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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

About Our School and Operational Compliance:

The name of our proposed charter school is Horizon Educational Reinvestment Opportunity Charter High School (HERO). This school is the inspiration of community leaders, parents, educators and all the people who have championed this effort for many years. HERO's design and operations are in accordance with all the requirements of Article 56 of the New York State Charter School Act of 1998, amended in 2007 and by Chapters 101, 102 and 221 of the Laws of 2010, to serve all students, in a safe, supportive environment that promotes self-discipline.

Mission Statement:

HERO is a unique program that supports high school students in an educational setting that ensures academic achievement in partnership with family and community through rigorous college-preparatory and employment programs. All of our graduates will be lifelong learners, resilient, resourceful and independent scholars who will acquire **Knowledge, Attitude, Skills, and Habits (KASH)** necessary to reach their full potential and to build a better future for themselves, their families and community.

Vision and Beliefs:

We envision an educational program that will create a high school that promotes academic achievement, permits students to develop their full potential and excel in all areas of life. With family and community support, along with our rigorous academic curriculum and character education, our students will be better prepared to excel in whatever fields they choose as lifelong learners. Additionally, we will provide support and high expectations as key mechanisms that boost successful academic efforts, in spite of race, culture, language, disability or socioeconomic status. We believe that our students, irrespective of their economic or family circumstances can learn and must be offered a high school education that will give them the greatest opportunity for success. We believe that one's station in life should not determine one's academic achievements. HERO will create and foster an educational environment that reduces those inhibitors and barriers that prevent our students from achieving.

Goals:

Our goal is to ensure that all of our students will read, write, speak, master mathematics, science, social studies and languages at/or above grade levels. In addition, our students will be analytic about varied subjects, critique broad ranges of issues, and apply appropriate grade level knowledge, skills in technology, physical and social sciences. Specifically, we will ensure that:

- ✓ There is dramatic improvement in the academic success of all students.
- ✓ Students demonstrate yearly improvement in academics based on norm referenced assessment data and are thoroughly prepared for rigorous higher education.
- ✓ We will produce audacious graduates who are resourceful, independent scholars and resilient that will overcome challenges with integrity, perseverance and self-respect.
- ✓ Our students will graduate with a high school diploma and as many as 12 college credits, be academically prepared and accepted by top universities/colleges without remediation.
- ✓ Our students will possess academic knowledge, positive attitude, job skills and habits required by prospective employers.

Key Design Elements

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The design elements of HERO's educational program center on a commitment to rigorous high school and college-preparatory curriculum combined with additional time on task learning, with close individualized instruction. Core elements include; more time on task, weekend school, and assessment tools administered early and often to drive instructional programming, provide structure and order, emphasis on college preparation and highly qualified teachers. Our focus will be on literacy, a curriculum aligned with State and local standards with concentration on basic skills for those in need of this assistance and college readiness. HERO's collegiate skills curriculum, internship program, opportunities to nurture talents and a strong character education program will foster independent learning, small class sizes, students wearing uniforms and a professional compensation package for staff will contribute positively to student outcomes.

Enrollment Planning

HERO' admission and enrollment will be open to all students in accordance with Education Law 2854(2). However, it is specifically designed to meet the needs of our target populations. First year projected student enrollment is 240. In the first year, we will serve grades 9 through 10. Our projected student enrollment at full growth will be 610. We will serve grades 9 through 12 at full enrollment. The Board in its discretion may allow increase in enrollment not to exceed 650.

Governance

Our initial Board of Trustees (BOT) and founders have over 150 years of experience in education, law, organizational governance, management, fundraising, school finance, accounting, social services, special education, community advocacy and parenting. Among them are New York State certified (SAS, SDA, and SBA) education practitioners. In addition, the team has a certified public accountant that will assist in setting up our financial systems in accordance with Article 56 of Education Law and New York State Comptroller's rules and regulations. Dr. Sally Thompson, an educator with over thirty five years of experience is our proposed principal. Currently she is consulting for NYSED on School Leadership Assessment for Certification and is a former member of the New York State Professional Standards and Practices Board for Teaching, retiring as an Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum. Dr. Ralph Schneider, our proposed BOT chairman, a former Board President of the Hempstead Union Free School District (HUFSD), and a retired Assistant Principal, will be leading the governance team. Our initial BOT and founders have demonstrated a strong capacity to launch, oversee and govern HERO successfully and are willing to do whatever it takes to accomplish the mission of the school. This level of commitment will be expected of all staff members that join the HERO team and supports its mission. The BOT will hire the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to whom the responsibility for management and daily operations of HERO will be delegated. The CEO will be given the ultimate authority to carry out his/her responsibilities in accordance with policies established by the BOT, applicable law, and in pursuit of the school's mission and achievement of its goals.

Financial Management

HERO has developed a conservative fiscal plan to analyze its financial health and ensure its sustainability from the planning year through the fifth year of operation. We have created a balanced school budget utilizing estimates and data provided by the New York State Education Department and in accordance with Education Law 2856. We will raise general operating funds and in-kind contributions from local/external sources to supplement our revenues. We will show

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a positive fund balance for each of the five years of operations after meeting all financial obligations.

II. STUDENT POPULATION

A. Student Enrollment

We provide student enrollment projections for HERO, by year, for the first five years of operations, in the table below.

Anticipated Enrollment Table

Grade	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
9	120	140	140	140	140
10	100	120	140	140	140
11		100	120	140	140
12			100	120	140
Ungraded/SPED	20	32	45	50	50
Total	240	392	545	590	610

NB: Full enrollment will be capped at 610, however, the Board, in its discretion may allow increase in enrollment not to exceed 650.

