

LETTER OF INTENT

I. Applicant Information

a. *Applicant(s) information*

- Evelyn Collins. [REDACTED] NYCDOE Administrator.
- Reginald Richardson [REDACTED] NYCDOE Administrator.
- Rhode Octobre-Cooper. [REDACTED] NYCDOE Administrator.

b. *Media contact:* Evelyn Collins

Email: onyxacademyforperformingarts@gmail.com

Phone: 347-843-8788

c. *Founding Group*

Founding Members	Relevant Experience/Skills	Current/Prospective Charter Position
Evelyn Collins	Principal: 6 years. Assistant Principal: 3 years. Teacher: 7 years (NYCDOE). Teacher: 10 years (Ann Arbor Public Schools).	Lead Applicant Founder - Board of Trustee Executive Director – Onyx Academy
Reginald Richardson	Principal: 2 years: Assistant Principal: 5 years. Teacher: 5 years (NYCDOE) and 1 year (Boston).	Board of Trustee. Head of School – Upper Grades Onyx Academy
Rhode Octobre-Cooper	Assistant Principal: 7 years. Teacher: 4 years. Dean: 3 years.	Board of Trustee. Head of School – Lower Grades Onyx Academy

d. Proposed Board of Trustees

Board of Trustees	Relevant Experience/Skills
1. Evelyn Collins	See above
2. Reginald Richardson	See above
3. Rhode Octobre-Cooper	See above
4. Jami Floyd	Accomplished journalist and television anchor. Lawyer and former White House Fellow.
5. Ruth Morrison	Television Producer. CEO, “What’s the 411?” - a digital media company

e. Replication or Network History – N/A

f. Application History – N/A

II. Proposed Charter School Information

- a. *Proposed school name.* **Onyx Academy for the Performing Arts Charter School.**
- b. *Proposed school location.* **Harlem in School District 5 – Community Board 10.**
- c. *Planned grades and enrollment in each of the years of the proposed charter term.*
Grades 6-12:
Grades 6 and 9: 2013-2014. Grades 7 and 10: 2014-2015.
Grades 8 and 11: 2015-2016. Grade 12: 2016-2017.

Grades	Year 1 2013- 2014	Year 2 2014- 2015	Year 3 2015- 2016	Year 4 2016- 2017
6	75	75	75	75
9	75	75	75	75
7		75	75	75
10		75	75	75
8			75	75
11			75	75
12				75
Total	150	300	450	525

- d. *Proposed Management and/or Partner Organization(s):* The anticipated partnerships includes: **Fordham University, Disney Theatricals, SUNY Potsdam, Lincoln Center Theatre, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, INC., College For Every Student, New York University APEX, Theatre Development Fund, PENCIL, and City College of New York (CCNY).**
- e. *Proposed school mission:* *ONYX Academy for the Performing Arts Charter School* will inform a student’s sincere passion for the performing arts, and facilitate their journey as lifelong learners through a rigorous college-prep curriculum. We value a culture of collaboration and a focus on inquiry based learning. Deeply embedded in the curriculum are the historical and creative connections to the contributions of individuals from the period in history known as the Harlem Renaissance. This cultural and historical connection will not only serve to solidify the students place in our global society but also prepare them for success in college and beyond.
- f. *School overview:* *A brief description of the school model, especially any innovative design elements that might require specific expertise to evaluate during the review process.*

The Arts are a vital component of our society. **In Strong Arts, Strong Schools**, Charles Fowler states, “students who are involved in the arts are more motivated, more engaged, more sensitive, and more focused, creative, and responsible. They perform better in all aspects of school including academic achievement.” Onyx Academy for the Performing Arts Charter School is

designed for passionate students in the performing arts. It will offer a rigorous academic program in addition to its sequenced program in theatre, music, and dance that will:

- Satisfy the New York State Learning Standards
- Increase and sustain student attendance to 99%
- Increase and sustain the graduation rate to 100%.
- Prepare students for success on all Regents Examinations
- Highlight and strengthen literacy, math and writing skills
- Offer a sequenced program in theatre, music, and dance
- Model curriculum through a multi-cultural lens
- Prepare students for acceptance into college and performing arts conservatories
- Model excellence in the arts and create and nurture future patrons of the arts.

Onyx Academy for the Performing Arts will implement a curriculum that will offer Honors courses in all academics, as well as advanced placement courses. Also evident in the curriculum will be its multi-cultural thematic approach. Our multi-cultural approach will expressly be evident in the selection of textbooks, fieldtrips, guest speakers, film series, and college tours.

