# I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## A) Our Mission Statement

The SISDA Charter School will be the premiere Career and Technical Education school in New York City, as evidenced by student achievement on state tests and Regents' exams, graduation rates, college acceptances, career internships, and alumni employment in related fields. The SISDA Charter School will ensure that its students are both college and career ready by combining a rigorous academic program in middle and high school with cutting-edge Career and Technical Education instruction and training and strong community based support systems, and will prepare at-risk students in the South Bronx to compete and achieve in the 21st century global economy.

## B) Key Design Elements of the Educational Program and Unique Characteristics

The SISDA Charter School will serve as a nation-wide model of innovation in urban schooling by graduating students who are both college and career ready. The SISDA program will be based on two key design elements which will work together to prepare at-risk students in the South Bronx for multiple paths to vocational success. The success of the school will encourage young people in the community to see high school graduation as a clear route to a variety of rewarding careers, and will instill a greater sense of cultural, civic, and community pride for all.

The first key design element is the combination of a middle school and high school program aimed at simultaneously developing academic and career competencies in at-risk student populations in the South Bronx. In order to make informed choices about college and careers in high school, we believe that students must be provided with academic, career and cultural opportunities at an early age in a nurturing yet demanding environment. Throughout their early years in the SISDA program, students will attain academic skills and participate in vocational surveys and assessments that will educate and prepare them for secondary training, higher education, and career entry. This middle school preparation will provide a seamless transition into the high school program, when students will continue both the rigorous academic training of their middle school years and have the opportunity to participate in a range of career and technical education programs, widening their vocational choices as they move towards graduation.

The innovation in our instructional model lies in the fact that students will acquire the essential skills for both college entry and highly skilled careers at an early enough age so that they will naturally and readily develop more demanding and advanced skills as they grow. At both national and city-wide levels, there is a growing need for secondary schools to provide high school graduates not only with the skills they need to be successful at four-year colleges, but also with the option of successfully following other paths to vocational success, including training in the skilled trades or preparation for other post-secondary educational programs. Providing rigorous and effective training for career options at the secondary level is especially crucial for at-risk students, including those who are English language learners and who require special education services. The SISDA Charter School model therefore epitomizes the current charter law's mandate that charter schools seek to provide the quality educational options which are currently lacking for these groups. In addition, it will take advantage of the charter law's flexibility in teacher hiring and certification to select high school instructors with expertise in rewarding technical and vocational fields as well as skill in reaching at-risk students.

The standards by which we will measure our success in this area are as follows:

***Our graduates*** are prepared for further post-secondary study as determined by personal goals they themselves set during middle and high school with the help of a college advisor.

***Our students*** will be expected to meet the requirements of a New York State Advanced Regents Diploma or another diploma which leads to a rewarding career upon high school

graduation. This will be the internal baseline measure of instructional effectiveness.

***Our students*** will have the opportunity to take college-level courses in their areas of interest prior to graduation.

***Our students*** will be able to obtain New York State certifications in skilled technical and trade fields concurrently with high school graduation and the minimum age requirements.

***Our students*** will possess both the academic and professional skills to pursue advanced degrees in the areas of business, law and government, computer science and programming, as well as the wide array of liberal arts and humanities.

The second key design element is the partnership with The Simpson Street Development Association (SISDA), which has established itself as a trusted community institution in the South Bronx community since its founding in 1964. SISDA will also be providing a significant level of uncompensated high-quality in-kind services to the SISDA Charter School, including after school programming, Saturday programs, spring break programs, arts and music programs, and a computer lab and equipment. Their involvement in creating the SISDA Charter School is the culmination of almost five decades of providing youth, family, and community services programming to at-risk young people and their families. The focal point of their programs has been encouraging family stability, youth development, academic achievement, workplace competencies, and increased potential for long term employment and self sufficiency. Their strong community and district connections and the experience of their staff in combining a strong academic focus with vocational and cultural programs and goals will provide the resources and expertise necessary to ensure that the school successfully recruits, retains, and educates the at-risk students it seeks to serve.

**C) Founding Group's Capacity to Effectively Launch, Oversee, and Govern the School**

The Board of Trustees and the Leadership Team of the SISDA Charter School has the expertise, credentials, and credibility needed to implement the School's academic program, administer its operations and manage its finances. The school's stakeholders have sound and substantial ties to the community, which will support them in meeting enrollment targets, facilitating meaningful parent involvement, and raising funds to support the school's programs.

As noted above, the involvement of the leadership and staff of SISDA is central to the planning and the operations of the school. Lead Applicant and SISDA Director Margarita Smith and other SISDA staff have committed time and resources to the process of creating the charter application, and have also taken the lead in reaching out to local leaders in the South Bronx and elsewhere to serve on the planning team and board of the school. SISDA's motto has always been "Arriba El Pueblo" ("Up With the People"), and the organization's goals are centered on developing four "core values" in all participants in its programs: Efficacy, Empathy, Self-Reliance, and Self Confidence. Over 2,500 community residents participate in their programs and services annually, and the overwhelming majority of their participants are African-American, Latino, and living in high-poverty communities. For the past thirty years, SISDA has worked with the NYC Department of Employment as a Summer Youth Employment Sponsor, has collaborated with a group of over seventy-five local service providers in the South Bronx (including Hostos Community College and Jacobi Hospital), and has provided internship and drop-out prevention services for local high school students. SISDA has also been an educational partner with Community School Districts 8 and 12 by providing after school tutorial programs in literacy, mathematics, science, and social studies, as well recreational opportunities for children. The Board also includes the Bronx Borough President's appointed Representative to the local Community Education Council, Carmen Judith Taveras.

The planning team has also been led by individuals with deep roots in the district and in the education of at-risk young people in New York City's schools, all of whom intend to serve on the school's founding board of trustees. Louis Corominas has been successfully educating students in New York City

for 35 years, including 17 years as a principal in the South Bronx. He has extensive experience in meeting accountability standards at the city and state level (having received multiple A ratings on district progress reports) and in mentoring school leaders in high-poverty schools and the administrative staff of three charter schools which co-located in the district schools he led. He was also part of the planning team for the successful charter application of the Dr. Richard Izqierdo Charter School and is currently a consultant for the NYC DOE. John Musico served in the NYC DOE for 36 years, including as principal of PS110K (during which the school demonstrated the highest reading and math achievement levels in its history) and seven years as Senior Superintendent of Schools for CSD 14 and Superintendent for Middle School Reform and Promotion Policy. Frank Steele has 34 years of experience in high-poverty NYC schools, including his current position as site supervisor at the Bronx Alternate Learning Center. He has expertise in mentoring teachers of at-risk, served as a liaison and mentor to staff of charter schools incubating in district school buildings, and directed the district's Success Academy to an A rating in the DOE Progress Report. Robert Restivo has thirty years of expertise in Human Resources and personnel administration in the DOE, particularly regarding the alignment of human resources to student achievement and instruction. Stuart Austein has served students of the South Bronx for 13 years as a guidance counselor, including serving as a coach for teachers of at-risk students in positive behavior interventions.

