, how much, and how well their students are learning. Teachers can then use this information to refocus their teaching to help students make their learning more efficient and more effective.

- Classroom assessment is particularly useful for checking how well students are learning at those initial and intermediate points, and for providing information for improvement when learning is less than satisfactory.

- Through practice and professional development in classroom assessment, teachers become better able to understand and promote learning, and increase their ability to help the students themselves become more effective, self-assessing, self-directed learners. Simply put, the central purpose of ongoing documented Classroom Assessment is to empower both teachers and their students to improve the quality of learning in the classroom.

- Circulating around the room talking to individual students or small groups of students about specific tasks or activities

- Every time the students read, writes, or speaks

- Student Conferences

- Self-Assessments

- Rubrics

- Assessment Checklists

e. Increase implementation of local instructional improvement systems to assess and inform instructional practice, decision-making, and effectiveness;

GCSG is committed to the analysis of data to access and inform instructional practices, decision-making and effectiveness. GCSG will utilize data-driven decision making the classroom levels, administrative level and the board level. Please refer to Section D. on how we plan to use assessment data.

f. Partner with low-performing, local public schools to share best practices;

GCSG is committed to partnering with low-performing, local public schools to share best practices. The founders plan to meet with Superintendent Jean-Claude Brizard and his support staff to discuss how our charters school teachers and staff can collaborate with various public schools' teachers and staff in the RCSD to share best practices and improve students' learning outcomes. We also plan to contact other nearby district superintendents of public schools and a private school (Lady of Mercy). We anticipate sharing lesson plans, job shadowing, observing classes, developing curriculums, and combining professional development training.

The RCSD has a District-Charter Collaboration Compact, which is an on-going dialogue between public schools and charter schools to form a partnership to work together to provide a high quality education for all students. The RCSD's compact is signed by the district superintendent, multiple charter school leaders, local mayor, teachers' union, and school board members. When our charter is granted, GCSG leaders will also sign aboard. It is important that schools collaborate with each other to share successful practices that will improve all students' learning. We believe that these relationships benefit all parties involved, especially the students we serve.

g. Demonstrate the ability to overcome start-up challenges to open a successful school through management and leadership techniques;

GCSG has a leadership team that is more than capable to meet the challenges of a new charter school. Our Founders and Initial board members are made up of former and current educators, college faculty, college chairperson and directors, community leaders, business owner, and a parent. Together they have experience needed to overcome the start-up challenges.

The three founders know that there will be unexpected start-up challenges. Plans have been drafted for student recruitment, staff recruitment, marketing, locating a facility, facility renovation, securing finance from Eastman Savings

and Loan or XCEED Financial, identifying services from community providers.

The Board of Trustees (BOT) will currently consists of nine members, three of whom are founding members of the school. The remaining members of the Board will consist of community, college faculty, and two parents, all of which serve staggered terms to ensure continuity. All members of the (BOT) will be familiar with the Charter, its mission, philosophy, policies and procedures. All Board members will undergo training in the roles and responsibilities of BOT. A member of the public charter school's board is responsible for overseeing the education of all students enrolled in the school, the expenditure of public monies directed to the charter school, and to follow the bylaws.

h. Demonstrate the support of the school district of location and the intent to establish an ongoing relationship with such district; and

The Founders plan to approach Superintendent Jean-Claude Brizard and his administrative support team in March 2011 to request support from the RCSD to work together to share best practices and improve students' learning outcome. We have already drafted a communication to the Superintendent.

i. Provide access to viable education alternatives to students in regions where there are a lack of alternatives.

GCSG offers a choice to parents who are looking for a viable education alternative for their child. We offer a caring environment for underserved students. A challenging, differentiated, and research-based curriculum will help to prepare students with an excellent learning experience. GCSG will train students in civility, self-efficacy, listening, organizational and social skills. GCSG will utilize the Rochester's community, to enrich the school environment.

The founders plan to seek community support for the GCSG by presenting to community groups, institutions of higher learning, civic leaders, RCSD superintendent and his senior district staff, and others.

They are many students on waiting list seeking enrollment in a Charter schools because they have become very popular in Rochester. Our school will form a long and lasting connection with the students and their families.

In partnership with the community, GCSG is committed to educational excellence and guarantees challenging learning opportunities for all students to become lifelong learners and productive and responsible members of society. In summary, the GCSG seeks to provide a caring community, an integrated character education initiative that supports

both the emotional development of young adolescents as well as the development of leadership abilities. As a result, student commitment to being kind, helpful, responsible and respectful of others deepens. Students learn to accept both the rights and responsibilities of citizenship in a democratic society and develop the skills necessary to live safe, humane, and productive lives in a society.

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