To attain our projected enrollment, HERO will institute an enrollment policy in accordance with New York State Education Laws and will ensure the following:

- ✓ **No Discrimination Policy**
We will not discriminate against any student and family on the basis of race, skin color, national origin, religion, nationality and disability.
- ✓ **Friendlier Enrollment Process**
Admission will be open to all. We will implement easy to understand enrollment process and answer all questions during and after orientation and community outreach sessions. We will provide simultaneous translation for families whose dominant language is not English during enrollment. Also we will accept a thumb-print or pen-mark in lieu of signature from educationally less informed who cannot write.
- ✓ **Lottery/Waiting List**
HERO will implement a lottery and waiting list system as part of our open enrollment policy. We will always accept "Resident" students before accepting "Non-Resident" students except when the "Non-Resident" student is also a "Sibling" of a student that is enrolled at HERO. We will be constrained in our enrollment by space in any given year.
- ✓ **Enrollment Confirmation**
Confirmation of enrollment documents will be mailed to each student/parents by first class mail with the directions for completion of the enrollment packet clearly written. Additionally, we will make follow up phone calls to ensure that parents received the enrollment packet by mail. We will provide assistance to parents on as needed basis to complete the enrollment confirmation. In the event enrollment packets are not returned, home visits will be made to determine if assistance is needed.

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B. Target Populations

Our target populations are; at-risk, out-of-school youths, economic disadvantaged students, students who are behind academically or performing below grade level, migrant students, English language learners, students who are academically ahead or performing on/or above grade level, special education students, gifted/talented students, intermediate charter school graduates, students whose parents are unaware of school choice options, residing in Nassau and western Suffolk counties. We provide below, statistical/language descriptions and justification for need. We begin with the Hempstead community itself.

Hempstead UFSD and Community

Nestled within Nassau County, western Long Island, nineteen miles from New York City and around the corner from affluent Franklin Square and Garden City communities, summer home training camp to the New York Jets and location of Hofstra University, the Incorporated Village and Hempstead has a population of 556,554 according to the 2000 census,¹ and student enrollment of 5,784 in 2008-09. The HUFSD community has one of the most academically underperforming secondary schools on Long Island and in New York State.

Students from Households that Are Eligible for the Federal Free and Reduced-Price Lunch Program

Poverty, unemployment, public assistance/welfare and single parent homes are major at-risk factors that make a child eligible for free and reduced-price lunch.² Hempstead had the highest unemployment rate in Nassau and Suffolk counties in 2009 and 2010,³ with 17.7 % of all residents living below poverty level as at 1999.⁴ The number of residents on public assistance is 25% more than the entire number of Nassau County's public assistance recipients.⁵ Approximately, 71 % of HUFSD students are eligible for free and reduced-price lunch.⁶ Furthermore, 68.5 % of all Hempstead families have children and 35.7 % of those families are headed by a single young parent.⁷ Wracked by unemployment, poverty and violence, the Village of Hempstead community has one of Nassau's highest percentages of child welfare cases when compared to the rest of Nassau County.⁸ Of the 136 economically disadvantaged 2004 cohort students tested in mathematics at the secondary level, 8 % scored at level 4.⁹

Plan for Attracting, Serving and Retaining Students from Households that Are Eligible for the Federal Free and Reduced/Priced Lunch

We will embark on the following strategies in our plans to attract, serve and retain students from households that are eligible for the federal free and reduced-price lunch in our efforts to reach families about educational choices including the traditionally less informed.

¹ <http://www.hempsteadvillagenewyork.com>. Retrieved on 12/5/2010

² Leroy and Symes, 2001

³ <http://www.labor.state.ny.us/stats/lon/pressrelease/LAUSLI.shtm>. Retrieved on 12/6/2010

⁴ <http://www.quickfactsc.census.gov/qfd/states/36/36059.html>. Retrieved on 12/5/2010

⁵ <http://www.familyandchildren.org/servicesweoffer.asp>. Retrieved on 9/7/2010

⁶ The New York State District Report Card, Comprehensive Information Report, 2008-2009

⁷ <http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/ADPTable>. Hempstead Village, New York –Selected Social Characteristics in the United States: 2006

⁸ <http://www.familyandchildren.org/servicesweoffer.asp>. 8/22/2010

⁹ The New York State District Report Card, Overview of District Performance, March 20, 2009

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Building-to-Building Meetings

We will attend tenants meetings of low income housing developments in the Village of Hempstead at 100 Terrace Avenue, 50 Fulton Street, the Martin Luther King Housing Project and other low income housing developments. In each one of these housing developments, HERO enjoys one or more resident contacts who that are prepared to serve as community liaison for the purposes of gaining access and disseminating information about alternatives and options not available to traditionally less informed parents who reside at these locations These liaison relationships have previously been established and nurtured by the founders and BOT. Most of the families who have historically been less informed of the available educational options that may exist in the community.

Mass- Mailing

We will mail in mass, written communication in the dominant languages in addition to other than English such as Creole, Spanish and West Indian Patois to parents/guardians and community members about programs and educational options available to them at HERO.

Pulpit-to-Pulpit Approach

We will meet with church leaders and other faith-based organizations to discuss educational opportunities and options that will be offered by HERO and we will request that HERO brochures be placed in church bulletins for weekly distributions during particular times of the year to coincide with our recruitment cycles.

Partnerships with Community Based Organizations (CBO)

We will partner with CBOs to disseminate information about HERO to parents/guardians and students.

Canvassing

We will canvass specific neighborhoods; distribute flyers and brochures about HERO Charter High School and the viable education alternatives it offers. We will meet with leaders of Caribbean and African immigrants, in addition to Hispanics and African-Americans, to inform them of the options HERO provides. We will also work with community organizers and civic leaders to inform them of the school's existence and potential for success.

Open-Houses/Town Hall Meetings

We will hold open houses and community style town hall meetings in the public library, community centers, Salvation Army and other service organization such as American legion, Rotary Club, 100 Black Men, 100 Black Women, Chamber of Commerce and the NAACP.

