

# PHASE I: Letter of Intent

Created Monday, February 09, 2015

Updated Tuesday, February 10, 2015

## 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	david.gracia79@gmail.com

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

Lead Applicant(s) Signature and Date

Use your PC mouse or your mobile device stylus to sign your name below.

Lead or Co-Applicant listed in section c above.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink. The name "Jonid" is written on the top line, and "Racine" is written on the bottom line. The "J" in "Jonid" is large and loops around the "R" in "Racine".

Date Signed (Lead or Co-Applicant)

2015/02/10

Thank you for completing this survey so that the Department may plan its review panel accordingly.

**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, a community-based El Sistema program serving 150 children per week; (iii) Associate Music Director at Playground Sessions, a music software company co-founded by Quincy Jones; (iv) President and Founder of Orchestrating Dreams, Inc. an El Sistema-inspired non-profit organization that serves 500 children per week, and (v) 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 Blue School, an independent school. Previous teaching positions include band/chorus/general music/early childhood music. Anne performs with Columbia Summer Winds, writes curricula and online teacher trainings for ABC Do-Re-ME!, and maintains a private piano studio. Ann holds a Bachelors degree in instrumental music education from Bucknell, a Masters in music and music education from Columbia University Teachers College, and Kodaly certification from NYU.

**Gregory David** teaches 4th grade at the Bank Street School for Children. He previously spent 17 years in business, as a financial journalist, investment manager, and entrepreneur. He is the founding teacher of the JCC in Manhattan's new Gift of Math program, an after-school support program for second grade public school students struggling in math. Greg holds a B.A. from the University of Pennsylvania, a Masters in English from NYU, and a graduate degree from Bank Street's Childhood Special and General Education degree program.

**Ivonne Norman, Esq.** is an attorney admitted to practice in both State and Federal Court. She graduated magna cum laude from John Jay College of Criminal Justice and 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 and her integrity, compassion and dedication to excellence are reflected in her successful practice of law.

**Andrea Profili** began her musical studies in guitar and violin at the Escuela Juvenil de Música de Panamá and then studied violin with Horacio Bustamante, and with Sarah Johnson at Converse College, where she received a B.M. in Performance and a Masters in Music Education. As a member of Delta Omicron, she was awarded the Rob Fund Memorial Grant, which enabled her to study orchestral conducting with Sarah Ioannides and Siegwart Reichwald. Andrea also completed the Abreu Fellowship, a highly competitive leadership program to launch and manage El Sistema-inspired programs in the US. Currently, she works in El Sistema-inspired music programs in NYC: WHIN Music Project, Upbeat NYC, The Orchestra of St. Luke's and Opportunity Music Project.

**Daniel Schulte** is an innovative and experienced educator who founded his own educational business, Schulte Educational Services. He spent four years working 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 (principal licensure) from the Harvard Graduate School of Education and served as principal intern at the Conservatory Lab Charter School in Boston.

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

f. **Application History:** We submitted a similar letter of intent to this entity in July 2014 and were not invited to submit a full application due to concern that we failed to demonstrate sufficient community outreach and support. We have sought to remedy these inadequacies.

## II. Proposed Charter School Information

a. **Proposed School Name:** WHIN Music Community Charter School

b. **Proposed school location:** NYC Community School District 6. We intend to request being located in school district facilities.

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 implement a music-centered curriculum in combination with intensive music instruction (primarily orchestral and choral) that will provide students with the executive functioning skills, inquisitive minds, emotional stability, parent involvement, and community support to engage in a positive and thriving learning environment. This environment will help them to overcome any obstacle and perform at or above grade level in the school setting.

f. **School overview:**

- Our School will develop a **music-infused, Common Core-aligned** curriculum that will use student data to collaboratively plan high-quality and rigorous interdisciplinary units of study.
- 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.
- 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.

### Curriculum

·Our **music-centered, Common Core-aligned curriculum** will have an integrated learning approach that lends itself to making connections between music, language, and mathematics through daily reading/writing workshops and math projects. Using the Common Core State

Standards, the curriculum will encourage students to investigate the science of sound, understand the natural connections between rhythm and melody of language and music, explore the different cultures through their musical traditions and genres, and connect their minds to their bodies through the experience of how music can awaken and help develop our motor skills.

- **Inspired by the pioneering work at the Conservatory Lab Charter School** in Boston (an elementary school that has successfully developed a music-centered curriculum since 1999), we will offer two hours of in-house daily music instruction based on the El Sistema model, an internationally known and successful music education program using orchestral and choral instruction. The School's focus on music will contribute to our commitment to high academic standards by developing our student's capacity for discipline, attention to detail, hard work, maturity, and teamwork.

- 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.

- 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 be used 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 grade will have three different expeditions in a year that will focus either on a science or a social studies topic.

- **Curriculum coaches** will work with the administration 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.

- **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.

- **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 specialists will follow a multi-tiered Response to Intervention (RTI) model.

**Building Community Through Music:** Our learning environment will have four pillars: the students, the parents, the teachers, and the community. We are committed to fostering a partnership among these four constituencies that will lead to outstanding student performance.

- As a **Child-Centered School** our main goal will be to ensure that each student succeeds and develops his/her skills (academic, musical, emotional and social) so he/she can become a leader in his/her community, a role model for others, and a positive contributor as a citizen.

