



# PHASE I: Letter of Intent

Created: 06/19/2015

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## Basic Contact and Application Information

### Page 1

**Applicant groups and Existing Education Corporations interested in submitting an application to establish Regents-authorized charter schools are asked to complete this brief information sheet. The Department will use this information to plan and coordinate peer review panels with appropriate expertise to evaluate all application materials.**

**Please indicate whether an Applicant Group or an Existing Education Corporation is submitting this Round 1 Letter of Intent.**

Applicant Group LOI to establish a single, brand new charter school

### **Proposed Charter School Name**

(Please write out the formal and full name for the school you proposed, and include the words "charter" and "school" in the proposed name(s)).

School Name	Truxton Academy Charter School
Grades Served (K-5, .6-8, 9-12, etc.) During Initial Term	k-5
Number of Students During Initial Term	75

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

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

	First and Last Name	Best Phone Number (###-###-####)	Email Address
Proposed/Current Board Chair	Lucinda Denkenberger	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Public/Media Contact Person	K. Jeanetta Laudermilk	607-345-6466	<a href="mailto:kilaudermilk@gmail.com">kilaudermilk@gmail.com</a>

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

<http://www.truxtonacademycharterschool.org/>

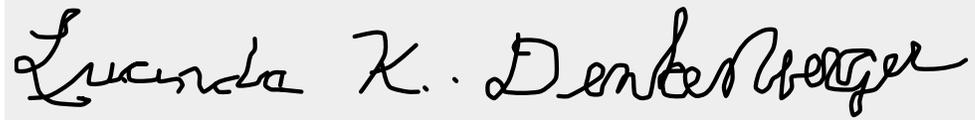
**Proposed Management and/or Partner Organization(s), such as a charter or educational management company or a university, academic program partner, or whole school change partner.**

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

Proposed Management Company	none
Partner Organization 1	none
Partner Organization 2	none

**Proposed Board Chair Signature**

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

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light gray background. The signature reads "Lucinda K. Dentonberger" in a cursive script.

**Date**

2015/06/19

**Thank you for completing this form.**

# Letter of Intent to Establish the Truxton Academy Charter School

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Table 1:	Applicant Group Information
Attachment 5a:	Board of Trustee Documentation
Attachment 5b:	Prospective Student Enrollment Form
Attachment 5c:	Summary of Business Letters of Support
Attachment 5d:	Truxton Academy Charter School Outreach Documentation

# Letter of Intent to Establish the Truxton Academy Charter School

To: NYSED Charter School Office, Albany, NY

Submitted: June 19, 2015

**Introduction:** In April 2014, the Homer School District Superintendent announced plans to close Hartnett Elementary School in Truxton citing a small school population, decreasing enrollment, and lowered State funding. Based on a strong desire to maintain an educational presence in the area and meet the needs of this rural agricultural community, parents, Village and Town leaders, and retired teachers banded together to investigate the potential of a public charter school and demonstrate the resilience and fortitude of rural communities. This Letter of Intent and a subsequent application submittal is the result of their determination.

## I. Applicant Group Information

- a. **Members:** The group is comprised of eight individuals with backgrounds in various aspects of education, farm operation and management, and small business ownership (Table 1.)
- b. **Prospective Roles:** Six individuals of the applicant group will serve on the Board of Trustees. (Table 1.) The Board will include an additional parent representative upon definitive enrollment.
- c. **Public Contact:** K. Jeanetta Laudermilk, 607-345-6466, [KJLaudermilk@gmail.com](mailto:KJLaudermilk@gmail.com)
- d. **History:** A Letter of Intent was submitted February 9, 2015 and declined by the NYSEDCSO. No proposal application has been previously submitted by this group or for this location. **Attachment 5a** contains the required background information documentation. Identified board members are aware of the criminal background check and fingerprint scan requirements.

## II. Proposed Charter School Information

- a. **Proposed Name:** Truxton Academy Charter School (TACS)
- b. **Proposed Location:** The applicant group is working with local community officials in obtaining the current Hartnett Elementary School facility or an alternate facility within the Town of Truxton.
- c. **Planned Grades and Enrollment:** The applicant group proposes a Kindergarten through 5<sup>th</sup> Grade program, basing enrollment projections on surveyed community interest and a gathered statement of interest/intention enrollment form (Attachment 5b). The proposed opening date is September 2016 under a granted charter term September 1, 2016 through June 30, 2021.