Outreach

We will continue to provide information about the school to those who are interested throughout the year in places such as delis, Laundromats, Newsday, Community Journal, public television and radio stations. Applications and information sessions will be held October through March of each year for interested applicants on a monthly and as needed basis. Marketing brochures and materials will be provided in the dominant languages of the community and will be strategically placed throughout the village and neighboring towns including supermarkets and health facilities and other common gathering locations. If a family is unable to attend an information session, we will mail all necessary information, including enrollment forms to them.

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We will use translators in our meetings and ask our bilingual staff to assist parents and guardians with translation.

Programmatic Strategies

Our programmatic strategies are predicated on the mantra "failure is not an option." We will provide; one to one assistance to students identified for academic deficits, longer school days and school year for students and teachers to have more time devoted to teaching and learning. Coaching on test-taking strategies and homework assistance will be offered on Saturday and Sunday for students whose religious observance will not allow them to attend classes on one or both days. We will go on academic field trips to places outside the Hempstead community such as the Smithsonian Institute in Washington D.C., the United States Congress, the United States Supreme Court,, NASA, Wall Street, Yellowstone National Park, United States Army, Coast Guards, Marine and Navy Headquarters on Long Island and the metropolitan New York City area to enrich students' learning experiences. To ensure that students re adequately prepared for each day's lessons we will provide supplies, materials, calculators, laptops to students whose parents cannot afford these items.

Transportation and Home Visit Strategies

We will provide transportation to students who are ineligible to receive transportation services pursuant to Education Laws 2853(4) (b) and 3635. We will contact the parent/guardian of a student, the morning of the day of absence. We will ensure that the student/parent receives his/her assignment at the end of the instructional day. The student's homeroom teacher/designee will visit the home of the absent student on the second day of consecutive absence. The school will also have a website where homework will be listed daily.

Mentoring and Needs Support

We will provide mentors to our students and information on how, where and when to access wrap-around services (shoes, jackets, clothing, food, etc) in the community so that students will have access to support services that enhance their education.

Celebration of Achievements and Milestones

We will celebrate; positive achievements, academic award winning and performance achievement on national, state and local assessments of students, and cultural heritage of students. We will create an atmosphere of home-away-from-home and family for our students.

English Language Learners (ELL) / Limited English Proficiency (LEP)

With foreign born population (not yet citizens),¹⁰ Hempstead has one of the highest numbers of migrants and immigrants in western Long Island and as a result Hempstead has 27.49 % of its students identified as LEP/ELL ¹¹By LEP/ELL we are referring to students whose first language is not English, and it encompasses both students who are just beginning to learn English (often referred to in federal legislation as "limited English proficient" or "LEP") and those who have already developed considerable proficiency. The ELL students will learn English the same time they are learning the content specified in the curriculum standards. In 2008-09, only 15 percent

¹⁰ <http://www.factfinder.census.gov/servlet/ADPTTable>. Hempstead Village, New York – Selected Social Characteristics in the United States: 2006

¹¹ The New York State District Report Card, Comprehensive Information, 2008-09

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of HUFSD students scored at the proficient level in grades 7-8 reading and writing on the New York State English as a Second language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT), while grades 9-12 scored a dismal 7 percent at the proficient level.

Plan for Attracting, Serving and Retaining ELL and LEP Students

Our target ELL and LEP students will be attracted, served and retained through the following; pre-referral, monitoring progress, parent notification of LAB-R assessment results and rights, home language survey, assurances per rules and regulations, making parents/students aware of their Rights, LAB-R , use of translators and translated materials and program model.

Pre-Referral

The purpose of the pre-referral activities is to resolve issues within the regular education environment by providing proactive strategies and interventions that will assist the student in being successful at school. Pre-referral activities, through documentation, will provide supporting evidence if a student needs to be referred to the bi-lingual department.

Monitoring Progress

We will comply with all federal and state regulations in serving students with limited English proficiency, while practicing inclusion to the extent possible. We will ensure that students entering the school will be given a language survey of parents along with teacher observation. Students identified as non-native speakers will be tested with the Language Assessment Battery-Revised (LAB-R). The LAB-R will be administered only once to each incoming student. A student who scores below the designated proficient level is Limited English Proficient (LEP/ELL). Students scoring as LEP/ELL on the test will enter the school's special language program. LEP/ELL program will include supplementary ESL instruction in accordance with Part 154 of Commissioner's Regulations during the thematic enrichment period, in addition to instruction normally occurring during 2.5 hour literacy and Language Arts block. We will use immersion in all other subject areas to help LEP/ELL students quickly gain familiarity with English. We will provide trained staff and materials required for supplementary ESL classes. Classroom space will be made available for ESL classes during the thematic enrichment period. Student progress will be assessed regularly, with students taking the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT) annually to evaluate the English proficiency for accountability purposes. The Principal /designee will review student achievement and monitor the program to make modifications where needed. Finally, in accordance with law, we will not exclude LEP/ELL students from curricular and extracurricular activities in school.

Parent Notification of LAB-R Assessment Results and Rights

We will ensure that ESL teachers are responsible for the LAB-R and second language testing of ELLs. Once a student is identified as needing services, based on the results of the assessments, the parents will be informed of the need. Parents will also be informed of the program goals, their rights to visit the program, and their right to serve on the advisory committee. The results of the assessment will be used to plan the students' educational program

Home Language Survey

We will request that parents complete a home language survey when their child is enrolled. We will assess all students with home language surveys indicating a language other than English using LAB-R. We will use the home language surveys to provide the school with information

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regarding the communication needs of the parents. If a parent indicates the need for notices to be translated, we will provide this service.

