



# PHASE I: Letter of Intent

Created: 06/17/2015

Last updated: 06/18/2015

## Basic Contact and Application Information

### Page 1

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

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

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

### **Proposed Charter School Name**

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

School Name	WHIN Music Community Charter School
Grades Served (K-5, .6-8, 9-12, etc.) During Initial Term	K-5
Number of Students During Initial Term	324

### **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	Gregory David	██████████	██████████
Public/Media Contact Person	David Gracia	347-739-6342	<a href="mailto:david.gracia79@gmail.com">david.gracia79@gmail.com</a>

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

(No response)

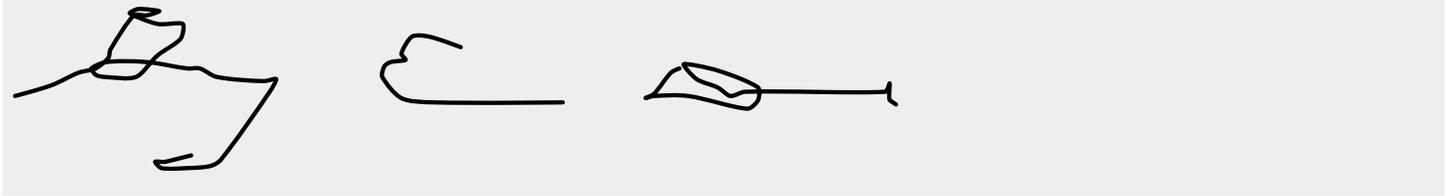
### **Proposed Management and/or Partner Organization(s), such as a charter or educational management company or a university, academic program partner, or whole school change partner.**

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

Proposed Management Company	N/A
Partner Organization 1	N/A
Partner Organization 2	N/A

**Proposed Board Chair Signature**

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



**Date**

2015/06/18

**Thank you for completing this form.**

New York State Education Department  
Charter School Office  
89 Washington Avenue, Room 471 EBA  
Albany, New York 12234

We submit this Letter of Intent (LOI) in response to the Request for Proposals to Establish Charter Schools Authorized by the Board of Regents.

## I. Applicant Information

**a. Lead Applicant:** David Gracia, [REDACTED]

**b. Public contact:** Mr. Gracia: tel.: (347) 739-6342; email: david.gracia79@gmail.com.

**c. Applicant group information:** Mr. Gracia will be Executive Director of the School. His relevant experience and skills include: (i) Sistema Fellow at the New England Conservatory, a leadership program to develop the internationally renowned music education program “El Sistema;” (ii) Founder and Executive Director of the Washington Heights and Inwood (WHIN) Music Project, an El Sistema music project serving 500 children from CSD6 and other underserved communities in New York City; (iii) Music Director at Playground Sessions, a music software company co-created by Quincy Jones; (iv) Music Director of the New York Society for Ethical Culture.

### **d. Initial Board of Trustees Information:**

**Anne Cohen** is a local resident, mother, musician, and music teacher at the independent Blue School. She previously taught band/chorus/general music/early childhood music. Ann holds a Bachelor’s degree in instrumental music education from Bucknell, a Masters in music and music education from Columbia University Teachers College, and a Kodaly certification from NYU.

**Gregory David** is Head Teacher in 4th grade at Bank Street College School for Children. He previously spent 17 years as a journalist, investor, and entrepreneur. A Founding Teacher of the JCC in Manhattan's Gift of Math after school program, Greg holds a B.A. from the University of Pennsylvania, a Masters in English from NYU, and a Masters from Bank Street in Childhood Special and General Education.

**Bob Green** has 25 years of experience in systems and business process re-engineering working with a variety of companies in the public and private sectors. Since 1996 he has been involved with Non-Profits and Community Development Credit Unions in northern Manhattan. He currently serves as Audit Committee Chairperson at Neighborhood Trust Federal Credit Union. As a repertory artist with Lincoln Center Education, Bob has performed in over 100 schools and colleges.

**Ivonne Norman, Esq.** is an attorney admitted to practice in both State and Federal Court. A graduate from John Jay College of Criminal Justice she also received a Juris Doctor from New York Law School. Her professional experience includes over a decade representing parties in civil litigation focused on the areas of medical malpractice, nursing home negligence and personal injury.

