



New York State Education Department
The Regents of the University of the State of New York
Charter School Office
89 Washington Avenue
Albany, New York 12234

January 17, 2012

Re: Letter of Intent for the Westchester Academy of Science Charter School

To Whom It May Concern:

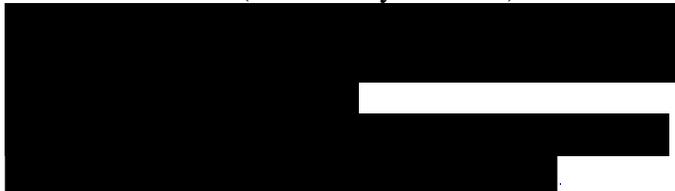
We are pleased to present you with this letter of intent to apply for a charter school to be located within the Yonkers Public Schools District. With myriad board members committed to ensuring all our students have a strong foundation in the core content areas with an emphasis on math and science, we look forward to submitting an application next month.

Per the Letter of Intent requirements outlined on pages 16 and 17 of the 2012 Charter School Application Kit, we have addressed all the components as requested.

I. Applicant Information

a. **Applicant Information**

Mehmet Ozhables (community member)



b. **Media Contact**

Cell Phone: (914) 414 7391 Email: mehmet.x.ozhables@jpmchase.com

c. **Applicant Founding Group**

Board Member 1 (Lead Applicant) - Mr. Mehmet Ozhables is an economist and Vice President at J.P. Morgan Chase in the Chief Investments Office. His prior charter school experience and his experience in teaching will be valuable to the Westchester Academy of Science Charter School. His expertise in the use of databases and data analysis has helped the founders assess the need for improved education in Yonkers. His expertise will also help evaluate the success of the Westchester Academy of Science Charter School's students through analysis of test score data and other measures.

Board Member 2 - Dr. Genevieve Yarrell-Harris works at the College of New Rochelle and Lehman College in New York City as an adjunct professor teaching courses on Education Psychology and Counseling Psychology. Her background experiences include regular education counseling and guidance responsibilities as well at the N.Y.C. Board of Education. Her rich background in counseling diverse student bodies makes her an important asset for the Westchester Academy of Science Charter School.

Board Member 3 - Dr. Serigne Gningue is an Associate Professor at Lehman College where he coordinates the Teacher Opportunity Program and co-coordinates the Master's of Mathematics Education Program. As a former New York City public school teacher, he provided equity in mathematics learning, through the teaching of mathematics content and methods especially algebra and problem solving in grades 6-12 in urban and minority settings. Dr. Gningue will work to ensure our Mathematics program is stellar.

Board Member 4 - Dr. Hasan Erkan is a Researcher/System Engineer at the AT&T Research & Development Center in Middletown, NJ. Dr. Erkan has vast experiences teaching collegiate courses at the departments of Electrical Engineering/Computer Engineering/Physics of various colleges including SUNY Maritime College, Brooklyn College, City College of New York, La Guardia Community College, Bronx Community College, and the Borough of Manhattan Community College. His experience and established relationships with local colleges are key to the success of the Westchester Academy of Science Charter School.

Board Member 5 - Mr. Mithat Gashi is an Assistant Principal at the New World High School in the Bronx, ranked in the top 2% among New York City's high schools. He is a member of numerous international organizations that promote peace and human rights education and has organized and facilitated many workshops for teachers, journalists, and diplomats. Mr. Gashi will provide his expertise to ensure the Westchester Academy of Science Charter School also becomes a top performing school in Yonkers whose students and staff promote peace as they strive for excellence.

Board Member 6 - Ms. Madeline Gomez has been serving in public education for 17 years. She currently works for the Yonkers City Board of Education as a special education instructor. Ms. Gomez also worked as an Academic Talent Search Counselor for Fordham University. At Mt. Vernon High School, she counseled and advised students on selecting a college or university, assisted juniors and seniors on admissions and the financial aid application process. She has been an active parent at her children's school as a member of PTA, Book Publishing Center Volunteer, and BOCES Spanish Enrichment Instructor.

Board Member 7 - Dr. Mustafa E. Ozbudak is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Genetics at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine of Yeshiva University. Dr. Ozbudak's lab currently conducts research on vertebrae development, stem cell proliferation and skeletal muscle differentiation. Dr. Ozbudak also served as a board member in a charter school in Kansas City, Missouri for two years. His experience in science, education and charter school operations will be beneficial for the Westchester Academy of Science Charter School.

Board Member 8 - Dr. Selcuk Eren works as a Research Scholar at Levy Economics Institute of Bard College. Conducting extensive research on economic wellbeing across generations and demographic groups, Dr. Eren strongly believes that the quality of elementary and secondary education during childhood is the single most crucial determinant for lifetime success, especially for underprivileged children. He is currently in charge of the school budget's preparation for this proposal and will provide oversight to the budget once WASCS commences operation.

Board Member 9 - Dr. R. Gul Tiryaki Sonmez is an Associate Professor for the Department of Health Sciences and the director of the Exercise Science Program and Human Performance Lab in the Department of Health Sciences at Lehman College, The City University of New York. She volunteers in an elementary school in Riverdale, Bronx, NY and actively participates in Parent Association committees. Dr. Sonmez will help develop the Westchester Academy of Science Charter School's and board members' university collaborations with the Department of Education, and provide guidance with establishing effective communication with parents and appropriate health programs for the school.

d. Proposed Board of Trustees

The names and descriptions of the founding members in section c will also serve as the initial Board of Trustees for the Westchester Academy of Science Charter School.

e. Replication or Network Information

The proposed charter school is not a replication of another school model nor intended to be part of a network.

f. Application History

In 2010 this founding group sought approval through the New York State Department of Education to open this proposed charter school in Yonkers. Each section of the application "met" the criteria, with the exception of the financial plan analysis summary, which received a rating of approaching. In 2011, this founding group submitted a prospectus for the proposed charter school. The prospectus, however, was not approved.