LAB-R

All students with home language survey indicating a primary language other than English will be assessed for English Language Proficiency. We will provide English proficiency assessment including listening, speaking, reading and writing. We will ensure that English testing and program will occur within the No Child Left Behind guidelines (within 30 calendar days for students enrolled on day 1 of school and within 15 days for students enrolled after first day of school).

Program Model

We will serve ELL students and their non-native English speaking parents in homes where English is not the dominant language. We will provide LEP/ELL services for what is anticipated to be approximately 40% of the school population that will require it. We will serve students who speak languages other than Haitian Creole, Spanish, Akan, Yoruba and West Indian Patois at home as the demography of the community changes. We will use Structured Immersion Model to serve the needs of LEP/ELL students. We will place students in regular classrooms for general on-grade level curriculum, with teachers who have experience and training in the use of ESL methodology. Our ELL teacher(s) will work with all ELL students on a pull-out basis for the amount of daily minutes required by New York State guidelines. Our ELL teacher (s) will provide training in ESL strategies to classroom teachers during professional development block and/ or during school wide staff development. The ELL teacher(s) may also team-teach with regular classroom and subject matter teachers during instruction periods. We will ensure that LEP/ELL students receive the same academic content and will meet the same high academic standards that will be set for all HERO students. We will not alter the academic level or grade appropriateness of academic content of the program. We will maintain daily time commitments as denoted on the bell schedule for each subject matter/content area in the same way for English speaking students. We will use Open Court reading program as basis of instruction for ELL. The Open Court program will provide ESL support for students whose first language is not English. We will ensure alignment with the transitional bilingual model framework and all content academic programs will be available in Spanish. We will ensure that the TESOL portion of the Open Court program has the same content as the regular Open Court program. As an additional resource, we will provide access to commercial products such as the language learning materials offered by Rosetta-Stone for students when they have “free” time to engage in an independent learning session.

Students with Disabilities (SwD)

Hempstead UFSD has 10.68 % of its population enrolled as special education students as of 2009 and their disabilities are broad ranged.¹² These disabilities range from mild to profound mental retardation, specific learning disabilities, hearing loss and vision impairments. Inclusive in this category are students with physical disabilities that require the use of wheel chairs and/or other assistive devices. In 2008-09, SwD at the secondary level made adequate yearly progress (AYP) in ELA and Mathematics using safe harbor targets. Of the 98 % of SwD tested during 2008-09,

¹² The New York State District Report Card, Comprehensive Information Report, 2008-09

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HUFSD achieved a performance index of 116 against performance objectives with effective annual measurable objective (AMO) of 127 and a safe harbor target of 124¹³ (District Accountability, March 10, 2009).

Plan for Attracting, Serving and Retaining Students with Disabilities (SwD)

We will attract SwD by engaging in an extensive outreach and recruitment program which will involve meetings with Special Education Parent Organization groups. We will attend community and faith-based organizations meetings, network and partner with youth services administrators at the juvenile detention centers in Nassau and western Suffolk counties, Department of Social Services, homeless shelters, and the Child Advocacy Center located in the Hofstra University Neighborhood Law Clinic. We will disseminate information via fliers and verbal presentations about available services in English and the dominant languages currently spoken in the Village of Hempstead other than English. We will indicate on HEROs application for admission that parents of special education students and students with disabilities will not be discriminated against in favor of regular education students.

Our founding team and BOT, made up of individuals with years of education experience and membership in varied community associations, will act as ambassadors for the school and its unique special education program offering. We will establish a website that will be used as one of the mechanisms to communicate with prospective families. We will establish a full inclusion and collaborative team teaching design model for instruction to serve the SwD population. We will ensure that this model provides the opportunity for students to maximize their full academic potential in a least restrictive environment (LRE). We will ensure that each student's specific, mild or moderate learning needs as outlined in their Individual Education Plan (IEP) will be supported by at least one full time special education teacher working collaboratively with the regular education teacher.

We will ensure that special education students have access to the general curriculum with an IEP through differentiation, accommodations and any necessary modifications. We will employ a full time special education coordinator who will work directly with the various school district's Committee on Special Education (CSE) to ensure that HERO remains compliant with all federal and state laws. We will request that appropriate districts provide services onsite for students whose disabilities are beyond the expertise of the HERO special education staff including speech therapy, physical therapy, occupational therapy, counseling, or any other services prescribed by the student's IEP. We will routinely monitor all special education students to determine if they are making adequate academic progress or not. We will implement a Universal Design Curriculum since our research has indicated that it is one of the most effective and efficient way to provide access for a broad range of diverse learners¹⁴. We will require students to take nationally-normed standardized tests such as the Terra Nova as well as other internally designed criterion referenced comprehensive exams for each of the core subject/content areas. Our curriculum design is influenced by the work of Raymond Orkwis and his Curriculum Access and Universal Design for Learning¹⁵ which is predicated on the idea of universal design and full inclusion for students with disabilities, from the physical plant, to the differentiated instruction,

¹³ The New York State District Report Card, District Accountability, 2008-09

¹⁴ www.cast.org. Retrieved on 10/2/2004

¹⁵ Raymond Orkwis. *Curriculum Access and Universal Design for Learning*. ERIC Clearinghouse, Digest #E586. Council for Exceptional Children, 1999

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and to the daily routine tasks. We will acknowledge SwD and be sensitive to the inherent academic struggles of these students. We will implement remedial systems and employ highly qualified and dedicated staff to support each student. We will provide academic interventions across the entire curriculum which will ensure school success and lead inevitably to a positive self image, since school success leads to a feeling of accomplishment and self worth.

