

Neighborhood Charter School of Harlem

**Prospectus for a Public Charter School
Neighborhood Charter School of Harlem**

Submitted to:
The New York State Education Department
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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The mission of the Neighborhood Charter School of Harlem is to provide the children of Harlem with new educational opportunities through a rigorous, comprehensive K-8 program that cultivates the intellectual, social and emotional development of each child. Our students, who will include high functioning children with autism spectrum disorders, will become independent learners and critical thinkers, will acquire the academic skills that they need to succeed in college preparatory high schools and will exhibit the social and emotional skills that will allow them to reach their full potential.

NCSH will provide a rigorous, **fully inclusive**, education to a **broad range of Harlem children**. Our guiding principle is that we will do whatever it takes to ensure that every one of our students succeeds.

We will “meet each student where she is” whether she is an English Language Learner (ELL), a student with a disability, a student who struggles academically or a gifted student. Our school design will allow us to provide all of our students with the individualized attention, differentiated instruction and specialized supports that they need to maximize their academic potential and go on to succeed in high school and college.

Within our general education program, NCSH will offer a **specialized program, the first in Central Harlem, for high-functioning students with autism spectrum disorders** (ASD students). These students have a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder but have the necessary cognitive function to participate in a general education curriculum and have no significant language delays except in the area of pragmatic language.¹ ASD students will be served in inclusive CTT classrooms and will participate fully in the general educational program. The ASD program is modeled on the very successful ASD Nest program that currently serves about 400 students in traditional public elementary schools throughout New York City.

NCSH will be a “**no excuses**” school. A large and growing body of research, starting with Samuel Casey Carter’s study of high-performing schools,² has shown that this model is very effective in raising student achievement for all students and closing the achievement gap. In New York City, “no excuses” schools, including those in the KIPP, Uncommon Schools and Achievement First networks as well as the Harlem Success schools, have consistently out-performed their local districts and often the city as a whole, while enrolling significantly higher percentages of students eligible for free or reduced lunch.

Students with disabilities and ELLs often show dramatic achievement gains in “no excuses” schools. A study of a KIPP school with a large number of ELL and special education students published by the National Bureau of Economic Research in 2010 confirms this. While all students in the study showed achievement gains compared with their peers in the local school district, the positive effect was greater in math and significantly greater in reading for special education and ELL students.³ The “no excuses” model is also well-suited to the needs of ASD students because the emphasis on order, consistency and clarity of expectations that is characteristic of these schools offers the structure and predictability that many of these students need in order to succeed in school.

The **core approaches and practices** of the “no excuses” model NCSH will implement are:
High expectations for all students. Teachers will challenge students to achieve at the highest levels.

¹ Pragmatic language is the appropriate use of language in a social context, taking into account the likely responses of the conversation partner.

² Samuel Casey Carter: *No Excuses: Lessons from 21 High-Performing, High-Poverty Schools*: Heritage Foundation 2000

³ Joshua D. Angrist et al. *Who Benefits From KIPP?* National Bureau for Economic Research. 2010

More time for learning. Our extended school day and longer school year will provide students with significantly more time to master the New York State (NYS) standards than their peers in traditional public schools.

An orderly and supportive school culture that allows students to concentrate on learning. We will create a safe and orderly school climate from the first day of school, with clear, consistently enforced expectations for student behavior that take into account the needs of ASD students and other students with disabilities. We will also create rituals and celebrations that create a spirit of community throughout the school.

A rigorous educational program. Our educational program will be fully aligned with the NYS standards and will focus relentlessly on bringing all students to proficiency in ELA and math. We will provide instruction in literacy at least 120 minutes a day and in math at least 90 minutes a day. We will use research-based curricula that have been shown to accelerate learning for all students.

Data-driven instruction. We will use a variety of formative and summative assessments to measure academic progress and to adjust curriculum and instruction to the individual needs of students.

On-going professional development. Teacher quality is the most important determinant of student achievement and we will commit significant resources to professional development. The professional development program will be targeted to the specific needs of teachers as indicated by assessment data and will be continuously evaluated to ensure that it is effective.

Partnership with parents to make the home a center of learning. We will create a partnership with the parents of our students by communicating with them often, formally and informally, inviting them into the school for curriculum evenings, workshops and other events, fostering an active and engaged parent association and reserving a seat on the Board of Trustees for a parent.

Our rigorous academic program will be supported by explicit instruction in **social and emotional skills**. Deficits in these areas, particularly among low-income students, are increasingly being linked to low academic achievement.⁴ A recent literature review by the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) found evidence of substantial achievement gains among students who participated in social and emotional learning programs.⁵

The program for ASD students will include Social Development Intervention (SDI) classes that will address deficits in pragmatic language and social problem solving, classroom environmental modifications to address sensory problems and reduce distractions, and research-based individualized behavior supports to prevent, replace and respond to behaviors interfering with learning and to develop self-regulation skills. All teachers working with these students will receive specialized training at Hunter College.

The **founding group** includes accomplished individuals with all of the experience and skills that are necessary to establish and oversee a successful charter school. It includes two members with previous experience of starting a charter school, two lawyers, one with experience in special education law, experts in finance, including real estate finance, a retired and a current Principal of successful schools, an architect with experience of designing schools and four members who live in Harlem and/or have broad contacts in the Harlem community. In addition, our advisors include the Director of the ASD Nest program, a former teacher in the ASD Nest program who is now creating and implementing professional development for ASD Nest teachers as a Research Associate at New York University, and the Director of the Autism Center of the YAI Network, a highly regarded non-profit organization that serves people with developmental disorders.

⁴ Michaella Sektan, Megan M. McClelland, Alan Acock, Frederick J. Morrison, "Relations between early family risk, children's behavioral regulation, and academic achievement." *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* (2010).

⁵ John Payton et al. *The Positive Impact of Social and Emotional Learning for Kindergarten to Eighth Grade Students*. CASEL 2008

II. A. STUDENT ENROLLMENT

Grades	Projected Enrollment Table				
	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2017-2018
K	49	49	49	49	49
1st	57	57	57	57	57
2nd		57	57	57	57
3rd			56	56	56
4th				52	52
5th					52
Totals	106	163	219	271	323

The above table assumes 7% annual attrition of non-ASD students. NCSH will replace students lost through attrition through the second grade but will not add students in grades three and four, except for an additional ASD student in each third grade class. We will add additional students to replace students lost through attrition in grades five and six. We have assumed that there will be no attrition of ASD students based on the experience of the ASD Nest program. We intend to replace any ASD student lost through attrition with another ASD student but may decide not to do so.

II. B. STUDENT POPULATION

NCSH will be a neighborhood school that will attract and serve a broad range of students. We believe that students of differing needs and abilities, including students who are typically developing, students who are at-risk academically, ELLs, students with special needs and gifted students can and should be educated together in their own neighborhood. We will provide a high quality education to each of our students and will do whatever it takes to meet her individual needs. DREAM Charter School, which successfully serves a broad range of students in East Harlem has a comparable mission. We have also studied Mott Haven Academy Charter School in the Bronx and John W. Lavelle Charter School in Staten Island. Both of these schools offer specialized programs for at-risk students (children in foster care or under the supervision of the child welfare system at Mott Haven and emotionally disturbed adolescents at Lavelle) while successfully attracting and serving a diverse range of other students from their local neighborhoods. The following sections describe the population of the neighborhood that we will serve.

The population of Central Harlem is largely African-American, but is becoming more diverse. Community School District 5 (CSD 5) covers Central Harlem, a neighborhood that has historically had a largely African-American population and high rates of poverty. In recent years Central Harlem has experienced a decline in its African-American population and an increase in the Hispanic population. The 2000 Census showed that the population of Community District 10, which covers CSD 5 and parts of CSD 3 was 77.3% African-American and 16.8% Hispanic. According to *The New York Times*, the Hispanic population has grown by 27% since 2000.⁶ Our research shows, and the Citizens' Committee for Children 2010 status report for NYC⁷ confirms, that the Hispanic population of Community District 10 is largely Dominican in origin. CSD 5 also has a small West African population centered around 116th St. Many members of this community speak French but others speak only local languages. In spite of this increasingly diverse population, the Charter School Comparability Data provided by the New York State Education Department (NYSED) on its website (NYSED data) shows that only 10.6% of students in CSD 5 schools are English Language Learners compared with 14.4% for New York City as of 10.31.10.⁸

⁶ <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/06/nyregion/06harlem.html?scp=1&sq=black%20population%20harlem&st=cse>

⁷ *Keeping Track of New York City's Children*. Citizen's Committee for Children Status Report (2010).