Jose Vargas, another member of both the planning team and the Board, taught in the South Bronx for 25 years, and currently serves as the Bronx Borough Representative for the United Federation of Teachers. In addition to Mr. Vargas' participation on the team and the board of trustees, members of the UFT staff are also serving as consultants for the planning team during the charter application process, including assistance in financial planning from David Hickey, current business manager (and former planning team member) for the Green Dot Charter High School and the UFT Charter School, guidance on CTE programming from Sterling Roberson, UFT Vice President for Career and Technical High Schools, and guidance on charter school policy and research from Dr. Christina Collins, Lead Research and Policy Analyst for the UFT Alliance of Charter Teachers and Staff.

The planning team also includes future SISDA Charter School Leader Sharon Delaney, who currently serves as the site supervisor of the Bronx Alternate Learning Center High School. Over her past 30 years of distinguished service to the NYC Department of Education, Ms. Delaney has served as a principal and assistant principal at Community School 8 and taken the lead in providing high-quality services for special needs and at-risk students and in integrating technology and literacy across the curriculum.

## II. STUDENT POPULATION

### A) Student Enrollment

With the opening of the SISDA Charter School in September 2012, the initial phase-in of the school will begin with a first cohort of 100 6$^{th}$ grade students. In each subsequent year, the next cohort of 100 6$^{th}$ grade students will be admitted to the school. Each year will phase in an additional grade level. By Year Five (2016-2017) of the charter, the school will have a total enrollment of 500 students, from grades six through ten. By Year Seven, the phase in will be complete, with a total of 700 students and 100 students per grade level from grades six through twelve.

**The SISDA Charter School Enrollment Projections For Years One Through Five**

| | Projected | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2012-2013 | 2013-2014 | 2014-2015 | 2015-2016 | 2016-2017 |
| 6th | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| 7th | | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| 8th | | | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| 9th | | | | 100 | 100 |
| 10th | | | | | 100 |

**B) Target Populations**

The SISDA Charter School has strong community support and is uniquely positioned to effectively reach out to parents and youth in underserved communities throughout the South Bronx. At the core of the SISDA Charter School's community outreach will be the recruitment and enrollment of students who represent the populations of English language learners (ELL), students with disabilities, and students who are eligible for federal free or reduced lunch. These student groups comprise a substantial percentage of children who are enrolled and attending our targeted geographical areas of New York City Community School Districts 8 and 12 in the South Bronx. The following table demonstrates the most recent data from the New York City Department of Education Enrollment and Movement Data (as of April/May 2010 for the 2009-2010 school year):

| NEW YORK CITY DOE DATA | Community School District 8 | Community School District 12 |
|---|---|---|
| Black or African | 29.2% | 25.6% |
| Hispanic or Latino | 67.6% | 70. 2% |
| Asian or Nat. | 1.8% | 2.8% |
| American Indian | 0.7% | 0.6% |
| White | 0.8% | 0.5% |
| Special Education | 27.1% | 23.9% |
| English Language | 16.1% | 14.4% |
| Poverty Rate | 93.6% | 91.9% |
| Recent Immigrants | 12.0% | 9.0% |

The data table illustrates the critical need for more schools in the South Bronx to become conscious agents of support for a substantial segment of the community, as the proportion of students in the

community with disabilities, ELL's, families below the poverty level, and recent immigrants fall well above the New York City median. In addition, 81% of the children who attend CSD's 8 and 12 fall within federal Title One guidelines, which entitles them to free lunch, and 5% fall within the guidelines of reduced lunch programs. The SISDA Charter School intends to aggressively recruit these demographic groups, and will give them preference in the lottery process (if a lottery is necessary) to the full extent permissible under state charter law.

SISDA will utilize all outreach and recruiting methods set forth below to promote the concept that it is the inherent mission of our school to set high expectations for all students. It is our responsibility to impart to them: (1) a ***belief*** that the only barrier to achievement is a lack of effective effort; (2) access to rigorous world-class ***academics*** in preparation for college achievement at the finest institutions of higher learning; (3) ***career education*** in skilled vocational trades so that they are well-informed about the wealth of opportunities in these fields; (4) ***social enrichment*** opportunities within and beyond the school day that will enable them to see their own growth potential and ability to positively impact their community. Children with disabilities, English language learners, and those from impoverished backgrounds will be our main focal points in this crucial mission, and partnerships with community based organizations, civic and business leaders, colleges and universities, trade unions, the United Federation of Teachers, and local elected officials will all lend critical support in the recruiting, enrollment, and education of these students and their families.

Evidence of community support and capacity for extensive community outreach includes:
***Strong community ties***—The Simpson Street Development Association has established strong ties in the South Bronx with a proven track record of over five decades of service to the community. SISDA's past and present services include providing Senior Citizen housing and centers, Summer Youth Employment, educational and recreational programs for adults, summer day camps for children, after school programs, and Beacon programs for young adults. SISDA has also worked closely with local private and public schools (including charter schools) in implementing successful before-school and after-school instructional and recreational programs. Because of this long standing history of working within this community and its schools, SISDA has established positive relationships with ten of thousands of residents of the South Bronx, including families with students or parents who are English Language Learners, come from low-income households, and who have special needs. These relationships will provide the SISDA Charter School with unique opportunities to recruit and retain students from these key demographic groups, as the charter law requires.