Identifying Special Needs Students and Child Find Provisions of IDEA

HERO will comply with all state and federal law, in particular, New York Education Law Charter School Act Section 2850 to Section 2857, and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) as implemented through Title 34 Part 300 of the Code of Federal Regulations (34 CFR 300). When a teacher determines that a student is not progressing academically based on various assessments, that teacher will initiate a Response to Intervention (RTI) process. The process requires that the teacher provides instruction using a range of differentiated instructional strategies, if after review of achievement data it appears the student is not progressing, the teacher begins recording in an academic log to document attempted interventions. If the classroom interventions are ineffective, a Teacher Assistance Team (TAT) meeting will be scheduled with the teacher, other instructional staff and a school leader as a first step in this pre-referral process. The TAT team members, comprised of experienced highly qualified members, provides the teacher with a specific set of strategies and approaches to employ that may help the fledgling student. All suggested accommodations will be tried for about two weeks and the teacher will be directed to report back to TAT with results. If the TAT recommendations are successful, the special education coordinator will monitor the teacher's use of the methods that work and will remain available to provide other ongoing intervention suggestions as needed.

If the student does not demonstrate progress, a second meeting will be convened wherein the teacher is asked to try new approaches or strategies such as assistive technology, adapted materials, graphic organizers or other accommodations that have not been presented to the student. Again, the strategies will be tried for two weeks and if unsuccessful, a Child Study Team (CST) will be convened. At this meeting the family will be invited to participate and if no further classroom accommodations are generated with parental input, the procedural safeguards will be presented and the special education coordinator will issue a request in writing to the school district chair of the Committee on Special Education (CSE) to begin the process for an initial evaluation to determine if the student is eligible to receive special education services.

A copy of the request for an initial evaluation along with the procedural safeguards notice described in the Parents Rights Brochure will be sent to the student's family. The written request will provide the reasons for the referral including any applicable test results, reports or records and will also include an outline of the interventions implemented by HERO prior to the referral generated from the TAT and CST interventions. Attached to the notice, HERO will send copies of all relevant documentation generated during the pre-referral process and descriptions of the family participation throughout the entire pre-referral process.

As outlined in the New York State Charter School Act Section 2853(4) (a) and Section 2856(1) of the Education Law, HERO Charter will continue to provide appropriate accommodations to the student while they continue through the CSE initial evaluation process. When the District's CSE convenes an IEP team to review the findings of their psychological, educational and other testing materials, HERO' special education coordinator and special education teacher will attend

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the meeting as well as a general educator, along with a parent representative from the special education parent committee with the approval of the parent of the student being evaluated.

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 the provisions of their IEP and the special education coordinator will similarly monitor compliance issues. Importantly, the special education coordinator will ensure that effective academic progress is made by all special education students and as students progress at HERO, reviews of IEPs and 504 Plans will occur routinely to determine if changes, revisions or modifications are needed. If a full and comprehensive analysis of the student's performance would indicate a change is needed to the IEP, the special education coordinator will request that the CSE office re-evaluate the student and consider revising the IEP as needed. In anticipation of a re-evaluation meeting the special education teacher and special education coordinator will gather all relevant student work product and copies of up-to-date detailed written reports from all service providers including the regular education teacher.

Compliance with Federal Law

HERO is committed to providing a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) to all students in the least restrictive environment (LRE) in order to access the general curriculum. HERO will comply with federal laws and regulations pertaining to students who have been formally identified as having a learning disability as well as those suspected of having a disability. This includes but is not limited to:

- Section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973
- The Education of All Handicap Children Act of 1975
- The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA)
- The Family Educational Rights Privacy Act (FERPA)
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
- Title 34 Code of Federal Regulations Sections 300-Index

Preparing Teachers to Work With Special Needs Students

A professional development workshop will be presented to all staff, including support personnel as well as any adult employee of the school and parents as well, explaining the unique learning needs of disabled learners and the process for referral for evaluation. As part of the workshop, participants will view a video by Richard Lavoie entitled "*When The Chips Are Down*"¹⁶ for the purpose of developing a sensitivity to the needs of the learning disabled student as well as providing useful strategies for educating special needs students through the full inclusion model. The presentation will also address the process of the TAT referral leading to CST recommendations to a request for initial evaluation to the appropriate District's Committee on Special Education. The development and implementation of the IEP will be explained in detail and requirements for reporting of the student's progress toward meeting individual academic goals and objectives will be emphasized.

While behavior issues are not expected to pose a disruption to the learning process, teachers will nonetheless learn about the specific requirements for disciplining students with disabilities in order to remain compliant with applicable law, and toward that end, Functional Behavioral Assessments (FBA) and Behavior Intervention Plans (BIP) and their occasions for implementation

¹⁶ www.ricklavoie.com

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will be illustrated. In addition to the FBA and the BIP, workshop participants will be instructed about the requirements of a manifestation determination, wherein the offending behavior is examined in light of the student's disability. If the manifestation team determines the offending behavior is linked to the student's disability, that student will NOT be suspended and instead other remedial behavioral interventions will be employed. On the other hand, if the team should determine that the behavior is NOT linked to the disability, HERO's discipline policy is to send that student to serve an In-School-Suspension (ISS). During the ISS duration, the student will continue with assigned academic work but will lose the privileges enjoyed by other students.

When the regular education teacher is first presented a copy of the IEP, that teacher will receive instruction on the importance of confidentiality of student records and the special education coordinator will discuss the IEP with the teacher and answer any questions. The communications between special education and regular education teachers will continue throughout the school year for the purpose of working collaboratively toward accomplishing all the goals and objectives of the IEP.

III. SCHOOL DESIGN

Our school design model draws on the following core elements; make more time on task; assessment tools administered early and often to drive instruction; provide structure and order; emphasis on college preparation; highly qualified teachers, focus on literacy; curriculum aligned with New York State and local standards with concentration of basic skills for those in need of this assistance. HERO will include an employment/internship program, opportunities to nurture talents and a strong character education program, small class sizes (18:1), students wearing uniforms and a professional compensation package for staff.

