

Letter of Intent: Applicant and Media Contact Form

Created Sunday, January 20, 2013

Updated Friday, January 25, 2013

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All applicants seeking to establish a charter school authorized by the Board of Regents to open in 2014 must submit a Letter of Intent to Apply, which requires completion of this applicant and media contact form, and an upload of your 5 page Letter of Intent to Apply as outlined on pages 14 of the 2013 RFP and Application Kit. Please submit these tasks by 5:00 PM on February 1, 2013. Applicants who do not submit a complete Letter of Intent to Apply by this deadline will not be permitted to submit a Full Application.

a. 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).

Arista Hellenic Charter School

Whether submitting an application in Round 1 or Round 2, all new charter school applicants seeking public space in New York City must fill out a "Request for DOE Space" by January 31, 2013. The Request Form can be found at <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheet/viewform?formkey=dHNTYVFueWd4RWhmLW5CNHBqV>

b. Preferred school location.

Select the preferred geographical area on the left and then select the preferred school district or community school district on the right.

NYC CSD-Queens: CSD 24

Select a second geographical area on left and then select the school district or community school district on right.

None

If necessary, select a third geographical area on left and then select the school district or community school district on right.

None

c. Applicant(s) information, including mailing address, phone number, and email address, and information establishing that the applicant(s) is a parent, teacher, school administrator or community resident.

(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	Street Address, City, State, Zip
Lead Applicant	Frank Merenda	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

Co-Applicant

As the Lead Applicant(s), I (we) can best be described as a:

(Multiple responses permitted)

- Current or former Teacher

d. Media Contact: please provide a phone number and/or email address to which public inquires about the proposed charter school may be addressed.

	First and Last Name	Best Phone Number (###-###-####)	Email Address	URL (type web address or the word "none")
Media Contact	Cynthia DeMonte	917-273-1717	cynthiademonte@gmail.com	None

e. Planned grades and enrollment in each year of the proposed charter term.

	Ages (or age ranges)	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019
K	4-6	50	50	50	50	50
1st	5-7	50	50	50	50	50
2nd	6-8	0	50	50	50	50
3rd	7-9	0	0	50	50	50
4th	8-10	0	0	0	50	50
5th	9-11	0	0	0	0	50
6th	0	0	0	0	0	0
7th	0	0	0	0	0	0
8th	0	0	0	0	0	0
9th	0	0	0	0	0	0
10th	0	0	0	0	0	0
11th	0	0	0	0	0	0
12th	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ungraded	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total		100	150	200	250	300

f. 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 36-39 of the application kit for definitions and guidance as only "significant" partnerships should be listed here).

f. 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. Proposed Management Company	N/A
f. 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. Partner Organization 1	N/a
f. 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. Partner Organization 2	N/A

Thank you for completing the Applicant and Media Contact Form which will be duplicative of some information contained in your letter of intent. Having information in this form allows the Department to merge applicant contact information into our existing data system. Please proceed to upload your signed and dated 5 page Letter of Intent to Apply.

I. Applicant Information:

a. Lead Applicant: Frank Merenda, Ed.D; [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Dr. Merenda has been an educator for over seventeen years.

b. Media Contact: Cynthia DeMonte, cynthiademonte@gmail.com

c. Founding Group:

Dr. Frank Merenda has worked within the educational field for the last seventeen years. He has taught in grades K-8 assisting in curriculum and professional development. He co-founded Jumpin' Jeepers after school program for primary grades and has developed technology strategies for online learning. He holds a Masters in Special Education and a Doctorate in Educational Leadership & Administration from St John's University. Dr. Merenda has received a full fellowship from Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government and Public Policy where his focus is on the operation of Charter Schools, curriculum, and educational strategies. Dr. Merenda will provide overall support to the school and the principal as needed as well as for curriculum and staff development. Dr. Merenda will serve on Arista's Board of Trustees.

