

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Mission Statement

The mission of Democracy Prep Public Schools is to educate responsible citizen-scholars for success in the college of their choice and a life of active citizenship.

Key Elements

All Democracy Prep schools are “no excuses” schools, and thus Democracy Prep III will have in common with all DPPS schools five core elements: 1) Rigorous college-prep academics, 2) More time to learn, 3) Smart use of data, 4) Safe and supportive school culture, and 5) exemplary talent.

- 1) *Rigorous college-prep academics.* Democracy Prep III will be an academically rigorous, college preparatory middle school. The Democracy Prep III curriculum will be based on an accelerated introduction to the 28 New York State Learning Standards, and will utilize primarily direct instruction. It is designed to challenge students to do their best academically regardless of their language proficiency, special education status, or the academic level at which they enter the school. Our rigorous core academic program provides dramatically more time, allowing for three hours of guided reading and writing, two hours of math, an hour of social studies/study skills, and an hour of science for all middle school students each day. This academic rigor requires all students to receive Regents level high school algebra, earth science, English, or Social Studies in eighth grade.
- 2) *More time to learn.* Democracy Prep III will serve students Monday through Thursday from 7:45 am to at least 4:15 pm, until at least 1:30 pm on Fridays, and up to three Saturdays per month. The school year will be a minimum of 190 days, and students in need of additional individual support or required remediation attend school on additional Saturdays and during some vacations. Students who have not yet mastered the grade’s content expectations attend a mandatory Summer Academy for a total of up to 33 additional “Opportunity Days” throughout the year. All together, this adds up to more than 70% more instructional time than the average traditional public school.
- 3) *Smart use of data.* DPPS will use a variety of assessment systems to measure student progress and inform instruction. These include absolute measures (the NY State ELA and Math tests, Regents exams, etc...), value-added measures (such as the Measure of Academic Progress), and internally-developed, externally-validated trimester and comprehensive exams.
- 4) *Safe and supportive school culture.* Democracy Prep III school culture will be based on Discipline, Respect, Enthusiasm, Accountability, and Maturity, or DREAM. Students earn or forfeit “DREAM Dollars” based on their adherence to these values and these DREAM Dollars may be linked to college scholarship accounts and a percentage used by students to “buy” privileges and benefits such as end of trimester trips and end of year adventures including Civic and College Expeditions.
- 5) *Exemplary talent.* Democracy Prep Public Schools has an extremely selective staff application process. At DPPS schools, fewer than the top 1% of applicants are hired. At Democracy Prep III, like at all Democracy Prep schools, teachers will be paid a base salary that exceeds the Department of Education scale and they are eligible for excellent benefits and performance bonuses. We work with our teachers on Professional Development in the summer for three weeks prior to student arrival as well as three hours every Friday.

In addition to these core elements of “no excuses” schools, Democracy Prep is committed to 1) special education and ELL and 2) civic education.

- 1) *Special education and ELL.* Democracy Prep III will utilize a full inclusion, collaborative team-teaching (CTT) model for its special education students, and a structured immersion program for

English Language Learners. A more in depth discussion of Democracy Prep III’s commitment to these students is discussed in Section III: School Design.

- 2) *Civic education.* DPPS believes that public schools have a primary responsibility both to educate students for college and to improve the democratic infrastructure of our community.¹ Our goal is to ensure that all graduates are able to participate and take leadership roles in civic institutions. Through required service learning, summer experiences, internships, debate, and other civic activities during in and out-of-school time, our students will apply the knowledge, skills, and character they have developed in the academic program to help change the world. Our graduates must be poised public speakers, respectful debaters, skilled negotiators of conflicting information, engaged community members, critical thinkers, and confident leaders. The measurement of these goals includes standardized testing (NAEP Civics), community service data, interscholastic competition results, and metrics of school behavior and citizenship such as “DREAM Dollars.”

Capacity of Management

Democracy Prep Public Schools (DPPS) is a non-profit charter management organization (CMO) that operates high-performing public charter schools in Central Harlem, New York and Central Falls, Rhode Island. Its mission is to educate responsible citizen-scholars for success in the college of their choice and a life of active citizenship. Its flagship school, Democracy Prep Charter School, opened in 2006, and is now the highest-performing middle school in Harlem and eighth-best in New York City over the past two years. Democracy Prep Blackstone Valley, its first Rhode Island school, opened in 2009 to serve 76 kindergartners, and already has some of the highest early literacy results in the nation on nationally-normed assessments. DPPS has successfully navigated the challenges of starting up, at the same time, two schools hundreds of miles apart. Democracy Prep Blackstone Valley Middle and Democracy Prep Harlem will open this fall in Rhode Island and New York, respectively.

Seth Andrew is Founder and Superintendent of DPPS. Prior to founding DPPS, Mr. Andrew founded Democracy Prep Charter School in Central Harlem. A Building Excellent Schools fellow, Mr. Andrew was previously a leader in residence at Amistad Academy and a special education administrator. He has degrees from Harvard’s Graduate School of Education and Brown University.

In Year 1, William Cooke—currently a Campus Director at Democracy Prep Charter School, and formally Dean of Students and Math Instructor—will serve as Campus Director of Democracy Prep III. Democracy Prep III will also operate with a standard cohort of teachers (6 full-time instructional staff, including 1 dedicated SPED teacher), and 1 office manager. DPPS will share SPED administrative services, social work services, and all back-office support with other DPPS schools. As the school grows, it will retain 1 full-time social worker and 1 full-time SPED administrator.

The Board of Democracy Prep III, as Democracy Prep Public Schools’ third middle school in New York City, will overlap with other Democracy Prep Boards. DPPS is currently applying to the State Education Department for a waiver to the 40% overlap restriction, following the effective practice of other high-performing charter schools. If this waiver is granted, the Board of Democracy Prep III will be the Democracy Prep Charter School Board of Trustees, as it is constituted at the time of waiver approval. This Board has 6 members, with expertise in financial management, real estate, community affairs, and law.

¹ Our approach to building democratic infrastructure is similar to that outlined by Robert Putnam in “Bowling Alone.” We have identified Social and Civic capital as two quantifiable and demonstrable ways to measure the effect we have on our community.

II. STUDENT POPULATION

A. Student Enrollment

Anticipated Enrollment Table

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Kindergarten					
1st					
2nd					
3rd					
4th					
5th					
6th	125	125	125	125	125
7th	110	110	110	110	110
8th	104	104	104	104	104
9th					
10th					
11th					
12th					
Ungraded					

B. Target Population

DPPS is committed to explicit and intentional recruitment of special education, English language learners, and hard to reach students. DPPS expects that Democracy Prep III’s student population will be very similar to its other middle schools in Harlem: ~100% Black and Latino, ~80% FRPL, ~15% SPED.