School Environment and Accountability

HERO will be governed by a seven-member BOT that will regulate our school environment and hold staff accountable. They will set policies appertaining to academic, business and financial operations, safety and health with authority to hire and fire the CEO and all other employees. In addition, the Board will hold the CEO accountable for the performance and achievement of students.

Instructional Leadership

The school will be led by a CEO with ultimate authority from the BOT to administer the day-to-day affairs of the school. S/he will be supported and assisted by a Principal with full responsibility for teaching and learning and a Chief Financial Officer with full responsibility for financial operations and auxiliary services such as purchasing instructional supplies and paying teachers timely. Both administrative staff members will report to the CEO and will be part of his/her cabinet.

Innovative Teaching Methods

Teachers employed to teach at HERO will be trained in using multiple teaching and technology infused methodologies such as differentiated instruction, project-based learning, individualized instruction, cooperative learning, whole group, one-to-one instruction and small group instruction (SGI). The application of specified teaching methods depends on the subject matter and individualized learning styles.

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Other teaching methods will include cooperative learning involving an entire class or even entire school to tackle larger problems in areas of interest. These instructional opportunities may take the form of a science fair or social science focus which will allow student teams or groups to take brief respite from daily schoolwork, usually three to five days twice a year to pursue topics that are often selected by them. Concentrated opportunities such as drama and music incorporated into ELA and Social Studies along with an increased second language program will be additional hallmark of the HERO instructional program. This will be known as the HERO Link.

In précis, the trademark of HERO instruction program will be:

1. A trough of proven instructional practices and research-based programs
2. A uniquely supportive and affirming school culture
3. Extensive and deep connections to the immediate surrounding communities
4. Focused instructional leadership
5. Targeted pedagogy and a focus on quality of instruction
6. Data-driven decision-making to guide instructions
7. A heightened sense of urgency with regard to learning and a focus on results
8. PBS (**Positive behavior support**) - package of evidence-based strategies, established effective behavior support systems for all students at a school - team consisting of licensed psychologist, social worker, resource-room teacher and licensed special education teacher.
9. Professional learning communities to keep current on new and innovative curriculum design and academic practices

School Calendar

We have developed a school calendar which ensures a minimum of 200 instructional school days in excess of requirements stipulated in Education Laws 2851(2)(n), 2852(9)(a) and 8NYCRR 175.5 in addition to a school design that meets the requirements for the granting of high school diploma.

Bell and Daily Instructional Schedules

We have developed a bell schedule for 10 periods a day in addition to ½ hour for Daily Briefing (DB) period. During DB, we will conduct homeroom activities such as attendance, daily announcements and discussion about the day's activities. We will devote 15 minutes of DB to speak to students about leadership and remind them about correlation between effort and success. Each period is 41 minutes with 5 minutes between the end and start of periods. We will begin school at 7:30 AM and close at 6:00PM. DB begins at 7:30 AM and ends at 8:00AM. Formal classes will begin at 8:05AM and end at 3:42PM, Monday to Friday. We will ring the bell for Tutorials and SGI periods. Tutorials will begin at 3:47PM and end at 6:00PM while the SGI will start at 3:47PM and end at 4:30PM. During tutorials, we will coach targeted students who have been identified by teachers through various assessments as needing assistance in subject matter areas and testing strategies. During SGI, a 43 minutes period, teachers will meet with students who have to leave early but have been programmed for academic help. We have developed daily schedules for grades 9 through 12 for fall and winter semesters. We will teach content/subject matter areas including ELA, mathematics, social science, physical sciences, music, art, technology, electives, foreign languages, health and physical education. Our daily schedule includes a period for lunch and time for extra curricula activities/after school programs.

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

We will implement the following ideas in tandem to increase student achievement and decrease student achievement gaps.

More Time on Task:

- ✓ A longer school year consisting of 200 instructional days will constitute HERO's calendar. HERO will remain open for 6 weeks during July and August. During the school year approximately eleven hours per week will be dedicated to the instruction in Math and English Language Arts (ELA). This will consist of three and half hours of instruction in both math and ELA will be given during the regular school day with an additional 4 hours in each area given after the school day from 4 to 6:00 P.M.
- ✓ HERO's school day will begin at 7:30 a.m. and end at 6:00 p.m. from Monday to Friday.
- ✓ HERO will provide approximately ten hours of instruction daily. The day will begin with one half hour of "Daily Briefing" (DB) consisting of preparation and readiness for the days class activities. Additionally, two hours and thirteen minutes of tutorials and extracurricular activities will be offered. Academic Intervention via small group instruction teachers will meet with students who have to leave early but are in need of additional academic help in math or ELA from 3:00 to 4:00 p.m. Students can also meet with their guidance counselor during this time of prior to the school day beginning from 7:00 to 7:30 a.m.
- ✓ Weekend School will offer four additional hours of instruction on Saturday and Sunday. This time will be dedicated to students who are one or more grade levels behind in math or ELA. Coaching and test preparation for students to take SAT, ACT, State and national assessments will also be given at this time. Students will be encouraged to attend at least one day utilizing the other weekend day to meet religious, social and family obligations.

High School Program Planning Guide:

- ✓ A Program Planning Guide will be given to each student on the first day of school and a copy mailed to parents/guardians to inform them of the expectations for math and ELA for that given school year.
- ✓ The Program Planning Guide will indicate the subjects that should be taken that year, credits to be earned and the semester in which the course should be taken. This will be given to all students during their four years of high school at HERO.
- ✓ Minimum number of credits in Math and ELA and other subjects that must be earned in order to graduate from HERO with a Regents diploma.

Weekly/Daily Schedule:

- ✓ HERO will provide instruction and extra help to students, every week except on holidays, in mathematics, ELA and other subject areas for a total of 58 hours.
- ✓ HERO will schedule mathematics and ELA, from freshman to junior years, after mid-morning to accommodate students arriving late to school except during the senior year. However, timely arrival to school will be emphasized to all students.

