

## Letter of Intent

### The WHEDco Bard Academy

*A New York State Charter School serving students in the South Bronx*

#### I. Applicant Information

##### a. Lead Applicants:

Bard College Master of Arts in Teaching  
Program (Bard MAT Program)  
PO Box 5000  
Annandale-on-Hudson, NY 12504  
Phone: 845-758-7145  
Email: [dte@bard.edu](mailto:dte@bard.edu)

Women's Housing and Economic  
Development Corporation (WHEDco)  
50 East 168th Street,  
Bronx, NY 10452  
Phone: 718-839-1103  
Email: [nbiberman@whedco.org](mailto:nbiberman@whedco.org)

##### b. Media Contact:

1. Davon Russell, Executive Vice-President, WHEDco,  
Email: [drussell@whedco.org](mailto:drussell@whedco.org) Phone: 718-839-1118
2. Ric Campbell, Dean of Teacher Education, Bard College  
Email: [dte@bard.edu](mailto:dte@bard.edu) Phone: 845-758-7145

##### c. Board of Trustees:

**Nancy Biberman, Esq. President, WHEDco.** As President of WHEDco, Ms. Biberman manages an organization with a \$14 million annual budget and 275 employees. She began her career as a legal services attorney after which she oversaw the restoration of 23 abandoned buildings in the Bronx. Ms. Biberman founded WHEDco in 1992 and has since developed 3 buildings with over 300 residential units and over 45,000 sq. ft. of non-residential space now valued at \$78 million. WHEDco's Intervale Green is the largest Energy Star certified affordable housing development in the nation. She will serve the Board with legal, administrative and real estate/facility development expertise.

**Ric Campbell, Ed. D, Dean of Teacher Education, Bard College and Director, Bard MAT Program.** Dr. Campbell began his career as a classroom teacher in 1978; worked with at-risk students in NYC in various venues; worked as an associate of the Institute for Writing and Thinking (IWT) in 1994; became associate director of the IWT in 2002; founded the Bard College Master of Arts in Teaching Program in 2004 (with campuses now in Annandale-on-Hudson, NY; Bronx, NY; Delano, CA; and Palestine); and founded the Paramount Bard Academy, a charter school serving grades 6-12 in Delano, CA. He will serve the Board with expertise in teaching, administration, fundraising and development.

**Davon Russell, M.A., Executive Vice-President, WHEDco.** As Executive Vice-President of WHEDco, Mr. Russell is responsible for WHEDco's community service programs, including Headstart, youth and teen initiatives, family support, and home-based child care provider training. He works directly with community members, tenants, and families on a daily basis. Mr. Russell is Bronx Borough President Diaz's appointee to the Community Education Council of the NYC Department of Education, and is a member of Mayor Bloomberg's Fatherhood Initiative. He will serve the Board with expertise in administration, fundraising, community engagement and family involvement.

**Karen Zorn, M.A., President, Longy School of Music, Cambridge Mass.** Karen Zorn became President of Longy in the spring of 2007. Ms. Zorn negotiated plans to merge with Bard College. She guided the school toward taking on a national leadership role through the formation of an *El Sistema*-inspired initiative, the “Take A Stand” partnership with the Los Angeles Philharmonic and Bard College. She served as Associate Provost at the Berklee College of Music, and the Acting Executive Director of MacPhail Center for the Arts in Minnesota. She will serve the Board with expertise in administration, financial management and accounting, and fundraising and development.

**Valerie Capers, Ed.D, Professor Emeritus, City University of New York.** Dr. Capers is a world-renowned jazz pianist and composer. A lifelong resident of the Bronx, she received her BA and MA from The Juilliard School of Music. She served on the faculty of the Manhattan School of Music, and was chair of the Department of Music and Art at Bronx Community College of the City University of New York (CUNY). She has received awards for education innovation from institutions including the National Endowment for the Arts, CUNY Research Foundation and the Smithsonian. Blind since childhood, Dr. Capers is a role model for students with disabilities. She will serve the Board with expertise in teaching, performing, and community engagement.

- d. The WHEDco Bard Academy (the Academy) is a replication of the Paramount Bard Academy (PBA) in Delano, California. PBA is now in its third year, with 530 students in grades 6-11 and serves a representative demographic of students in this rural region of the Central Valley, which was recently described as the Appalachia of the West.<sup>1</sup> Roughly 85% of the student body is eligible for free and reduced lunch and 87% is Mexican-American, which makes English language learning one of many key issues to be addressed in classrooms. The curriculum is influenced by *El Sistema*, a comprehensive Venezuelan music education philosophy centered on the link between the intense study of music and improved self-esteem, communication skills, and curiosity. Learning from the experiences of this first Bard College charter school, the Academy will start with a small student population and build gradually to full capacity.
- e. The Paramount Bard Academy in Delano, California was established in August 2009 as a California Charter School. The Bard MAT Program submitted an initial application for a New York State Charter School during the 2005-2006 academic year in partnership with organizations and community members in the City of Hudson, NY. Phase I of the application for the Hudson Community Charter School was submitted to the SUNY Charter Schools Institute on September 30, 2005 and Phase II was submitted November 2005. At that time, the cap on charters was near its limits and the initial proposal was not approved.