At Democracy Prep Charter School, more than 80% are eligible for free or reduced lunch and 100% are African-American or Latino.² At least 5% of all DPCS scholars are registered in the NYC homeless system, the highest of any charter in NYC.³ Because of DPCS’ unique focus on special education, at least 23% enter the school with identified special needs each year and 12% enter as English Language learners (ELL), levels that exceed the sending district every year.⁴

Academic achievement of entering students matches challenges these students face. When students enter DPCS in 6th grade they are on average at a 3rd grade level in ELA and math⁵. New DPCS students test below the average for 6th graders in CSD5.⁶ Fully 91% of Democracy Prep’s sixth graders entered below grade level as assessed by the Stanford 10.⁷

Approach to Special Education

Democracy Prep will implement an inclusive, heterogeneous educational model that serves all students in a manner that maximizes their academic potential and prepares all of them for success in the college of their choice and active citizenship. Our approach and design emulate high-performing urban schools

² As reported by NYC-DOE’s ATS & ARIS system.

³ As reported by NYC-DOE’s ARIS system.

⁴ As reported by NYC-DOE’s ATS & ARIS system.

⁵ As reported by NYC-DOE’s ATS & ARIS system.

⁶ District Performance Reports on State ELA/Math. Accessible: <http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/default.htm>

⁷ The Stanford 10 (SAT10) is a nationally-normed assessment intended to inform classroom instruction by helping teachers to know a students’ level of achievement.

servicing similar students with disabilities, language proficiency barriers, and/or special circumstances that put them at risk for academic failure.

The guiding philosophy at Democracy Prep is to minimize the impact of a student’s disability while maximizing his or her access to support services and the college-preparatory general curriculum. We embrace the approach of Dr. Thomas Hehir with respect to “Universal Design” and “Eliminating Ableism in Education.”⁸ Dr. Hehir is an Advisor to Democracy Prep, director of the School Leadership Program at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and a former special education teacher and administrator and director of the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) at the Department of Education. Democracy Prep believes that students with disabilities fall along a wide continuum of difference in learners, but they are not a discrete category when it comes to instructional methodology. This means that adjustments will occur for all students, not just those with disabilities.

Systems to Ensure that All Students Meet Academic Performance Standards

We anticipate that 23% of our students will have Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), 6% of our students will be classified English Language Learners (ELL), and that our students will be, on average, two-grade levels behind when they enter sixth grade.⁹ Therefore, the entire school incorporates supports for students struggling academically, not just those with disabilities. The educational program at Democracy Prep will avoid remediation “pull-out” from core courses whenever possible, limiting its use to connections courses and extracurricular activities from 3:00-5:15 pm each day. We will use a curriculum that meets each student where he or she is and, using extra time and supports, accelerate students academically to master the 28 New York State Learning Standards at a faster rate than in traditional schools.¹⁰

Students will have more than three hours of Literacy each day Monday through Thursday, two hours each on Friday, as well as additional time on Saturdays. Our Literacy program focuses on phonics from the start, providing services for students who struggle with decoding or fluency with a program such as Wilson Reading. Blocks of time will be set aside for tutoring or for provision of special education services without requiring pull-outs from core subjects.

In order to ensure that all students meet academic performance goals as outlined in their IEPs, Democracy Prep makes a clear distinction between modifications to curricular content and accommodations available to students that do not lower academic expectations. We will seek to *modify* curriculum as *infrequently* as possible, yet we will provide *accommodations* as *frequently* as necessary to help students progress as guided by students’ IEPs and their individual needs.¹¹

Universal Design

Democracy Prep believes that a universally designed curriculum is the most efficient and effective way to provide access for a broad range of diverse student disabilities and needs.¹² This approach guides the full inclusion of students with disabilities, from the facilities, to the differentiated curriculum,

⁸ Hehir, Thomas. “Eliminating Ableism in Education” Harvard Educational Review. Volume 72. Number 1 Spring 2002. Ableism refers to discrimination based on disability.

⁹ This assumption is based on the averages for CSD 5 and will serve as a baseline. Our intent is to serve at least the same or greater numbers of ELL and special education students than the district as a whole and our outreach will reflect this goal.

¹⁰ Material culled from <http://www.cast.org/udl/index.cfm?i=7> on October 2nd, 2004.

¹¹ Hehir, Tom. “Implementing Inclusive Education.” Harvard Graduate School of Education. Spring 2002.

¹² Orkwis, Raymond. “Curriculum Access and Universal Design for Learning.” ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education. ERIC/OSEP Digest #E586. The Council for Exceptional Children. December 1999.

to the routines and rituals of daily life. This approach is proven to help students with disabilities and their non-disabled peers to achieve greater academic success.¹³ Specifically, this approach will include a design of materials and activities that are attainable by individuals with wide differences in their abilities to see, hear, speak, move, read, write, understand, organize, engage, and remember. We will implement the three universal design principles for learning as formulated by the Center for Applied Special Technology:¹⁴

- The curriculum provides multiple means of representation. Subject matter can be presented in alternate modes for students who learn best from visual or auditory information, or for those who need differing levels of complexity.
- The curriculum provides multiple means of expression to allow students to respond with their preferred means of control. This accommodates the differing cognitive strategies and motor-system controls of students.
- The curriculum provides multiple means of engagement. Students' interests in learning are matched with the mode of presentation and their preferred means of expression. Students are more motivated when they are engaged with what they are learning.

Service Provision and Staffing

In order to provide all IEP and Section 504 (Rehabilitation Act) services, we have designed a model that is flexible and fully compliant with applicable laws. In Year One, Democracy Prep III will have a full-time Special Education Coordinator. We will also have at least one full time teacher certified in special education for students with mild and moderate special needs. These individuals will be responsible for implementing classroom-based IEP services and ensuring access to the general curriculum for all students on IEPs.¹⁵ The certified special education teacher will focus on providing classroom-based inclusion services and pull-out services when required by an IEP. The administrator certified in Special Education will work directly with the Committee on Special Education and also serve as the Section 504 Officer. If, through the lottery process, a student is admitted who has profound or severe disabilities, Democracy Prep will ensure that the student has the appropriately certified aides and teachers working with him or her to provide necessary services.

Democracy Prep plans to contract with the District or a qualified outside service provider, such as Interactive Therapies Group, to provide on-site pull-out special education services including Occupational Therapy (OT), Physical Therapy (PT), Speech Therapy (ST), Counseling, Social Work and any other services specifically indicated in our students' IEPs that are not able to be managed by our in-house staff.¹⁶ All special education services will be provided by appropriately trained, certified, and licensed providers accountable to the Campus Director.

When a student arrives at Democracy Prep with either an IEP or a 504 plan, the special education coordinator will be immediately responsible for ensuring that the services indicated in the plan will be available. For certain services, this may entail the scheduling of an outside provider such as the InterActive Therapies group. All of the student's general education teachers will be provided with the relevant sections of the IEP (accommodations, modifications, goals, etc.) and they will work with the

¹³ Hehir, Tom. *Seminar with Building Excellent Schools Fellows*. 9/28/04. Boston, Massachusetts.

¹⁴ Information gathered from <http://www.cast.org/udl/> on October 2, 2004.

¹⁵ Whenever possible, Democracy Prep will seek to hire excellent teachers who hold dual certification in a subject as well as in special education.