**Carmel Owen** is the Vice President of Major Gift Leadership at the New York Women's Foundation, having helped to raise almost \$20 million in donations in the past 18 months. She was previously the Director of Major and Leadership Gifts at Columbia Law School. Carmel is a Montessori Certified Teacher, with a M.S. in Education from Fordham University, as well as a composer.

**Andrea Profili** began her violin studies with Horacio Bustamante at the Escuela Juvenil de Música de Panamá, and received a B.M. in Performance and a Masters in Music Education studying with Sarah Johnson at Converse College. Selected as one of the fifty Sistema Fellows at NEC, Andrea is director of orchestras at WHIN Music Project, Upbeat NYC, and Opportunity Music Project.

**Melissa Randazzo** is a researcher and speech-language pathologist (SLP) with an MS from Teachers College, Columbia University. She works as a SLP in NYC, serving mainly bilingual children with language disorders, and has extensive experience as a related service provider and speech supervisor in charter schools. Currently finishing her doctoral studies in the Neurocognition and Language Lab at Columbia, Melissa has worked as an adjunct instructor and clinical educator.

**Daniel Schulte** is an innovative and experienced educator who taught for four years at an international school in Turkey, where he served in various positions including ESL teacher, Educational Technology Integration Specialist/Teacher (K-5), and Grade 3 Classroom Teacher. Daniel holds a

B.A. from Harvard College, an Ed.M. in School Leadership from the Harvard Graduate School of Education, and served as a principal intern at the Conservatory Lab Charter School in Boston.

**e. Replication or Network Information:** Not applicable.

**f. Application History:** We submitted a letter of intent to this body in July 2014 and were not invited to submit a full application due to a concern that we did not demonstrate sufficient community outreach and support. In February 2015, we submitted an improved letter of intent, responding to and incorporating the reviewers’ feedback and demonstrating strong community outreach and support. Our February 2015 LOI garnered an invitation from the Board of Regents to submit a full application. Our March 2015 application did not garner an invitation for a capacity interview, due to the concern that we did not sufficiently address many of the evaluation criteria featured in the request for proposal. We seek to submit a Round 2 Application incorporating the reviewers’ feedback and remedying previous shortcomings.

**II. Proposed Charter School Information**

**a. Proposed School Name:** WHIN Music Community Charter School (“WHIN”)

**b. Proposed school location:** NYC Community School District 6.

**c. Planned grades and enrollment in each of the years of the proposed charter term:** The school will enroll 54 students per grade, beginning with grades K-1 and adding one grade per year until 2020-2021, when the school will have approximately 324 students in grades K-5.

Grades	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
Kindergarten	54	54	54	54	54
Grade 1	54	54	54	54	54
Grade 2		54	54	54	54
Grade 3			54	54	54
Grade 4				54	54
Grade 5					54
<b>Total</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>216</b>	<b>270</b>	<b>324</b>

**d. Proposed Management and/or Partner Organization(s):** None.

**e. Proposed school mission:** The WHIN Music Community Charter School's mission is to provide our diverse student population with unique and rigorous academic and music education in a positive and thriving learning environment, so every student can overcome any obstacle and perform at or above grade level in the school setting. WHIN will use a music-centered curriculum in combination with intensive El Sistema music instruction (primarily orchestral and choral) to provide students with the executive functioning skills, inquisitive minds, emotional stability, parental involvement, and community support to build character and make positive contributions to their communities.

**f. School overview:**

**1. Rigorous, project-based academic curriculum aligned with the Common Core standards.**

Our School will develop a **music-infused** (as discussed in greater detail below), **Common Core-aligned** curriculum that will use student data to collaboratively plan high-quality and rigorous interdisciplinary units of study.

- Our **Common Core aligned mathematics program** emphasizes problem-solving in the context of real world situations. We believe that elementary children will become passionate for mathematical thinking and build strong foundations in mathematical concepts by using hands-on manipulatives and interactive learning materials that allow authentic, deep learning. Our program may draw upon the curriculum guidelines of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) and TERC investigations, adequately aligned with Common Core content materials.