***An effective community outreach strategy***—The school's leadership will employ a targeted and ongoing community information strategy to: a) build community awareness; b) demonstrate to parents and youth in the community the importance of education and the critical role of parental involvement and decision-making in the academic achievement and outcomes of children; c) illustrate the opportunities for collegiate and career success offered in the professional areas of business, law and government, computer technology and skilled vocational trades; and d) inform parents and youth about the uniqueness of the curriculum and the role the school might play in helping students access opportunities in professional, governmental, and skilled trades. Under the direction of the principal, the school will engage in a strategy to:

***Build community awareness about the School***—The SISDA community based organization will play a lead role in carrying out an effective community outreach strategy and in building community awareness about the school. This will be accomplished through a comprehensive and ongoing

campaign to build and sustain awareness of the school among parents and community-based influencers. The school will hold numerous events throughout each year to inform parents and community residents about the school, its curriculum, and its lottery, if one is necessary. These events will be held at SISDA, at the school (when it opens) and at other sites throughout the South Bronx to ensure that the widest possible audience of parents and community members is reached. The school's leaders will also disseminate written information (in Spanish, English, French and other languages) about the school's programs to representatives of community-based organizations, elected officials and others to leverage their networks and relationships and expand community awareness of the school, and will have translators available at public events. The School will also build a website where information about the school, curriculum and activities will be posted. Once the school opens, its website will be student driven and feature news about the school, community, and pertinent news on the local, national, and world level, under the direction of faculty advisors.

***Inform parents and youth about how the school might help students succeed in Professional, Technical, and Vocational Careers***—Our outreach will emphasize how SISDA Charter School's academic programs will prepare students for college and careers in business, computer technology, law and government, or the skilled trades. Outreach activities and materials will stress the school's: a) strong academic focus, rigorous curriculum and instructional staff; b) focus on enabling students to learn about these careers, and preparing students for success in these areas; c) emphasis on internships, job-shadowing opportunities and other field learning activities as critical components of each student's educational experience; d) opportunities for hands-on, experiential learning, including access to interactive learning technology e) use of technology, data-driven decision-making and innovative instructional practices to help students achieve; and f) commitment to improving the quality of education, career opportunities, and life for children and families in the South Bronx.

***Focus on Parent and Family Involvement --*** The SISDA Charter School strongly acknowledges the roles that family, particularly parents and guardians, play in every child's education. The school's leadership also recognizes that, while supportive of their children's education, many families of prospective students may have limited experience with the educational process and limited access to information about educational options for their children. Research shows that parents with low levels of educational attainment and little understanding of their children's schools are less likely to be involved in their children's education.[1] In the South Bronx, sixty percent of adults in the community did not graduate high school, and more than half of the population lives below the poverty line.

The SISDA Charter School will therefore leverage its resources to connect with parents and inform them about the school's academic programs and the critical importance of "taking charge" and decision-making about their children's educational experiences. In addition, the school will partner with Learning Leaders, which will be providing uncompensated academic support services as an in-kind contribution to the school. Founded in 1956, Learning Leaders has been recruiting, training and supporting up to 10,000 school volunteers who work with over 230,000 students (over one-

[1] Delgado-Gaitan, C. (1990). Literacy for empowerment: The role of parents in children's education. New York: The Falmer Press

fifth of the New York City public school population) in over 800 schools throughout the five boroughs. Results have shown that by introducing parent volunteers into schools, students are recording higher grade point averages and standardized test scores as well as better attendance, improved behavior and refined social skills. During its distinguished history, Learning Leaders has helped students succeed by providing individualized instructional support through the implementation of the Fundamental Program, essentially a one-on-one tutoring model. This program establishes volunteers to assist with reading, writing, ESL, math and other academic activities at the elementary, middle school, and high school level, as well as non-instructional aid such as general office and library assistance. Learning Leaders is a prime example of the quality of partnerships The SISDA Charter School will forge and cultivate in our quest to deliver the optimum degree of educational and academic supports.

As stated earlier, we believe clarity of instruction and teacher efficacies are key factors for student success. This includes general education students, ELL, and Special Education students. We will provide an extensive outline of our plans to serve students with special needs as we are aware that many children in our community require these services to achieve their full potential. Although we believe that effective instruction is the key to success, we also understand that this is a result of a concerted effort by teachers, administrators and a continued dedication to ongoing professional development. Effective instruction works for all student populations, however each student has individual needs, strengths and growth areas. Therefore, a balance must be attained between instituting best practices for each population and examining each student's disaggregated data. We seek to understand not only the similarities in student needs but also differences. We embrace the challenges in offering this quality education to all children.

***ELL/ESL Program***

The SISDA Charter School will service students of various cultures, beliefs, and ethnicities.
Our program will address the needs of the English Language Learners by integrating scaffolding strategies within the content areas. Students who are not proficient in the English language will have the opportunity to have their educational needs met at their level of second language acquisition. The goal is to provide students with an opportunity to learn and enhance their development of English in reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills. All students who are identified as English Language Learners as per our Home Language Identification Survey will be evaluated to determine how much level of support is needed. Students who need specialized instruction in order to be successful academically will be serviced by our ESL Program, which facilitates the acquisition of communicative and academic English. Our ELL teachers will provide academic content and cultural knowledge to enable ESL students to succeed in mainstream classes as quickly as possible and to provide a quality education for our students.

The school shall serve all students designated as English Language Learners (ELL) by providing supportive instruction so that they achieve proficiency in the English language as quickly as possible. The school shall comply with all applicable laws including Title VI of the federal Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the federal Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974. Our approach to English language instruction for LEP students is based upon the following tenets:

- Age-appropriate knowledge of English is a prerequisite for success in school.
- Academic ability in English is different from conversational ability and takes much longer to attain.
- Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE)—also known as Sheltered Instruction (SI)—provides access to the core curriculum.

We will create an instructional culture that is acutely aware of the needs of English language learners and aware that there are two types of English language proficiency:

Social (BICS) Basic interpersonal communication skills

Academic (CALP) Cognitive academic language proficiency

Our instructional practices will focus on the four stages of language development that will be modified for each grade level:

Pre-production- (silent period) student is not speaking the new language: he/she dependant upon modeling, visual aides, and context clues to obtain meaning. The focus is on comprehension as students develop listening strategies.

Early Production- after initial listening phase, students will begin to produce words that they have often heard and understood. They will produce no more than isolated words in response to comprehensible input. They will answer yes or no to specific questions. They may also answer in a one-word response.

Speech Emergence- student has now acquired a limited vocabulary and response in short phrases or sentences. The student is able to respond to literal questions which have been made comprehensible.