¹⁶ ITG has come highly recommended by successful charter school leaders. For example, Kristin Kearns Jordan, Director of Bronx Prep, believes that ITG provides legally compliant, high quality services, which fit with her school culture and high academic standards for all students.

special education teacher to ensure appropriate compliance with the plan. Training and professional development will be provided by the Special Education Coordinator as well as outside consultants when necessary to support full implementation of the IEP or 504 and to help ensure academic success, college preparation and civic engagement of all students.

Re-Evaluation and Revision of existing IEPs

Each student with an IEP or 504 plan will be monitored by a special education teacher to ensure compliance with their IEP. A second monitoring feature of the Democracy Prep model is that an Advisor will check in regularly with the students' classroom teachers to ensure that they are making effective progress in all subjects, and if not, why not. As students progress at Democracy Prep we will review their Plan annually and if there is a need for a change to the IEP, the Special Education Coordinator will contact the CSE to re-evaluate the student and consider revising the IEP as needed. We will also work closely with the CSE to ensure that Democracy Prep staff members are present at all annual review meetings and that all three-year re-evaluations are completed in a timely manner.

Identification of Students with Disabilities and Child Find Provisions of IDEA

The robust evaluation and assessment system at Democracy Prep III will ensure that all students who enter the school will be routinely monitored to ensure that they are making effective academic progress. This tracking of student performance will begin prior to the first day of Preparation Academy in the summer before sixth grade. Students admitted through the lottery process will be required to take a nationally-normed standardized test such as the MAP as well as a battery of internally designed criterion-referenced comprehensive exams for each of the core subjects. The results of these exams will be used to determine which students are in immediate need of remediation during the summer school program. Students with particularly low scores will be monitored closely by their Advisors and be provided with support and accommodations as needed.

Beginning in the first weeks of the summer school program, those students who are not demonstrating effective academic progress given their abilities will be brought to the attention of the grade level team. The first step in this Pre-Referral involves a process called a Teacher Assistance Team (TAT) and is focused on the teacher and his or her methods. The grade level team, principal, and lead teachers will provide the teacher with a specific set of approaches and strategies that may help the student make more significant academic gains. These strategies will have a one-to-two week time frame before the teacher will be asked to report back on the student's progress. If the TAT methods have been successful, the special education Coordinator will continue to monitor the teacher's use of the new approaches.

If a student continues to demonstrate a lack of effective progress or he or she is suspected of having an undiagnosed disability after the TAT recommendations have been appropriately implemented, the teacher will again bring the student's case to the weekly grade-level team meeting. At this second step in the pre-referral process, the Child Study Team (CST) will convene. The family will be involved and the classroom teachers will be asked to implement specific accommodations (without curricular modifications) that may help the student better access the curriculum. These may include further adapted materials, assistive technology, graphic organizers, or other accommodations that have not yet been made available to the student. If, after two additional weeks, these accommodations have proven successful, they will be provided until it is determined by the grade level team that they are no longer needed.

If, after two weeks, the TAT recommendations and the specific CST accommodations have been implemented without an improvement in the student's academic progress, the family will be called in to school to further discuss the situation and the next steps. If no further immediate classroom accommodations are generated at that meeting, with parental consent and procedural safeguards in

place, the special education administrator will issue a request in writing to the chairperson of the district CSE to begin the process for an initial evaluation to determine if the student is eligible to receive special education and/or related services. A copy of this request along with the procedural safeguards notice described in 34 CFR 300.504 (Parents Rights Brochure) will be sent to the student’s family. This request will:

- 1) Provide the reasons for the referral including any applicable test results, reports, or records.
- 2) Outline the interventions taken prior to referral as a result of the TAT and the CST.
- 3) Describe the family participation throughout the pre-referral process.
- 4) Provide relevant documentation generated during the pre-referral process.

Under IDEA and the implementing federal regulations, 34 CFR § 300, coupled with § 2853(4)(a) and § 2856(1) of the Education Law, Democracy Prep will continue to provide appropriate accommodations to the student while they continue through the CSE initial evaluation process.¹⁷ When the CSE convenes an IEP team to review the findings of their psychological, educational, and other testing, the Democracy Prep Special Education Coordinator and/or the special education teacher will attend the meeting as well as a general educator from the school.

Confidentiality of Student Records and Professional Development

Democracy Prep will comply with the Family Educational Records Privacy Act regarding confidential student records. Our procedures will maintain confidentiality of records with restricted access to authorized personnel who have a specific “need to know.” An access log will be maintained to track the movement and use of confidential records. Staff will be trained in policies and procedures in special education service provision as well as records maintenance, family rights, and disciplinary expectations for students with disabilities.

Assessment and Reporting of Special Education Information

All students with IEPs at Democracy Prep will take the same city, state, and internal assessments as their non-disabled peers. Students with IEPs or 504s will receive the appropriate accommodations as identified in their plans and parents will receive reports on their student’s progress at least as often as non-disabled students.¹⁸ Parents will receive three IEP progress reports each year in addition to report cards, progress reports, citizen-cash paychecks and personal contact from Advisors.

As required by 34 CFR 300.750, Democracy Prep will provide an annual report to the State Department of Education including:

- The number of students with IEPs and 504 plans
- The specific nature of each student’s disability
- Each student’s placement and educational setting¹⁹

In further compliance with this section, Democracy Prep will submit the following reports:

		On or about:
PD-1C	<i>Counts of Students with Disabilities</i>	Dec. 1
PD-4C	<i>Students in School-Based Program and Separate Settings</i>	Feb. 1
PD-5C	<i>Students Exiting Special Education</i>	mid-Jul
PD-6	<i>Special Education Personnel</i>	Feb. 1
PD-8	<i>Students with Disabilities Suspended for Disciplinary Reasons</i>	mid-Jul

¹⁷ <http://www.ideapractices.org/law/index.php>. October 2, 2004

¹⁸ <http://www.ideapractices.org/law/index.php>. October 2, 2004

¹⁹ <http://www.ideapractices.org/law/index.php>. October 2, 2004

SEDCAR-1 *ASEP Request for IDEA Sub-Allocation (if also required)*²⁰

Furthermore, we will comply with 8 NYCRR 119.3 which outlines requirements for the “Charter School Report Card” including information pertaining to students with disabilities. Please see Attachment 5 for Additional Special Education Assurances and the Systems Flowchart.

Compliance with Federal Law

Democracy Prep is committed to providing a free and appropriate education (FAPE) to all students in the least restrictive environment (LRE) such that they can access the general curriculum. In so doing, we will comply with federal laws and regulations pertaining to students who have been identified as having a disability as well as those suspected of having a disability.²¹ This includes, but is not limited to:

- Section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 29 U.S. Code §794
- The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, PL 92-142
- The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), 42 U.S. Code §12101. et seq.
- The Family Educational Rights Privacy Act (FERPA)
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) 20 US Code., §1400, et seq. and the 1997 IDEA Amendments (§614(d)(3)) PL 105-17 including:
 - Child Find Provision - CFR 34 § 300.220
 - Referral & Prior notice - 34 CFR § 300.504
 - Informed Consent - 34 CFR § 300.500
 - Evaluation - 34 CFR§ 300.532
 - Least Restrictive Environment PL 94-142²²

Approach to English Language Learners

Democracy Prep’s mission is to prepare all students to graduate with the essential knowledge, skills, and character to succeed in college and citizenship. A prerequisite to achieving this mission is that every Democracy Prep student must become a literate and fluent reader, writer, and speaker of Standard English as quickly as possible. As such, it is one of our chief aims to work with identified ELL students in an inclusive structured English immersion (SEI) program that provides them with the challenge and extra supports needed to rapidly achieve proficiency in English. This SEI model does not segregate ELLs from their English speaking peers and SEI students have “consistently scored higher than those enrolled in traditional bilingual programs” in large scale studies in California, Arizona, and Massachusetts.²³ SEI has demonstrated success at Democracy Prep Charter School, and at other New York high-performing charter schools like KIPP Infinity and Bronx Prep.