<i>Truxton Academy Charter School – Projected Enrollment</i>							
<i>Year</i>	<i>K</i>	<i>1<sup>st</sup></i>	<i>2<sup>nd</sup></i>	<i>3<sup>rd</sup></i>	<i>4<sup>th</sup></i>	<i>5<sup>th</sup></i>	<i>Total</i>
2016-17	15	15	15	15	15	0	75
2017-18	15	15	15	15	15	15	90
2018-19	16	16	16	16	16	15	95
2019-20	16	16	16	16	16	16	96
2020-21	16	16	16	16	16	16	96

- d. **Proposed Management and/or Partner Organization:** None. The applicant group is not applying with the intention of securing a management company or partnership

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organization. However, the group has and will continue to seek the help of charter school organizations and the support of local businesses for the mission of the school, as well as such things as in-kind services, special programs, extracurricular activities, or contributions. A sampling of initial letters of support is contained in Attachment 5c.

### e. Mission Statement

*The Truxton Academy Charter School will cultivate enthusiasm for learning. We will plant seeds of understanding and appreciation for our progressive rural life, environment and its resources. Using project-based, hands-on learning, integrated with today's technology, our nurturing school will produce unique academic opportunities for its students. Harvesting knowledge and skills, these students will become innovative citizens and leaders of the future.*

- f. **School Overview:** TACS proposes an academic setting utilizing Project-Based Learning (PBL) to provide small and large group instruction and hands-on learning. The school will operate under an administrative staff with classroom teachers that spend instruction time in common core subject areas including language arts, mathematics, social studies, science, and technology. Introduction to a foreign language (Spanish) will be incorporated into the curriculum.

The skills learned in these subject areas will be integrated and applied to projects that promote the understanding, functioning, and value of an agricultural community. Implementation of projects requires expanding the classroom into the outdoors and learning in natural and agricultural environments. TACS will look to youth education programs such as 4-H, FFA (Future Farmers of America), Boy Scouts, and Girl Scouts as examples of successful models of project-based, hands-on programming. TACS programming will require collaboration between grades and pairing with local agri-businesses. Parents, volunteers, and community business and organization participation will be involved.

The primary objective of the TACS is to create a culture of individual expectations of academic excellence, respect, performance, and collaboration. The school will emulate the strengths of the Walton 21<sup>st</sup> Century Rural Life Learning Center and the Syracuse Academy of Science Charter School in the following ways:

**Project-Based Learning (PBL):** Teachers and staff will be trained in PBL, and parents will be informed and involved with this approach. PBL strengthens confidence and self-efficacy, improves knowledge retention, develops team collaboration skills, and builds healthy social interaction and leadership abilities.

**Agricultural Education:** Each classroom will be partnered with an area agri-business. Students will benefit from this partnership through field trips, observations, guidance, and support in learning to understand and respect the value and rigor of farm family life. Comprehensive math, science, and technology skills will be incorporated in the PBL and agricultural learning experiences.

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**Environmental Education:** TACS environmental education will promote awareness of the diversity and characteristics of surrounding terrain including the Labrador Hollow Unique Area, Lime Hollow Nature Center, and Morgan Hill State Forest. Students will participate in and help create nature-related programs and share acquired knowledge with parents and the community.

**Youth Leadership Program:** TACS will incorporate character education, teaching recognized values such as honesty, stewardship, kindness, generosity, courage, freedom, justice, and equality. In this respectful environment, students will receive positive reinforcement and recognition for successfully exhibiting these values.

**Foreign Language Education:** Because of large rural agri-businesses and the needed presence of migrant workers for these farms, TACS will reach out to ELL parents and students using Spanish information and application forms as well as a local bi-lingual educator to support the classroom teachers. Many of these children are not receiving classroom instruction at this time.

**Performing Arts:** Instrumental, choral, and a variety of artistic opportunities will be provided in the daily school schedule.

**Physical Education:** TACS will provide adventure-based physical activity, emphasizing exercise and life-long health practices.

