

LETTER OF INTENT: HARLEM HEBREW LANGUAGE ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOL

I. Applicant Information

- a. Co-Lead Applicants: Sara S. Berman William Allen
 [Redacted]
 [Redacted]

William Allen’s home address is within CSD 3; thus, he is a CSD 3 resident.

b. *Media Contact:* Dan Gerstein, dan@dangerstein.com, 917-456-6010

c. *Applicant founding group:* Each founding group member listed below is currently a member of the Harlem Hebrew Language Academy Charter School (Harlem Hebrew) Applicant Team. Each of these individuals, *with the exception* of Hindie Weissman, Maureen Campbell and Eli Schaap, is also a prospective Harlem Hebrew Trustee.

Name	Relevant Experience/Skills
Sara S. Berman	Charter school governance, charter school start-up and implementation, fundraising.
William Allen	Charter school governance, youth programming in Harlem, community outreach and engagement, Harlem resident.
Linda Aristondo, Esq.	Legal experience and nonprofit governance, Harlem resident.
Maureen Campbell	Charter school administration, school leadership, community outreach and engagement.
Daniel M. Cohen	Real estate financing and development.
Lisa Lippman	Real estate brokerage, charter school governance.
David Gedzelman	Charter school governance, charter school start-up and implementation, nonprofit leadership and management, fundraising, community outreach, education and curriculum development, Harlem resident.
Eli Schaap	Charter school governance, charter school start-up and implementation, budgeting and finance, real estate, data analysis, principal and teacher evaluation, program evaluation.
Basil Smikle, Jr.	Community outreach and engagement, public relations, educational public policy, Harlem resident.
Rev. Michael A. Walrond, Jr.	Community outreach and engagement, youth programming in Harlem.
Hindie Weissman	All aspects of elementary education: curriculum development, instruction, professional development, teacher evaluation, extensive training in Reading and Writing Workshop Project model.
Celia Wickham	Family advocacy, youth counseling, community outreach, Harlem resident

d. *Proposed Initial Board of Trustees:* The response to *I.c.* above indicates which Applicant Team members will continue to serve on the charter school’s initial Board of Trustees along with their relevant experience and skills.

e. *Replication or Network Information:* Harlem Hebrew is not a replication of another school model for reasons described further in this response; thus, we are not seeking to invoke the language of the law in the current NYS Charter Schools Act and receive a charter as a replication. Harlem Hebrew has been *modeled* after Hebrew Language Academy Charter School (HLA) in Brooklyn’s CSD 22. We are drawing on the strengths of HLA’s current program and structure, which is researched-based and grew out of both the comprehensive planning process undertaken by HLA’s applicant team as well as the experience over the last three years of HLA’s Board and school leadership. HLA’s internal

assessment data and external feedback from its authorizer from its annual monitoring visits indicate there is foundational strength in HLA’s academic and operational model.

In seeking to understand how to define Harlem Hebrew’s relationship with HLA, we drew on the August 2010 National Association of Charter School Authorizers brief authored by former SUNY CSI General Counsel and current charter school and education law expert Paul O’Neill, *The Spectrum of Replication Options*. In this brief, Mr. O’Neill discusses a concept of *franchises* of charter schools:

...numerous stand-alone programs [that] share a set of program elements. One example of this approach would be a charter school design model that calls for a particular focus...and that has a common school staffing structure ...instructional approach...and school calendar and schedule (similar core subjects and extended day and year). Even without a formal network, if an initial school with these features were to take root and flourish and lead to numerous intentional clones, a loose “franchise” arrangement would result. This is particularly pronounced when such schools all receive funding, technical assistance, and/or other resources from a central source, such as a local or national funder, interested in fostering this particular model or mission. The franchise model offers the highest degree of autonomy (the schools are not directly linked by a charter agreement, board or ESP).

This concept of *franchise* best describes how Harlem Hebrew relates to HLA. Harlem Hebrew shares HLA’s mission of academic excellence and rigor, its research-based instructional model and curriculum, elements of its organizational structure, and the incorporation of both Hebrew language instruction and the attendant culture and history of the language. While it shares many of HLA’s underlying academic and organizational elements, its model also includes modifications that respond to the specific needs of students from Harlem. HLA and Harlem Hebrew, if chartered, would be supported by the same Partner Organization, Hebrew Charter School Center (HCSC). Sara Berman and David Gedzelman also serve on HLA’s Board but the two schools are not directly linked by the same governing Board. Lisa Lippman and William Allen serve on the Boards of Harlem Success #7 and Sisulu Walker, respectively. This is the only charter application being submitted by the Applicant Group during this round.

f. *Application History:* Ms. Berman was the co-lead applicant for HLA. The application was submitted to the NYC Department of Education on June 4, 2008 and received its charter from the Board of Regents on January 13, 2009. In response to SED’s January 2011 RFP to Establish Charter Schools Authorized by the Board of Regents, an initial application for Harlem Hebrew was submitted by this team. In spring 2011, after careful consideration the group withdrew its application. Members of this applicant team applied to the Charter Schools Institute in 2011 for the Sosúa Hebrew Language Academy Charter School in CSD 6 but withdrew the application in the spring 2011 as well.