At Democracy Prep III, all students will have equal access to all programs and services including: instructional services (e.g., tutoring); support services (e.g., guidance and counseling); all school programs, including music, art, vocational, and technology programs; and all after school programs including athletics. Students will maintain and enhance their native language skills through enrichment

²⁰ <http://www.ideapractices.org/law/index.php>. October 2, 2004

²¹ Osgood Smith, Judith and Robert J. Colon. “Legal Responsibilities Toward Students with Disabilities: What every Administrator Should Know.” Bulletin. January 1998.

²² <http://www.ideapractices.org/law/index.php>. October 2, 2004.

²³ Arizona Department of Education, July 2004. “The Effects of Bilingual Education Programs and Structured English Immersion Programs on Student Achievement: A Large-Scale Comparison” found at http://www.public.asu.edu/~macswan/ade/ade_document.pdf.

and World Language class. During Drop Everything And Read (DEAR) time, ELL students will have access to a computer-based English Language acquisition program such as *Rosetta Stone*.

ELL Identification

Democracy Prep III will identify students as ELL using the *Home Language Questionnaire* (HLQ). We will provide the HLQ to the parent or guardian in a language and format the parent or guardian best understands. After the lottery, families will be asked questions including:

- What language(s) is/are spoken in the student’s home or residence?
- What language(s) is/are spoken most of the time to the student, in the home or in the residence?
- What language(s) does the student understand?
- What language(s) does the student speak?
- What language(s) does the student read?
- What language(s) does the student write?
- In your opinion, how well does the student understand, speak, read, and write English?

If the answers to any of these questions are other than English, as appropriate, an oral interview will take place to provide sufficient feedback to make a reasonable assessment of the student’s oral proficiency in English. Once the preliminary screening is complete, if the results show that the student speaks a language other than English and speaks little to no English, we will conduct a thorough assessment of the student’s English proficiency using the Language Assessment Battery-Revised (LAB-R). The LAB-R exam battery will be administered to screen students for ELL status eligibility based on whether their score is low enough to qualify students for the appropriate SEI services. ELL students will also be assessed in reading and math in his or her native language to help identify their academic level, separate from their ELL status.

Frequent communication with families is an integral part of Democracy Prep through both faculty members and Advisors. For families whose English proficiency is limited, Democracy Prep III will make all reasonable attempts to provide written notices in their native language and/or an interpreter to help foster honest and effective communication with the families of our ELL students.

The ELL Program Model

Our SEI program will comply with all applicable laws and legal precedents specifically related to ELLs including, but not limited to, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974, and *Castaneda v. Pickard* (1981).²⁴ ELLs will be included in every aspect of the educational program at Democracy Prep and valued as members of our community. ELLs will never be provided with curriculum materials of a lower standard, or denied access to curricular or extracurricular activities because of their lack of English proficiency.

Professional Development

In order to ensure that our ELL students master English as quickly as possible, we will provide trained staff, specialized curricular materials, extra time, tutoring, and in-class services for students in need of supplementary support. All teachers at Democracy Prep will receive professional development training and practice in communicating with ELL students, understanding cultural heritage, and applying instructional methodology appropriate for learners of a second language. They will be provided with

²⁴ Rosalie P. Porter. “Accountability Is Overdue: Testing the Achievement of LEP Students.” *Applied Measurement in Education*, 404.

tools to help detect and remedy specific English language deficiencies as well as the ability to identify students in need of additional support. Teachers will be trained in the use of graphic organizers, scaffolding, and backwards planning for all students with a particular emphasis on those who are designated as ELL. We also anticipate having an English as a Second Language certified teacher available for consultation and at least one Spanish speaking teacher as a member of the staff to help communicate with students and their families.²⁵

Evaluation of the ELL program

The body of research over the past ten years around the effectiveness of Structured English Immersion has grown increasingly clear that it is the most effective strategy for educating English Language Learners, especially compared to traditional bilingual education.²⁶ The SEI program at Democracy Prep will be evaluated using a wide variety of value-added, longitudinal, criterion-referenced, norm-referenced, and authentic tests of ELLs individually and in the aggregate. Some of the specific methods used to determine the effectiveness of the program will be those in our goals section above as well as additional measures unique to ELLs. Each year ELL students will take the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT) to determine the new level of English Proficiency and whether they should exit the SEI program. We will evaluate how long it takes the average student to transfer out of ELL status, how fast they progress through electronic evaluations (e.g. Rosetta Stone), and how well they do academically while in the SEI program. Using these indicators, the ELL program of Structured English Immersion at Democracy Prep will be evaluated annually and modified accordingly.

Additional Assurances

Democracy Prep Public Schools also assures that:

- ELL students will not be excluded from curricular and extracurricular activities based on their inability to speak, read, or write English.
- ELL services are completely distinct from Special Education services and no child will be assigned to Special Education simply because of their ELL status.
- Students who qualify for both ELL and Special Education will receive the full benefit of both individually tailored programs.
- Families whose English proficiency is limited will be provided with notices, phone contact, and other information from the school in their native language.

Frequent evaluations will ensure that teachers and families know exactly where each student stands in relation to our rigorous standards and what each student needs to do to make progress. They ensure that group instruction, lesson planning, and student support can be adjusted in direct response to their results. The Democracy Prep III faculty will work together for three weeks, prior to the opening of the

²⁵ Sources including, *Teaching of Language Arts to Limited English Proficient/ English Language Learners: A Resource Guide for all Teachers*, *Guidelines for Programs for Limited English Proficient Students: Bilingual Education/English as a Second Language* Commissioner’s Regulations (NYCRR Part 117 and Part 154); *Regents Strategy for Raising Standards for Students with Limited English Proficiency*; *Twelve Action Steps to Assist LEP Students To Meet the English Language Arts Standards*; and *Seven Essential Elements for Effective Programs for LEP Students* will be used to create & evaluate our SEI program for English Language Learners.