Assess Early and Often to Drive Instruction:

- ✓ We will assess early and often in mathematics, ELA and other subjects to drive instruction, diagnose student performance, disaggregate assessment data, measure

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instructional impact, build a culture of continuous success and use data to inform program planning and identify students who need help.

- ✓ We will measure growth attained by individual students, across grades and cohorts in mathematics and ELA.
- ✓ Data obtained from assessments will be used to plan professional development for teachers in math and ELA.

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

We believe that, these ideas, when implemented together, will increase high school graduation rates, while serving at-risk high school students including re-enrolled drop-out and students below grade level.

- ✓ We will print and mail HERO' Countdown to Graduation (CTG) brochure to 100 % of our parents/guardians and students at the end of each semester. We will indicate in CTG subjects completed successfully, credits earned, and the remainder of subjects that must be completed before graduation. We will generate each student's individual education plan (IEP) towards attainment of Regents high school diploma within four years in the CTG and ensure that there is transparency in our academic programs.
- ✓ We will ensure that our student's (especially at risk and re-enrolled drop outs), parents/guardians, and the guidance department of HERO, are on the same page regarding academic achievement and progress towards graduation.
- ✓ Rules and responsibilities for expected behavior will be given to students and parents at the beginning of each school year. All students will be expected to follow these policies to avoid in-school suspension only, where the continuity of instruction will continue.
- ✓ HERO will create a healthy and safe environment for all students where effective teaching and meaningful learning will take place. We will stress that alcohol, bullying, drugs and weapons of any kind will not be tolerated. We will encourage students to respect authority, property, life, good citizenship and will be taught character education courses.
- ✓ HERO will provide mentors for students, who will guide them to stay in school and focus on their studies.
- ✓ HERO will partner with faith and community based organizations to provide wrap-around services for students that need it.
- ✓ HERO will provide academic support in all subject areas for 100 % of our students with special focus on all at-risk, re-enrolled dropouts and below grade level students. We believe that our innovative teaching strategies, longer school days (about 10 1/2 hours), longer school year (200 days), Small Group Instruction (SGI), Tutorials and the Weekend School will help students to pass their subjects and earn requisite credits towards graduation.
- ✓ HERO will offer nationally known norm-referenced tests such as the Terra – Nova, and the Stanford Achievement Tests. These will be used as benchmarks to measure 100 % of individual student growth each year, in math, languages, sciences, social studies and technology. Data will also be used to plan school wide and departmental professional development programs for our teachers.
- ✓ Our entire student population will show maximum achievement on internal, state and nationally recognized norm reference tests. Student growth gains will also be used as one of the basis for teacher retention and salary increases.

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c. Focus on academic achievement of middle school student populations and preparation for transition of high school

We will utilize the 8th grade test scores of incoming freshman class on state assessments in ELA and mathematics, science and social studies in conjunction with norm referenced assessments given a week before the opening of school to inform teachers of students in need of academic intervention, teacher professional development and strategic distribution of resources to allow for instruction needed. Our enrolled students will be transitioned to high school in the following manner:

1. Five days of transition boot camp on HERO premises, one week before official reopening of school, for all in-coming freshmen and first time enrollees. During this period, the mission and goals of the school will be discussed. The school's expectations for students will be made clear, and rules and regulations will be delineated also with sanctions that would be imposed for infractions.
2. Key instructional components such as the bell schedule, weekly/daily class schedule and the HERO Charter High School Program Planning Guide and the path to graduation in four years for all students will be thoroughly explained to students during the transition boot camp.
3. During this transition boot camp, students will be given information on assistance that they might need academically, emotionally and physically. Students will be informed of how to access these services and which staff is available to assist students in whatever area they are in need of. It will also be stressed that confidentiality will be adhered to for all students in need of any of these services.
4. We will inform students that academic achievement will be rewarded.

d. Utilize a variety of high quality assessments to measure understanding and critical application of concepts

We will engage in reading assessments, and we will design projects that integrate learning standards. We will use the interdisciplinary, cross-standards project assessment that New York State designed. Also, we will utilize Language Assessment Battery-Revised (LAB-R) and New York State Alternate Assessments (NYSAA) and the Terra-Nova at the appropriate grade levels. Assessments and instructions in all content areas will be administered as mandated by State Education Department (SED). The tests will be administered to students on the date which SED announces. HERO will administer four mock regents' examinations in all content areas during the year the students are expected to sit for each specific examination. Teachers will conduct item analysis of each exam and align instruction based on the results and analysis of each student's examination.

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

We will utilize growth gain assessment to determine baselines for incoming students by obtaining all students' past scores from their previous schools, administering a pre-test and/or use the first six months' of students' performance as a baseline. We look at norms to compare and interpret the data gained from assessments, and use the data to disaggregate scores and identify achievement for subgroups of students. We will disaggregate test scores for specific aspects of achievement so that data can be analyzed to identify particular strengths and weaknesses in curriculum and instruction, set priorities for professional development, or

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reallocate resources. We will use the information obtained to inform instructional practices, decision making and effectiveness in program planning, teaching and learning, and to determine specific professional development needed for teachers and staff. Through this improvement cycle involving assessments that are practical and written, quantitative and qualitative, formative and summative, we will continuously give data and feedback towards improvement of instructional practice, decision-making and results-driven instruction.

During the academic year, our teachers will participate in professional development once a month, when students are dismissed after half day. The teachers will spend the balance of that day (over 4 hours) participating in the professional development program. Teachers will determine thematic areas for professional development which will be addressed in the monthly sessions.

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

HERO will draw the majority of students from populations similar in demographic characteristics as Hempstead High School and ABGS Middle School. We will partner with these schools in these areas if agreed to for joint professional development for our teachers, sharing of instructional information about best practices, disaggregating data of students' assessments in local and New York State Testing Programs. Inter school competition in academics and debates will also be encouraged.

