

June 25, 2012

Director Cliff Chuang  
NYSED Charter School Office  
89 Washington Avenue, Room 471 EBA  
Albany, New York 12234

Dear Mr. Chuang,

I am sending this Letter of Intent to officially declare my intention to apply for a charter school authorized by the Board of Regents to open in the 2013-2014 school year. Below please find information about the school as per New York State Education Department guidelines:

**I. Applicant Information**

**a. Lead Applicant**

Shimon Waronker, Headmaster  
The New American Academy at Lincoln Terrace Park

Qualifications: School Administrator

**b. Media Contact:** Nick Ackerman: [nick@thenewamericanacademy.org](mailto:nick@thenewamericanacademy.org)

**c. Founding Group**

Name	Relevant Experience/Skills	Prospective Role at TNAACS
Shimon Waronker	Creator of The New American Academy (TNAAC) model, experienced school leader	Headmaster
Nancye Miller	Business management, organizational strategy, fundraising	Trustee
Lorraine Scorsone	Master Teacher at PS 770 (TNAAC public school), 25 years education experience.	None (will remain at PS 770)
Nick Ackerman	Helped develop TNAAC model at PS 770	Pre-opening planning/operations
Yehudi Meshchaninov	Helped develop TNAAC model at PS 770	Pre-opening planning/operations

**d. Proposed Board of Trustees**

Name	Relevant Experience/Skills
Varleton (Mac) McDonald	Experienced educator with experience as teacher, turnaround principal, superintendent, and currently, network leader. Has professional relationships with community leaders in East New York and throughout Brooklyn. Proposed Board Chair.
Dr. Evelyn Castro	Associate Dean for the School of Education at Long Island University, research focused on Educational Leadership. Former Superintendent of Community School District 17.
Dr. Leo Casey	Experienced teacher and union member, including experience as Chapter Leader, Special Representative for High Schools, and Vice President from Academic High Schools for the United Federation of Teachers. Recently named director of the Albert Shanker Institute.
Krista Dunbar	Executive Director of Cahn Fellows program for distinguished public school principals at Teachers College, Columbia University.
Nancye Miller	Founder and CEO of Opportunities Development Group, a strategic consulting firm that works with businesses, government, and non-profits.

- e. **Replication or Network Information:** The New American Academy (TNAA) model was first implemented at PS 770-The New American Academy at Lincoln Terrace Park, a NYCDOE school in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, New York. This district school and the proposed charter school would not engage in a formal network or partnership, though they would share a model and education philosophy. Staff of both schools would engage in shared summer training and professional development to exchange ideas and best practice.
- f. **Application History:** Lorraine Scorsone was a member of the applicant group for the UFT Elementary Charter School in 2005. The Board of Trustees of the State University of New York approved the charter on July 15, 2005, and it was subsequently approved by the Board of Regents on July 21, 2005.

**II. Proposed Charter School Information.**

- a. **Proposed school name:** The New American Academy Charter School (TNAACS)
- b. **Proposed school location:** New York City Community School District 19
- c. **Planned grade and enrollment:**

	Year 1 2013-14	Year 2 2014-15	Year 3 2015-16	Year 4 2016-17	Year 5 2017-18
<b>K</b>	65	65	65	65	65
<b>1</b>	65	65	65	65	65
<b>2</b>		60	60	60	60
<b>3</b>			60	60	60
<b>4</b>				60	60
<b>5</b>					60
<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>310</b>	<b>370</b>

- d. **Proposed management/ partner organization.** N/A
- e. **Proposed school mission:** The New American Academy Charter School will empower learners and inspire leaders to make this a better world. Through our collaborative teacher-teams, mastery-based career ladder, and looping cycles, we will offer personalized rigorous instruction that will build our students academically, socially, and emotionally to succeed in high school, college, and their future lives.
- f. **School overview:** TNAACS will use The New American Academy model developed at Harvard’s Urban Superintendents Program (USP) by a cohort of six high achieving principals from around the country<sup>1</sup>. The model draws upon research-based best practices from across the globe, and has been implemented with great success at P.S 770, The New American Academy at Lincoln Terrace Park, a NYCDOE district school in Crown Heights, Brooklyn. The key components of The New American Academy Model include:

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<sup>1</sup> Waronker, S., Walker, L., Narvaez, B. S., Guerrero, G., Garcia, R. Abevta, A. (2009). *The New American Academy*. Unpublished manuscript. Harvard Graduate School of Education. Cambridge, Massachusetts.