Stylliani Stenos is Chairperson of Garden School's ELA department. She served as the Dean of the 4th, 5th, & 6th grade division of the Garden School in Queens. She has taught Language Arts & Social Studies for nearly 20 years and actively developed curriculum and policy. She was the Chairperson of the Middle States Steering Committee which granted accreditation to the Garden School. She is certified as a Greek language teacher and holds certification & a P.D. from St. John's University in Education Administration & Supervision. She is Director and facilities manager of the highly successful Garden Summer Program. She is a life-long resident of Corona and will serve on the Board of Trustees.

Dr. William Poll is currently an Assistant Principal at Nassau BOCES/Barry Tech. His educational experience includes positions as a Business Manager and Mathematics teacher at Aviation High School and advisor for the NYC Teaching Fellows program. Achievement highlights in these capacities include mentoring and training new teachers while modeling best practices, developing a Professional Learning Community focusing on creating lessons aligned to the Common Core State Standards, securing grants for student related activities and managing school bank accounts. Dr. Poll holds NYS certification/licensure as District Administrator, School Business Administrator and School Administrator and Supervisor. He holds a B.B.A. in International Marketing, an M.B.A. M.S. and PD in Education/ School Administration and an Ed.D. in Administration and Supervision. He will serve on the Board of Trustees.

Nicholas Vartholomeos is certified in teaching Speech and Language Disabilities and teaches at Voyages Preparatory School. He taught at St Joseph's School for the Deaf as a speech teacher providing evaluations and individualized educational plans (IEP). He has also provided evaluations at the Board of Education facility for special needs pupils. He has a B.A. in Speech – Language Pathology and Audiology, and a M.S.Ed. He will serve on the Board of Trustees.

d. Proposed members of the school's initial board of trustees: **Dr. Frank Merenda, Stella Stenos, Dr. William Poll, Nicholas Vartholomeos** (See brief descriptions of relevant experience/skills above)

Helen Papas-Kavalis, RN.C is a Registered Nurse and Professor. She served as a Pediatric Clinical Nurse Specialist where she developed policies and procedures, including instruction for parents in CPR and home care issues. Mrs. Kavalis earned a specialty certificate from the NY Foundling Home in the Prevention of Child Maltreatment. She holds a B.S. in Nursing and a M.S. degree in Nursing Services with a major concentration in pediatrics and the family.

Ms. Martha Kiamos, holds a BA in Political Science from Baruch College. She has held various positions: former Special Assistant to the NYC Comptroller, V.P. of the Comptroller’s Research and Policy Management Foundation, Executive Director of the Brooklyn Borough President’s Office and Assistant Director of the Hellenic American Neighborhood Action Committee (HANAC). She has a wealth of experience in community outreach and fundraising.

Kriton A. Pantelidis, Esq. is an associate with the firm Gogick, Byrne, and O’Neill LLP. He received his BA in History with a minor in English Literature, Philosophy, and Art History from N.Y.U. in 2006. He studied Law at St. John’s University, receiving his Juris Doctorate in 2009. He has assisted with the research and writing of the NY Chapter contained in the publication: State-by-State Guide to Design and Construction Contracts and Claims.

e. Replication or network information: NA **f. Application history:** NONE

II. Proposed Charter School Information

a. Proposed school name: Arista Hellenic Charter School of Corona.

b. Proposed school location: 98-07 38th Ave, Corona, NY 11368 (CSD # 24) – a private independent building. We are not intending to request to be sited in school district facilities.

c. Planned grades and enrollment in each of the years of the proposed charter term:

At full size, Arista Hellenic Charter School will serve students in grades **K- 5**. The table below depicts the school’s planned enrollment in each year of the proposed five-year charter term. The school will reach full planned enrollment of 300 students in its fifth year (2018-2019).