The effectiveness of the curriculum will be evaluated by assessing and analyzing data from baseline assessments, diagnostic tests, progress reports, portfolios, student conferencing, teacher generated tests and surveys administered three times each semester. The use of data will be pertinent in developing curriculum and addressing varied learning styles. Courses will culminate in the appropriate corresponding New York State or College Board examinations.

Additionally, Onyx will offer sequenced classes in the performing arts. The arts curriculum will include advanced courses in acting, dance, and music. Middle school students will play a string instrument throughout their three-years of school, in addition to their required academic classes. Onyx Academy will also offer advanced performance workshops, internships in the arts, theory and history of the performing arts, and opportunities for student performances in theatrical productions, music concerts, assemblies, films and professionally staged theatrical productions.

All students will be required to accumulate community service hours (30 hours by the end of middle school and 40 by the end of high school). The inclusion of a community service requirement encourages students to develop and sustain a sense of ethical responsibility and a sense of obligation for their community.

During the 11th and 12th grades, each student will be placed in an internship in an arts or community organization. The internship will serve to expose students to professional expectations, as well as preparation for achieving success in college

- g. Briefly describe the school's target population and the community that the school intends to serve.

The school's targeted population will be students in Harlem's Community Board 10 – school district 5. Onyx Academy will also seek to attract students whose families are

classified as Title I. This financial disability historically restricts access to early training in the arts for the students and thereby prevents their acceptance into the screened performing arts schools in NYC, which require prior training. Due to the lack of these resources, these children are denied admission to the premiere and screened performing arts schools in NYC - yet, these children aspire to a career in the performing arts. Onyx Academy for the Performing Arts Charter School will provide them with high-quality performing arts training while simultaneously providing rigorous academic experiences, which will ensure that all students are college and career ready.

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

Describe the school's strategies to attract, recruit, and retain its students, particularly those identified in the school's mission and students with disabilities, English language learners, and students who are eligible applicants for the free and reduced price lunch program.

Research has shown that ELL and students with disabilities thrive in a performing arts centered school. Therefore, Onyx Academy will utilize strategies to attract, recruit and retain its target population by:

Attract:

- Securing a temporary site in the community with future plans to build a new performing arts facility.
- Participate in middle and high school charter school fairs.
- Hold promotional performances in elementary and middle schools.
- Create a brochure that outlines the highlights of our school.
- Hire public relations firm and take out strategically placed advertising.

Recruit:

- Establish an admissions policy that gives preference to ELL and/or students who qualify for free or reduced lunch.
- Outreach to parents via church, community organizations, community centers, and Harlem elementary and middle schools.
- Reach out to parents of students with disabilities who are interested in and possess talent in the performing arts via agencies in Harlem.
- Hold informational sessions for elementary and middle school guidance counselors and parents.

Retain:

- Embed the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework in all classes so that teachers are utilizing a variety of modalities to provide all students access to content while allowing students a wide variety of methods to demonstrate their learning.
- Embed Response to Intervention (RtI) framework to help support students who require academic or behavioral interventions.
- Create advisory system to provide every student with meaningful connections to adults in the building.

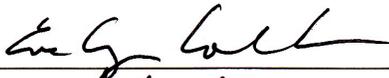
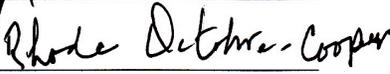
- Use frequent formative assessment to monitor student learning and adjust lessons to meet immediate student needs.
- Ensure that all lessons are differentiated to meet the needs of all students
- Hire highly qualified educators in special education and ESL who also possess professional backgrounds in the performing arts.

IV. Public Outreach and Community Support

- Secured Support of Congressman Charles Rangel's Office
- Secured Support of Assemblyman Keith Wright's Office
- Initial conversations with Community Board 10
- Established advisory relationship with Harlem's chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority
- Informally surveyed parents to gather input and insights about proposal
- Initial conversations with leaders of elementary Charter Schools based in Harlem
- Scheduled informational meetings for parents who currently have students in elementary schools

Initial Assessment

We have received positive response from the political and community organizations who viewed the proposal of *Onyx Academy for the Performing Arts Charter School* as original and refreshing. They also stated that it is an excellent option for students who reside in the Harlem community. Parents are thrilled at the possibility of having an additional performing arts school for their children that does not require an audition or test. Community organizations are elated by the opportunity to be a part of the school. Many stated that the mission and vision of the school and its location in Harlem honors the once thriving performing arts community that defined the culture of Harlem and influenced the world.

Evelyn Collins	<u></u>	Date	<u>6.24.2012</u>
Reginald Richardson	<u></u>	Date	<u>6/24/2012</u>
Rhode Octobre - Cooper	<u></u>	Date	<u>06/24/12</u>