²⁶Arizona Department of Education, July 2004 “The Effects of Bilingual Education Programs and Structured English Immersion Programs on Student Achievement: A Large-Scale Comparison” found at http://www.public.asu.edu/~macswan/ade/ade_document.pdf

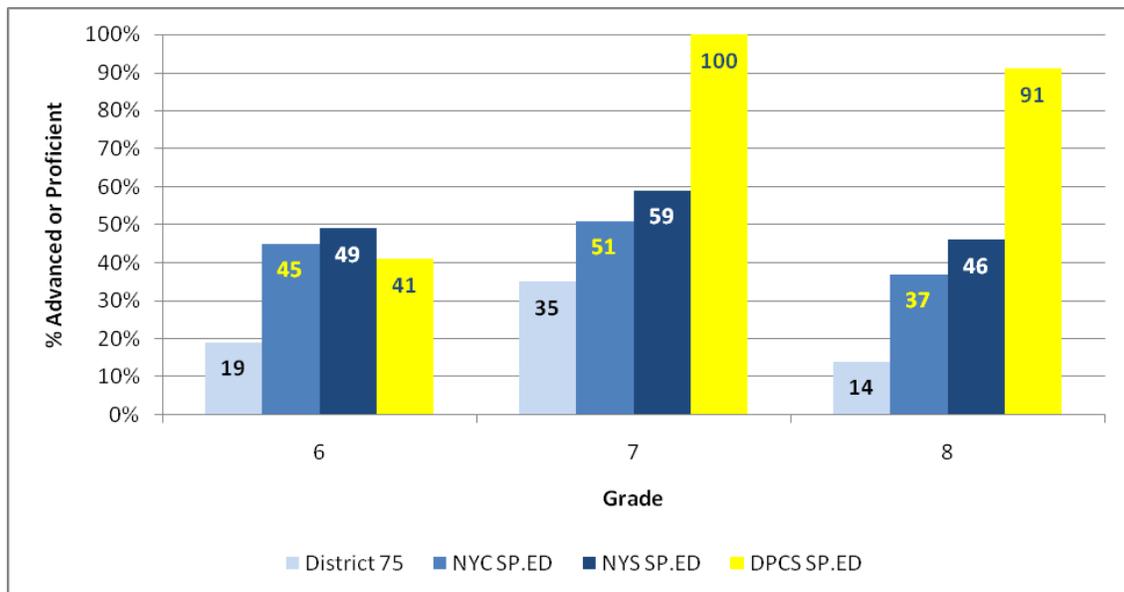
summer Preparation Academy, to revise and practice lesson plans, modify curriculum for ELL and Special Education students, and design a fully integrated assessment system. English Language Learners will have multiple supports, and students with special education services will have all necessary accommodations and modifications of curriculum to ensure their ability to meet the high expectations of all students at Democracy Prep.

Past Success of the Immersion Program for SPED Students

Despite these challenges, Democracy Prep’s special education students do exceptionally well on state assessments.

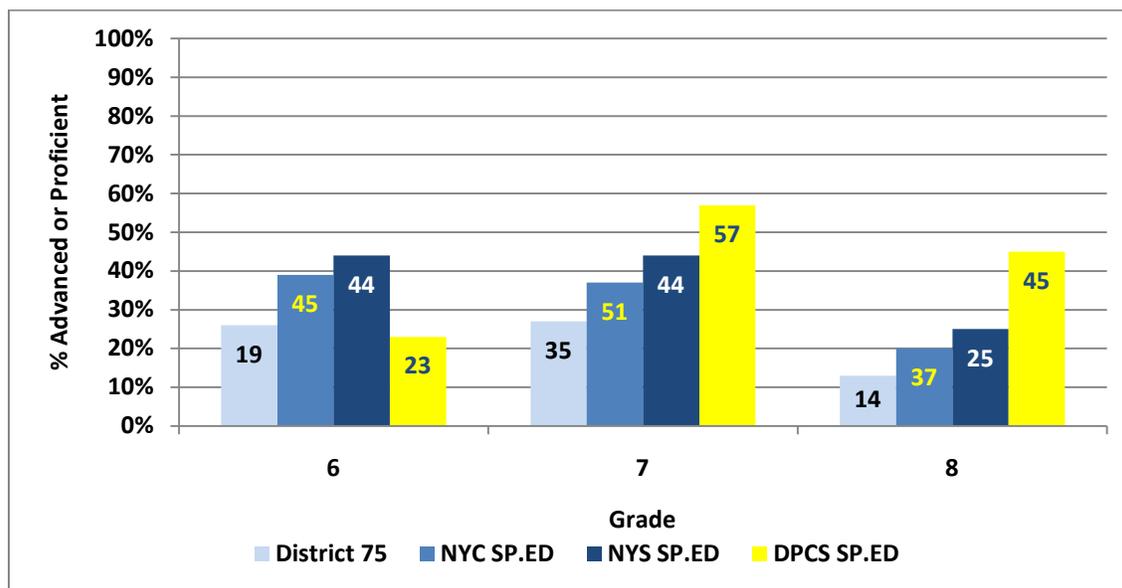
In 2006, when DPCS opened, only 13% of CSD 5 students had special education classification. In 2009, that percentage has risen considerably, to 23%. DPCS stayed ahead of the city average on this measurement, and in its 2006 cohort, 21% of students had special education status. DPCS continues to enroll 23-25% special education students yearly, and they have performed exceptionally well. As Figures 1 and 2 indicate, they not only outperform special education students citywide and in District 75, but they have some of the city’s highest ELA and math scores generally. Though they score below the city average for special education students in Year 1, they outscore that average by more than 50% in math and 25% in ELA by 8th grade. Given that CSD 5 has an increasingly large SPED population, these numbers are especially significant, as they indicate that DPPS would be able to serve those students particularly well. It is because of this outstanding performance that DPCS’ schoolwide average for special education students is about 15%—many that enrolled with IEPs no longer need them after a year or two at a DPPS school.

Figure 1: 2009 State Math Exam Grades 6-8: Special Education Students²⁷



²⁷ NYC-DOE State ELA and Math Test Results. Accessible: <http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/resources/testing/default.htm>

Figure 2: 2009 State ELA Exam Grades 6-8: Special Education Students²⁸



Recruitment and Enrollment Plan

Democracy Prep III will open with the *intent* of recruiting and serving an equal or higher proportion of students with disabilities than the surrounding district. We will make a specific effort to recruit into the lottery applicant pool approximately 23% of students who have disabilities. However, due to the random nature of the lottery-based admission process, we do not know exactly how many students will require special education services. Moreover, we do not know the exact types of accommodations and modifications under their IEPs or 504 plans that we will need to provide. We will serve all students qualified to attend public school in New York State admitted through the lottery process including those with disabilities, regardless of the type or severity of their disability.

The district’s CSE will be responsible for initial evaluations, reevaluations, and exit determination and they will design, review, and revise all IEPs with participation on the IEP Team from Democracy Prep faculty members and the Student Support Coordinator. Our special education service provision will require close collaboration with the CSE to ensure that all students’ IEP needs are met within the Democracy Prep program.

Students will be extensively recruited from throughout Upper Manhattan. DPPS will mail applications to every 5th grade family in both districts, recruit through elementary guidance counselors and SPED administrators and present at all community board meetings, tenant meetings, and education forums. This strategy has been instrumental in recruiting the large population of challenging students that attend DPCS.