Intermediate Fluency- in the final stage, students begin to engage in conversation and produce full sentences. Students are challenged to produce responses that require creativity, critical thinking skills and complex sentence Structures.[2]

Upon entering the school, all families will be expected to complete a Home Language Identification Survey that the parent understands. This helps to identify students who may be ELL/LEP and therefore require further screening. Any student whose home language or first language is not English is then interviewed by the school in English, or if necessary in their native language, to make an assessment of the student's oral proficiency in English. Once this initial screening process is completed, the school will conduct a formal assessment of any student who speaks little or no English to determine the student's level of English language proficiency by administering the Language Assessment Battery-Revised (LAB-R). Students performing below the designated cut-off on the LAB-R will be classified as ELL students. The parents of any student who is entitled to a bilingual program will be informed in writing of their right to have the student placed in a bilingual program. If the parent chooses to have the student remain at the school, the student will be provided a special language instructional program that is designed to teach English as well as the general curriculum. The Academic Language and Literacy Diagnostic (ALLD) diagnostic tool will be used to identify Students with Interrupted Formal Education (SIFE). This assessment is meant to standardize the SIFE identification process for students with a home language of English or Spanish. The ALLD will be given after the HLQ and LAB-R have been administered and an interview indicates an educational interruption of more than two years.

Research indicates that successful performance on ELA assessments is based upon the development of both oral proficiency and cognitive academic language proficiency. Academic language proficiency includes the language skills required for literacy and complex thinking such as reading comprehension, writing mechanics, critical thinking skills, study skills, and academic vocabulary. Strategies that promote the acquisition of cognitive academic language proficiency include bilingual education and Sheltered

[2] Information based on materials from the NYCDOE The Office of English Language Learners.

Instruction (SI).[3] The goal of SI is to develop English language and academic skills among ELL students. Content instruction is provided in English with sheltered English instructional methods to make content comprehensible.

In line with the mission of our school and the values of our Founder, Principal and Board, we believe that language knowledge develops student efficacy and that student diversity is an invaluable asset to the community. We also believe that English language learners will benefit most by becoming an integral part of the school. One of the keys to language acquisition is providing authentic and challenging opportunities for learners to apply what they have learned. This is in line with our school's overall instructional ideology and will be no less relevant for our ELL population. We will also maximize the strengths which students bring to our school. We envision scenarios where our ELL students will organize and lead the seminars described earlier as well as organize and lead student and parent orientation sessions.

Teachers will also be trained to utilize special instructional strategies—i.e. Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English—for delivering content to English language learner students in English. At the school, students will receive instruction from their classroom teachers and, as needed, discrete ELL instruction from a highly qualified English to Speaker of Other Languages (ESOL) teacher on their grade level to ensure that ELL students meet the same high standards as the general student population. Professional development in instructional methodology appropriate for language learners will ensure that the materials and facilities available to ELL students are equal to those of the general population. One valuable tool in our professional development plans will be *Promoting Academic Success for ESL Students: Understanding Second Language Acquisition For School* by Virginia P. Collier. This is an excellent choice for professional development because of its clarity and brevity, and it will be a resource that will ensure all of our teachers have a baseline understanding of how to support English Language Learners in our community.

The principal will oversee the School's Language Allocation Policy (LAP)[4] working in conjunction with a certified ESOL teacher; as we grow to capacity, additional ESOL teachers may be added and one will be designated as the Team Leader of English to Speakers of Other Languages, and ultimately share this role with a future Assistant Principal. We will utilize the following methods and services to meet the needs of our ELL students:

Daily English instruction by our ESOL teacher using a pull out model when appropriate. This will provide for an even smaller teacher to student ratio.

Professional development for all instructional staff directly involved with ELL students. Teachers will be trained in Specially Designed Academic Instruction (SDAIE) methodology and strategies, which emphasize the concept of comprehensible input- making concepts understood by the learner.

Trained teachers pulling out ELL students for intervention based on their Pupil Achievement Profile. Formal communication will take place during specifically allocated planning times between subject teachers, administrators and ELL teachers providing the interventions.

Interventions will be based on the specific needs of the ELL student as identified in the Pupil Achievement Profile as determined by the assessments mentioned earlier, and provided by both subject teachers and ESOL teachers.

The interventions being provided will be evaluated on an on-going basis for effectiveness and modified

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[3] Cummins, R. (1989). Meaning and mental representation. MIT Press, Cambridge, MA.

[4] We will develop and re-evaluate a program that is in compliance with federal, state, and local regulations using NYCDOE guidelines.

when necessary

ELL students will not be excluded from curricular and extra-curricular activities based on an inability to speak and understand the language of instruction, and ELL students will not be assigned to special education for lack of English proficiency. Parents whose English proficiency is limited will receive notices and information from the school in their native language to encourage participation in the school. Semi-annually, the Principal and ESOL teachers and other administrators will conduct a review of ELL student participation in extra-curricular activities to identify any impediments to their full participation. The results of the review along with recommendations for improvement will be presented to the Education Committee of the School Board. The school and the UFT will provide training for all instructional staff who are directly involved with ELL students. This training will be a standard part of the school's professional development plan. The staff development program will enhance staff appreciation for the ELL students' native language and culture; provide information on the techniques, methods, and strategies appropriate for instructional and support services for ELL students; and introduce techniques to improve communication with parents/guardians of ELL students. The school will guarantee that materials and facilities for the ELL instructional program will be of the same quality as those available to English proficient students. The school will also have a process for continued program assessment. ELL students' academic program and services will be assessed on an ongoing basis at all levels using multiple, fair, and equitable measures. We will use this information to determine student academic progress, as well as the level of English language acquisition, to modify programs and services, where necessary, and to report outcomes.

**Students With Disabilities**

The SISDA Charter School is committed to providing the highest quality education to all students and is dedicated to serving students with special needs. The school will educate students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment, to the extent appropriate and allowed by each student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) prepared in partnership with the Committee on Special Education (CSE) of the students' school district of residence and all applicable federal laws, including the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The school shall not discriminate in admission and enrollment practices based on a student having or being suspected of having a disability. All special education programs and services at the school shall be provided in accordance with Education Law § 2853(4) (a) and applicable federal laws and regulations and in accordance with the IEP recommended by the CSE of the students' school district of residence. The school shall use the NYCDOE Special Education Operating Procedures Manual as its guideline for compliance. [5]

Our School will:

- Educate our special education students in the least restrictive environment mandated as per their IEP.
- Provide a Special Education Teacher Support Service (SETSS) Resource Room teacher providing push in/pull out and/or small group instruction to students when called for in the IEP.
- Mainstream students when he/she is showing strengths/gains in a particular subject area, revisit IEP and convene with our own School Assessment Team (SAT), (starting in year four of charter) members to make changes to the IEP.
- Emphasize the use of student data in differentiating instruction so teachers may create multiple paths for students of different abilities and different needs to experience appropriate ways to absorb, use,

[5] This is a comprehensive document developed by the NYCDOE Office of Special Education Initiatives. The school will use this as a baseline measure of professional development to ensure that all our educators are aware of the laws, procedures and best practices in special education.

and present concepts in the daily learning process.