⁸ <http://schools.nyc.gov/AboutUs/data/stats/default.htm>

Central Harlem remains a low-income community. Central Harlem has experienced significant economic development in recent years but remains a low-income community. The NYSED data show that 80.39% of students in CSD 5 schools are eligible for free or reduced lunch (FRL students). The economic difficulties of the last few years have had a disparate impact on Harlem. The *Columbia Spectator* reported in 2009 that in 2008 the unemployment rate in Community District 10 reached 18.7%, more than double the NYC average.⁹ On July 15, 2010, Harlem Talk Radio ran a segment on the continuing unemployment crisis in Harlem.¹⁰

There is pressing need for more high-quality schools in Harlem. Harlem is home to several excellent charter schools that serve about 20% of students in CSD 5. However, traditional public schools in CSD 5 have continued significantly to underperform NYC as a whole. In 2010 32.9% of CSD 5 students in third grade achieved level 3 or above in the NYS ELA test, compared with 46.5% in NYC as a whole, and 38.7% in math compared with 54.3% in NYC as a whole. In its 2011 Statement of Needs, Community Board 10 states, “all of the elementary and middle schools which fall within (the boundaries of the District) must improve their academic performance in order to gain the academic attractiveness that the students in the Community deserve”.¹¹ Parents know this, and there is a huge demand for charter school places in Harlem. For example, last year 7,000 families applied for 1,100 places in the Harlem Success Academies. Kim Gittleson of Gotham Schools reported that only 18% of applicants to charter schools in Harlem in 2008/2009 were admitted compared with approximately 30% in the South Bronx, which also has a concentration of charter schools.¹²

Central Harlem has a higher percentage of students with disabilities than NYC as a whole. The NYSED data does not include data for the percentage of students with disabilities in CSD 5 as a whole. However, an analysis of the school demographic data on the website of the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) shows that of the 15 traditional public schools in CSD 5 that serve elementary grades, only two have percentages of students with disabilities that are lower than the NYC average of 12.45%. Five have 20% or more students with disabilities. This includes students in all settings, including self-contained classrooms. There is a pressing need for more charter school options for students with disabilities in Harlem. There is currently no charter elementary school in CSD 5 for which data is available that has a population of students with disabilities that is greater than 11% except for Harlem Success Academy II where 14% of the students have IEPs.

There is a pressing need for specialized programs for students with ASD in Harlem. Currently, the ASD Nest program is the only full inclusion specialized public school program for ASD students and operates in only four locations in Manhattan. NCSH will offer the first full inclusion specialized program for ASD students in CSD 5, serving 15% of our total student population. These students will be admitted through a lottery set-aside, described below. The number of individuals diagnosed with ASD has increased dramatically over the last two decades. The latest data (December 2009) from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) estimates that approximately 1% of children have ASD.¹³ We requested specific data about the number of students with a diagnosis of ASD in CSD 5 from the Superintendent of the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) District 75, which serves students with disabilities, but she was unable to provide it. However, using the prevalence data from the CDC study described in Section III.g. and an additional CDC study of the prevalence of high-functioning autism in five counties in metropolitan Atlanta,¹⁴ we estimate that approximately 200 children in greater Harlem (CSDs 4 and 5) are likely to have ASD and be sufficiently high functioning that they can access a general education curriculum. This estimate has been confirmed by our advisor Dr. Charles Cartwright (see Section III). We

⁹ <http://www.columbiaspectator.com/2009/03/30/harlem-hit-hard-rising-unemployment-rates>

¹⁰ <http://www.harlemtalkradio.com/community-news/town-hall-the-unemployment-crisis-3>

¹¹ <http://www.nyc.gov/html/mancb10/html/about/needs.shtml>

¹² <http://gothamschools.org/2010/04/14/charter-school-lottery-statistics>

¹³ <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/ss5810a1.htm>

¹⁴ Yeargin-Allsopp et al. “Prevalence of Autism in a US Metropolitan Area.” *Journal of the American Medical Association*, January 2003. We used this study because it is the only study to date of the prevalence of *high-functioning* autism in an urban area.

have included both CSDs in our calculation because the extensive outreach and identification program, described in this Section, will include working directly with several organizations serving pre-school children with disabilities that have a presence in CSD 4 and other low-income neighborhoods. These organizations, described below, have all confirmed the pressing need for our program. We will give preference to students living in CSD 5, as required by law, but we expect that our specialized program will attract students from other, neighboring CSDs.

NCSH's targeted outreach to FRL students, students with disabilities and ELLs and to families who are traditionally less informed about educational choice options will ensure that we recruit higher percentages of these students than traditional public schools in CSD 5. NCSH will use a range of strategies to reach families with varying needs throughout the community. Because there are several charter schools in Central Harlem, many families are well-informed about the application process. We will reach these families through (i) the email list that we have already compiled, which includes more than 200 families with young children who have expressed an interest in our school, (ii) the email list of the Hue-Man Bookstore in Harlem, owned by a member of the planning team, which includes more than 30,000 people, (iii) the very active website Harlem4 Kids in which we participate and (iv) informational literature distributed at education fairs in Harlem, community centers, apartment complexes, Head Start programs, daycare centers, local businesses and churches. All informational literature will be translated into Spanish and French.

NCSH will hold informational meetings in locations where parents gather, to attract and recruit FRL students, ELLs and families who are traditionally less informed about educational options. In order to reach families who are traditionally less informed about educational options, including FRL students and ELLs, we will also conduct informational meetings at locations where parents gather. These include daycare centers, Head Start programs, community centers and public housing complexes. We have established a relationship with the Children's Village, an organization that works with struggling families in Harlem and we will make a presentation at the community center that they operate at Polo Grounds Housing Community. We will also make a presentation at the Greater Refuge Temple, a very large and vibrant church on 124th St with which we have established a relationship. We have visited seven Head Start and other daycare programs in Harlem, one of which is located in St Nicholas Houses, a very large public housing complex in Central Harlem. The directors of each of these programs are eager to help us publicize NCSH to families. We will continue to visit Head Start programs and daycare centers in Central Harlem over the course of this year so that all of the directors are familiar with our school by the time that we start recruiting students.

NCSH will work with Spanish and French speakers to recruit non-English speaking families in their own language. We have enlisted two volunteers to help us reach Spanish and French speaking families. One is a native Spanish speaker and the other is a former Peace Corps volunteer in Mali, West Africa, who speaks French, Bambara, the indigenous language of large parts of Mali, and some Wolof, the indigenous language of large parts of Senegal. One of the members of the planning team is also a native Spanish speaker. We will work with these volunteers to make contact with Dominican and West African community organizations such as the Alianza Dominica and the ADCP (Community Association of Progressive Dominicans) as well as the African Mosque on 116th Street in Harlem and the Senegalese Association of America. We have compiled a list of Spanish language daycare centers in Harlem, and have visited three of them, including La Familia Unida, run by the Alianza Dominica, to introduce our school to the directors. We will visit others during the course of the year. We will recruit and train local college students who speak Spanish or French and, preferably, are members of the local communities, to make presentations to parents at daycare programs and other locations such as Spanish language churches and the African Mosque during the winter vacation before the school opens.