Furthermore, in its extensive publicity surrounding its yearly admissions lotteries, DPPS highlights its special education services. DPPS’ NY 2010 Lottery Celebration (for spots at Democracy Prep Charter School and Democracy Prep Harlem) was covered by several news channels including CNN where we emphasized our commitment to serving special education students. As it builds and grows Democracy Prep III, DPPS will continue to aggressively publicize its lotteries and school openings.

²⁸ NYC-DOE State ELA and Math Test Results. Accessible: <http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/resources/testing/default.htm>

Democracy Prep III will give admissions preference—as indicated by law—to students living within its Community School District, and to siblings of students in other Democracy Prep schools.

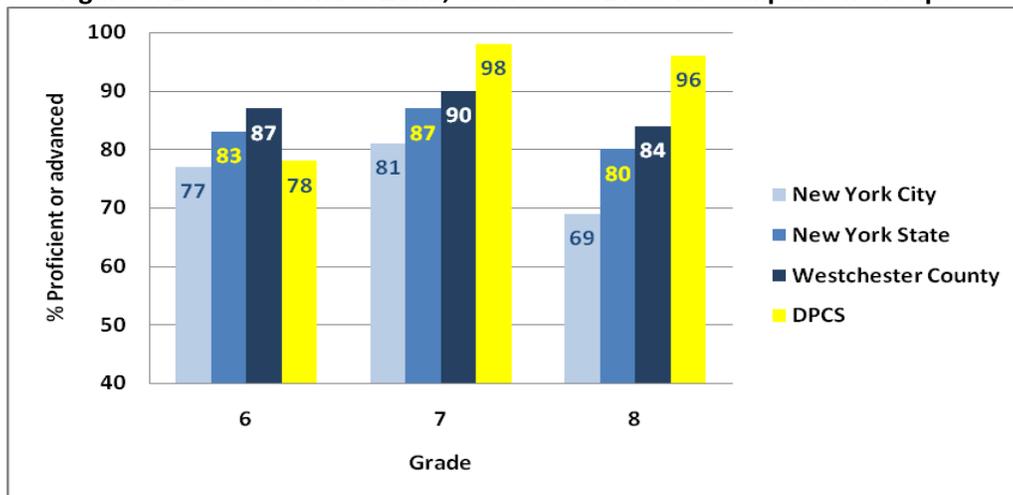
III. SCHOOL DESIGN

The design of Democracy Prep III, as discussed above, will follow the same core model of all DPPS schools, and will most closely mirror Democracy Prep Charter School, DPPS’ fully grown middle school, ranked the highest in Harlem on the NYC Chancellor’s Progress Report in 2009. DPPS here presents historical evidence about DPCS to show that the proposed design of Democracy Prep III has led to the desired outcomes.

A. Increase student achievement and decrease student achievement gaps in reading/language arts and mathematics;

DPCS students significantly outperform the standard achievement effect²⁹ for New York City charters, estimated by economist Caroline Hoxby, literally reversing the “Harlem-Scarsdale Achievement Gap” in math and nearly closing it in ELA.³⁰ Figures 3 and 4 show how DPCS students improve at a greater rate relative to their wealthier counterparts across the city and state.

Figure 3: 2009 State Math Exam, Grades 6-8: DPCS vs. Comparison Groups³¹



²⁹ Hoxby estimated the effect of the *average* New York City charter school to be 0.09 standard deviations in math and 0.06 standard deviations in ELA per year. These effects were statistically significant at the 1% level (p-value < .01) making us 99% certain they are greater than zero. Hoxby et al, “How New York City’s Charter Schools Affect Student Achievement.” September, 2009. Accessible: http://www.nber.org/~schools/charterschoolseval/how_NYC_charter_schools_affect_achievement_sept200.pdf

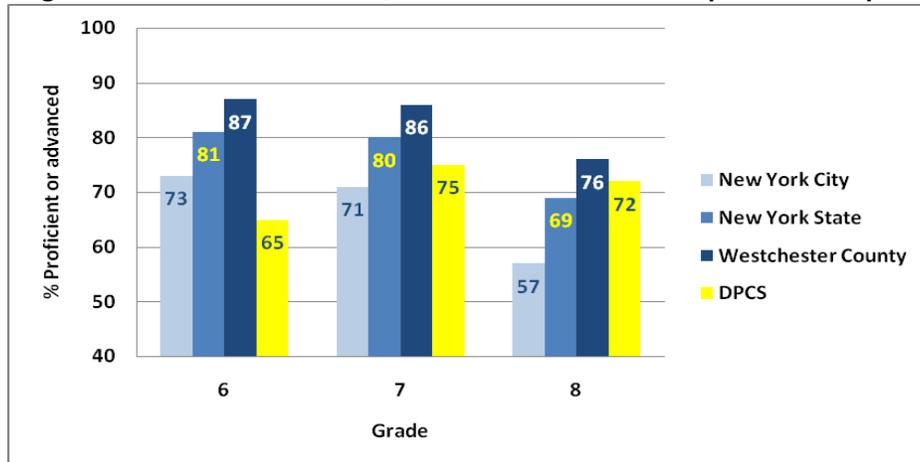
³⁰ Hoxby et al, 2009.

³¹ NYC-DOE State ELA and Math Test Results. Accessible: <http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/resources/testing/default.htm>

While Hoxby found that NYC charters would close most of the “Harlem-Scarsdale” gap over eight years, after just one year at DPCS, 7th graders outscore their counterparts in Westchester County by almost 10% on the NYS Math Exam.³² They also outscore New York City and State averages by wide margins.

In ELA, DPCS students close the gap with every comparison group, eventually surpassing the state average and limiting the differential with wealthy white Westchester County to four points. The trends are also clear that DPCS students are improving over time, while city, state, and even Westchester students lose ground every year they remain in traditional public schools.

Figure 4: 2009 State ELA Exam, Grades 6-8: DPCS vs. Comparison Groups³³

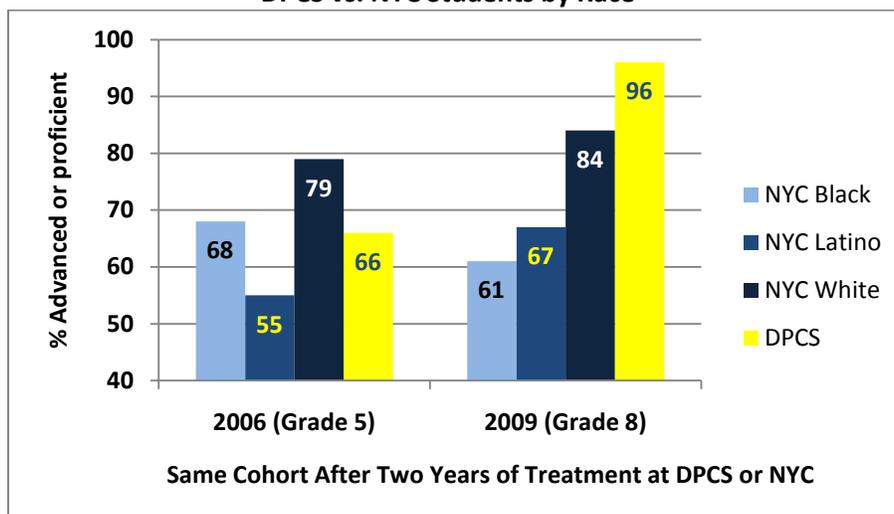


DPCS has also reversed the racial achievement gap in math. Figure 5 compares DPCS students (who are 100% black and Latino) to black, Latino and white students citywide.