Provide interventions based on the specific needs of the student as specified in his or her IEP and Pupil Achievement Profile as outlined in this document.

Provide special education teacher(s) to plan for additional interventions during the extended day (for example *Read 180 or Wilson Program*) with trained staff.

Monitor effectiveness of various interventions on an on-going basis.

Provide professional development for all teachers servicing special education students in order to guide their instruction to best serve their special needs students.

Create protocols that safeguard the privacy of students by protecting their IEP's as per § 94-142 law; and provide professional development for teachers to promote awareness and compliance with these protocols.

Work to transition special education students to general education program and move them towards least restrictive environments (LRE).

As required by the population of students we enroll, we will hire a special education teacher who will also serve as the school's Special Education Coordinator. He or she will coordinate the school's special education program, ensuring compliance with all IEP requirements and regulations, manage the review and referral process, and ensure provision of services as mandated on student IEP's are being met, all under the purview of the principal. As the school grows, other special education teachers will be added, creating a special education team as needed, who will report to a specified Assistant Principal in addition to the principal. We recognize the limitations of providing all required services to all students with disabilities; such services may include, but are not limited to: speech language pathology, audiologist services, psychological services, physical and occupational therapy, recreation, including therapeutic recreation, early rehabilitation counseling, orientation and mobility services, diagnostic and/or evaluative medical services and student and/or parent counseling. The school will always defer to the Committee on Special Education (CSE) to provide its students with support services that are not available at the school or to place students where the best supports can be accessed. Special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of students with disabilities from the regular educational environment will occur only if the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily, in accordance with the IEP prepared by the Committee on Special Education of the students' district of residence.

Students with disabilities will be expected to participate in, and receive credit for, non-core subjects such as physical education, the arts, and nonacademic, extracurricular and ancillary programs and activities with all other students to the extent allowed by the IEP approved by the CSE of the students' district of residence. Students with disabilities will receive all notices concerning school-sponsored programs, activities and services when such notices are distributed to other students. Also, the school will ensure that the special education programs and services as indicated on each student's IEP will be provided directly to the student during school hours. The school's special education staff will provide consultation and support to classroom teachers, work in the general education classrooms with special education students individually and in small groups. The school's general education core subject teachers will be knowledgeable about the needs of students with disabilities; informed of their responsibilities for particular students; receive the support they require to implement a student's program; and implement any modifications or accommodations in their classes in accordance with the students' IEPs. All teachers and support staff will receive on-going training regarding the education of special education students.

## III. SCHOOL DESIGN

SISDA Charter School will be designed to address the current unacceptably low levels of achievement for students in the South Bronx by providing at-risk students with a firm academic foundation in their middle school years and an academically rigorous career and technical education program in high school. This blended design will give at-risk students in the South Bronx both the solid academic preparation they need for acceptance to and success at four-year colleges and the career and technical skills required to pursue other challenging and rewarding post-secondary vocational paths.

The five commonly acknowledged factors associated with "at-risk" students are poverty, race/ethnicity, family composition, mother's education, and language background (i.e. English Language Learners living in homes where English is not spoken). At-risk students are more likely to face academic failure, and we intend for the composition of the school's student-body to be predominantly made-up of at-risk students from CSDs 8 and 12. Currently, the overwhelming majority of students in the South Bronx fail to attain level 3 or 4 scores on the latest NYS assessments, and the average assessment scores of South Bronx students lag behind students in the city and state. Additional supports will be necessary in order to bring our students to grade level—and eventually above— not only in the critical subject areas of English and mathematics, but ultimately in all subject areas. The school's success in achieving the goals of its design will be measured using the following standards:

*Comparative Student Achievement Performance Middle School:*

Each year, the percent of students performing at or above Level 3 on the State ELA exam in each tested grade will place the school in the top quartile of all similar schools (as defined by the NYCDOE).

Each year, the percent of students performing at or above Level 3 on the State Math exam in each tested grade will place the school in the top quartile of all similar schools.

Each year, the percent of students performing at or above Level 3 on the State Science exam in each tested grade will place the school in the top quartile of all similar schools (as defined by the NYCDOE).

*Value-Added Performance/ Progress*

For years 2 through 5 of the proposed charter, grade-level cohorts of the same students (i.e. students who are in the school for two years in a row) will reduce by at least one-quarter the gap between the percent at or above Level 3 on the previous year's State ELA exam and 75 percent at or above Level 3 on the current year's State ELA exam. In circumstances in which the number of students scoring above proficiency in a grade level cohort exceeded 75 percent on the previous year's ELA exam, the school is expected to demonstrate growth (above 75 percent) in the current year.

For the 2012-13 through 2015-16 school years, grade-level cohorts of the same students will reduce by at least one-quarter the gap between the percent at or above Level 3 on the previous year's State Math exam and 75 percent at or above Level 3 on the current year's State Math exam. When the number of students scoring above proficiency in a grade level cohort exceeded 75 percent on the previous year's Math exam, the school will demonstrate growth (above 75 percent) in the current year.

*High School:*

Each year, the percent of students in the high school accountability cohort passing an English Regents exam with a score of 65 or above by the end of their fourth year will exceed that of the students in the high school accountability cohort from a group of similar schools.

Each year, the percent of students in the high school accountability cohort passing a Math Regents exam with a score of 65 or above by the end of their fourth year will exceed that of the students in the high school accountability cohort from a group of similar schools.

***Alternative/Internal Assessment Indicators***
Each term the students shall demonstrate progress toward the above goals based on internal interim data.
***AYP Status***
Each year, the school will be deemed "In Good Standing."

***Graduation Rates***
Each year, at least 75% of each student cohort (as defined by the New York State Education Department) will graduate from the high school program within five years. At least 60% of each graduating class will receive a Regents Advanced diploma, and all graduating students will receive a diploma which prepares them for rewarding careers.