**Parental Involvement and Home Visits:** Parental involvement is a strategic part of TACS goals. The teachers will perform home visits to understand the students' abilities and difficulties, and student/parent concerns, and to establish a strong triad of parent-student-teacher relationships. The TACS educators will do a minimum of four home visits each year and contact at least five school parents each week.

**School Day/Tutoring:** The school day will be six hours long and based on the public school schedule. Teachers will provide extra help, tutoring, and after-school activities.

**Performance Based Accountability:** Academic goals and objectives will be measured using NYS assessments administered each year. Additional assessment will be anecdotal and narrative. Student progress will be measured regularly through data collected and tracked by multiple assessment instruments such as Early Literacy software and Benchmark Exams.

TACS teachers and students will become adept at using and understanding rubrics in both formative and summative assessments with regard to PBL. Student performance will be documented and reviewed by teachers to create action plans to improve individual student achievement.

Bi-weekly teacher observations and enrichment programs will be done, giving each teacher supportive feedback and providing resources tailored to meet individual teacher needs.

**Lunch/Transportation/Health/Safety:** TACS will operate on a five-day school week, serving lunch in accordance with the National School Lunch Program, and snacks as appropriate for extra-curricular programming. Transportation of students will be done in conjunction with the Homer School District and other districts depending upon exact

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enrollment. TACS will operate in accordance with all applicable health, safety, civil rights, human resources, and environmental laws, rules, and regulations.

TACS aims to plant the seeds of understanding, appreciation, and knowledge of natural environments, conservation of resources, and production of food so that its students grow to become the individuals who create viability and sustainability for rural communities in New York State.

- g. **Target Population/Community Served:** The initial target population is the elementary students displaced by the closure of Hartnett Elementary school. This population includes:
- 59% economically disadvantaged
  - 15.3 % students with disabilities
  - 0% English Language Learners (ELL)

Intended target populations will extend to the Homer School District, four neighboring school districts with residents within a 15 mile radius of the proposed facility, and currently home-school families seeking choice in educational venues. Target populations will continue to include the economically disadvantaged and students with special needs.

The agricultural nature of the area attracts migrant workers, often Spanish speaking families. TACS intends to reach out to this population for inclusion and collaboration that can expand the global and cultural aspects of the TACS.

- h. **Replication of High Quality School Models:** TACS proposes a partial replication of Walton 21<sup>st</sup> Century Rural Life Learning Center, Walton, Kansas. As of date, no agriculturally focused charter school operates in New York State. TACS poses a unique opportunity to create this focus for the State.

Walton shares a similar history of being a rural agricultural area, an impending elementary school closure, and the fortitude of the local community to meet the educational needs of its residents. In 2007, Walton had the support of the local school district in developing the concept and design of the charter school.

Walton operates a K-5 school and is now in its second charter term. It has ranked in the top 5% of Kansas schools with students excelling and exceeding state test score averages in every classroom. The closing school in Walton had a school population below 100. The school enrolls a maximum 170 students and maintains an active waiting list for future enrollment. Walton 21<sup>st</sup> Century Rural Life Learning Center is fully prepared to share data to demonstrate its successful implementation.

- III. **Enrollment and Retention:** Enrollment activities have begun with completion of an interest/intention enrollment form (Attachment 5b) distributed at informational meetings, TACS sponsored and community events, and mailed to 2,600 households. It is available from applicant group members. Enrollment intention can also be made via the TACS website, <http://www.truxtonacademycharterschool.org>.

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Continued enrollment strategies will include mailings, print postings at community locations, web postings on available/acceptable community sites and social media. Public invitation to event functions at the school, particularly an Open House to be held in the spring and a scheduled enrollment day in early summer. Enrollment strategies addressing area residents and the current school population will include the mission objective students, special needs students, and the economically disadvantaged students. Plans for targeted mailings and personal contact with the migrant work force will be done to recruit individuals who are ELL.

Retention of all students (mission objective, special needs, economically disadvantaged, and ELL) is to be accomplished through successful operation, specialized and individualized support, consistent and frequent family communication and interaction, and involvement of the community residents and businesses. Successful operation will be accomplished by securing a dedicated faculty and staff, maintaining a strong Board of Trustees, parent satisfaction, community collaboration, and most importantly the academic success of the students.