NCSH will work with partner organizations to recruit students who have a diagnosis of ASD. NCSH will reserve eight places in each grade for high-functioning students on the autism spectrum using a lottery set-aside (the ASD Set-Aside). We have consulted with an experienced charter school lawyer in designing our lottery procedures and will work with the NYSED to ensure legal compliance. Some ASD students will be referred to us by organizations that serve pre-school children with disabilities. We have

established relationships with seven such organizations including the Northside Center for Child development in Harlem and the Early Childhood Direction Center at New York Presbyterian Hospital, which works with Harlem families. The other organizations, including YAI and the Seaver Autism Center at Mount Sinai Hospital, work with families throughout Manhattan. All have told us that there is a pressing need for schools like our and have agreed to refer families to us.¹⁵ Children who are referred by partner organizations will be evaluated based on the criteria referred to in the next section, using existing evaluation reports if available.

NCSH will also recruit students for the ASD Set-Aside who have not yet been given a formal diagnosis of ASD. There is evidence that autism is identified two to three years later in African-American and low-income communities than in more affluent areas.¹⁶ The ASD Nest Program, which is NYCDOE's only specialized full inclusion program for high-functioning ASD students, admits only students who have already been identified as having an autism spectrum disorder before entering kindergarten. As a result, low-income students are seriously underrepresented in the program. With the help of Dr. Charles Cartwright of YAI (see Section III), NCSH has developed a comprehensive outreach program to reach families whose children have not been given a formal diagnosis of ASD. These children will be evaluated using detailed, objective criteria designed by Dr. Cartwright and based on widely used diagnostic tests.¹⁷ YAI personnel will conduct the evaluation and will determine whether an applicant meets the criteria. All of our informational material and all of our presentations at informational meetings will include a description in everyday language of the symptoms of an autism spectrum disorder. Parents who believe that their children may have an ASD will be invited to contact a coordinator employed by NCSH who will work closely with the family during the evaluation process. Admitted students who have been identified by YAI as having an ASD but do not yet have an IEP will be referred to the Committee of Special Education (CSE) of residence for evaluation.

NCSH will recruit students with other disabilities. All of our informational material and presentations at informational meetings will include information about the school's program of supports for students with disabilities of all kinds and the families of such students will be encouraged to apply to the school.

NCSH will adopt specific targets for the enrollment and retention of FRL students, ELLs and students with disabilities. These targets will be adopted in consultation with NYSED and will at least equal the corresponding percentages in CSD 5. The Head of School will report enrollment numbers for these categories of students to the board each fall as soon as practicable after school opens and again in the spring. If the percentage of students in any of these categories is lower than the target percentage in the fall, the Head of School will be required to prepare and present to the board a written outreach plan designed specifically to recruit students who belong to the underrepresented group during the recruitment period that will start in the following January. If any of the targeted categories is persistently underrepresented we will consider adding a lottery preference.

NCSH will serve and retain all of our students, including students with disabilities, students who enter the school well below grade level, ELLs and FRL students by doing whatever it takes to meet their individual needs. All of our students will participate in a rigorous academic program aligned with NYS standards. This program is described in more detail in Section III. A culture of high expectations, a longer school day and year, extended time for literacy and math and data-driven instruction are all elements of our program that will allow us to "meet each student where she is". In addition we will use a variety of specific, research-based instructional strategies to ensure that all of our students will maximize their academic potential. These include:

Our low student/teacher ratio will allow us to "meet each student where she is." We will have three classes in each grade, each of which will be a CTT classroom, with a special education teacher and a general education teacher. ASD students have multiple deficits and high needs and will be served in two

¹⁵ We will provide letters from all of these organizations to the NYSED

¹⁶ Alison Cook. "Autism Diagnosis Comes Later for Blacks than Whites"
http://reuters.com/news_article.jhtml?type=healthnews&StoryID=1731010

¹⁷ We will provided a detailed description of the criteria and evaluation process to the NYSED

very small classrooms in each grade. The composition of these classes is based on the research-based and proven model used by the ASD Nest program. In kindergarten, the ASD classes will have four ASD students and eight students who do not have ASD (but may be ELLs and/or have other disabilities.) In first grade the number of students who do not have ASD will rise to twelve, and we will add another ASD student in third grade. The third class in each grade will have 25 students. This class will have a teaching assistant as well as two certified teachers so that the student/teacher ratio is comparable with the ASD classes. We will take great care to ensure that students are assigned to the classroom that best meets their individual needs. The leadership team will review the composition of each class with teachers on an ongoing basis.

NCSH will differentiate instruction to meet the individual learning needs of each of our students. Teachers will use frequent formative assessments to continuously monitor their students' learning. Using the work of Carol Tomlinson, co-teachers in the classroom will plan instructional strategies and curricular modifications that address each student's individual learning needs under the supervision of the Director of Curriculum and Instruction. Strategies will include providing tiered practice and assessments so that all students will be able to understand essential concepts and acquire essential skills, providing more time, either in class or as part of homework, for students who need it and compacting or exempting students from assignments that they have mastered. Our staffing plan will allow teachers to work with small groups during much of the day. Students will be assigned to groups based on their specific needs but group membership will be flexible depending on the activity involved. Students may also be paired or assigned to work alone to solidify understanding in ways that are efficient for them.

NCSH will use a comprehensive, research-based Response to Intervention program to identify and provide individualized support to students who are struggling. NCSH will use an RTI model to address the needs of students who are at-risk or struggling academically. Diagnostic assessments at the beginning of each year and frequent formative assessments will allow teachers to identify quickly any student who appears to be struggling. The teacher will refer a struggling student to the Student Support Team (SST), consisting of the student's two classroom teachers, the Director of Curriculum and Instruction (DCI) and the Director of Special Education (DSE). If the SST determines that a student is in need of intervention, the DCI will assign the student to RTI level 1 and will prepare a written intervention plan in consultation with the classroom teachers. The plan will have specific goals and a timeline. Teachers will provide differentiated instruction targeted to the students' weaknesses in the classroom setting. In level 2, students who continue to struggle will work in small homogeneous groups in the classroom during extended literacy and math blocks. These students will receive systematic, explicit instruction in the areas where they struggle, using curricula that address their specific weaknesses.¹⁸ Classroom teachers will continuously monitor their progress and adjust instruction accordingly. Teachers will again refer students who, after a period of intervention in level 2 are still not meeting the goals set out in their individual intervention plans, to the SST. The SST will determine whether the student appears to have a disability, in which case the student will be referred to the appropriate Committee on Special Education (CSE) for evaluation. The SST will assign students who need more intensive intervention to meet their goals to level 3. These students will work with a teacher outside the classroom during the school day, after school or on Saturday mornings for an extended period, in small groups of not more than three students. The DCI will be accountable for monitoring and maintaining records of the progress of all students assigned to RTI and will report to the board on the effectiveness of the program regularly.

NCSH will comply with federal and state law with respect to the identification of ELLs. The parents of students who are admitted will be asked to complete the Home Language Questionnaire (HLQ) provided by the NYCDOE's Office of Bilingual Education (OBE). The HLQ will be provided in Spanish, French or another language if appropriate. A student will be considered as a potential ELL if the survey indicates that:

- A language other than English is spoken at home;

¹⁸ We will use the Practice Guide *Assisting Students Struggling with Reading* published by the What Works Clearinghouse to help guide our selection of literacy intervention programs.

- The student is foreign-born and speaks or understands a language other than English;
- The student speaks or understands a foreign language because of foreign ancestry;
- English is spoken in the student’s home but the student speaks a language other than English because of foreign birth or ancestry.

If the results show that one of the above criteria is met, a member of the school staff will interview the student and his or her parents to determine the level of the student’s proficiency in spoken English, using the sample questions provided by the OBE.

An incoming student who is found to speak a language other than English at home and who speaks little or no English will be assessed using the Language Assessment Battery Revised (LAB-R). Any student who scores below proficient level will be assigned to the school’s ELL program. During the orientation period before school starts, each student assigned to the ELL program will be assessed in his or her native language for proficiency in reading, writing and math, so as to establish a baseline level. An ELL student who is suspected of having a disability at any time will be also assessed academically in his or her native language to determine if the suspected disability arises from his or her lack of proficiency in English. The student’s performance will be evaluated using the same standards for referral that are used for native English speakers.