³² 98% of DPCS students were proficient compared to 90% of Westchester County. NYC-DOE State ELA and Math Test Results.

³³ NYC-DOE State ELA and Math Test Results. Accessible: <http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/resources/testing/default.htm>

**Figure 5: 2006 and 2009 State Math Exam: Same Cohort Analysis
DPCS vs. NYC Students by Race³⁴**



Prior to enrolling at DPCS, these fifth graders scored 2% below the city-wide average for black students.³⁵ By eighth grade, the same cohort of black and Latino students, after just three years at DPCS, outperforms the citywide average for black students by 35%, the citywide average for Latino students by 29%, and the citywide average for white students by 12%.³⁶ A study by Dr. Roland Fryer of Harvard University’s Education Innovation Laboratory found similar results within DPCS, concluding “The effect of attending DPCS does not appear to systematically vary by gender or ethnicity, but students with lower fifth grade tests scores do seem to gain slightly more in both math and ELA than students with higher fifth grade test scores.”³⁷ Again, this demonstrates that the DPCS model is effective for all sub-groups, and most effective for those students furthest behind.

B. Increase high school graduation rates and focus on serving at-risk high school student populations (including re-enrolled drop-outs and those below grade level);

DPPS plans for Democracy Prep III to serve middle school students from grades 6 through 8. Students that complete the 8th grade at Democracy Prep middle schools may be offered seats at a Democracy Prep High School, such as Democracy Prep Charter School.

C. Focus on academic achievement of middle school student populations and preparation for transition to high school (if applicable);

³⁴ NYC DOE State ELA and Math Test Results. Accessible: <http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/resources/testing/default.htm>

³⁵ 68% of Black students citywide were proficient or advanced compared to 66% of DPCS students who were advanced or proficient. NYC-DOE State ELA and Math Test Results. Accessible: <http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/resources/testing/default.htm>

³⁶ 96% of DPCS students were proficient compared to 61% of Black students and 84% of white students. NYC-DOE State ELA and Math Test Results.

³⁷ Roland Fryer and Will Dobbie, “A Quasi-Experimental Evaluation of Democracy Prep Charter School,” April 2010.

By improving achievement of students from up to several grades behind 6th grade level to at or beyond grade level by grade 8, Democracy Prep III will be preparing its students to graduate high school and succeed in college. Our college-prep middle school program provides for three hours of literacy, two hours of math, an hour of social studies/global literacy, an hour of science, and an hour of Art, Physical Education, Music or Theater for all middle school students each day. Additionally, all students will receive a full year of high school algebra, earth science, English, and social studies in the eighth grade.

Democracy Prep’s mission seeks to leverage academic excellence in our middle schools to accomplish two specific goals for all students in our Upper School: 1) preparation for success in college and 2) active democratic citizenship.³⁸

- 1) *Preparation for college success.* DPPS will measure our progress based on academic metrics, earned visits to colleges, and a College Preparation Portfolio (CPP) required for promotion to the 8th grade. The CPP³⁹ may include a transcript, a complete college application with essays, interviews, extra-curricular activities, recommendations, and an academic honors thesis, as well as demonstration of mastery in all areas of the Democracy Prep curriculum.
- 2) *Preparation for civic success.* Through required public service, summer internships, and other civic activities, our students will apply the knowledge, skills and character they have developed to help change the world. Our students will be poised public speakers, dynamic debaters, skilled negotiators of conflicting information, engaged community members, critical thinkers, and confident leaders. The measurement of civic goals includes 100% participation in community service and interscholastic speech and debate.

D. Utilize a variety of high-quality assessments to measure understanding and critical application of concepts;

We will employ a robust assessment system that does not rely on any one measure in isolation; instead, we will rely on four types of measures in concert: *criterion-referenced*, such as the NY State, Regents, SATII, and AP exams; *value-added and norm-referenced*, such as the Measure of Academic Progress (MAP); and *internally developed/externally validated*, such as measures such as weekly quizzes, biweekly tests, six week assessments, and comps that are aligned to state assessments. Each measure is essential to the effectiveness of our overall system to help determine student curricular mastery, areas for extra support, progress of cohorts over time, and effectiveness of individual teachers.

E. Increase implementation of local instructional improvement systems to assess and inform instructional practice, decision-making, and effectiveness;

DPPS believes that real time student data is essential to informing instruction to reach every student. Teachers at Democracy Prep III will utilize the exit ticket, a short series of questions about the subsequent lesson that students must answer in order to transition to their next class, to assess, at the end of each lesson, what is working and what is not on the individual student level. DPPS staff is currently engaged in digitizing the exit ticket system to enable teachers to enter this data on their smart phones and allow them as well as instructional leaders to access and adjust instruction based on this data on a faster turnaround than was ever possible before.

³⁸ Both mission related goals are long-term and ambitious in nature. We will evaluate them by keeping close contact with our alumni.

³⁹ The term “College Preparation Portfolio” was coined by Scott McCue, founder of Boston Prep Charter School.

F. Partner with low-performing, local public schools to share best practices;

To design Democracy Prep III, we have borrowed successful practices from schools around the country to guide our design process in all areas including academic curriculum, instruction, culture, routines, hiring, physical space, civic education, and character education among others. We believe strongly in the importance of school visits, and have built at least four school visits to successful urban schools into the annual professional development schedule for all Democracy Prep staff members.

It is for this reason that DPPS has an open door policy and invites everyone, including representatives from traditional public schools down the hall or across the street, to visit and tour the school to learn about the best practices we implement every day. DPPS is participating in the study entitled “A Vaccine for Public Education” by Dr. Roland Fryer at Harvard University’s EdLabs, which aims to be a qualitative as well as quantitative follow up to the landmark Hoxby study and discover the exact practices that lead to the success found at many public charter schools across the city to inform implementation of those practices at traditional public schools.

G. Demonstrate the ability to overcome start-up challenges to open a successful school through management and leadership techniques;

DPPS is supported by a highly-qualified team of operations specialists with extensive experience in building new organizations, strategic planning, and instructional leadership. Together, DPPS CMO staff has several decades of instructional and organizational experience in the charter sector and beyond. Key CMO staff currently includes, but is not limited to: Seth Andrew, Founder and Superintendent; Katie Duffy, Chief of Staff; Jaime White, Director of Curriculum and Instruction; Andrew Epstein, Director of Finance; Gabriel Nadel, Director of Data and Technology; Jonathan Howard, Director of Recruitment; Linda Easton, Director of Human Resources, and Chiv Heng, Director of Rhode Island Operations. Additional support staff will provide administrative assistance to the directors either individually or as a whole. Members of the team have successfully overcome start-up challenges for the three new DPPS schools that have been opened over the past year spanning two states.