- Our **Common Core-aligned Language Arts program** will facilitate all students' development of literacy skills by using the Reading Workshop and Writers Workshop models. The reading program will emphasize plenty of time for reading authentic, self-selected, properly leveled (using the Fountas and Pinnell leveling system) texts. The writing program will foster the love of writing through daily, authentic writing tasks integrated with the rest of the curriculum. Wilson Foundations will serve to teach phonological awareness, phonics, decoding, and spelling in Grades K-2.
- Our **Common Core-aligned Science and Social Studies** will be taught through the Expeditionary Learning principles of project-based and inquiry-based instruction. Each year, students will participate in three different expeditions that will focus on either a science or social studies topic.
- **Teacher development** will be an essential part of our school culture. Curriculum coaches will work with the administrative team to increase the level of instructional quality. A math/science coach and a literacy coach will work with teachers through classroom observations and feedback sessions. Expeditionary Learning coaches will work with teachers to implement successful lesson plans in science and social studies classes.

## **2. Music-infused curriculum and El Sistema music education model to build community**

- **El Sistema music education emulating pioneering work at the Conservatory Lab Charter School** in Boston (an elementary school that has successfully developed and implemented a music-centered curriculum since 1999): Our music teachers will offer two hours of in-house daily music instruction based on the El Sistema model, an internationally renowned and successful music education program in orchestral and choral instruction.
- **Music-infused curriculum:** Based on the Learning Through Music (LTM) model used at the Conservatory Lab, which promotes the flexible and interdisciplinary use of music within academic subjects, WHIN will develop a project and performance based learning environment with clear standards for measuring outcomes. Our classroom teachers will work with our music teachers (both inside and outside the classroom) to develop engaging projects incorporating music into academic study, and fostering students' academic and artistic development through music's Five Processes: Questioning, Listening, Creating, Performing, and Reflecting.
- **Build community through music:** In alignment with El Sistema principles, students will perform frequently for their peers, parents and immediate community, cultivating their self-esteem and bonds with their community, and contributing positively to their community's cultural life. The School's focus on music will directly serve our commitment to high academic standards as well as positive **community engagement and parent involvement** while developing student's capacity for discipline, attention to detail, hard work, maturity, and teamwork.

## **3. Strategic use of time and scheduling**

- The **extended school day** will run from 8:00 am to 4:30 pm four days a week. On Fridays, instruction will end at 2:00 pm to allow for professional development, music performances for parents and the community, and meetings to discuss students' progress.
- **Looping:** Students in Grades K-5 will loop with their classmates and teachers for two consecutive school years (K-1, 2-3, 4-5). Looping will help students connect better with teachers and allow teachers to develop individualized instructional approaches for each student.

## **4. Student empowerment through fully inclusionary model and use of Responsive Classroom**

- As a **Child-Centered School** our main goal will be to ensure that each student succeeds and develops his/her academic, musical, emotional and social skills, so he/she can become a leader in his/her community, a role model for others, and a positive contributor and citizen.
- **Co-teaching model:** All classes will be staffed with two certified teachers, including at least one with SPED and/or ESL certification. This will allow us to implement differentiated instruction through a variety of collaborative models between the two teachers: parallel, alternative and team teaching, among others.
- An **Inclusion model of instruction** will ensure that English Language Learners (ELLs) and special needs students will have equal access to the curriculum and quality instruction. We will support the needs of our English Language Learners by using evidence-based models such as SIOP, among others. Special Education teachers will follow a multi-tiered Response to Intervention (RTI) model

that will be supplemented when needed by related service providers (occupational, physical, and speech therapy services) following a push-in model to ensure services are aligned with curriculum.

- **Using Responsive Classroom**, we will teach students the social/emotional skills for conflict resolution, teamwork, and collaboration, in order to develop well-rounded scholar citizens.

**g. Target population and community:**

Washington Heights and Inwood are diverse and vibrant communities. According to the New York State Education Department's Student Information Repository System data for 2012-2013, District 6's student population is 7% Black or African American, 88% Hispanic or Latino, 1% Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander, and 3% White. 91% of students are Economically Disadvantaged, 15% are Students with Disabilities, and 34% have Limited English Proficiency. We intend to serve a representative cross-section of the community because we believe schools should be a reflection of their communities and help bring them together.