NCSH will assess the developing language proficiency of ELLs regularly. All students identified as ELL will take the NYS English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT) annually to evaluate their proficiency. Students will also participate in all assessments administered as a regular part of the school’s educational program. Teachers will disaggregate and analyze the results of all of these assessments regularly and will modify instruction accordingly. The DCI will be responsible for monitoring and for maintaining records of all students in the ELL program and will report to the board regularly on the effectiveness of the program. Students whose proficiency in English has progressed sufficiently to allow them to be transferred out of the program will be referred by their classroom teachers to a review panel. The panel will consist of both classroom teachers, the Director of Curriculum and Instruction and specialized bilingual education staff, if any. The panel will review the most recent results of the NYSESLAT and of all regular assessments and will decide if the student should be transitioned out of the program. Classroom teachers will continue to monitor the progress of students transitioned out of the program using written checklists and observations.

NCSH will bring ELLs to proficiency in English quickly using a structured immersion model. Students in structured immersion programs have consistently scored higher than students enrolled in traditional bilingual programs and NYC charter schools such as the KIPP schools and Bronx Prep have successfully used this model. ELL students will be taught the same curriculum as English-speaking students and will be expected to achieve the same high standards. They will have full access to all of the programs and services of the school and will not be assigned to special education based on their inability to speak English. ASD students who are also ELLs will be assigned to an ASD classroom and will receive the same supports as other ASD students in these classrooms. ELLs who have other disabilities will receive the same services as other students with disabilities. All instruction will be in English. However, teachers will be trained in strategies to meet the needs of ELL students and will use differentiated instruction to ensure that students are able to comprehend content. Initial training in the instructional practices and techniques described in the guide entitled *The Teaching of Language Arts to Limited English Proficient/English Language Learners: A Resource Guide for all Teachers* published by the OBE. If necessary, depending on the profile of our ELL students, we will hire or contract trained bilingual education personnel to “push-in” specialized services for ELL students. The DCI will have overall responsibility for coordinating and monitoring the ELL program and will report to the Board regularly on the effectiveness of the program.

NCSH will provide specialized supports for students with disabilities. NCSH will devote significant resources to the special education program. Classroom teachers will refer students who may have a disability to the SST as described above. If the SST believes that a student may have a disability, the DSE will promptly refer the student to the CSE of residence for evaluation. We will work closely with CSEs to develop challenging IEP goals for all of our special education students, including academic and also non-

academic goals, where appropriate. Special education teachers in each classroom will work with general education teachers to develop specific modifications and instructional strategies targeted to the individual needs of each student. The special education program (including the ASD program) will be overseen by the DSE. The DSE will be responsible for disaggregating and analyzing assessment data for students with disabilities, for maintaining IEP records and for ensuring compliance with federal and state law with respect to students with disabilities. The DSE will report to the board regularly on the effectiveness of the program for students with disabilities.

NCSH will provide a comprehensive research-based program of supports for ASD students. Autism spectrum disorders are characterized by impairments in the areas of socialization, communication and restrictive and repetitive interests and behaviors. Although many students with high functioning autism are capable of accessing the general education curriculum, many nevertheless struggle with understanding abstract concepts, inferring, organizing, planning, evaluating and synthesizing information, considering perspective and understanding figurative language as well as understanding expected social behavior, and developing social skills, social communication, and social relationships. Our program will address the unique needs of these learners using a variety of strategies, including classroom modifications, visual supports, replacement of behaviors that interfere with learning, clarifying social expectations and many others. All ASD students will take Social Development Intervention (SDI) classes taught by staff speech and language pathologists. These classes encourage interaction, address pragmatic language weaknesses and provide explicit instruction in academic and social problem-solving, social cognition and self-regulation.

NCSH will ensure student retention by working closely with parents. We will retain our students if their families are comfortable communicating with and visiting the school are confident that their students' needs are being met. We will earn this confidence in various ways including requiring that teachers call parents at least twice a month and that they seek input from parents about their students' needs and interests as well as informing them about progress. Administrators will supervise breakfast and will meet parents informally as they drop off their students. Parents will be invited to evening "learn with your student" workshops where teachers will explain academic goals for their students and will take sample assessments with them. Parents of students with disabilities will be offered specialized workshops. All written materials will be translated into families' home languages and translators will be available at school events.

III. SCHOOL DESIGN

NCSH's school design will accomplish the eligibility criteria by combining two research-based and proven models. There is no single definition of a "no excuses" school and consequently no single study of the effectiveness of schools using this model. There is, however, a growing body of evidence that schools that share many of the "no excuses" practices that we will implement are unusually effective in raising student achievement in urban student populations. Examples of this evidence include Samuel Casey Carter's 2000 study,¹⁹ Abigail and Stephen Thernstrom's 2003 book,²⁰ the Mathematica study of the KIPP schools²¹ and the studies of New York City schools, many of which are "no excuses" schools, conducted by Dr Caroline Hoxby²² and the Center for Research on Educational Outcomes at Stanford University.²³ Our program for ASD students is also researched based and proven. It is based on the very successful ASD Nest program that opened in one NYCDOE elementary school in NYC in 2003 and currently operates in 14 NYCDOE elementary schools. Kristie Koenig, an Assistant Professor at New York University is conducting a formal evaluation of the ASD Nest program. She has stated that "initial qualitative and quantitative data provide evidence of an effective program that is addressing parent

¹⁹ Samuel Casey Carter: *No Excuses: Lessons from 21 High-Performing, High-Poverty Schools*: Heritage Foundation 2000

²⁰ Abigail and Stephen Thernstrom. *Closing the Racial Gap in Learning*. Simon and Schuster 2003

²¹ Tuttle et al. *Student Characteristics and Achievement in 22 KIPP Middle Schools*. Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. 2010

²² Caroline M. Hoxby, Sonali Murarka & Jenny Kang, "How New York City's Charter Schools Affect Achievement." New York City Charter Schools Evaluation Project (Sept. 2009)

²³ CREDO. *Charter School Performance in New York City*. Stanford University 2010

concerns, with successful academic, social and behavioral outcomes [...]All students in [the cohort studied] demonstrated mastery of academic goals and advanced to the next grade level in an ASD Nest classroom.”²⁴ There is also anecdotal evidence that parents of ASD students are highly satisfied with their students’ progress²⁵ and that parents of students who do not have ASD often specifically ask for their students to be assigned to ASD classrooms.²⁶

NCSH’s founding group has the capacity to accomplish the eligibility criteria. The founding group has all the skills that are necessary to establish and oversee a successful charter school that fulfills the eligibility criteria. Its members have the following experience and skills:

Charter school experience. Ruth Meyler has served on three charter school boards over a period of more than 12 years. She and Gail Brousal were founding board members of Leadership Prep Charter School, a highly successful charter school in Bedford-Stuyvesant in Brooklyn and were actively involved in planning and establishing the school. Marva Allen and Ruth Meyler are board members of St Hope Leadership Academy Charter School, a charter middle school in Harlem.

Educational expertise. Gail Brousal was the Head of the Upper School at St Ann’s School in Brooklyn for more than 30 years. David Tinagero is currently the Principal of Mott Hall Bronx High School a successful traditional public school in the Bronx and has extensive experience in curriculum development at various grade levels.

Non-profit governance and fund-raising skills. Ruth Meyler, Gail Brousal, Marva Allen, Patricia Soussloff and Angela Bronner Helm are or have been members of other non-profit boards. Patricia Soussloff is currently the Board Chair of Partnership with Children, a non-profit that provides social and emotional support to at-risk children and youth. All five have been involved in fund-raising for their respective organizations.

Legal, financial and real estate expertise. Ruth Meyler and Patricia Soussloff are both lawyers and Patricia has experience in special education law. Adam Rashid is an expert in financial analysis and Sharon Joseph is also a finance professional. Everardo Jefferson is an architect with school design experience. Erik Dowling is an expert in real estate finance.

Close ties to the Harlem community. Four members of the planning team live in and/or have close ties to the Harlem community. Marva Allen is the owner of the Hue-Man Bookstore, which is a community hub in Harlem, and is one of the founders of The Power of One, a community organization that promotes small business in Harlem. Sharon Joseph is a Harlem resident and parent, a member of Community Board 10 and the owner of a bowling alley in Harlem. Angela Bronner Helm is a Harlem resident and parent and is a journalist with *Uptown Magazine*, based in Harlem. Derek Fleming is a Harlem resident and is the Director of Business Development for the Marcus Samuelsson Group. He has recently completed the development of the Red Rooster restaurant that has just opened in Harlem.