DPPS also expects to continue to receive additional start-up funds from external sources. Start-up funds are available from the Federal Charter Schools Program, the Walton Family Foundation, and the Charles Hayden Foundation (see attached letters of support). DPPS will also actively pursue matching fund prospects through the Charter School Growth Fund, New Profit, and New Schools Venture Fund.

H. Demonstrate the support of the school district and the intent to establish an ongoing relationship with such district; and

DPPS has an ongoing relationship with the New York City Department of Education (NYC-DOE), which has up to this point authorized both DPPS schools in New York State: Democracy Prep Charter School and Democracy Prep Harlem. NYC-DOE will be formally submitting this prospectus on our behalf.

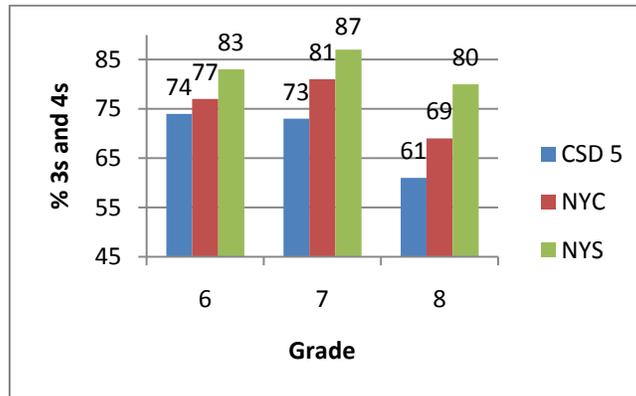
I. Provide access to viable education alternatives to students in regions where there are a lack of alternatives.

Harlem is one of the most diverse and culturally rich communities in the world. Composed of extraordinary artistic, architectural, historic, and cultural resources, Harlem is a wonderful place to live. Unfortunately, most of the schools in our community are not wonderful places to learn.

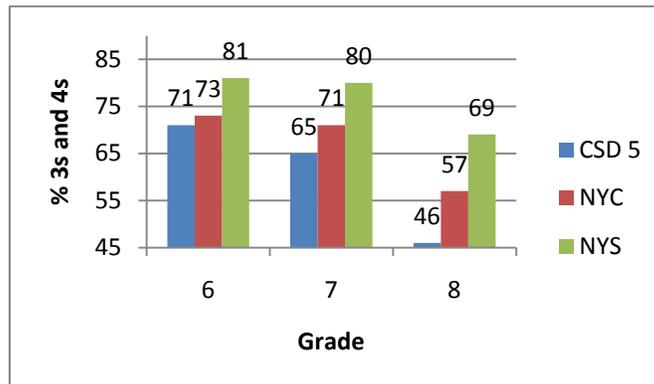
Community School District Five (CSD 5), part of Region 10 in Upper Manhattan, is comprised of 21 traditional public schools. CSD 5 is the lowest performing in Manhattan and one of the lowest

performing districts in the entire City of New York. Of the 6,560 students in grades 3 through 8 who took the 2009 City and State English language arts tests, 3,877 (59%) *were not proficient and not on grade level*.⁴⁰

Figures 6: 2009 NYS Math Exam: CSD 5 vs. Comparison Groups



Figures 7: 2009 NYS ELA Exam: CSD 5 vs. Comparison Groups



Students attending these traditional public schools are predominantly African American and Latino. In 2009, 60% of students tested were identified as Black, 37% Hispanic, and 3% White, Asian, American Indian, and other.⁴¹ Of students tested, 23% were identified as receiving special education services. Another 11% were identified as English Language Learners (ELL), and the predominant home language other than English is Spanish. The district overwhelmingly serves poor students; in 2008-09, 89% of students in grades 3-8 were identified as low-income based on free and reduced lunch applications.⁴²

The underperformance of traditional CSD 5 schools is even more profound than demonstrated by

⁴⁰ 2009 State Results are available in ELA and Math

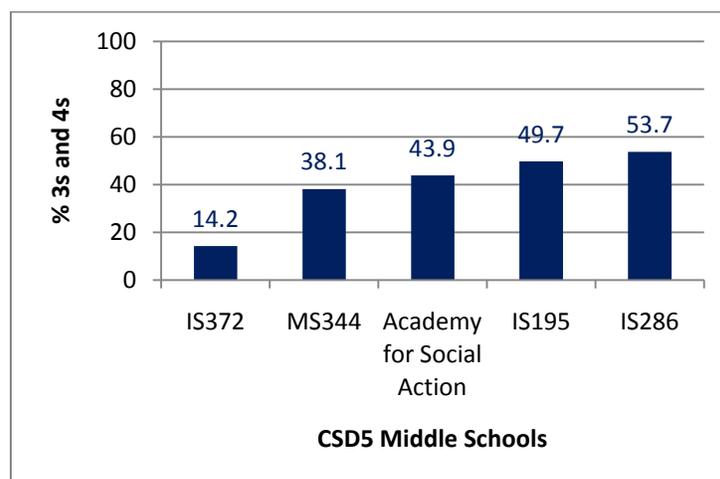
⁴¹ Racial categories were those reported by District Performance Reports on State ELA/Math <<http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/default.htm>>

⁴² District Performance Reports on State ELA/Math <<http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/default.htm>>

the graphs above. For a special education student or an ELL in CSD 5, cumulative English Language Arts (ELA) proficiency rates are just 31.8% and 32.6% respectively. Longitudinal analysis from grade 3 to grade 8 indicates that each year fewer students are proficient the longer they remain in CSD 5.⁴³ Local high schools offer similarly disappointing results, with 4-year graduation rates less than 50% of students who enter 9th grade.

The four traditional middle schools are the area of greatest need in CSD 5. In 2009 fewer than 55% of students were proficient in ELA, and fewer than 60% were proficient in math.⁴⁴ And on the Chancellor’s Progress Report, Figure 8 shows that middle schools in CSD 5 scored significantly below the city average. Research has shown that almost half of high school drop outs can be identified by the end of sixth grade based on just four variables: low attendance, poor behavior, failing math, and failing English grades.⁴⁵

Figure 8: 2009 State ELA Exam: CSD 5 Middle School Performance



Two of five middle schools are Schools Under Registration Review (SURR). Even when compared to public middle schools with nearly identical demographic profiles, CSD 5 schools fall “far below average.”⁴⁶ The painful reality is that in our traditional middle schools *far too many children are being left behind*. For the majority of Harlem students who do not place into selective public school programs, *Democracy Prep III, and other high-performing charter schools, are the only alternative.*

⁴³ District Performance Reports on State ELA/Math <<http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/default.htm>>

⁴⁴ District Performance Reports on State ELA/Math <<http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/default.htm>>

⁴⁵ Research by the nonprofit Philadelphia Education Fund in conjunction with Johns Hopkins University was discussed in the June 6th, 2005 *Washington Post* http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/06/06/AR2005060601488_2.html

⁴⁶ Analysis of similar school data is from the New York Department of Education’s office of Assessment and Accountability and is based on the 2003 New York City and State ELA and Math exams. Schools are rated as far below average when their scores are more than one standard deviation from the mean compared to schools citywide with similar demographics. Raw data is at, <http://www.nycenet.edu/daa/RRR/index.html>.