- 1) **Four Person Teaching Team:** TNAAC teacher teams work with a grade level cohort of 60-65 students. Research has shown that four-five person teams provide the optimal balance between too many and too few voices<sup>2</sup>. Teams allow for transparency, positive peer-pressure, multiple perspectives, and a diverse range of skill sets. Team-based models are common across a diverse range of sectors from the military to healthcare, and are being used with great success in schools across Victoria, Australia. Education, particularly in urban neighborhoods challenged by low socio-economic status, is a complex task deserving of the same professionalism that is now standard in other sectors.
- 2) **Looping Cycles:** Students loop with the same teaching team and classmates for five years. Looping cycles allow for the development of trust and meaningful relationships between students, parents, and their teaching team, and have been proven to improve student learning both nationally and internationally<sup>3</sup>. The relationships developed encourage greater parent involvement and enable targeted and differentiated teaching<sup>4</sup>. Moreover, looping allows each teacher team to begin instruction on the first day of school without having to spend the weeks usually required to get to know students and acculturate them to their classroom systems. Looping also provides a powerful and organic accountability system, as each teacher team is directly responsible for their students' scores in the testing grades.
- 3) **Mastery-based Career Ladder:** Research has shown that a quality teacher is the greatest single determinant of student academic success<sup>5</sup> <sup>6</sup>. Unfortunately, teacher ability and development is often not recognized or rewarded. A career ladder provides a continuum for teacher growth that is both supported and incentivized. The TNAACS four-step career ladder (apprentice, associate, partner, master) will be based on demonstrated ability, culminating with the Master Teacher. TNAACS teachers will receive higher salaries than their DOE counterparts with Master Teachers earning \$120,000. This will attract and retain quality teachers and ensure that the most talented teachers can stay in the classroom directly supporting student learning.
- 4) **Multi-dimensional Teacher Evaluation System:** Good teaching is complex and nuanced. Our teacher evaluation system draws upon a diverse range of indicators, including student testing data, peer review, and Danielson-based classroom observations to create a holistic and accurate measure of teacher performance. Our teacher evaluation will allow us to promote and reward those teachers who are effective and to remove those who are not.
- 5) **Lower Teacher/Student Ratio:** Each TNAACS four-person teacher team works with a group of 60-65 students. A 15:1 teacher student ratio has been shown to increase student achievement .3-.45 standard deviation per year in grades K-2<sup>7</sup> and allows for more personalized attention for every student.

<sup>2</sup> J. Richard Hackman and Neil Vidmar, "Effects of Size and Task Type on Group Performance and Member Reactions," *Sociometry* 33, no. 1 (March 1970):

<sup>3</sup> <http://roomnine.org/a/about-us/Teacher-looping.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/search/detailmini.jsp?\\_nfpb=true&\\_ERICExtSearch\\_SearchValue\\_0=EJ479971&ERICExtSearch\\_SearchType\\_0=no&accno=EJ479971](http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/search/detailmini.jsp?_nfpb=true&_ERICExtSearch_SearchValue_0=EJ479971&ERICExtSearch_SearchType_0=no&accno=EJ479971)

<sup>5</sup> Rivkin, S. G., Hanushek, Kain. (2005). Teachers, schools, and academic achievement. *Econometrica*, 73(2), 417-458. doi: 10.1111/j.1468-0262.2005.00584.x Rockoff, J. E. (2004). The impact of individual teachers on student achievement: Evidence from panel data. *The American economic review*, 94(2), 247.

<sup>6</sup> Rockoff, J. E. (2004). The impact of individual teachers on student achievement: Evidence from panel data. *The American economic review*, 94(2), 247.

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/search/detailmini.jsp?\\_nfpb=true&\\_ERICExtSearch\\_SearchValue\\_0=EJ422836&ERICExtSearch\\_SearchType\\_0=no&accno=EJ422836](http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/search/detailmini.jsp?_nfpb=true&_ERICExtSearch_SearchValue_0=EJ422836&ERICExtSearch_SearchType_0=no&accno=EJ422836)

- 6) **Embedded Master Teacher:** Each four-person team includes a Master Teacher. Earning \$120,000, these highly skilled professionals provide support to all students in their classroom and serve as mentors to the three other members of their team. Master Teachers provide minute-to-minute coaching, support, and feedback and ensure best practice and appropriate rigor. Integral members of each team, they are in the classroom all day, every day.
- 7) **Five Week Summer Training Program:** Those who fail to plan, plan to fail. Our five-week summer training program goes beyond standard professional development to provide in depth communication, reflection, and listening skills. These skills are practiced throughout the summer as teams create their curriculum maps, management systems, and curricula for the school year.