II. Proposed Charter School Information

a. Proposed School Name

Westchester Academy of Science Charter School (WASCS)

b. Proposed School Location

Yonkers Public Schools District

c. Planned Grades and Enrollment

School Year	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018
Grades	6 th - 8 th	6 th -9 th	6 th - 10 th	6 th - 11 th	6 th - 12 th
Enrollment	216	240	360	432	504

d. Proposed Management and/or Partner Organization - Not Applicable

e. **Proposed School Mission**

The mission of Westchester Academy of Science (WASCS) is to provide each Yonkers student with a diverse, quality, innovative and relevant education in a safe, supportive environment that promotes self-discipline, motivation, critical thinking and excellence in lifelong learning. WASCS aims to provide excellent opportunities for its students with its college preparatory program that focuses on Math and Science. The WASCS team will join the parents and community to assist the students in developing skills to become independent, happy, healthy, self-sufficient adults and productive citizens who will succeed and contribute responsibly in a global community.

f. **School Overview**

WASCS will accomplish its mission by utilizing innovative methods that will provide challenges and opportunities for educationally underserved students to achieve the necessary skills and knowledge needed to succeed, not only in an academic environment but also in life. Based on the current student data for grades K-5, students entering WASCS may be significantly below grade level. WASCS staff will provide students with the necessary foundation to ensure students' success in WASCS' rigorous high school curriculum. Students will benefit from additional instruction through an extended school year, Saturday sessions and summer school. The school will create a variety of learning opportunities by encouraging students to participate in science fairs and national and international science competitions. The Academy will create a personal advisory and mentoring system coupled with active parental involvement to support students in reaching their highest intellectual, social, emotional and physical potential. WASCS will provide meaningful and challenging educational activities appropriate for each student's academic, social, and personal development. Home visits and real-time access to student data will provide the necessary data and support to parents to further assist their children.

g. **School's Target Population**

The Westchester Academy of Science Charter School (WASCS) will be located in the Yonkers Public Schools District, which resides in Westchester County. Families in Yonkers are economically disadvantaged compared to neighboring cities in Westchester County. There are 23,000 students in grades K through 12 in Yonkers and 74% of them are eligible for free and reduced-price meals. In addition to being economically disadvantaged, a large proportion of the Yonkers population is comprised of minorities. Approximately 51% of the students in Yonkers are Hispanic, 26% are African-American, 17% are White, and 6% are Asian. As a result of the large Hispanic and Asian community, a disproportionate amount of the student population in Yonkers is comprised of English Language Learners, when compared with the state and county. The percentage of English Language Learners is 15% in Yonkers versus 8% in the state and 7% in the county. The share of students with disabilities in Yonkers is 13%, about the same as the percentage for the state.

III. Enrollment and Retention of Students

The Westchester Academy of Science Charter School (WASCS) will actively seek students with disabilities, English Language Learners and economically disadvantaged youth who are not receiving the high quality education entitled to them.

Brochures, pamphlets, and fliers in English and Spanish will be actively distributed to the target subgroups and readily available for interested families. The materials will state that WASCs will be open to all students and that children of all needs will be welcomed.

IV. Public Outreach and Community Support

In addition to the community outreach efforts conducted and documented in the previous years and applications, the founding board has completed the following:

(1) More than 1,200 parents were surveyed between January 4th through January 16th, 2012; approximately 1,100 of them are parents whose children will be attending 6th, 7th, or 8th grade when the school opens in 2013; (2) Our website is updated and includes an interactive parent petition component at <http://www.westchesterscience.org/>; (3) A Facebook account has been opened at <http://www.facebook.com/westchesterscience?sk=wall>; and, (4) A Twitter account has been opened at <https://twitter.com/westchestersci>.

We met with (1) State Senator [Andrea Stewart-Cousins](#), (2) Yonkers City Council President Chuck Lesnick, and (3) Yonkers City Council Member [Michael Sabatino](#) (3rd District). We are scheduled to meet with (4) Yonkers Mayor Mike Spano (1-17-12), (5) State Senator Suzie Oppenheimer (1-20-12), and (6) Gail Baxter - NAACP (1-23-12). We also spoke with the Directors of: Andrus Community Services, Cluster, Inc., Greyston Child Care Center, Project Step, Phillips Manor Hall State Historic Site, Sharing Community, St. John's Episcopal Church, Yonkers Partners in Education Wendy Nadel, YWCA, Yonkers Christian Academy, and Project Rainbow Ms. Gut.

Public events including presentations about the Westchester Academy of Science Charter School were held at the Yonkers Wills Public Library on January 13, 2012. Another public event will be held at the Riverfront Public Library sometime in February. Education reporter Colin Gustafson has been contacted and scheduled to attend public events.

Additionally, a paper advertisement has been prepared and an order has been placed to appear on the paper copy of the Journal News as well as an electronic copy, and a tri-fold brochure was developed, printed, and widely distributed in public places. A master list of community organizations, non-profits, and businesses has been generated. The brochure and information sheet has been mailed and follow up phone calls will be placed and appointments scheduled to ask for feedback and solicit support.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Mehmet Ozhabes
Lead Applicant
Westchester Academy of Science Charter School

Date