

Letter of Intent: Applicant and Media Contact Form

Created Sunday, January 27, 2013

Page 1

All applicants seeking to establish a charter school authorized by the Board of Regents to open in 2014 must submit a Letter of Intent to Apply, which requires completion of this applicant and media contact form, and an upload of your 5 page Letter of Intent to Apply as outlined on pages 14 of the 2013 RFP and Application Kit. Please submit these tasks by 5:00 PM on February 1, 2013. Applicants who do not submit a complete Letter of Intent to Apply by this deadline will not be permitted to submit a Full Application.

a. 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).

American Dream Charter School

Whether submitting an application in Round 1 or Round 2, all new charter school applicants seeking public space in New York City must fill out a "Request for DOE Space" by January 31, 2013. The Request Form can be found at <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheet/viewform?formkey=dHNTYVFueWd4RWhmLW5CNHBqV>

b. Preferred school location.

Select the preferred geographical area on the left and then select the preferred school district or community school district on the right.

NYC CSD-Bronx: CSD 7

Select a second geographical area on left and then select the school district or community school district on right.

NYC CSD-Bronx: CSD 9

If necessary, select a third geographical area on left and then select the school district or community school district on right.

NYC CSD-Bronx: CSD 10

c. Applicant(s) information, including mailing address, phone number, and email address, and information establishing that the applicant(s) is a parent, teacher, school administrator or community resident.

(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	Street Address, City, State, Zip
Lead Applicant	Melissa Melkonian9	917-579-8689	mm3051@columbia.edu	[REDACTED]

Co-Applicant

As the Lead Applicant(s), I (we) can best be described as a:

(Multiple responses permitted)

- Current or former School Administrator

d. Media Contact: please provide a phone number and/or email address to which public inquires about the proposed charter school may be addressed.

	First and Last Name	Best Phone Number (###-###-####)	Email Address	URL (type web address or the word "none")
Media Contact	Melissa Melkonian	917-579-8689	mm3051@columbia.edu	none

e. Planned grades and enrollment in each year of the proposed charter term.

	Ages (or age ranges)	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019
K	0	0	0	0	0	0
1st	0	0	0	0	0	0
2nd	0	0	0	0	0	0
3rd	0	0	0	0	0	0
4th	0	0	0	0	0	0
5th	0	0	0	0	0	0
6th	11-12	100	100	100	100	100
7th	12-13	0	100	100	100	100
8th	13-14	0	0	100	100	100
9th	14-15	0	0	0	100	100
10th	15-16	0	0	0	0	100
11th	0	0	0	0	0	0
12th	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ungraded	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total		100	200	300	400	500

f. 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 36-39 of the application kit for definitions and guidance as only "significant" partnerships should be listed here).

f. 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. Proposed Management Company	none
f. 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. Partner Organization 1	(No response)
f. 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. Partner Organization 2	(No response)

Thank you for completing the Applicant and Media Contact Form which will be duplicative of some information contained in your letter of intent. Having information in this form allows the Department to merge applicant contact information into our existing data system. Please proceed to upload your signed and dated 5 page Letter of Intent to Apply.



American Dream Charter School
Live the Dream

Application Information

a. **Applicant:** Melissa Melkonian, [REDACTED], (917) 579-8689, mm3051@columbia.edu. Melissa Melkonian is currently an assistant principal in a charter school, grades 5-12, in the Bronx.

b. **Media Contact:** Melissa Melkonian, (917) 579-8689 or mm3051@columbia.edu

c. **Founding Team:**

Melissa Melkonian: M.A. Bilingual and Special Education, Mercy College; Ed.M. Educational Leadership, Teachers College. Melissa has taught bilingual, special and general education and been an assistant principal to students in grades 5-12 for 10 years. Melissa has also provided professional development workshops to teachers from both charter schools and the NYCDOE on teaching students with disabilities and students who are English language learners. Melissa will serve as the proposed school leader.