***College and Post-Secondary Success***
Each year (after the first 12th grade class has graduated), at least 75% of students will successfully complete their first semester of college or other post-secondary training by passing all classes in which they are enrolled.

The SISDA Charter School will achieve these goals by implementing academic programs which have a history of success with at-risk students and by recruiting, developing, and retaining school leaders, teachers, and staff with expertise in guiding at-risk students to high levels of achievement as well as expertise in the technical and vocational fields which students will explore at the high school level. As required by state charter law, the SISDA Charter School's design will focus on achieving the following goals

**A) Increase student achievement and decrease achievement gaps in reading/language arts and mathematics**
***Reading/English Language Arts***

Balanced literacy instruction will be the basis of all instruction in the school for grades six through eight. All teachers will be teachers of literacy, as reading, writing, listening and speaking skills are the essential building-blocks of all academic knowledge and success. Students will read from a variety of fiction and non-fiction books and other reading materials appropriate for their reading development as determined by the subject specific reading assessments.

We will utilize a combination of assessments including Terra Nova and Fountas & Pinnell (with which the Scantron Performance Series is aligned). A combination of these assessments will allow a level of accuracy and diversity of assessment tools which will enable us to best serve the vital and differing needs of our students in the area of English Language Arts. CTE (Career and Technology/Vocational Education) will be integrated into reading and writing at the middle and high school levels by emphasizing multi-disciplinary instructional activities that enable students to strengthen their literacy and written communication skills while developing a deeper understanding of fundamental technical/vocational concepts upon which they will build further knowledge. By integrating topics and issues that are intrinsic to personal interests of students, it is highly anticipated that motivation and curiosity will be piqued, thus enabling the students to be able to springboard from any and/or all prior skills.

The writing component of the curricula is process-oriented and rubric-based, with students required to apply higher-order thinking skills attached to *Bloom's Taxonomy* as they progress through each writing lesson. There will be an emphasis placed on use of the English language and its grammatical structure and conventions. Students will study grammar in the lower grades and develop this knowledge into an understanding of linguistics in the upper grades. The driving force of effective instruction is the collective approach to developing our students' literacy skills. The students' ability to function at higher

levels of academic proficiency begins by establishing clear individual learning goals for ELA achievement. Furthermore, our ELA courses will be an invaluable means by which we can instill the core values (efficacy, empathy, self-reliance, and self confidence) that will become the hallmarks of our graduates.

***Mathematics***

We believe that mathematics is as much a vital language as any other, and our mathematics program will be designed to increase student achievement while decreasing achievement gaps relative to comparable schools. We will be adopting the New York Impact Mathematics program published by McGraw-Hill/Glencoe, but the cornerstone of our approach to mathematics instruction in both the middle school and secondary programs will be to embed mathematics instruction with our academic and technology instruction, an approach which builds on the work developed by the National Research Center at the University of Minnesota. This model aligns the teaching of mathematical concepts with their application in technology professions and adheres to the following five core principles:[6] 1) Develop and sustain a community of practice among the teachers; 2) Begin with the CTE curriculum and not the math curriculum; 3) Understand that math is an essential workplace skill; 4) Maximize the math in the CTE curriculum; 5) Recognize that CTE teachers are teachers of math-in-CTE, and not math teachers. According to the National Research Center: "This model has proven to be extremely effective in enabling students of varying degrees of proficiency the opportunity to master mathematical concepts."

It is also well-established that to prepare for college and careers in business and technology careers, students must have a strong command of mathematical concepts. In our meeting with various school leaders, we have learned that many urban students fail to enter highly skilled careers not because of a lack of desire but because of deficits in mathematics. This realization is the guiding principle of our approach to math instruction. Students will master number systems, geometry, algebra, measurements, statistics and probability as well as more advanced mathematical concepts. They will develop an understanding of real-world mathematical applications and problem solving. Students will use math analysis, scientific inquiry, and engineering design to pose questions, seek answers, and develop solutions. Students will apply the knowledge and thinking skills of mathematics, science, and technology to address real-life problems and make informed decisions.

**B) Increasing High School Graduation Rates and Focus on Serving At-Risk High School Student Populations (including re-enrolled drop-outs and those below grade level)**

Given the tremendous academic challenges facing its students, the SISDA Charter School is committed to devoting resources to an academic program that creates multiple avenues for academic success and results in graduates who are confident that their high school degree has prepared them to be both college and career ready. Nationally, an increased focus on academically rigorous career and technical education programs has been identified as a promising avenue for increasing the graduation rates and career readiness of at-risk students. Experts such as those involved with Harvard University's Pathways to Prosperity project and the NYC Mayoral Task Force on Career and Technical Innovation[7] have urged urban public school systems to create new paths for at-risk youth to enter post-secondary training programs which lead to rewarding vocations and careers which do not require a four-year degree. Creating high schools which offer routes to both college and career readiness for high school graduates is especially

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[6] The Math-in-CTE model is a curriculum integration model designed to enhance mathematics that is embedded in career and technical education (CTE) content. It is a process that provides the opportunity for math and CTE teacher teams to work together in communities of practice and to identify where math intersects with CTE concepts and applications." http://cehd.umn.edu/NRCCTE/Math-In/

[7] http://www.agi.harvard.edu/projects/Supports.php; "Next-Generation Career and Technical Education in New York City: Final Report and Recommendations of the Mayoral Task Force on Career and Technical Education Innovation." July 2008. http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/91B215BF-21F8-4E11-9676-8AFCFBB170E0/0/NYC_CTE_728_lowres.pdf

crucial in communities such as the South Bronx, where high proportions of students are English Language Learners and come from families in which parents and guardians have low rates of high school and college graduation themselves. SISDA's model will build on the success of CTE charter schools elsewhere in the country[8] by implementing an innovative combination of middle and secondary preparation which will effectively enable students to choose either a career or college path at the high school level and to be well-prepared for both.

Our focused curriculum and differentiated instruction will help these students succeed, but another key element in this process will be our implementation of Academic Intervention Services (AIS). AIS is a program of services designed to help at-risk students achieve learning standards in English, mathematics, social studies and science. AIS includes two valuable components for the at-risk student: additional instruction that supplements the general curriculum (regular classroom instruction); and/or student support services needed to address barriers to improved academic performance. The intensity of the components may vary based on need, but they will respond to student needs as indicated through the results of state assessments, interim assessments, and teacher and team recommendations. AIS at the school will be provided to all at-risk students, in addition to special education services and other mandated services. These programs and services will be designed to promote increased graduation rates while directly serving the at-risk high school population.