**III. Enrollment and retention of students with disabilities, English language learners, and students who are eligible applicants for the free and reduced-price lunch program:**

- Building upon the work of social integration and community building started by WHIN Music Project, we will strive to create a diverse student population reflective of the residents of CSD 6. To achieve this, WHIN will conduct a comprehensive campaign to enroll **students eligible for free/reduced lunch (FRLP)**, with **special needs**, and who are **English Language Learners (ELL)**. With the history, rapport, and trust built with our students, parents, and community partners we will use **word of mouth and direct referrals** from our current students and families (over 150) to help spread the word about our school. We will also conduct **door-to-door distribution and direct mailing** of our brochures in the different languages represented in the community (primarily Spanish, English, and Russian) and will **host presentations** in preschools, daycares, community centers, community-based organizations that serve non-English speaking populations and/or offer support to low-income families, and in clinics and childhood development centers that cater to children with special needs. We will also inform the **CSD's Committee on Special Education** of our program and services so they can share them with interested families. Through our **website/social media** we will reach a wider audience that might have been less reachable via the previously mentioned channels.

- WHIN will emphasize the creation of a supportive community environment that will promote diversity by making sure that the individual learning needs and styles of our students are met, and that all students have equal access to our curriculum, in order to retain diverse learners. A **multi-leveled approach that engages students, teachers and parents** will help create this supportive community environment. Our **Child Study Team**, composed of teachers (classroom and music), specialists, and administrators will work to identify students who might qualify for and benefit from IEPs or accommodations, including access to related services such as counseling, speech, occupational and physical therapy, in order to participate fully in music and academic programs. A dedicated specialist will oversee each child's individual program to ensure least restrictive environment, progress in measurable benchmarks, and full access to program. **FRLP** students will be afforded the highest standards of assistance necessary for them to participate fully in WHIN academics, music, expeditions, and extracurricular activities. **ELLs** will be identified through both Home Language Surveys and follow-up pre-assessment evaluations administered for all new students. **ELL/ESL teachers** will work intensively with classroom teachers to ensure that ELLs' learning needs and styles are being met. Based on the effectiveness of the ESL program, modifications and adjustments will be made. There will be **Spanish-speaking staff members** in key positions to make sure non-English speakers are engaged and active participants in the school community. We will use the **morning community meeting time to engage with all parents** and show them they are part of the school. We will implement multicultural programs throughout the year to make **all families** feel welcome. **FRLP, ELL, and special education students, and their parents**, will benefit from monthly parent workshops (offered in English and Spanish) led by a social worker and/or Special Ed teacher, as needed, to make sure parents understand the needs of their children, how WHIN is working comprehensively to meet those needs, and to help parents acquire the tools to meet those needs successfully. Furthermore, ongoing parent workshops and referrals to

other service providers in the community that serve **FRLP, special Ed, and ELL students** will be available for the parents of students given multilayered intervention, supporting those parents who in turn support their students in overcoming challenges. Workshop topics will include: increasing speech and language skills at home, helping children with critical thinking skills, how music impacts brain development, nutrition for healthy learners, positive discipline strategies, and parent peer support discussions, among others.

#### **IV. Public Outreach and Community Support:**

Based on the NYSED Board of Regents' recommendations regarding the community outreach for our July 2014 letter of intent, we have implemented an action plan that addresses their concerns and increases public knowledge of our initiative.

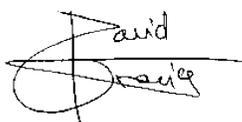
**a. Public outreach conducted to date:** Our public outreach is divided into three levels:

**Family/parental level:** We have presented the school proposal to over 150 parents in several public meetings held at Our Saviour's Atonement Lutheran Church, the Small Idea School, the Renaissance Village Montessori, and private houses, collecting over 100 signatures of support so far. We also have met with several directors of prominent early childhood centers and preschool programs who have been very supportive of our school initiative, including Tatjana Matano, Director of the Renaissance Village Montessori, Howard Johnson, Director of The Medical Center Nursery School, Susan Hennan, Director of Early Childhood Services at the YM & YWHA, Karen Ellefsen, Director at Isabella Child Care Center, Kevin and Melissa Guzman, Co-Directors of the Small Idea School, among others.