The added autonomy afforded to us as a charter school will also allow TNAACS to implement some of the lessons learned applying the model at PS 770. These include:

- 1) **More instructional time:** TNAACS students will have an additional 10% of instructional time each day. This added time represents over three weeks of extra instruction each year.
  - 2) **More professional development time:** Teacher development leads to higher quality instruction and greater student achievement. In addition to the daily 90-minute teacher team meetings, TNAACS will add 120 hours of professional development time each year.
- g. **Target population and community:** TNAACS intends to be located in Community School District 19, which covers most of East New York, Brooklyn. East New York is a diverse community, challenged by poverty, the highest crime rate in Brooklyn<sup>8</sup>, and the most murders and robberies in New York City<sup>9</sup>. It is one of the few neighborhoods in New York City in which the crime rate is increasing. Among residents 25 years or older, only 8% have a college degree and only 29% have a high school diploma<sup>10</sup>. Data on zip code 11207 (which covers most of District 19) indicate that 35.4% live below the poverty level. Residents are predominantly black and Hispanic, with 56,020 (59%) black and 34,619 (37%) Hispanic residents as of 2010<sup>11</sup>.

### **III. Enrollment and retention of students with disabilities, English language learners, and students who are eligible applicants for free and reduced price lunch programs.**

TNAACS seeks to serve students in Community School District 19, particularly those eligible for free and reduced meals (FARM students), English language learners (ELLs), and students with disabilities (SWDs). Our team teaching model allows for one special education teacher per team, ensuring that every classroom is able to provide an inclusion setting for SWDs. Moreover, our lead applicant is a native Spanish speaker, which enables us to host open houses and information sessions in both English and Spanish.

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.nyc.gov/html/nvdp/downloads/pdf/crime\\_statistics/cs075pct.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/html/nvdp/downloads/pdf/crime_statistics/cs075pct.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/16/nyregion/police-in-east-new-york-brooklyn-have-uneasy-dialogue-with-residents.html>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/downloads/pdf/data/2006chp-204.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.city-data.com/zips/11207.html>

- Admissions preference: TNAACS will have an admission preference for students who have siblings in the school, FARM students, and those who live in Community School District 19
- Recruitment: Our experience establishing PS 770, Brooklyn has led to many lessons learned about effective recruitment. In addition to maintaining an active website and web presence, disseminating flyers, meeting with community leaders, and organizing open houses, we will partner with local daycare centers and head start programs in the neighborhood. We have found these partnerships to be the most effective and reliable way to host information sessions and to recruit students. Outreach and materials will be conducted in multiple languages. We will also network with early intervention providers to target students with IEPs.

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

Our team has met with multiple stakeholders in Community School District 19, including NYCDOE Deputy Chancellor Marc Sternberg, UFT Vice President Leo Casey, and District 19 Superintendent Rose Marie Mills, all of whom continue to provide input and have pledged to support the opening of a New American Academy Charter School in Community School District 19. We have also presented and received feedback on our proposal from members of CEC 19 and from local educators in the neighborhood. In addition, we have solicited input from parents, teachers, and administrators within our district school (P.S. 770) and have incorporated their feedback into the TNAACS design. On a grassroots level, we have begun to hand out fliers and brochures throughout Community School District 19, and to expand our web presence through our website <http://thenewamericanacademy.org/tnaa-charter-school/>, which contains information about our school model and provides an opportunity for people to offer comment on our school design. Over the next few weeks we will continue to expand and deepen our grassroots outreach.

Based on our conversations with the NYCDOE, educational leaders, CEC 19, and residents we are confident that a New American Academy Charter School will generate significant local interest. As indicated by a recent study by the NYC Charter Center, there is great demand for additional charter schools in Brooklyn, as there are only 5,882 Charter seats for 22,702 applicants<sup>12</sup>. Moreover, Community School District 19 is especially in need of better schools. Out of the 33 elementary and middle schools in the district only 2 were rated by the NYCDOE<sup>13</sup> as “A” schools, while 12 were rated as “C” schools and 5 were rated as either “D” or “F”.

The first TNAA school (P.S 770) attracted over 250 applicants for 120 slots. Now that we are significantly more established, we expect to meet or exceed those numbers.

If you have any additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Shimon Waronker

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<sup>12</sup> <http://www.nyccharterschools.org/sites/default/files/resources/Lottery2012Report.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> 2010-11