Number of classes per Grade: **2** • Number of students per Grade: **50** • Students per class: **25**

Grade	Ages*	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
K	4-6	50	50	50	50	50
1	5-7	50	50	50	50	50
2	6-8		50	50	50	50
3	7-9			50	50	50
4	8-10				50	50
5	9-11					50
Total*		100	150	200	250	300

d. Proposed management and/or partner organization(s): NA

e. Proposed school mission: The mission of the Arista Hellenic Charter School of Corona is to promote excellence in student learning and close the achievement gap for all students through an academically rigorous Core Knowledge K-5 curriculum, a comprehensive Greek study program and customized instruction. Through a number of academic endeavors students will understand their potential and learn to strive for excellence, utilizing the education and tools provided them, thus becoming empowered to serve as responsible leaders in our increasingly globalized society. This mission will be accomplished following three methods:

- Tailoring instruction to students' needs, thereby increasing learning opportunities for all students with an emphasis on at-risk students including special needs and ESL scholars while actively including parents in the process;
- Closing of the learning gap will be accomplished by delivery of the proven and highly successful Core Knowledge curriculum to meet and surpass NYS standards with an emphasis on math and reading, with requisite tutoring services throughout a longer school year; and,
- Promoting academic rigor by assisting students in fulfilling predetermined outcomes and competencies by challenging them with high expectations of content acquisition, critical thinking, integration, application of concepts, long term retention, and responsibility.

f. School overview: Arista's educational philosophy is aimed at promoting high levels of academic achievement and individualizing instruction to ensure that the academic needs of all students are met. Intensive focus will be placed on core academic subjects that are aligned with NYS learning standards. In order to carry out this philosophy and the school's mission, Arista's design utilizes key elements which have been proven to be most effective in student success.¹

- Rigorous Academics within the curriculum and frequent assessments
- Extended time to 112 minutes per day for ELA and 90+ minutes for Mathematics
- Extended 8 hour day (8-4) to extend academics and extracurricular activities
- Extended Year to 192 days
- Mandatory Uniforms
- Teacher pay based on performance in addition to seniority and credentials
- Use of the Core Knowledge program
- Ongoing professional development
- Open communication with the parents and the community
- A discipline and reward system and firm Anti-Bully policies with a Code of Ethics
- Safety Initiatives clearly posted and sent to all parents
- An ongoing notification system regarding academic performance, illness and absences

We also plan to incorporate the following series of unique elements that will help fulfill our mission to assist all children to achieve including ELL, SDIS, FRLP, and other special needs:

Direct Instruction (DI). Arista Charter School believes a major component of teaching is the ability to recognize and accommodate the different needs of students. DI refers to a rigorously developed teaching method that provides constant interaction between students and teachers to allow for recognition and accommodation of those differences. It is also well suited for special needs students because with guided instruction by the teacher, the students can take the time they need to understand the lesson to the point of mastery.

Greek Study Program. Arista Charter school recognizes the importance of beginning a foreign language in Kindergarten. Knowledge of classical languages increases English vocabulary, 25 percent of all English vocabulary comes from the Greek language. Ancient Greek culture has influenced the origins of science, philosophy, democracy, architecture, art and literature. Lessons will be presented in an exciting way and will assist in fulfilling our mission to reach all students.

¹ The New York City Charter Schools Evaluation Report, 2010

Extra-curricular activities will also be included in the regular school day, including sports, in order to develop team-oriented skills. Because of our longer school day, students, especially those at-risk of academic failure, can meet proficiency standards in all subject areas, while still having time to engage in studies outside of core subjects to improve socio-emotional development and become responsible leaders in our society.

After school tutoring/study program. In order to fulfill our mission to close the achievement gap for ALL students, especially those at risk of academic failure, individualized attention to students' needs will be accomplished via our R.R.R. program (Re-instruction, Reinforcement, and a Relaxed setting conducive to studying and performing school work). Teacher assessments, including daily reading logs of students, will identify student needs and will allow this program to target specific areas. This program will run M-F 4-6PM.

g. Target population and the community that the school intends to serve:

Arista's vision is to serve a representative group of CSD 24 students in a diverse school where the educational needs of all students including ELL, SDIS, FRLP., and those at-risk of academic failure are met. Queens is the most over-crowded borough in NYC , District 24 is the most over-crowded district in Queens and Corona is the most over crowded neighborhood within District 24 , therefore preference will be given to students who reside in CSD 24. The district's student population of 52,262 is diverse: 4% Black or African American; 62% Hispanic or Latino; 14% White and 20% Asian/Other. The founding team will continue its comprehensive outreach plan to attract a student population aligned with these demographics. 25% of CSD 24 students in 2010-11 were classified as limited English proficient and 79% were eligible for free or reduced-priced lunch. Therefore, the founding group intends to establish a lottery preference to reserve 79% of seats for free or reduced fee lunch students and to every extent possible similar preferences for ELL and students with disabilities who make up approx. 5-10% of CSD 24 .