II. Proposed Charter School Information

a. *Proposed School Name:* Harlem Hebrew Language Academy Charter School

b. *Proposed school location:* New York City CSD 3.

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

	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
K	78	78	78	78	78
1	78	78	78	78	78
2		78	78	78	78
3			74	74	74
4				72	72
5					66
Total	156	234	308	380	446

**Table takes into account student attrition.*

d. *Proposed Management and/or Partner Organization(s)*: HCSC will be Harlem Hebrew's Partner Organization, providing financial support, technical assistance, professional development and curriculum development services. HCSC is not a CMO and does not manage schools.

e. *Proposed School Mission*: Harlem Hebrew Language Academy Charter School will provide its students with the academic and personal foundation necessary to successfully pursue advanced studies and achieve continued personal growth as ethical and informed global citizens. In order to accomplish this, Harlem Hebrew will offer an academically rigorous K-5 curriculum which includes intensive instruction in the Hebrew language. Students in a diverse student body will also develop a strong sense of social and civic responsibility through the integration of service learning and community service across the curriculum.

f. *School Overview*: Harlem Hebrew will have an intensive focus on core academic subjects. It will have a longer school day and year so that all 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. Our instructional staffing model and class schedule will allow *two* general education teachers to provide instruction to each K-5 classroom in the critical subject areas of reading and math. Clearly, each classroom of 26 students will reap the benefits from the additional instructional intensity associated with *two* highly qualified teachers. *Each* week, all students will have 10 hours of instruction in ELA, 5 hours in Math, 3 hours in Social Studies and 2¼ hours in Science in addition to Physical Education, Art and Music instruction.

We will use Gradual Release of Responsibility (GRR) as our overarching instructional model with Columbia University's Teachers College Readers and Writers Workshop the specific model for instruction in ELA. Both GRR and Readers and Writers Workshop shift the cognitive load slowly and purposefully from teacher-as-model, to joint responsibility, to independent practice and application by the learner.¹ By gradually assuming increasing responsibility for their learning, students become competent, independent learners.² Importantly, the peer learning aspect of these methodologies is highly effective in working with classrooms of heterogeneous students, including students with disabilities (SWD)³, English language learners (ELLs)⁴ and Title I students. When students actively participate in their own learning through discussion and collaboration, they engage more fully in higher order skills. The combination of GRR and Readers and Writers Workshop provides the opportunity for teachers to differentiate instruction through the use of assessment data to identify student need and tailor instruction and small group composition. Harlem Hebrew's comprehensive assessment program will include a variety of tools, such as standardized and teacher made assessments, as well as ongoing daily teacher observations of students' performances. Student data will be tracked by OnCourse, a robust student data base provided by HCSC.

A unique part of Harlem Hebrew's mission of academic excellence and curricular rigor is the acquisition of Modern Hebrew language. Incorporating an intensive focus on foreign language acquisition beginning in Grade K will amplify the mastering of cognitive skills, habits of learning and competencies that will contribute to students' academic success in general. This distinctive aspect

¹ Duke, N. K., & Pearson, P. D. (2002). Effective practices for developing reading comprehension. In A. E. Farstrup & S. J. Samuels (Eds.), *What research has to say about reading instruction* (pp. 205–242). Newark, DE: International Reading Association

² Graves, M. F., & Fitzgerald, J. (2003). Scaffolding reading experiences for multilingual classrooms. In G. G. García (Ed.), *English learners: Reaching the highest level of English literacy* (pp. 96–124). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

³ Stevens, R. J., & Slavin, R. E. (1995). Effectiveness of a cooperative learning approach in reading and writing on academically handicapped and non-handicapped students. *Elementary School Journal*, 95, 241–262.

⁴ Kong, A., & Pearson, P. D. (2003). The road to participation: The construction of a literacy practice in a learning community of linguistically diverse learners. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 38, 85–124.

will better prepare students to be active participants in our global community as bilingual and bi-literate individuals. Hebrew language instruction will be enriched by the exploration of the language's attendant history and culture in the context of both American and world histories, imparting to students the commonalities of all humankind's struggles and successes throughout time and the interconnectedness of the global world today.

Harlem Hebrew will utilize the most effective tool for enabling students to *acquire* a foreign language in a classroom setting—the Proficiency Approach, considered the gold standard for teaching a foreign language by The American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Language. The Proficiency Approach incorporates robust assessment tools that are utilized in both formative and summative evaluations. The Proficiency Approach is consistent with the GRR method and lends itself to a seamless transition for students from their instruction in the Hebrew language to their instruction in their English-driven core subjects.