- IV. **Public Outreach and Community Support:** Community outreach has been ongoing. Attachment 5d includes examples of public outreach communications. The applicant group has benefitted from several individuals with marketing expertise who intend to continue serving as a resource. Parental interest has been assessed by the response (to date) of enrollment intention (57 children) and 22 business letters of support from adjoining communities. (Attachment 5C.)

Outreach approaches will continue to use print and social media marketing tools, invitations to special events, open houses, booths at local events, and participation of students and parents in community events. Targeted mailings and postings will be used as well.

The current applicant group intends to evolve into a Charter School support group to facilitate and implement the directives of the Board of Trustees, collaborate with the faculty and staff to advance the presence of TACS. A strong parental involvement in this support group is anticipated.

The applicant group strongly believes that honesty, integrity, and frequent and forthright communication with all concerned and involved with TACS is, and will continue to be, the philosophy by which the Board of Trustees will operate.

V. **Proposed Board Chair Signature and Date**

I am pleased to submit this Letter of Intent on behalf of the Truxton Academy Charter School applicant group. We look forward to moving forward with you into the proposal application phase.

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Lucinda Denkenberger, Board President

June 19, 2015  
Date

**Letter of Intent to Establish the Truxton Academy Charter School  
ATTACHMENT 5a**

**TABLE 1: APPLICANT GROUP INFORMATION**

\*Minimum of 5 members must be designated as Trustees

NAME OF APPLICANT GROUP MEMBER	EMAIL ADDRESS	CURRENT EMPLOYMENT	RELEVANT EXPERIENCE, SKILLS, AND ROLE ON APPLICANT GROUP (Key Words)	PROPOSED ROLE (if any) (Trustee, Employee, Consultant, or No Continuing Role)	PROPOSED POSITION ON THE BOARD (e.g., officer, trustee, or constituent representative)	LENGTH OF INITIAL TERM	VOTING MEMBER (YES OR NO)
Lucinda "Cindy" Denkenberger	[REDACTED]	Retired Teacher	BA SUNY Oswego, Early Education and Elementary Teacher, Collaborator on multi-grade curriculum, active in community groups. <i>Initiator and leader of applicant group.</i>	Trustee	President	3	Yes
K. Jeanetta Laudermilk	[REDACTED]	Manager New Penn Farm 4h Youth Coordinator	Eight years of agricultural experience operating and managing a dairy farm, Cortland County 4-H Board, Alternate Delegate for Cooperative Resources International. <i>Public Contact and Media support to community and 400 identified charter school supporters.</i>	Trustee (parent)	Vice President	3	Yes
Adam Aldrich	[REDACTED]	Business Owner Morgan Hill Maple Syrup	AAS SUNY Morrisville Environmental Science, 15 years with NYSDEC, Treasurer of Truxton Medodist Church, active in community. Operates agri-tourism business. <i>Concept development and promotion.</i>	Trustee (parent)	Treasurer	3	Yes
Krysta Austen	[REDACTED]	Business Owner Little Sprouts Day Care	BA SUNY Cortland Accounting/Finance, EMT, Hartnett School Parent Association. <i>Concept development and promotion.</i>	Trustee (parent)	Member	2	Yes
Patricia Dawson	[REDACTED]	Business Owner Patricia Dawson Designs	<i>Harnett Community School Parent Association, Preble Children's Center Board of Directors (former member). Marketing support.</i>	Consultant Charter School Support Group (parent)			
Kay Reakes	[REDACTED]	Business Owner Country Goods Farm Market	MS Cornell University Early Childhood Education, 10 years experience early childhood teacher, 16 years hands-on nature center programming, Hartnett volunteer. <i>Concept development, curriculum and</i>	Charter School Support Group			
Elaine Sturges	[REDACTED]	Workshop Facilitator Retired Teacher	MS Cornell University Early Childhood Education, 10 years experience early childhood teacher, 16 years hands-on nature center programming, Hartnett volunteer. <i>Concept development, curriculum and programming expertise.</i>	Trustee	Member	2	Yes
Stuart Young	[REDACTED]	Partner and CEO East River Dairy	BS Cornell University Farm Business Management, leadership positions with numerous agricultural organizations. <i>Concept development and financial expertise.</i>	Trustee	Member	2	Yes