## **II. The Proposed Charter School Information**

- a. The WHEDco Bard Academy
- b. The WHEDco Bard Academy will be located at 435 E. 162nd Street in School District 7 in the Melrose section of the South Bronx. The Academy will be housed within a campus consisting of a new 355,000-square-foot development including 300 units of affordable housing (with a set-aside for elder musicians); a performance, rehearsal and event space (The

---

<sup>1</sup> *California's Central Valley: The Appalachia of the West*. January 21, 2010. The Economist. <http://www.economist.com/node/15331478>

Bronx Music Heritage Center); a community gym and an outdoor recreational ball field. Currently vacant land, the site was awarded to WHEDco and development partner Blue Sea Development Company through a competitive NYC HPD RFP process. The development represents the final phase of the Melrose Urban Renewal Plan, spanning a 30-block area. Launching the Academy in this complex will create a community-focused “ecosystem” where educational opportunities, affordable housing, cultural expression, health, and community pride intersect in rich and transformative ways.

**c. WHEDco Bard Academy Enrollment Projection**

Year/Grade	6 <sup>th</sup>	7 <sup>th</sup>	8 <sup>th</sup>	9 <sup>th</sup>	10 <sup>th</sup>	11 <sup>th</sup>	12 <sup>th</sup>
2013-14	40	40	0	0	0	0	0
2014-15	80	40	40	0	0	0	0
2015-16	80	80	40	40	0	0	0
2016-17	80	80	80	40	40	0	0
2017-18	80	80	80	65-80*	40	40	0

\*It is anticipated that rising 9<sup>th</sup> graders will be competitive applicants to high schools throughout NYC and that students may elect to transfer to programs of particular interest after completing 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

- d. The two principal partners are the Women’s Housing and Economic Development Corporation (WHEDco) a NY State not-for-profit 501(c)(3) corporation and the Bard College Master of Arts in Teaching Program. The Longy School of Music and the Bronx Music Heritage Center are secondary partners, with the Longy School of Music providing leadership for the *El Sistema*-inspired music program and the Bronx Music Heritage Center providing support and resources from Bronx artists.
- e. The WHEDco Bard Academy is committed to providing a full range of students with an academically challenging curriculum, individually responsive and fully inclusive in its approach to teaching and learning, and dedicated to the idea that all children should complete high school prepared for thoughtful citizenship and ready to complete a college degree. An emphasis on a comprehensive curriculum, including the arts and an *El Sistema*-inspired music program ensures that adolescents develop competencies across a broad range of disciplines, building identities through productive experiences in learning that will shape their choices and options as adults and future citizens.
- f. At the WHEDco Bard Academy, success in learning emerges from curriculum and instruction that is shaped by three key principles: ***teaching and learning is student-centered; literacy is the basis for successful learning; and learning emerges from the authentic work and challenges of the core disciplines.*** Instructional practice emphasizes effective clinical practice attending to the needs and dispositions of individual learners while applying what research tells us about how people learn. Effective use of language builds an educational foundation as well as a broader idea of what literacy means across the range of disciplinary contexts. Developing the thinking, skills, and usable knowledge that lead to competent understanding in any subject requires engaging with the forms of inquiry and knowledge making that motivate a discipline.

These principles are supported by purposeful design and specific structures, unique to the WHEDco Bard Academy, such as: ***Small school culture as learning support:*** at full capacity, the Academy will enroll no more than 560 students, from grades 6-12; ***Reduced class size:*** the school will maintain class sizes of 20-25 students with the exception of some music classes that engage students as players in larger ensembles; ***Advisory support:*** students