In addition the following advisors are working with the planning team:

Dorothy Siegel is one of the founders of the ASD Nest program and is currently its Director.

Dr Charles Cartwright is the Director of the Autism Center of the Young Adult Network (YAI) a nationally know non-profit serving children and adults with developmental disorders.

Lauren Hough was formally a teacher in the ASD Nest program and is now creating and implementing professional development programs for teachers in the ASD Nest program as a Research Associate at New York University.

III. a. *NCSH will increase student achievement and decrease student achievement gaps in reading/language arts by focusing relentlessly on literacy.* Literacy is the key academic skill on which knowledge acquisition is based. It has been well-established since the 1998 National Research Council report *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children* that reading proficiency in third grade is a strong predictor of high school graduation. It is also known that an average low-income child is exposed

²⁴ Koenig, Bleiweiss, Brennan, Cohen and Siegel. “A Model for Inclusive Public Education for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders.” Teaching Exceptional Children Sept/Oct 2009.

²⁵ See, for example, the blog post by Marni Goltsman on the *Inside Schools* website. <http://insideschools.org/blog/author/marni/>

²⁶ Reported by our advisors Dorothy Siegel and Lauren Hough

to approximately 30 million fewer words than a child from a more affluent family and arrives in kindergarten with approximately half the vocabulary.²⁷ In order to overcome these deficits, NCSH will focus relentlessly on literacy. We will maximize time for learning and practice by devoting at least 120 minutes to literacy each day. Our reading program will be based on the five components of literacy identified by the Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement; phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension.²⁸ At the core of the NCSH language arts curriculum is the belief that children learn to read and write by reading and writing. Managed within a workshop format, based on Teachers College Reading and Writing Project (TCRW), NCSH will adopt the Balanced Literacy Approach based on the work of Marie Clay. Most importantly, Balanced Literacy is designed to meet the individual needs of each student within a general education classroom. With a long record of success in raising academic achievement in urban populations, the Balanced Literacy Approach is extensively used in the NYC public schools.²⁹ The program systematically addresses each of the elements of literacy by explicitly teaching phonics, and decoding skills as well as vocabulary and comprehension using a variety of instructional methods, including read-aloud, shared reading, guided reading and partner reading. NCSH teachers will plan lessons based on their assessments of students' reading and writing abilities so that each student is appropriately challenged and supported through the learning process. To further support literacy development NCSH will use other research-based programs as needed. Students who are slower to acquire any of the five components will receive targeted intensive intervention using research-based intervention programs such as Wilson Reading Program. We will build our students' vocabulary skills using a vocabulary program such as TextTalk. We will also emphasize independent reading from second grade on because research has shown that the best way to build vocabulary is to read extensively.³⁰ Fundamental to NCSH's approach to language arts instruction is the expectation that students will explore their interests by selecting their own books to read from extensive classroom libraries and topics on which to write and share with others. Therefore, our students in second grade and above will have at least 20 minutes a day of independent reading and a further 30 minutes of required reading at home. Our writing program will be based on the workshop model developed as part of TCRW. This writing program is closely coordinated with the reading program and uses mini-lessons, workshops and interactive writing.

NCSH will increase student achievement and decrease student achievement gaps in mathematics by focusing relentlessly on numeracy. NCSH will devote at least 90 minutes a day to math, using Everyday Mathematics as our primary curriculum. This research-based curriculum balances direct instruction in mathematical facts and skills with developing conceptual understanding. It is one of only two elementary math programs among 76 surveyed that were found by the US Department of Education's *What Works Clearinghouse* to have "evidence of positive or potentially positive effects for at least one improvement outcome".³¹ Everyday Mathematics uses a spiraling approach, providing multiple exposures to important concepts and skills, often over more than one grade level. While we believe that this approach is important in promoting long-term retention, it has been criticized on the basis that it does not provide enough time for practicing each skill as it is learned. We will supplement Everyday Mathematics by adding more time for practice. To support the diverse needs of our learners we are also considering using other research based programs such as TERC Investigations in Number, Data and Space which focuses on in-depth understanding of content and provides opportunities to practice skills and concepts in a variety of ways and in different contexts and Stern Structural Arithmetic, which is based on reasoning and insight into mathematical relationships, not on rote learning and counting.

NCSH will increase student achievement and decrease student achievement gaps in reading/language arts and mathematics by using the proven best practices of successful schools. As demonstrated by the

²⁷ Hart and Risely: *The Early Catastrophe: The 30 Million Word Gap by Age 3*: American Educator. Spring 2003

²⁸ Bonnie B. Ambruster et al. *Put Reading First – The Research Building Blocks for Teaching Children to Read*. Center for Improvement of Early Reading Achievement. 2001

²⁹ <http://www.tc.columbia.edu/news/article.htm?id=7498>

³⁰ Bill Honig. *Teaching Our Children to Read*. Corwin Press. 2000

³¹ <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/reports/Topicarea.aspx?tid=04>

findings of The New York City Charter School Evaluation Project³² directed by Caroline Hoxby, NYC charter schools have been successful in raising student achievement and closing the achievement gap. While the changes in testing and scoring introduced by NYSED last year have changed the achievement profiles of all public schools, some charter schools have, nevertheless, continued significantly to outperform the NYC average, while enrolling higher percentages of African-American students and students eligible for free or reduced lunch than the NYC average. These schools, including the Harlem Success, Achievement First and KIPP schools and the schools managed by Uncommon Schools, Inc. (USI) share a number of best practices, including many of those identified by Dr. Hoxby as being statistically correlated with academic achievement. NCSH will adopt many of the best practices of these schools.

A longer school day and year will provide more time for learning. The school day will start at 8:00 a.m. after breakfast and will extend until 4:00 p.m. This schedule offers 70 minutes a day of additional instructional time compared with a typical traditional public elementary school where the instructional day starts at 8:25 a.m. and dismissal is at 3:15p.m. The school year will be at least 195 days, 15 days longer than the DOE’s 180-day calendar. In addition there will be an orientation period in August before school starts during which parents and students will meet teachers, learn about academic goals and be introduced to school routines and expectations. Students will take diagnostic tests during orientation. Our students will have significantly more time than their peers in NYCDOE schools to master the NYS standards in ELS and math.

A school culture that emphasizes academic excellence and challenges students to achieve.

One of the most important drivers of school quality is a school culture where every adult member holds him or herself accountable for student achievement and where students are confident that they will learn and hold themselves accountable for their own learning. All of the elements described in this section will contribute to establishing this culture. The Head of School will be specifically accountable for creating and nurturing a culture of excellence and for reinforcing it through professional development.

An orderly and supportive school environment that allows students to concentrate on learning. Many studies have identified a safe and orderly school environment as a key factor in school quality. From the first day of school we will create clear and consistent expectations for student behavior that are consistently enforced throughout the day (taking into account the special needs of students with disabilities). We will reinforce expectations by creating a system of “small rewards/small punishment discipline.” This is one of the charter school characteristics identified by Dr. Hoxby as positively correlated with high achievement.

A data-driven instructional model. Frequent assessments will allow instructional staff to continuously monitor student learning, identify problems quickly and plan appropriate interventions and modifications. All teachers will learn how to analyze assessment data effectively during the two-week professional development period in the summer before school starts. Co-teachers in each classroom will be responsible for analysis of their own data, under the supervision of the DCI, and will be required to organize it by individual question, by standard, by individual student and by whole class. The Director of Curriculum and Instruction will provide a framework for data analysis and will be responsible for ensuring that analysis is consistent and complies with the framework. Teachers will analyze data on a timely basis during weekly two-hour professional development blocks and during “data days” following interim assessments. Teachers will be required to prepare re-teaching action plans for individual students and for the whole class, including implementation timelines. The DCI will review re-teaching plans and ensure that timelines are met. (See Section III.d.)