An important part of our mission is also to infuse students with values of understanding and respect for others through an integration of an experiential service learning curriculum that promotes social responsibility through a cycle of action and reflection as students work collaboratively through a process of applying what they are learning to community problems.

g. Target population and the community Harlem Hebrew will serve: We hope to physically site our school in the following general area of CSD 3: the Harlem section of CSD 3 with northern and southern borders of 110th Street and 122nd Street and between Morningside Blvd. and 5th Avenue. We expect our school model will appeal to families from all over CSD 3 but we will make an extra effort to recruit in the Harlem sector of CSD 3 resulting in a population reflecting the district. According to the 2009-10 District Report Card, 9% of CSD 3 students were classified as limited English proficient (LEP) and 55% were eligible for free- or reduced-priced lunch (FRPL). With regard to SWD, according to the June 2011 *Schools Demographics and Accountability Snapshot*, of the 18 public schools in CSD 3 that were configured as elementary or elementary/middle schools, 14% of students were designated as SWD. In elementary schools located in the Harlem sector of CSD3 in which we hope to site Harlem Hebrew, 16% of students were classified as LEP and 77% were eligible for FRPL. Academically, children have struggled in CSD 3: in 2011, 61%, 59% and 57% of all 3rd, 4th and 5th graders respectively met proficiency standards on the NYS ELA exam and 64%, 69% and 65% of all 3rd, 4th and 5th graders respectively met proficiency standards on the NYS Math exam. The percentage of Black and Hispanic students scoring at Levels 3 and 4 were 40 to 50 percentage points less than their White and Asian counterparts on both these exams. In addition, percentages of ELLs and SWD in the district who met proficiency standards were significantly less than their English proficient and general education classmates, respectively, on these exams.

III. Enrollment and retention of students with disabilities, ELLs and eligible for FRPL.

We will engage in a focused effort to attract, recruit and ultimately retain *all* students, particularly ELLs, SWD and those eligible for FRPL. Our outreach to families of these special populations will demonstrate our ability to serve these students with our supportive academic model that has the staffing, programs and interventions in place to effectively welcome these students and meet their needs. We will retain our students, particularly those from these at-risk populations, because of our highly individualized instructional model that not only uses data to inform instruction, but provides wrap around support and intervention strategies that ensure no child falls through the cracks.

We will market our school to neighborhoods in CSD 3 where a predominance of low-income/poverty-level families and non-English speaking families reside. We will leverage the

community-based contacts of our Applicant Team and the many community leaders we have engaged, including clergy, elected officials, nonprofit administrators, directors of preschools and Head Start programs, among other stakeholders who serve a non-English speaking and/or economically disadvantaged as well as SWD constituency. All recruitment and application material will be available in the predominant languages of the community. Harlem Hebrew representatives will host family information sessions *within* the identified communities—such as in houses of worship and local CBOs (especially Head Starts and pre-schools serving low income children, ELLs and SWD). These meetings will highlight the academic program, curriculum, inclusive school culture, academic support and intervention services and instructional and student support personnel specifically focused on ELLs, SWD and Title I children. We will also specifically target preschools which serve SWD and network with early intervention providers. Harlem Hebrew will advertise in local newspapers including those focused on minority populations with descriptions of how Harlem Hebrew is welcoming to and supportive of all students, including FRPL, ELLs, and SWD.

IV. Public Outreach and Community Support

The Applicant Team has continued to build on the extensive public outreach it undertook for its previous application. Our website, www.harlemhebrewcharter.org, contains information on the school and an online survey (which is also available at all community meetings) that allows stakeholders to comment on and offer input to our school design. We have met with Community Boards within CSD 3 and CEC 3 to inform and engage the public in our planning and development and seek input. Our planning team has grown to include William Allen and Celia Wickham, both Harlem community leaders and Rev. Michael Walrond Jr., pastor of First Corinthian Baptist Church in the heart of Harlem, whose congregation is comprised of a significant number of families with age-eligible children eager to apply for a seat in the school should Harlem Hebrew be authorized. We are excited about our collaboration being developed with the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. The focus is to develop a curricular component as part of the NYS 4th grade social studies curriculum focusing on immigration and migration with a lens on Harlem, given that Harlem has been a beacon to immigrant and ethnic groups from all parts of the globe. The resulting curriculum and the professional development specifically designed to train teachers for its quality delivery will be shared with neighboring elementary schools in CSD 3.

Based on our assessment of community interest we have no doubt that we will reach our anticipated enrollment. The existing elementary charter schools in CSD 3 have experienced overwhelming demand for seats in their schools. Of the schools that shared lottery data with us, Harlem Link had 6 times the number of applicants and Sisulu Walker had 3 times the number of applicants for available K seats and both have significant waiting lists for each grade they serve. The media coverage for Harlem Success indicates they have at least 7 applicants for each K seat. Based on parent signatures we received and are continuing to collect from parents of age-eligible children and the enthusiastic support of leaders of numerous houses of worship, community-based organizations, preschools and other entities connected to families of school-age children, there is ample evidence that the number of eligible applicants for Harlem Hebrew will exceed available seats in the first year and beyond.

	
Sara S. Berman	William Allen
<u>1/17/12</u>	<u>01-17-2012</u>
Date	Date