Students at the SISDA Charter School will be identified for Academic Intervention Services at both the middle school and high school levels through:

Pupil Achievement Profiles (PAP), where all pertinent data for students is recorded. This plan allows for the identification of specific skill deficiencies and the classification of the corresponding interventions and provides for assessing the effectiveness of those interventions. The instruction provided by the teachers will be driven by this student data.

Professional development in data analysis and decision making that will take place for all staff to ensure that we as a School community are collecting, analyzing and using relevant data in purposeful ways. In this way, teachers will use the PAP in an effective and responsive manner and will use student data to differentiate instruction and provide students with appropriate interventions.

Data-inquiry teams that will enable teachers to work collaboratively to make instructional intervention plans for their students based on the data.

Data driven instruction that will enable teachers to make specific instructional decisions that will most benefit their students' individual needs, and prescribe effective interventions to address those needs.

At the high school level, re-enrolled drop-outs and students who are below grade level according to age will receive an intensive program of AIS integrated with a career and vocational path, leading to state certification and licensing in skilled trade professions, or pathways with partner colleges which will ultimately lead to the attaining of high school diplomas and associate degrees.

**C) The Focus On Academic Achievement of Middle School Populations and Preparation For Transition to High School**

Beginning with the first cohort of 100 6th grade students in September 2012, each student will have a Pupil Achievement Profile (PAP), which will be developed by his or her instructional team of teachers, under the supervision of the Principal and Assistant Principal. The PAP will include analysis of the student's prior academic performance in local feeder schools, and a diagnosis of academic needs in all

[8] http://www.redorbit.com/news/technology/1519902/new_charter_high_school_a_model_for_cte_education_nationally/; **http://www.gacec.com**

subjects—based on assessment data and other performance measures—and an individualized prescriptive plan for addressing them. The PAP will also be a valuable tool for addressing the social and developmental needs of our students. From Day One, a crucial focus will be the preparation for our middle school grade level students to transition smoothly to academically rigorous high school work.

The school will use curriculum mapping and pacing schedules to accelerate every student to achieve at the highest academic level. The accelerated program will focus students on achievement through a precise and continuous cycle of instruction, evaluation, feedback, and support. Our goal is for 25% of eighth graders to take three New York State Regents Exams—Foreign Language, Science, and Mathematics -- and for all students to have the opportunity to do so. By achieving this benchmark at that grade level, they will familiarize themselves with the level of work necessary to pass future Regents exams and Advanced Placement classes, as well as be better prepared for internships and college courses in the high school.

Underscoring the academic goals for planning and transitioning students from the six through eighth grade middle school levels into the ninth through twelfth grade high school levels will be our CTE and Professional program. These concepts will begin from the day the school opens up its doors to our first cohort of sixth grade students, and will build and expand as the school grows and each cohort moves to the next grade level.

***Career Education***—a dynamic, challenging and engaging curriculum that connects daily academics to career competencies in business, computer technology, law and government, in addition to skilled vocational trades, will be the foundation of the school's program of study at both the middle school and high school levels. The spiraling of the curriculum around professional careers and technical and vocational skills will provide infinite possibilities to enhance and support both remediation and post-secondary acceleration according to the needs of each individual student. Instructors at the high school level will be chosen both for their expertise in educating at-risk students and for their knowledge and skill in high-demand technical fields and vocations. In hiring such educators, the school will benefit from the flexibility available in teacher certification requirements under state charter law, as well as the state-wide emphasis on increasing alternative routes to teacher certification (including the "Alternate C" license for CTE teachers) in the state's successful Race to the Top application.

***Social Enrichment***— a culture of respect and discipline will be promoted as a means of creating an academically focused environment rather than as an end in itself. The children's needs are acknowledged and attended to by responsible adults who ensure that students have: 1) The right to participate meaningfully, 2) Opportunities to define themselves, 3) Opportunities for creative expression, 4) A strong sense of competency, 5) Structure and clear limits, 6) Physical activity, 7) Positive social interactions with adults and with one another.

**D) Utilization Of A Variety of High Quality Assessments to measure Understanding and Critical Application of Concepts**

***School-Wide Assessments*** will align with both the NYS Common Core Standards and the school's larger goals. In accordance with the school's value of self-reliance, students will be expected to actively participate in the setting of their PAP goals and articulate the steps they are taking to meet them. Interim-assessments will be used to adjust and modify the means by which benchmarks for teaching and learning will be met. The school will create a rigorous set of target goals for every student to which the students themselves, their teachers, and their instructional leaders will be held accountable. An assessment schedule will be developed and a premium placed on transparent discussion of performance indicator and meeting expected outcomes.

The SISDA Charter School is a strong subscriber to the *Common Core State Standards*[9] for ELA, social studies, science, and technical education. The common thread of these standards is the fact that the school serves the dual function of educating and preparing our students for professional and technical careers, as well as highly skilled vocational trade careers. The Common Core Standards refer first and foremost to college and career readiness for grades 6-12. These standards, specifically referred to as "Anchor Standards", refer to the ability to ascertain key ideas and details of a story, the understanding of craft and structure as it pertains to context of a paragraph or reading passage and how it relates to the story, and the integration of knowledge and ideas. This last point refers to differentiated means of evaluating content and information and how it correlates to the themes and topics of a reading selection. Lastly, the range of reading and level of text complexity refers to the student's ability to read and comprehend readings and texts in an independent and satisfactory manner. These standards conform to rigorous expectations, are internationally benchmarked, and correlate to the promotion of college and career readiness in a 21st century global economy, points that mirror the mission and philosophy of the SISDA Charter School.

In addition to setting high expectations for student performance on summative assessments such as the state tests and the Regents Exams, a key tenet of the school's educational program will be the use of interim assessments to inform instructional strategies that will drive student success. The school will utilize a combination of interim assessment tools and create others in-house as it grows to capacity and perfects the necessary tools to meet its developing instructional goals. The school will implement an assessment program that includes McGraw-Hill Acuity (a program of individualized "do your own" interim assessments), , standardized and teacher developed assessments, student portfolios, and teacher observations of students' performances. Teachers will use both interim and summative assessment data to identify student needs and tailor instruction to address identified areas of growth.