- **Teacher development** will be an essential part of our school culture. We will use the following approaches: curriculum coaches to help teachers improve their instruction, periodic staff meetings to serve as "think tanks" for innovation, early dismissal on Fridays for teachers to plan curriculum, and encouragement of teacher leadership.

- **Parent Engagement:** Parents will play an essential part in the development of school culture by participating in monthly parent association meetings, Parent-Teacher conferences, and regular communication with teachers.
- **Community Involvement:** The school will build upon the work of the WHIN Music Project to build solid relationships with community organizations – such as community pre-school programs – community leaders, arts organizations, and religious institutions. The Open House policy at the WHIN Music Charter School will engage community members to attend and participate in stellar student performances both on and off site.

**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. In order to achieve this, WHIN Music will conduct a campaign to enroll students eligible for free/ reduced lunch, with special needs, and who are English Language Learners. 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 120) 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, and community-based organizations that serve non-English speaking populations, advocate for students with disabilities and/or offer support to low-income families. Finally, we will also use our website and social media to present our program and ideas to a wider audience that may not have been reachable via the previous channels.
- In order to make sure that we create a learning environment where all of our students can thrive, we will use an inclusion model through which all students will have equal access to our curriculum. Our team of Special Education teachers and ELL/ESL teachers will work intensely with music teachers and classroom teachers to ensure that all students’ individual learning needs and styles are being met. We will provide services for physical therapy, occupational therapy, learning disorders, speech disorders, social services, and ESL. We will also develop a series of parent workshops with education specialists to make sure parents understand the needs of their children and that they acquire the tools to meet those needs successfully. We will strive for the family environment to become an extension of the school environment, so that it will complement the work done during the school day. Equally important will be establishing partnerships with organizations and education specialists with expertise in students with disabilities, English language learners, and low-income families, due to the multilayered intervention these students will need to overcome those challenges.

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

**a. Public outreach conducted to date:** Based on the NYSED Board of Regents' recommendations made about the community outreach for our letter of intent (July 2014), we have implemented an action plan that addresses their concerns. To increase public knowledge of our initiative, we divided our public outreach into three levels: family/parental, community organization/activist and elected officials.

- **Family/parental level:** we have presented the school proposal to 120 parents in several public meetings held at Our Saviour's Atonement Lutheran Church, the Small Idea School and the Renaissance Village Montessori collecting 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 Herman, Director of Early Childhood Services at the YM & YWHA, Karen Ellefsen, Director at Isabella Child Care Center, Kevin and Melissa Guzmán, Co-Directors of the Small Idea School, among others.

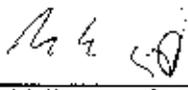
- **Community organization/activist level:** we have presented at the Community Board 12 Full Board meeting in January for 60 community members by invitation from the Chairman of the board Mr. George Fernandez Jr. By invitation from the Chair of the Youth and Education Committee, Fe Florimon, we also presented at their committee meeting. We have also met with the Community Board 9 Chairs of the Youth, Education and Libraries Committee, Judith Insell and Yvonne Stennett who showed great interest in our initiative and invited to present this initiative to the CB 9. Other supporters include Ana-Ofelia Rodriguez, Director of Community Development at Broadway Housing Communities, Juan Ignacio Rosa, a prominent 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. A reporter of DNA Info, Lindsay Armstrong is doing an article about our school initiative that will come out in the next days at the city level.

- **Elected official level:** we have met with Councilmembers Mark Levine and Ydanis Rodriguez, Senator Adriano Espaillat and the office of Assemblymember Guillermo Linares. They all liked very much our work in the community, gave us positive feedback about this initiative and thought that this school would be a great project that puts music at the forefront of the education for our neediest children. CM Levine and Senator Espaillat offered letters of support for our school initiative. We have a meeting with the office of the School Chancellor Carmen Fariña on February 19 and requested a meeting with CSD6 Superintendent Manuel Ramirez.

#### **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 to gain interest and support for this school initiative. The results of this extensive community outreach are the 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 their families to 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 well as 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 who will be interested in being part of our school.

  
Date: 2/9/2015  
David Gracia, Lead Applicant

  
Date: 2/9/2015  
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
Andrea Profili/ [REDACTED]	EI Sistema instructor/ conductor in NYC	Thorough knowledge of EI Sistema and music education	Trustee	Trustee	1 year	Y
Anne Cohen/ [REDACTED]	Music Specialist/Co- Curricular Team Leader at Blue School	Curriculum development, music education	Trustee	Trustee	1 year	Y
Daniel J. Schulte/ [REDACTED]	Schulte Educational Services	School Leadership, Curriculum development, Data/ assessment	Trustee	Trustee	1 year	Y
Gregory David/ [REDACTED]	Bank Street School of Children	Educational/ financial advice/ general management	Trustee	Board Chair	1 year	Y
Ivonne Norman/ [REDACTED]	Sinel & Associates, PLLC	Legal advice, non-profit experience	Trustee	Trustee	1 year	Y
David Gracia/ [REDACTED]	Director of WHIN Music Project, Music Director of NYSEC, Associate Music Director at Playground Sessions	leadership, fundraising, non-profit experience, EI Sistema education	Employee	Executive Director	N/A	N