Students who are already meeting standards will be challenged to achieve mastery. Curricula and instructional methods will promote higher-order thinking and the development of critical thinking skills for all of our students and will be differentiated to allow proficient students to move faster. In addition, inquiry-based curricula in Science and Social Studies and Writing Workshops will allow all students to

³² Caroline M. Hoxby, Sonali Murarka & Jenny Kang. *How New York City’s Charter Schools Affect Achievement*. New York City Charter Schools Evaluation Project (Sept. 2009)

deepen their understanding. As the school grows we will add after-school enrichment activities such as interest-based clubs for all students.

Teachers will be trained in instructional methods that increase academic achievement. Teachers will be trained in the Taxonomy of Effective Teaching Practices created by Doug Lemov of USI. This taxonomy is based on years of observation of teachers who are particularly effective at increasing student achievement and includes specific techniques, illustrated by video clips.

Ongoing intensive professional development will continuously improve teachers' knowledge and skills. NCSH has allocated significant resources to professional development. The school year includes the equivalent of twenty-one professional development days in the first year of operation, including two full weeks in August before school starts and two hours of embedded professional development each week. Professional development will be targeted to the specific needs of our students, identified by data analysis.

Partnership with students' families will involve them in student learning and encourage them to support academic achievement at home. NCSH will involve parents in their children's education in multiple ways. Teachers will be required to call parents or guardians at least twice a month to report on progress and achievement as well as any concerns. Written progress reports will be sent home at regular intervals and teachers will hold conferences with parents and guardians at least twice a year. NCSH will also host regular curriculum evenings during which parents and guardians will have an opportunity to experience learning along with their students and will be introduced to activities that they can use to advance their student's learning at home. Professional staff will provide regular workshops for the parents of students with ASD and parents will also have access to specialized workshops provided by our partner, YAI. NCSH will reserve a position on the board of trustees for a parent of a student in the school.

NCSH will reduce conduct problems and promote academic achievement by emphasizing social and emotional learning.

There is evidence that deficits in social and emotional skills contribute to the achievement gap. Self-regulation skills, in particular, are increasingly being linked to academic achievement. Deborah J. Leong and Elena Bodrova stated in a 2006 article "There is growing evidence that many children, especially those at-risk, begin school lacking the self-regulation necessary to succeed in school and life (Raver & Knitzer, 2002) and that this lack of self-regulation may have a great impact on how well children do in school and later life."³³ A recent study of 1,298 children from birth to first grade found that low-income children who learn to self-regulate have significantly higher reading, math and vocabulary achievement in first grade.³⁴ *Science Daily* reported on April 28, 2010 that this study "adds to the mounting evidence that self-regulation -- or children's ability to control their behavior and impulses -- is directly related to academic performance."³⁵ NCSH will use a social and emotional learning (SEL) program such as Responsive Classroom® to foster the social, emotional and academic growth of all students. Evidence shows that SEL programs improve students' social-emotional skills, attitudes about self and others, connection to school, positive social behavior, and academic performance, and reduces students' conduct problems and emotional distress.³⁶ CASEL rates Responsive Classroom as one of the most highly effective SEL programs.³⁷ The program will develop the core competencies of self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, relationship skills and responsible decision-making. ASD students often

³³ Deborah J. Leong and Elena Bodrova. "Developing self-regulation: the Vygotskian view." *Academic Exchange Quarterly* (Winter 2006).

³⁴ Michaella Sektan, Megan M. McClelland, Alan Acock, Frederick J. Morrison, "Relations between early family risk, children's behavioral regulation, and academic achievement.", *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* (2010)

³⁵ *Science Daily*, (April 28 2010).

³⁶ Payton, J., Weissberg, R.P., Durlak, J.A., Dymnicki, A.B., Taylor, R.D., Schellinger, K.B., & Pachan, M. (2008). *The positive impact of social and emotional learning for kindergarten to eighth-grade students: Findings from three scientific reviews*. Chicago, IL: Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning.

³⁷ The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) (March 2003). *An Educational Leader's Guide to Evidence-Based Social and Emotional Learning Programs*.

have very significant deficits in these areas and will receive specialized instruction during pull-out SDI classes. Techniques and language from SDI will be incorporated into our SEL curriculum to ensure school-wide consistency in addressing the social and emotional needs of all of our students.

III. b. Increase high school graduation rates

NCSH will not serve high school students but will use curricula and instructional methods that will prepare students for success in high school.

III. c. Focus on academic achievement of middle school student population

NCSH will not serve middle school students during its first charter period but will use curricula and instructional methods that will prepare students for success as they move into middle school during the second charter period.

III. d. NCSH will utilize a variety of high-quality assessments to measure understanding and critical application of concepts. Frequent, high-quality assessment is a key element of NCSH’s school design. The following table sets out the assessments that the NCSH plans to use for ELA and math, the information that will be provided by each, the way in which the information will be used to refine instruction and the schedule on which assessments will be administered.

Assessment	Information generated	Month
ELA diagnostic assessment (Fountas and Pinell or another research-based diagnostic test) Teacher-created Math diagnostic assessment	Provides baseline information to inform instruction	August
Teacher designed or embedded formative assessments (homework, quizzes, exit tickets etc.)	Provide quick information on student learning allowing the immediate adjustment of instruction	Daily and weekly
DIBELS – Grades K - 2	Assesses students’ phonemic awareness and decoding skills.	November, January, March
Teacher-created interim assessments.	Provide information about students’ progress towards goals. Provide information on content mastery, specific skills/standards that need to be re-taught or reviewed, content and standards that can be advanced and progress toward individual student academic goals, informs teachers’ weekly and unit lesson planning.	Every 6 weeks

Assessment	Information generated	Month
“Dress-rehearsal” ELA test – grades 3-5	Assesses proficiency in NYS standards and allows teachers to target instruction. Gives teachers and students an opportunity to prepare for high stakes tests and allows students to practice applying their knowledge. Allows teachers to address remediation needs prior to NYS high stakes assessment.	November
NYS ELA test – grades 3-5 NYS Math test –grades 3-5	Assesses students’ proficiency in NYS standards.	April May
Terra Nova	Measures student growth from year to year. Provides nationally normed information about student achievement. Provides a comparison with peers nationally. Provides a tool for discussion with parents about student performance. Allows the school to measure goals from a national perspective	Spring

Assessments will be of high quality. The Director of Curriculum and Instruction (DCI) will be accountable for ensuring that assessments are aligned to state standards and are rigorous, appropriately designed, consistent across classrooms at each grade level and are administered in accordance with the school’s assessment calendar.

Assessment data will be used in multiple ways to improve and modify instruction, to evaluate the effectiveness of individuals and programs and to engage students and parents in their own learning. The DCI will be responsible for overseeing the assessment program. However, teachers will be held accountable for analyzing their own data, after training as described in Section III. a., and under the supervision of the DCI.

Teachers will use assessment data (i) to understand, using individual question analysis, what individual students have learned and where they have weaknesses and to prepare differentiated re-teaching strategies, (ii) to understand which standards have not been met at the classroom level and prepare appropriate re-teaching strategies, (iii) to identify students who have understood the material so that they can be provided with more challenging material and (iv) to prioritize instructional time.

The leadership team will use assessment data (i) to compare teacher performance across classrooms and to identify areas in need of improvement, (ii) to identify professional development needs, (iii) to evaluate the effectiveness of NCSH’s chosen curricula and instruction methods and make modifications as necessary, (iv) to evaluate the effectiveness of the special education program, the ELL program and the RTI program on a school-wide basis and make modifications as necessary and (v) to evaluate teacher performance.

The board will review assessment data, presented in the form of a dashboard, at least four times a year. The board will use data (i) to monitor NCSH’s progress towards the goals set forth in its Charter, (ii) to monitor the progress of the programs for ELLs, students with disabilities, including ASD students, and students referred to the RTI program, (iii) to reallocate resources if necessary to ensure continuing academic progress and (iv) to evaluate the performance of the Head of School. Trustees who are members of the Accountability Committee will be required to attend a formal training in the analysis and interpretation of assessment data, provided by school staff or an outside organization.