Below is a table representing the proposed schedule of summative assessments throughout the academic school year:

| Assessment | Purpose | Grade | When |
|---|---|---|---|
| NYS Grades 6-8 ELA | Identify students' ability to meet or exceed grade level standards in reading comprehension and writing. | 6-8 | May |
| NYS English as a Second | The NYSESLAT is designed to measure the English language proficiency of students who have been identified | 6-12 | Spring |
| NYS Grades 6-8 | Identify students' ability to meet or exceed grade level standards in mathematical computation, mathematical | 6-8 | May |
| Terranova Testing | Used as an interim assessment tool twice during the school term across the curriculum to adequately assess progress during the term. | 6-8 | Sept. And May |
| NYS Earth Science Physical | Formative assessment of high school graduation requirements in science. | 8-9 | June |

[9] The Common Core State For English Language Arts & Literacy In History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects. The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). June 2010. http://www.corestandards.org

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|---|---|---|---|
| NYS Integrated Algebra | The questions on the Regents Examination in Integrated Algebra will assess both the content and the process strands of New York State Mathematics Standard 3. | 8-9 | June |
| NYS Geometry Regents | The questions on the Regents Examination in Geometry will assess both the content and the process strands of New York State Mathematics Standard 3. | 9-10 | June |
| NYS Global Regents | Formative assessment of high school graduation requirement in history. | 9-10 | June |
| NYS Living Environment | Formative assessment of high school graduation requirements in science. | 9-10 | June |
| NYS Algebra 2 | The questions on the Regents Examination in Algebra 2/Trigonometry will assess both the content and the process | 10-11 | June |
| NYS Chemistry & Physics | Formative assessment of high school graduation requirements in science subjects. | * | June |

**E) Increase implementation of local instructional improvement systems to assess and inform instructional practice, decision making, and effectiveness**

In order to successfully implement the assessment systems noted above, extensive and on-going professional development will be provided to ensure that teachers are not only able to effectively gather data, but also are able to analyze it and, most importantly, make sound instructional decisions as a result. Data conferences will be an invaluable tool to this end, as they will provide clear protocols whereby teachers and instructional leaders will discuss student data and plan accordingly. Multiple members of the board of trustees (which includes former and current DOE teachers, principals, and administrators) have expertise in the data analysis process for school performance and improvement in New York City schools and have successfully implemented these assessment systems in multiple middle school and high school contexts.

The SISDA Charter School will also utilize the resources provided by the UFT's Teacher Center in offering professional development targeted at at-risk students in New York City and the Bronx. The participation on the governing board of the UFT's Bronx borough representative will be especially valuable in offering opportunities for SISDA faculty to take advantages of programs offered in the local UFT Bronx office. The UFT will also provide a Teacher Center in the school, staffed by an experienced district teacher with expertise in providing individualized professional development for teachers of at-risk students. Teachers participating in professional development at the SISDA Charter School will also have the opportunity to receive continuing education credits towards further certification in their fields.

In addition, our founding school leader is a successful, experienced school principal with particular expertise in offering instructional guidance to teachers of at-risk students and special education instructors.

**F) Partner with low performing, local public schools to share best practices**

SISDA's long history in the South Bronx community and the UFT's involvement in the planning process for SISDA Charter School will offer a uniquely strong capacity to fulfill this requirement of the charter school law. In both planning for and opening the school, we will reach out to other schools in the community, offering to be part of a cohort providing professional development assistance, interim

assessment development, assistance with data analysis , shared participation in extended day and Saturday Academy programs, and summer youth employment. Inter-visitations will be provided for school development in each of the previously developed areas by the school leader and members of the Board of Trustees , all of whom are talented team builders and can offer local schools both expertise in youth development and a history of productive working relationships with the district. The UFT Bronx Borough Representative will also facilitate teacher visits between SISDA and local district schools, helping to build relationships on a foundation of mutual interest in promoting high achievement among at-risk students in the community.

**G) Demonstrate the ability to overcome start up challenges to open a successful school through management and leadership techniques**

Multiple members of the SISDA planning team and Board of Trustees have had prior experiences with New York City charter schools during the start-up process, effectively preparing them to guide SISDA Charter School through the challenges it will face in its early years. Two members of the current Board of Trustees have led a school where three charter schools were incubated; they provided assistance to charter school leaders and faculty during the incubation process, and helped resolve the challenges first hand that these schools encountered. Another Board member is a retired school principal who was a consultant to another charter school during its planning phases and first year, and who continues to provide assistance with its start-up challenges. UFT Business Manager David Hickey and other members of the UFT staff involved with the founding and operations of the Green Dot Charter High School and the UFT Charter School will also be available for consultation and assistance throughout the school's planning and start-up period, particularly in areas such as back-office services (including payroll and facilities management).

In addition, SISDA Charter's founding school leader is an experienced principal with years of experience in guiding school staffs through periods of transition and a commitment to facilitating high achievement for at-risk students. Finally, the lead applicant is SISDA's founding Executive Director, a skilled manager and leader who has overseen the growth of that organization and implemented educational programs in the South Bronx for over 40 years. Given these many sources of experience, talents, and expertise, the Board has the capacity to focus on a data-driven decision making process which will ensure a successful school start and continued improvement.

**H) Demonstrate the support of the school district of location and the intent to establish an ongoing relationship with such district**

As with the mandate to build relationships with local schools, SISDA's long history in the South Bronx community and the UFT's involvement in the planning process for SISDA Charter School will also offer a uniquely strong capacity to fulfill this requirement of the charter school law. We have already secured the support of the Bronx Borough President's CEC representative to the school district that we have chosen to incubate our school, and she has agreed to serve on the Board of Trustees. Both the CEC representative and SISDA Charter's founding school leader have close ties to the current community school district superintendent, with whom they maintain a close professional relationship. The CEC member on our Board has spoken to her and received the support of the other CEC members in the school district. As the planning process moves forward, we will be reaching out more formally to the community superintendent to discuss ways that we can collaborate in providing support to low-performing schools in her district.

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

As noted earlier, the South Bronx currently does not offer quality alternatives for at-risk students who seek schools with a dual focus on preparing them for college and careers. High school graduation

rates and rates of college attendance among local high school students are low, and there are also few options for students who seek high-quality career and technical training for rewarding vocations which do not require a four-year degree.

SISDA has had decades of experiences providing the South Bronx community with educational services which supplement the opportunities provided in the local district schools. In creating an innovative new school which offers an academically rigorous combined middle and high school program with a strong career and technical education focus, the SISDA Charter School will represent a valuable addition to the public education choices for parents and students in the South Bronx.