

ROCKLAND ACADEMY OF EXCELLENCE CHARTER SCHOOL
LETTER OF INTENT

I. Applicant Information

Lead Applicant: Dionne Olamiju, School Administrator

Address: [REDACTED]

Telephone number: [REDACTED]

Email address: [REDACTED]

b. Media Contact: Peter Obe

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c. **The members of our founding team are:**

- **Deedra Frater** is a curriculum and staff development consultant who provides guidance towards our curriculum design and staff development aspects of our school.
- **Patricia Dancy** is a retired guidance counselor from New York City Public Schools. She is a parent and grandparent of students in the East Ramapo community. She has over 30 years of experience providing counseling to at risk students in the public schools and in community organizations.
- **Pierre Gay** is currently the Supervisor of Instructional Technology in the East Ramapo School District. He brings solid experience in many areas including curriculum development, data governance and educational technology.
- **Dionne Olamiju** is an Assistant Principal in the East Ramapo Central School District. She holds significant educational leadership capacity and the insight into the academic, emotional and social needs of the students in the district.
- **Lydia Lestrade** is an educator in the District and is very well versed in teaching the ELL population.
- **Dawn Holness** is a guidance counselor in a charter school in New York City. She provides support in creating a nurturing school culture that is geared to meeting the academic, social and emotional needs of all of our students.
- **Segun Olamiju** is an ESL teacher in East Ramapo who understands the needs of the ELL population in the district.
- **Josie Felix** is a bilingual parent in the district who plays a crucial role in our parent outreach.

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d. **Our Prospective Board members are:**

- **Kalu Agwu, MD** is a parent of two children in the East Ramapo Central School District. He is currently a psychiatrist at Manhattan Psychiatric Center and an Assistant Clinical professor of Psychiatry at Columbia University College of Physician & Surgeons. As a prospective board member, he will advocate for enriching and engaging Math and Science curricula for our students.
- **Surendra Bansal, Ph.D.** is a research director for a pharmaceutical company and a parent of two graduates of East Ramapo Central School District. As a prospective board member he will advocate for academic rigor in our Science and Math curriculum.
- **Rod Merkley** is a real estate builder who lives in the East Ramapo community. As a prospective board member, he is spearheading the process of identifying a facility for our school.
- **Doris Ulman** is a village attorney for numerous villages in the county. She brings her keen and insightful legal capacity as a prospective board member.
- **Peter Obe** is a mechanical engineer, software developer and an entrepreneur in the East Ramapo Community. As a prospective Board member he brings strong advocacy for the infusion of technology into the curriculum.
- **Paul Weiner** is a prospective board member who is employed as an IT charter school consultant who offers technological data reporting support. He will provide guidance over our data reporting system.
- **Filomena Nortey** is a parent and an administrator in the New York City public school. As a prospective board member, she shares the awareness of the needs of students in urban school settings.
- **Allan Dubow** is a CPA who has worked for years with non- profit agencies. As a prospective board member, Allan will provide fiscal acumen over the school's budget.

e. Replication or Network Information: N/A

f. Application History:

Winter 2010 to Charter School Institute – Application was subsequently withdrawn.

Spring 2010 to Charter School Institute – Application was subsequently withdrawn.

Spring 2011 to New York State Education Department – Application was subsequently withdrawn.

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II. Proposed Charter School Information

a. Proposed school name: The proposed name of our school is Rockland Academy of Excellence Charter School.

b. Proposed school location: The proposed location of the school is in the East Ramapo Central School District.

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

Grades	Projected Enrollment Table				
	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018
6 th	80	80	80	80	80
7 th		80	80	80	80
8 th			80	80	80
Totals	80	160	240	240	240

d. 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. N/A

e. Proposed school mission: The mission of the Rockland Academy of Excellence Charter School is to develop and nurture informed global citizens and life-long learners by providing our students the academic, emotional and social skills essential for college and career readiness. Through a rigorous and intensive academic program, with parents as partners, our students will adhere to a standard of academic excellence that will propel them to become constructive members of society.

f. School overview: A brief description of the school model, especially any innovative design elements that might require specific expertise to evaluate during the review process.

Key Design Elements

As a school that will hold our students, staff and parents to the highest level of accountability; we will vigorously operate under the “No Excuses” philosophy which has been proven successful. Our core design elements that will propel our students to high academic achievement are outstanding pedagogy, rigorous academic program, data driven school culture, collaborative team teaching and our structured and supportive school culture.