NCSH will involve *students* in their own learning by designing age appropriate ways for them to understand and chart their own progress.

NCSH will also educate *parents* in the assessments used at school and the interpretation of assessment results during regular Learn with Your Student evenings. Teachers will discuss assessment data with parents during twice monthly telephone calls and parent meetings as needed to help parents understand their student's progress. Parents will receive written reports on their student's performance on the annual Terra Nova test and teachers will discuss these reports with them individually.

NCSH will regularly assess students' non-academic skills. We will regularly assess the effectiveness of our social and emotional learning program for all of our students, using the measures that are embedded in the Responsive Classroom program as well as school-created measures. Students with disabilities will be assessed using the measures specified in their IEPs, which may include commercially available assessments such as the Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scale and school-created observational rubrics.

III. e. *NCSH will increase implementation of local instructional improvement systems to assess and inform instructional practice, decision-making and effectiveness.* Our data collection, analysis and reporting systems will ensure that the school continuously evaluates and improves its staff, practices and programs. The board will have overall responsibility for ensuring that systems are in place that will provide useful, actionable data to inform instructional practice, decision-making and effectiveness. The board will hold the Head of School accountable for ensuring that these systems are implemented and used correctly and consistently and for ensuring that all reports to the board are timely and accurate.

Instruction will be data-driven. The system for collecting and analyzing academic achievement data and adjusting instruction based on data is described in Section III. d. The DCI will be primarily responsible for implementing this system under the supervision of the Head of School.

NCSH will continuously track and evaluate the effectiveness of its school-wide academic program. As described in Section III, the leadership team will be accountable for analyzing the data generated by the assessment program and using it to evaluate the school's curricula and instruction for all students. The leadership team will use this data to inform decisions about the academic program, including curricular modifications. Data will be disaggregated by gender, ethnicity and FRL status so that the leadership team can track the effectiveness of the academic program for each of these groups. Data will also be disaggregated by ELL and IEP status. The leadership team will also use assessment data to increase the effectiveness of instruction by identifying professional development needs school-wide and for individual teachers.

NCSH will continuously track and evaluate the effectiveness of its special programs for at-risk students
Effectiveness of the Response to Intervention program. The system for tracking and evaluating the RTI program for students who are struggling academically is described in Section II B. The DCI will be accountable for implementing this program, working with the SST.

Effectiveness of the ELL program. The system for tracking and evaluating the effectiveness of the ELL program is described in Section II B. The DCI will be accountable for implementing this program.

Effectiveness of instruction for special education students. The system for setting IEP goals for ASD students and other special education students, for assessing progress and making modifications as necessary and for reporting on student progress is described in Section II. B. The DSE will be accountable for implementing this system.

Effectiveness of the ASD Program. The system for tracking the progress and evaluating the effectiveness of the ASD program is described in Sections II. B. The DSE will be accountable for implementing this system.

NCSH will implement operational systems that support instruction. The Director of Operations (DOO) will be accountable for implementing an attendance tracking system, keeping a log of disciplinary referrals, designing parent and teacher surveys in collaboration with the leadership team, administering the surveys and analyzing the results, and collecting and analyzing other operational data requested by Head of School or by the board.

NCSH will implement systems for hiring, supporting and evaluating instructional staff.

Head of School. The board regards the hiring and evaluation of the Head of School, and supporting the Head of School by ensuring that he or she has the resources needed, as one of its key responsibilities. The planning team has developed a detailed job description for the Head of School, has circulated it widely in the charter school community, has interviewed several candidates and continues to meet with candidates. If we have not identified a Head of School by the time we are notified that our application will be recommended to the Regents, the planning team will start a formal search. We will use the networks of New Leaders for New Schools, Building Excellent schools, Teach for America, other school leadership programs such as the New York City principal development program and the program at Teachers College of Columbia University, as well as advertising on websites such as the New York City Charter School Center, the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, K 12 Connect, Idealist.org, LINKed and Opportunitynocs.com.

Evaluation of the Head of School. The planning team has developed a detailed rubric for evaluating the Head of School. The evaluation process is designed to ensure continuous improvement by (i) annually setting measurable goals, which will include the goals set out in the school's Charter and additional specific goals relating to areas for growth identified through data analysis, (ii) providing informal feedback to the Head of School regularly, (iii) requiring a written self-evaluation, including a reflection on progress towards goals, twice a year, (v) providing written evaluations twice a year, including a personal professional development plan to strengthen weaknesses and build on areas of strength.

The leadership team and teachers. The Head of School will be accountable for hiring, supporting and evaluating the leadership team and for hiring teachers in collaboration with the DCI and the DSE. The planning team has developed detailed job descriptions and hiring plans, and a detailed evaluation rubric for each of these positions. The evaluation process for the DCI and DSE will include an evaluation against the goals set out in Charter and additional specific goals relating to areas for growth identified through data analysis. The evaluation process for teachers is designed to ensure continuous improvement by (i) setting measurable goals for student achievement goals at the beginning of each year, (ii) observing teachers frequently and providing informal feedback that they can act upon immediately, (iii) conducting formal teacher observations with written feedback quarterly, (iv) requiring a written self-evaluation, including a reflection on progress towards goals, twice a year and (v) providing written evaluations twice a year, including a personal professional development plan to strengthen weaknesses and build on areas of strength.

The board will carry out its oversight responsibilities by regularly reviewing data generated by each of these systems. The data provided regularly to the board will include, at a minimum (i) results of interim assessments, DIBELS assessments in grades K-2, "dress rehearsal" assessments, NYS tests and the Terra Nova test, (ii) attendance, (iii) disciplinary referrals, (iv) enrollment, (v) student and teacher retention and (vi) parent and teacher satisfaction. In addition, the board will require (i) an oral report from the Head of School about the state of the school at every meeting, (ii) an oral report from the DSE at least twice a year on the program for special education students, including ASD students. (iii) an oral report from the DCI at least twice a year on the program for ELL students and (iii) additional data and information as needed to ensure that NCSH is making progress towards its academic and non-academic goals. The Accountability Committee of the board will meet with the Head of School monthly to review all data that relates to the school's progress towards its goals set out in the Charter.

The board will ensure that resources are allocated optimally to increase academic achievement. The board will regularly monitor the allocation of all of the resources of the school including financial resources, human resources and the resources of time and physical space to ensure that all they are being used optimally to support academic achievement. The board will reallocate resources if data indicates that their use is not optimal. The principle mechanism for the allocation of resources will be the annual budget.

The Head of School will be accountable for the day-to-day management of the school. The Head of School will be hired by and will report to the board and will be accountable to the board for the overall management of the school, namely determining and implementing the academic program and operational

procedures of the school, for managing the school's finances, for day-to-day administration and for establishing the procedures by which the policies established by the Board will be implemented.

III. f. NCSH will partner with low-performing local schools to share best practices

NCSH will partner with one or more low-performing elementary schools in CSD 5 to share best practices in designing and implementing an effective SEL program. The planning team has reviewed the publicly available information for the 15 traditional public elementary schools located in CSD 5. Of these schools, all except one have free and reduced lunch percentages of 80% or more and all except three have NYS test scores that underperform the NYC average, often by significant margins. Six schools received a grade of D on the Student Performance section of their 2009/2010 Progress Reports and two schools scored an F on this section. The Head of School will review the available information again once NCSH is open and will identify one or more schools that appear to be good candidates for a partnership based on the following criteria:

- The school is “low-performing.” This term is not defined in the Charter School Law as amended. If it has not been defined by the time that NCSH opens NCSH will seek guidance from the Authorizer.
- 80% or more of the school's students are eligible for free or reduced lunch.
- It appears from the “School Climate” section of the school's Progress Report that the school is experiencing difficulties with student behavior.
- The school serves a significant number of students with special needs.
- The school serves the same grades as NCSH.
- The school is physically close to NCSH.