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

The HERO Planning Team has already invested our personal financial resources and time. We have incurred and/or paid for training with the New York Charter School Organization out of pocket. We have attended several meetings about the founding of HERO, last of which occurred on January 26, 2011. One of our members has been in contact with the Office of Public School Choice-NYSED since 2009 asking for advice and seeking clarification, and sometimes answers on issue that have risen out of meetings. In November 2010, we sponsored one of the founders to attend NABSE conference in Dallas, Texas to bring us up-to-date information in educating minority and poor students, a description that is apt for over 95 % of our target population.

Expected Challenges

The challenge for all of our graduates to be successful in college and/or employment will be one of our greatest tests. Using data to inform a programmatic path, be aware of new employment demands are one of the expected challenges. We will support teachers to make informed changes in instruction and to constantly overhaul the curriculum, and that will be our approach in managing this challenge.

Teacher Recruitment, Retention and Sustainability

One of our primary responsibilities will be retaining one of our most valuable assets, teachers. We will look for dedicated teachers who will support the idea of an extended school day and school year. Teachers must be willing to acknowledge that a heavy workload is required to meet high expectations for themselves and their students. Teachers would embrace our policy that "Failure is Not an Option" and do whatever it takes to assure student success. HERO will roll out a five-year financial stability plan and a proposed compensation plan for teachers that will attract individuals from the national teacher market. Our team will conduct extensive searches and in depth interviews with all of our prospective teachers. Recruitment will be done through

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local and regional searches, advertisements in the media and educational organizations throughout the country. We will retain teachers through a teacher mentoring committee that will meet with teachers on a regular basis, allowing teachers to discuss concerns and problems in a non-threatening forum. We will also investigate other efforts to streamline teachers' responsibilities by accessing outside services and conferences to obtain ideas and materials in their area of teaching. HERO will make available external and internal services such as employee assistance program (EAP) to address challenges that teachers may face on a daily basis and long term to help them maintain a sustained work-life balance. We will continue to explore ways to create a professional environment at HERO where teachers will feel secure to build strong interpersonal relationships with peers, administrators and stake holders.

Facility Needs

We are cognizant that during the first year, the absence of a suitable facility will obstruct a strong culture and identity in the school. We may not have a gymnasium or a large space in which we can gather all of our students for culture-building assemblies, family and evening events, or school-wide celebrations. Our solution is to borrow spaces for major events from nearby district(s) and HUFSD. Our staff will be creative in planning small events in classrooms and in hallways. Our school may suffer for lack of space during the first year without advance planning but the founders and BOT are already working to correct it. The high cost of facility financing makes this need difficult to address. However, we plan in the near future to build our own facilities with classrooms, library, cafeteria, assembly and gymnasium and office facilities. Meanwhile, our interim plan is to identify and lease appropriate facility that can consistently meet our immediate instructional needs.

h. Demonstrate the Support of the school district and the intent to establish and on-going relationship with such district

We will meet with the HUFSD Superintendent and the district clerk at their convenience to discuss our mutual existence. We have discussed partnering with the district on teacher mentoring, professional development for teachers, sports, academics, test preparation, etc. We contacted the HUFSD about this relationship in August, 2010 and communicated our intent to establish a charter school to them. In addition, have solicited and received support from Ministers, community based organizations, parents, professionals and other community leaders. We have the support of Hempstead Retired Teachers Association (HRTA).

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

We will serve the educational needs of our students, mainly from Nassau County and western Suffolk County domiciled in indigent sections of communities in Elmont, Hempstead Village, West Hempstead, Uniondale, Roosevelt, Freeport, Baldwin, Westbury and Wyandanch, that are surrounded by affluent school districts whose residents are well educated, affluent, sophisticated and enjoy political access. We present several overarching reasons for establishing HERO Charter High School in Hempstead to provide education alternatives to students: One, we will provide quality education, improve passing rates on assessments and boost graduation rates for the rather low performance of students on local and statewide assessments and college entrance examinations. Two, we will provide a high school level education to students completing intermediate level charter and public school programs so they can continue with their high school education at HERO. Three, we will provide a performance-based institution that will provide education alternatives and expanded choices in high school education where

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students will graduate with a Regents diploma and actual college credits. Four, we will provide innovative and rigorous programs that will ensure integration of technology in teaching and learning in classrooms that will be equipped with smart-boards, laptops with limited internet access and I-pads. Five, we will coach students on how to take and pass State assessments and national tests such as SATs and ACTs with high percentiles that will make them competitive for admission in any top tier university/college in the nation, and to compete for academic scholarships. Six, we will ensure that our students enroll in top universities/colleges without remediation and follows their progress. Seven, we will ensure that 90-95 % of our students graduate on time (4years) with knowledge of a language other than English, and a Regents diploma. Eight, our students will attend school 200 days a year, receive 101/2 hours of academic instruction per day and 8 hours of instruction on Sundays and Saturdays and complete 25 credits within 4 years to graduate with Regents diploma. Nine, 95 % of our students will be on par academically by the end of 10th grade. Ten, we will serve our students 100 % nutritious breakfast, lunch and snacks. Eleven, we will partner and collaborate with parents and actively seek their involvement and participation on the BOT. Twelve, finally there is virtually NO public high school alternative option in the communities we have identified where there is the greatest need. Residents in neighboring affluent towns can afford private school tuition but in the communities we have described, the only option residents have is to either have their teenagers drop out and go to night school or go the GED route, or continue to enroll their children in FAILING schools. Where the public schools continually fail to achieve AYP, the residents MUST be offered a PUBLIC alternative, HERO Charter High School addresses and effectively fulfills that need not just for Hempstead residents but for the many surrounding communities we have identified.