Nena Gil: M.S. Bilingual/Bicultural Education, Teachers College; M.A. Art Education, Teachers College. Nena has been a dual language teacher, sheltered immersion teacher, and a general education teacher in independent and public schools in New York City and Westchester County for 8 years. Nena has worked on developing curriculum using SIOP lesson planning and has worked on professional development focused on designing and planning curriculum in content areas to meet New York State standards. Nena will serve as the director of curriculum and instruction.

Angie Pillier-Odate: B.A. Spanish Literature, Tufts University; M.S. Ed General and Special Education Touro College. Angie has taught special education to students in grades 5-9 for 4 years. Angie has led workshops for teachers in charter schools to help differentiate their lessons. Angie will serve as the director of school culture.

Maria Vaz: B.S. Accounting and Business Administration; M.B.A. in Finance, Mount Saint Mary College. Maria has worked in the charter school sector for the past 8 years. She has enormous amounts of experience in all aspects of operations and finance. Her ability to work well with facilities management, while creating policies and procedures, financial management strategies, compliance, and budget analysis will be used as the director of operations.

Paul Melkonian: M.S. Science Education, New York University; Ed.M. Educational Leadership, Teachers College. Paul has worked at Satellite Academy High School for more than 17 years.

During his tenure as a biology and environmental science teacher, Paul was instrumental in developing the school's science performance assessment system. As a veteran member of The Science Institute, Paul developed and implemented inquiry science activities for the American Museum of Natural History and the New York Botanical Gardens. As an assistant principal, Paul has helped lead the school to become the highest scoring transfer high school on the NYCDOE's Progress Report.

Luz Maria Rojas: Luz Maria was the lead teacher of the ESL program, a bilingual teacher of math and social studies as well as being a crucial member of the School Leadership Team, the Language Allocation Policy Team and the Comprehensive Educational Plan Committee at Inwood

Intermediate Academy. Luz Maria moved on to teach at a charter school in the Bronx before accepting an assistant principal position at Queens Satellite High School for Opportunity.

Angelo Cabrera: Angelo is a CORO Fellow through the NY Immigrant Leadership Program and trained at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government in organizational leadership. He founded an organization that aims to help students during afterschool hours in Mott Haven, the community in which he lived. He currently is the President and Founder of MASA MexEd, a nonprofit organization that helps students in Mott Haven achieve academic success afterschool.

Michael Weippert: Michael has spent the past 5 years working in commercial real estate leasing for the federal government where he is tasked with tenant requirements development, market research, contract negotiation, and management of tenant build out. He is responsible for transactions with a combined total exceeding 585,000 square feet of space worth \$95 Million.

d. Proposed Board Members:

Laurie Pastore: Laurie currently works at the White Plains district level to revise and refine ELA and Math curricula to align instruction with the new Common Core standards, to analyze and evaluate district based assessment data, and to identify emerging trends and key educational research.

Steven Zbaida: Steve began his career in 1994 as a science teacher in one of New York City’s most diverse districts – Alternative Schools and Programs (D.79). During his tenure he has served in the following capacities: staff developer of science, assistant principal, and curriculum instructional specialist for alternative schools and programs where he supported science teachers in over 100 settings. Presently, he continues to increase student achievement as principal of Satellite Academy High School which now ranks the number one transfer high school in New York City.

Rick Levine: Rick Levine began his 35 year career with the Department of Education as a paraprofessional. He taught at John F. Kennedy High School and then was a founding teacher at Vanguard High School and Fannie Lou Hamer Freedom High School. After 25 years, Rick left the classroom to be assistant principal at Gregorio Luperón High School and the Monroe Academies. He was the founding principal of Global Enterprise High School for six years. Rick taught history at CUNY-Queens and SUNY-Empire and education at Barnard College and Bank Street College.

In addition: *Luz Maria Rojas, Angelo Cabrera, Michael Weippert (see above).*

e. Replication/Network Information: not applicable

f. Application History: Founding team members or board members have not applied to this or another charter entity to open any proposed school.