The Head of School will prepare a plan for a collaboration and will present the plan to the Principa(s) of the selected school or schools. Initially, teachers and administrators will start an informal program of visiting and observing in each other's schools with particular reference to behavior and discipline. They will acquire a thorough understanding of each other's strengths and weaknesses that will inform their formal collaboration. Once good working relationships have been established between NCSH and its partner school(s), staff from both schools will collaborate to design, implement and evaluate a social and emotional learning program that is appropriate to the needs of the partner school(s).

III.g. NCSH has the ability to overcome start-up challenges to open a successful school through management and leadership techniques

NCSH will overcome start-up challenges through (i) vigilant oversight by a skillful and experienced board, with significant charter school experience, (ii) a strong Head of School who will have overall responsibility for all aspects of the school's educational program and operations and will be accountable to the board; (iii) a management structure that provides clear accountability and reporting lines, (iv) a contract with an experienced vendor of financial and accounting services to charter schools, (v) a strong system of financial control and reporting and (vi) support from New York Charter Schools Incubator a non-profit that provides expert support in compliance and best practices and links currently open schools with opening ones as well as providing access to expert consultants in governance, finance, operations, instruction, assessment and compliance. This support will help NCSH avoid many of the common startup pitfalls and benefit from the experiences of other schools and experts that have successfully navigated startup.

The board has experience in charter school governance and is committed to the school's success. The experience and skills of the planning team, who all expect to be elected as trustees, is set out in the introduction to Section III. Two members have been through the start-up of a charter school in New York and others are officers of other charter school and non-profit boards. All of the members of the planning group are deeply committed to the success of NCSH and its key members are able and willing to devote significant time to ensure that success

The board has expertise in areas that are likely to be challenging. Two areas which most start-up schools find challenging are facilities and fund-raising. The planning team includes an expert in real estate finance and an architect who are well qualified to help the school identify, negotiate and renovate a facility. Several members of the planning team have fund-raising experience and the team has used its

fund-raising skills to apply for and receive a grant of \$50,000 from the Walton Family Foundation. The school has also been approved for a \$200,000 start-up grant, subject to receiving a charter. The planning team has also explored other funding opportunities, including foundations active in the field of autism, and will use its fund-raising expertise to start an active fund-raising campaign as soon as the school is chartered.

A strong Head of School will provide leadership to the school as a whole. The management structure of the school has been designed so that the school has an overall leader who is responsible for the supervision of both the educational program and the operations and finances of the school. This structure makes decision-making quicker and clearer and allows resources to be allocated quickly where they are most needed. This will be particularly important in the start-up phase when issues are likely to arise quickly and need immediate resolution.

The board will select a Head of School who can overcome start-up challenges. Among other qualifications, the planning team is seeking a Head of School who exhibits the following qualities:

- A strong ability to multi-task, prioritizing effectively and managing time well;
- Professionalism, sound judgment and maturity;
- An entrepreneurial spirit that embraces the opportunity for creativity and hard work inherent in a start-up.

The management structure provides clear accountability for key start-up tasks. In addition to the Head of School, the school's administration will consist of three members initially, growing to four in the third year. This group will form the leadership team of the school. Members of the leadership team will report to the Head of School who will be required to consult with them in making decisions that affect their areas of responsibility or the school as a whole, while retaining ultimate authority subject to the oversight of the board.

The Director of Curriculum and Instruction will be accountable for implementing the academic program, ensuring that the curriculum aligns with NYS standards, administering the assessment program and ensuring that assessment data is analyzed and incorporated into instruction, coaching and evaluating teachers and designing professional development. The DCI will work closely with the DSE to modify curriculum and instruction for students with special needs. The DCI will be responsible, under the supervision of the Head of School, for preparing the assessment data and other information about the educational program provided to the board.

The Director of Operations and Finance will initially be accountable for all of the non-academic operations of the school including finance and facilities management. In order to ensure that the DOO can focus attention on the multiple operational challenges of a start-up school during the first two years, NCSH will out-source "back-office" services, including setting up the school's books, book-keeping, purchasing management, accounts payable and preparation of monthly financial statements, to Charter School Business Management Inc, (CSBM) an experienced vendor of back office services. The DOO will be responsible for the day-to-day supervision of the CSBM under the direction of the Head of School. In the third year of operation NCSH will hire a Director of Finance and separate the Operations and Finance functions.

The Director of Finance will be hired in the third year and will assume responsibility for the financial management of the NCSH.

The Director of Special Education will be accountable for implementing the special education program, including the ASD program. The DSE will act as the coordinator for special education throughout the school, maintaining relationships with CSEs, ensuring the implementation of IEPs and preparing the reports required by state and federal law. The DSE will be accountable for the collection and analysis of data relating to the progress of the school's special education students, including ASD students, and for preparing timely and accurate reports to the board.

III.h. NCSH has the support of the school district and the intent to establish an ongoing relationship with such district. The NYCDOE supported the application that the Lead Applicant submitted to the NYSED in September 2010. The Lead Applicant and another member of the planning team met with Recy Dunn, the new Executive Director of the Office of Charter Schools on January 10, 2011 and

informed him that we intended to submit this Prospectus. We also discussed the request for supplemental funding that we submitted to the NYCDOE in March 2010, based on the precedent established by the New York Center for Autism Charter School. Mr Dunn agreed to resubmit this request for the approval of the Chancellor. The NYCDOE has published its process for obtaining the Chancellor's Recommendation and NCSH has initiated this process by submitting a Notice of Intent to Apply. NCSH has developed relationships with the personnel of the Office of Charter Schools and intends to continue to work closely with the district.

III. i. NCSH will provide access to viable education alternatives to students in regions where there are a lack of alternatives. NCSH will provide a much-needed new educational option for children in Harlem. Although there are several charter schools in Harlem, they do not begin to meet the demand for alternatives in a neighborhood where very few of the traditional public elementary schools are able to bring their students to proficiency at rates that approach the NYC average. Almost all of the charter schools in CSD 5 have long waiting lists. NCSH will offer a school model that is familiar to many Harlem parents because it is used by the popular and successful Harlem Success and Harlem Promise schools. However, we will serve a broader range of students than these schools and will do whatever it takes to meet their individual needs and to retain all of our students. Unlike these schools we will also offer a school-wide social and emotional learning program that will specifically address difficulties that impede the success of many children in low-income communities. The program will be a fundamental part of the culture of the school and will be generalized throughout the curriculum in every classroom.

NCSH will respond to the pressing need for specialized programs for students with ASD

Recognizing the tremendous needs facing individuals with ASD, the New York State Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (OMRDD) and NYSED, as co-chairs of the Interagency Task Force on Autism, examined the needs and issues facing New Yorkers with ASD. The Task Force published its report in January 2010. The report contains 13 findings, among which are: *Finding 4*: Individuals with ASD need greater availability of evidence-based services and interventions to support them throughout the stages of their lives, and *Finding 5*: Teachers need specialized training and expertise to meet the unique educational needs of pre-school and school aged students with ASD.³⁸ There is a severe shortage of viable public alternatives for high-functioning students with ASD. The ASD Nest program is the only specialized full inclusion public school program for students with ASD in NYC and serves only about 400 students or about 10% of the NYC students who would be expected to be eligible for the program based on the CDC Study. As a result of the shortage of alternatives, high-functioning students with ASD often end up either in educational programs designed for much lower functioning children (for example, NYCDOE's District 75) which fail to address their intellectual strengths, or in community schools where the teachers lack the training and resources to provide the social and behavior supports they need.

The need for specialized programs is particularly urgent for low-income children, including children in Harlem.

No school in CSD 5 currently offers a specialized inclusion program for high-functioning students with ASD. There is an ASD Nest program located in PS 112 in CSD 4 and another located in PS 178 in Washington Heights (CSD 6). However, the students in these programs, like the students in the ASD Nest program citywide, are often relatively advantaged, as the Director of the program has recognized. We have been informed that, as a result, there are only seven students from Harlem (CSDs 4 and 5) among the approximately 400 students served by the ASD Nest program citywide. Our outreach program is designed to identify and recruit these children, who are currently "falling through the cracks". They need and deserve the kind of educational opportunities that are available to their more affluent peers.

³⁸ The 2010 Task Force Report, see http://www.omr.state.ny.us/autism/images/hp_autism_interagencyreport.pdf