will be organized into grade-level cohorts of 10-15 students with a single faculty member as their advisor and advocate, with responsibility for regular communications between home and school; **College before graduation:** all students will be expected to graduate with a minimum of 12 credit hours through cost-free Bard College courses offered as part of the regular schedule of classes as dual enrollment courses during 11th and 12th grade; **A 6-16 learning environment:** Bard MAT graduate faculty and charter school teachers share a common campus and form a teaching and learning community committed to providing “college-quality” learning from the earliest years, building models of instruction that offer students appropriate challenges and support for continued academic success; **Highly qualified classroom support:** MAT Program graduate students will serve as assistant teachers during the apprenticeship cycle of their teacher education program. These students are a select group of college graduates with deep knowledge in their respective subject areas and an abiding interest in becoming successful teachers of their disciplines; **Core literacy practices across subject areas:** emphasis on a language rich environment, literacy development across the subject areas, interventions to address gaps in reading and writing skills, and targeted support for English Language Learners; **Project-based instruction:** students will engage in learning that is prompted by the forms of inquiry that constitute each of the academic disciplines, developing knowledge and understanding in authentic contexts; **Ongoing assessment:** regular and systematic feedback for students and teachers, helping students become increasingly strategic and self-directed in their learning and allowing teachers to modify instruction to the individual needs of a range of students; **Block scheduling:** classes will meet for extended periods of time to allow for sustained inquiry and in-depth engagement with the various subject areas; **Integrated curriculum:** teachers will plan lessons collaboratively, building units of study across disciplines that allow for meaningful connections and the broad application of key cognitive abilities; **Music in the middle years:** under the leadership of the Longy School of Music, and with support from the Bronx Music Heritage Center, all middle school students will be engaged in an *El Sistema*-inspired music program with options to continue music performance and studies through their high school years; **Extended school day and year:** the academic year will be expanded to 190 days, creating two weeklong cycles for student presentations of work and projects to peers; the school will operate from 8:00 am to 5:00 p.m.; **Regular cycles of parent-school interactions:** advisory group leaders will communicate with parents of their advisees on a monthly basis and various forums for school-community engagements will be part of annual planning initiatives; **An emphasis on postsecondary education and lifelong learning:** the integration of Bard College faculty and graduate students in the daily life of the school and the fact that classroom teachers are engaged in continued learning through MAT Program provides models for learning that foster a culture of educational aspiration and achievement.

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

- a. The WHEDco Bard Academy, and the school’s target population, will be located in the Melrose section of the South Bronx in the poorest Congressional District in the nation (NY16). More than eight in ten households rely on Food Stamps. In School District 7 students are 69% Hispanic and 29% Black. Nine out of ten students are eligible for free/reduced lunch. 25% of students have disabilities and 19% are limited English proficient.

- b. WHEDco and Bard currently operate educational programs for thousands of underserved children in 12 Bronx public schools all of which have exemplary rates of engagement, retention and attendance. The experience of WHEDco and Bard in enrolling and recruiting students with disabilities, English language learners, and those eligible for free/reduced price lunch will be applied to the WHEDco Bard Academy. WHEDco will continue its practice of placing social workers in the school to address needs of the student and the 'whole' family. Both WHEDco and Bard are committed to utilizing the Academy's resources to support local Bronx public schools.

WHEDco has extensive experience attracting participants to its various programs, serving 30,000 people each year (mostly Bronx families). WHEDco's 13-year old nationally-accredited 104-child Head Start Center has an annual waiting list in excess of 200.

WHEDco's After School, Summer Camp and Teen programs serving over 1,000 annually are always at capacity. To attract and recruit students, WHEDco will employ strategies it has used as a developer of two income-restricted buildings in the Bronx. Recruitment was accomplished via advertising through city-wide newspapers and local press in multiple languages, local saturation marketing that employs traditional methods (including flyers, storefront posters, presentations at tenant associations, community boards and to elected officials, church and merchant associations), as well as public service announcements, and digitally through two WHEDco-run websites, community e-blasts, and social media.

#### IV. Public Outreach and Community Support

- a. In the spring of 2010, WHEDco began outreach by completing a needs survey of 448 people in Community District 3 where the proposed school will be located. It revealed a very high percentage of households with children under 18 (almost 62%), much higher than the Bronx's average of 41%. Youth education was one of the highest needs identified. In May 2010, WHEDco held a focus group leading to the formation of a 25-person Music Advisory Board. WHEDco made presentations to the Community Board and local elected officials and hosted nine free community events (concerts, roundtable discussions, tenant meetings) that promoted the mission of the WHEDco Bard Academy and the Bronx Music Heritage Center and engaged more than 1,000 parents, children and seniors. Public outreach about the Academy continues with a survey launched in early January 2012 administered by staff and partners in-person and electronically. Community members will provide input at a school visioning session and other events in January and February 2012.
- b. Initial assessment reveals great need for a high-performing school in District 7 due to the population influx in Melrose and the district's low-performing schools. The past decade has brought a 25% increase in the number of housing units located within the census tracts surrounding the Melrose area. This population influx has brought needs not addressed by existing or planned schools, especially those that can meet the needs of an ethnically diverse, limited English proficient and economically disadvantaged student body.



Ric Campbell, Dean  
Bard College Master of Arts in Teaching Program

1-17-12



Nancy Biberman, President  
Women's Housing and Economic Development Corporation