I. Proposed Charter School Information

a. Proposed School Name: American Dream Charter School

b. Proposed School Location: American Dream proposes to open in Community School District (CSD) 7, the Mott Haven section of the Bronx. American Dream has conducted extensive research on appropriate non Department of Education facilities in CSD 7 to determine market value for the required real estate acquisition. This has been accounted for in our proposed budget. American Dream will also submit a request to the New York City Department of Education Office of Portfolio Management for possible co-location space in CSD 7. After researching the NYCDOE’s enrollment

capacity and utilization report, we have identified 9 facilities that are under enrolled and could serve as incubation and/or permanent space.

- c. **Planned grades and enrollment:** American Dream will serve students in grades 6-12 at full capacity (year 7). Through the first charter, it will serve students grades 6-10.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Grade 6	100	100	100	100	100
Grade 7		100	100	100	100
Grade 8			100	100	100
Grade 9				100	100
Grade 10					100
TOTAL	100	200	300	400	500

- d. **Proposed Management and/or Partner Organization:** not applicable
- e. **Proposed School Mission:** The American Dream Charter School develops academic excellence in both Spanish and English, preparing students to excel in college and become leaders in their communities.
- f. **School Overview:** We strongly believe in cultivating an environment that is welcoming and supportive for English language learners (ELL) and immigrant students where learning and language development experience is supported. Our students will graduate from American Dream bilingual and biliterate in English and Spanish. The model of instruction will be designed to achieve academic success in both languages based on models that support English language learners. American Dream has 5 *Key Design Elements* that set it apart from other schools. They are:
- **Two Way Dual Language Program:** Students who are native speakers and English language learners will be placed in advisories together. This will allow for students to serve as language models for each other, giving each group of students an opportunity to show mastery in their native language as well as develop their second language. Students will receive an hour and twenty minutes of English language arts as well as an hour and twenty minutes of Spanish language arts daily.
 - **Project and Experiential Based Learning:** “I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand.”-Confucius. We believe experience is essential to learning therefore we will focus on explicitly providing students the opportunity to build critical thinking skills through real world experience. Two elements we will include as core curricular components to improve world understanding are field study and project based learning.
 - **Culturally Responsive Instruction:** Instruction will focus on including our community members’ cultural experience as part of the driving force in our curriculum. Our cultural considerations will not be limited to native language instruction. We go further by understanding that education is not an easy task for any one person or entity, so we will work to have an environment that resembles that of a “village” where students, teachers, families, and the community will be active participants in the academic life of the school.
 - **Data Driven Instruction and Assessment:** Students will be regularly and meaningfully assessed using formative assessment tools and informal observation In order for teachers to accurately drive their instruction. Every 6 weeks at the end of formal units, students will have a math assessment (Scholastic Math Inventory) and a reading assessment (Scholastic Reading Inventory), as well as running records in English and in Spanish. The data will be tracked and realistic, quantifiable, and infused goals will be set and infused into the learning objectives.

- **Teacher Development and Support:** Teachers will work in a collective group of four teachers plus one ELL Specialist and one Learning Specialist per grade. The specialists will be the support structure for teachers to reflect and think critically about improving their lessons methodologies and delivery through lesson study. Teachers will be asked to participate in self-reflection and to consider moments of success and difficulty to inform future instruction.

In addition to the 5 Key Elements, American Dream will implement the following:

- **June Mini-mester:** This will be an accelerated 2 week course in helping students make gains in becoming English proficient. Students will have an opportunity to take a class with students at the same proficiency level as their peers and hone in on developing in the areas most needed.
 - **DREAM Advisory:** American Dream will work to establish an advisory program called DREAM. DREAM will stand for Diversity, Respect, Empowerment, Advocacy and Motivation. These are the 5 pillars of our education and students will learn how each of these enhances not only their education but also who they are as citizens and leaders in their community.
 - **Teacher Academy:** In order to prepare for the academic school year, our teachers will participate in a two week intensive teaching academy where we will outline curricular objectives, set goals and establish the foundation for our year long professional development. The focus of this professional development program will be SIOP model lesson planning, practice, and implementation.
- g. **Target Population:** American Dream will target students who identify as English language learners and/or immigrants in CSD 7, grades 6-12, including those with disabilities.