**Community organization/activist level:** We have presented at the CB12 Full Board meeting in January for 60 community members by invitation from the Chairman of the Board Mr. George Fernandez Jr., at the CB12 Youth and Education Committee, by invitation from Chair Fe Florimon, and at the CB9 Youth, Education and Libraries Committee, by invitation from committee member Judith Insell. We also presented at CEC6 and met with CSD6 Superintendent Manuel Ramirez, receiving useful feedback to make sure our school proposal can contribute positively to the entire school district. Other WHIN supporters in the community include Ana-Ofelia Rodriguez, Director of Community Development at Broadway Housing Communities; Juan Ignacio Rosa, a community activist who has worked for various elected officials in Northern Manhattan, and Victoria Nezdansky, LCSW Chief Program Officer at YM&YWHA of Washington Heights and Inwood, all of whom have offered a letter of support. Our school proposal received media coverage with an article on DNA Info (February 2015) written by Lindsay Armstrong.

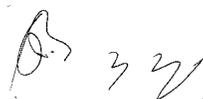
**Elected official level:** we met with Councilmembers Mark Levine and Ydanis Rodriguez, Senator Adriano Espaillat and the office of Assemblymember Guillermo Linares. They gave us very positive feedback and thought that this is a positive initiative that puts music at the forefront of the education of our neediest children. CM Levine and Sen. Espaillat provided us with letters of support.

**b. Describe your initial assessment of parent interest to reach its anticipated enrollment:** During the last three years, we have developed a strong reputation as well as strong ties with the communities of CSD 6 through the WHIN Music Project, which has been very helpful in gaining interest and support for this school initiative. The results of this extensive community outreach are the over 100 signatures of support so far, a number we have no doubt will increase, especially since the directors of several early childhood providers said they would recommend that their families apply for our school. We will continue to reach out to the Latino community and minorities because their children will greatly benefit from our educational model. The experiences of the Latino parents from WHIN Music Project will definitely help spread the word, as will our ever-expanding network of childcare providers. Finally, and thanks to our community outreach, we have a clear sense that this is a very exciting school in a community that needs new educational initiatives, so we feel very confident we will have many more families interested in being part of our school.



Date: 6/20/2015

David Gracia, Lead Applicant



Date: 6/20/2015

Gregory David, Proposed Board Chair

**TABLE 1: Applicant Group Information**

Applicant Group Member Name/ Email Address	Current employment	Relevant experience/ skills and role on applicant group (Key Words)	Proposed role(s) if any (Trustee, Employee, or None)	Proposed Position on the board (e.g., officer, trustee, or constituent representative)	Length of initial term	Voting Member Y/N
Anne Cohen/ [REDACTED]	Music Specialist/Co-Curricular Team Leader at Blue School	Curriculum development, music education	Trustee	Trustee	2 years	Y
Gregory David/ [REDACTED]	Head Teacher at Bank Street School of Children	Educational/ financial advice/general management	Trustee	Board Chair	3 years	Y
David Gracia/ [REDACTED]	Director of WHIN Music Project, Music Director of NYSEC, Music Director at Playground Sessions	leadership, fundraising, non-profit experience, El Sistema education	Employee	Executive Director	N/A	N
Robert S. Green/ [REDACTED]	BG Systems, Project Manager/ Lincoln Center Education, Repertory Artist	Finance, Systems Design	Trustee	Trustee	3 years	Y
Ivonne Norman/ [REDACTED]	Sinel & Associates, PLLC	Legal advice, non-profit experience	Trustee	Trustee	3 years	Y
Carmel Owen/ [REDACTED]	Vice President, Leadership Giving at the New York Women's Foundation	Fundraising, Non-Profit Management	Trustee	Trustee	3 years	Y
Andrea Profili/ [REDACTED]	El Sistema instructor/ Director of Orchestras at WHIN Music Project, Opportunity Music Project, UpBeat NYC	Thorough knowledge of El Sistema and music education	Trustee	Trustee	3 years	Y
Melissa Randazzo Wagner/ [REDACTED]	Clinical Supervisor, Marymount Manhattan College	Bilingual Speech Language Pathologist	Trustee	Trustee	2 years	Y
Daniel J. Schulte/ [REDACTED]	Schulte Educational Services	School Leadership, Curriculum development, Data/ assessment	Trustee	Trustee	2 years	Y