Outstanding Pedagogy

Rockland Academy of Excellence Charter School is committed to hiring highly qualified, passionate and committed teachers who have experienced success in teaching in an urban school

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environment. We will support the growth of all of our teachers by providing quality and meaningful staff development prior to the start of the school year as well as weekly. Our teachers will be expected to be ‘reflective practitioners’ whose classroom instruction will be guided and driven by data on our student achievement.

Rigorous Academic Program

Rockland Academy of Excellence Charter School will be an academically rigorous, standards based middle school with a strong emphasis on literacy across the disciplines. Our students will be held to high academic achievement regardless of their language proficiency, special needs or instructional level. Our rigorous academic program will provide our students dramatically explicit instruction.

Data Driven School Culture

Our curriculum will be aligned with the New York State Common Core standards coupled with ongoing meaningful assessments will work together to build a data-informed school culture. Data generated from initial and ongoing formative and summative assessments will be an integral means of analyzing our students’ strengths and weaknesses, thereby tailoring instruction to meet their individual needs.

Collaborative Team Teaching

Consistent with our mission of adhering to a standard of academic excellence for all scholars of Rockland Academy of Excellence Charter School, our special education students will thrive in a full inclusion, collaborative team-teaching (CTT) design where the content area teacher works in conjunction with a certified special education teacher to implement instruction that is differentiated to meet the needs of each student. We believe that the most effective way to prepare our English Language Learners to succeed academically is through a structured English immersion program in which they are educated alongside their English-speaking peers with additional support from a certified ESL teacher. Our ELLs will be educated in a collaborative instructional setting comprised of ELLs and native speakers.

Structured and supportive school culture

Rockland Academy of Excellence Charter School will provide a structured and supportive environment that will enable our students to cultivate the intrinsic **D.R.I.V.E** to succeed; **D**etermination, **R**esponsibility, **I**ntegrity, **V**ision and **E**xcellence in all endeavors. Our students will earn or lose ‘DRIVE’ dollars based on their adherence to these principles. They will be able to redeem their ‘dollars’ to purchase meaningful privileges.

g. Briefly describe the school’s target population and the community that the school intends to serve.

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Rockland Academy of Excellence Charter School will serve students in Grades 6-8 in the East Ramapo Central School Community. East Ramapo is a vibrant community that is economically, racially and culturally diverse; 59% of East Ramapo school-age children are Black/African American, 22% are Latino/Hispanic, 11% are White and 8% are Asian. The majority of students live at or below the poverty line, with 65% of the students in the district receiving free and or reduced lunch. English Language Learners make up 14% of the student population and students with special education needs make up 25% of the student population. We anticipate that the Rockland Academy of Excellence Charter School's population will be reflective of the East Ramapo community.

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.

Since 25% of East Ramapo's students are classified special education students and 14% are designated English Language Learners (ELL), Rockland Academy's planning team has ensured that all recruitment materials contain specific language that promotes our services to the Special Education and ELL populations. We have notified the related service providers who serve the students of East Ramapo of our available special education and ELL services. We have also advertised our ESL services in community centers, churches, and stores frequented by non-English speaking immigrants as well as neighborhoods that are inhabited by the same immigrants. Rockland Academy will also reach out to community centers, mental health clinics, foster care agencies, food pantries and other social services agencies in Rockland County, to give them information about our school and its services for economically disadvantaged, special education and ELLs. In order to have and maintain a high student retention rate, we will provide intensive afterschool and weekend interventions that are bound to result in 100% of our students acquiring Adequate Yearly Progress in English Language Arts and Math. In order to evaluate feedback from our parents, Parent Surveys will be completed at the end of each quarter. To reiterate the importance of our parents' input in the school's decision making process, we will retain at least one voting slot on our Board for our parents.

IV. Public Outreach and Community Support

Over the last two years, our planning team visited homes, churches, community centers, businesses and social service agencies to share plans for the school with community stakeholders and solicit signatures in support of opening the school. We collected more than 200 signatures from parents of eligible 2013-2014 sixth graders. Members of the founding team held several information sessions with members of the East Ramapo community where we shared the design elements of our school. The planning team held several community forums at the Village Planning Board meetings, houses of worship and on local television cable shows. We have met with and received support from community leaders such as the Village Mayor, the Village Planning Board, the County Executive, and the heads of local colleges and local businesses.