II. Enrollment and Retention Targets

Recruitment

- Those identified in school's mission:** American Dream will target students who are immigrants living in CSD 7. We will work with the New York Immigration Coalition to target newcomer students, providing them with workshops on public school choice and what that means for them.
- Students with disabilities:** During our information sessions, American Dream will ensure that we not only advocate for but also recruit parents to enroll their students who have an Individualized Education Program to the school. We will have one learning specialist per grade that will provide Integrated Co-Teaching for students as well as have one Learning Specialist that provides Special Education Teacher Support Services.
- English language learners:** As the target population, we will do extensive outreach to families in the community who speak a language other than English as their native language. Information will be provided in their native language to ensure that they understand that the mission of the school is to serve students who are learning the English language. We will target local places of worship, community centers and recreational centers.
- Students eligible for free and reduced price lunch:** CSD 7 has 90% of the student population who are eligible for free or reduced priced lunch. We intend on communicating the mission of the school to as many families through our information sessions, distributing flyers, and through support from community organizations.

Retention

- Those identified in school's mission:** Through the key design elements, students will be able to be successful at American Dream. Students learn in their native language while developing their English language skills. The curriculum will be culturally relevant and experiential in nature, allowing for each student to truly own their learning.

- b. **Students with disabilities:** Having at minimum one learning specialist per grade, students with disabilities will have an inclusive support structure that allows them to take risks while learning. The learning specialist will be the students' expert and also collaborate with grade level teams to ensure that lessons are differentiated and meet the needs of all students. IEPs will be closely monitored to ensure that there is progress monitoring for annual goals set forth for each student.
- c. **English language learners:** Devising an academic program that emphasizes language development will be instrumental to retaining English language learners. Students will have ample language support in and out of the classroom. This will be possible by having one ELL Specialist per grade, having native language instruction as designed in our model, and constant communication with the families.
- d. **Students eligible for free and reduced price lunch:** American Dream will not only have a sound language-focused curriculum and support for all students, but we will also have an advisory program that teaches students how to be reflective, self-aware young leaders in our community. This will help develop character and infuse a passion for learning in and out of school.

III. Public Outreach

To date, American Dream has conducted two information sessions (December 3, 2012 and January 14, 2013) at MASA MexEd, where a survey was administered, with parents to solicit feedback regarding the proposed school. When asked what was missing in the education of their child, parents overwhelmingly expressed their desire for their children to learn to read and write in Spanish. Additionally, parents expressed a desire to help their children maintain their native language and culture.


On January 11, 2013, members of the team met with District 17 council member Maria del Carmen Arroyo. She indicated that there was a need for a school that will address the needs of our target population and will write a letter of support.

On January 18, 2013, members of the team met with the Bronx Borough President's Office Director of Education, Monica Major. One of the major initiatives that the Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz, Jr. wants to address is how schools will be educating (successfully) English language learners.

American Dream has asked to be put on the January 31, 2013 agenda at the Bronx Community Board 1 meeting.

Initial Assessment of Sufficient Interest:

After meeting with local community members, the council member for Mott Haven and the director of education for the Bronx Borough President's office, there is an overwhelming support for a school that supports English language learners and immigrant students. Additionally, this current school year, based on the NYC Charter School Center's data, charter schools in the south Bronx currently had only 2,491 seats for 14,571 applicants. Also, NYC charter schools enroll a smaller percentage of English language learners (5.8%) compared to district schools (15%). American Dream Charter School will address this dire need to target, enroll, and graduate English language learners from high school, making them college ready in English and Spanish.



Melissa Melkonian, Lead Applicant

1/24/13
Date