Academically, the most recent data available from NYS and NYC Department of Education show that of third, fourth and fifth graders assessed in CSD 24 during the 2010-11 school year, of 4458 third graders only 54% passed (level 3 or 4) the state ELA exam and 62% passed the state Mathematics exam. The results from 4147 fourth grades revealed only 57% passed (level 3 or 4) the state ELA exam and 72% passed the state Mathematics exam. Finally, the results from 4134 fifth graders revealed 54% passed (level 3 or 4) the state ELA exam and 71% passed the state Mathematics exam. Therefore, we anticipate the need for intervention in the early grades.

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

By using lottery preferences, Arista plans to enroll special student populations in proportions that reflect their representation in the district. Founders and volunteers are performing a widespread outreach campaign to disseminate information about Arista's programs. To support and retain these students, Arista will utilize curriculum that has embedded differentiated instruction as well as experienced teachers who can support students of all backgrounds and ability levels. For students in need of academic remediation, Arista will provide individualized, self-paced, and differentiated instruction based on student ability. Retention of at-risk students will be driven by the school's commitment to engage families in their child's progress.

IV. Public Outreach and Community Support:

The founding group has undertaken community outreach to promote awareness of Arista Charter School, form partnerships and learn of the educational needs of the community in an effort to address those needs. Members met with Ms. Julissa Ferreras, our local Council Member. She discussed educational needs conveyed by the community and supports the opening of Arista and the academic program and resources it has tailored to meet those needs. Collaboration with community leaders and stakeholders resulted in a community event that was held on 12/15/12 across from the proposed location of the school. This event included a book giveaway and reading to the children of the community. It also allowed for the opportunity to talk about the proposed location of the school, the target population, grades to be served and a description of the educational program. Flyers were passed out in English and Spanish to further explain the information discussed. This event was covered by the Queens Gazette with a published article on 12/26/12. A website address on the flyers allowed parents and community stakeholders to learn even more about Arista and be given the opportunity to make comments and/or provide input on the educational and programmatic needs of students in the district. Input received at the public meeting, correspondence with stakeholders and community leaders, and the information from the website surveys, has been addressed by proposing an afterschool program, extending the school day and school year, and offering a comprehensive curriculum tailored to the community's expressed needs of the school's target student population.

We will continue to address and tailor the school structure and our application based on future input. Our ongoing community outreach approach includes further literacy and safety programs to attract stakeholders and residents, and attendance and hosting of public meetings. This will allow for continued communication of the details of Arista, and to address comments and needs. Members have also visited and/or consulted with area schools and school leaders to learn from their experiences and will continue to do so. We have reached out to CB #3 and anticipate further attendance at their open meetings to gain support. Events including pediatricians speaking to children's health issues with Child Health Plus and art projects with known artists and public community meetings are also planned to foster strong ties and a trusting relationship with the families of CD24. We will continue to describe the details of the school, solicit feedback, and inform students and their families in the community about the charter school and the utilization of a lottery to give an equal opportunity to attend. Members will also attend Parent Forums and will conduct further outreach through direct mailings of flyers and continued contact with the Community Education Council for District 24 (CEC 24).

Based on the support from the community and stakeholders thus far and our commitment to fulfill their needs, we estimate sufficient interest in our school, which will allow us to reach our targeted enrollment. Additionally, population growth in Corona has created an overcrowding crisis in the elementary grades. CD24's K-5 has a total of 27,172 students and according to NYC Dept. of Education data, there were close to 400 kindergarten students on their waitlist this year, and enrollment continues to increase. With that amount of district demand, coupled with the lack of educational options for elementary students in our proposed area, we anticipate a continued high level of interest and support in the establishment of Arista Hellenic Charter School.


Frank Merenda (Lead Applicant)

1/20/2013