

# Letter of Intent: Applicant and Media Contact Form

Created Friday, August 30, 2013

Updated Wednesday, September 04, 2013

---

## Page 1

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

### a. Proposed Charter School Name

(Please write out the formal and full name for the school you proposed, and include the words "charter" and "school" in the proposed name).

Astra Academy Charter School

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

### b. Preferred school location.

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

NYC CSD-Bronx: CSD 8

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

NYC CSD-Bronx: CSD 7

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

NYC CSD-Bronx: CSD 10

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

(The entire chart may not be visible on your screen. Use the "tab" key to move from column to column. The first column will remain static as you do so).

	First and Last Name	Best Phone Number (###-###-####)	Email Address	Street Address, City, State, Zip
Lead Applicant	Nancy Medina	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Co-Applicant	Catherine Ervin	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

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

(Multiple responses permitted)

- Current or former Teacher
- Current or former School Administrator

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

	First and Last Name	Best Phone Number (###-###-####)	Email Address	URL (type web address or the word "none")
Media Contact	Nancy Medina	718-391-8730	AstraAcademy2014@gmail.com	www.AstraAcademy.com

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

	Ages (or age ranges)	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019
K	0	0	0	0	0	0
1st	0	0	0	0	0	0
2nd	0	0	0	0	0	0
3rd	0	0	0	0	0	0
4th	0	0	0	0	0	0
5th	0	0	0	0	0	0
6th	11-12	80	80	80	80	80
7th	12-13	0	80	80	80	80
8th	13-14	0	0	80	80	80
9th	14-15	0	0	0	80	80
10th	15-16	0	0	0	0	80
11th	0	0	0	0	0	0
12th	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ungraded	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total		80	160	240	320	400

f. Proposed Management and/or Partner Organization(s), such as a charter or educational management company or a university, academic program partner, or whole school change partner.

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

f. Proposed Management and/or Partner Organization(s), such as a charter or educational management company or a university, academic program partner, or whole school change partner.   Proposed Management Company	None
f. Proposed Management and/or Partner Organization(s), such as a charter or educational management company or a university, academic program partner, or whole school change partner.   Partner Organization 1	NewTech Network
f. Proposed Management and/or Partner Organization(s), such as a charter or educational management company or a university, academic program partner, or whole school change partner.   Partner Organization 2	Bronx Community College

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

September 3, 2013

New York State Education Department Charter School Office  
89 Washington Avenue Room 471 EBA  
Albany, NY 12234

Dear Sir or Madam:

Astra Academy Charter School (AACS) hereby submits this Letter of Intent to Apply in response to the New York Education Department's Request for Proposals to Establish Charter Schools.

#### **I. APPLICANT INFORMATION**

**a. Lead Applicants:** Nancy Medina, [REDACTED]; Catherine Ervin, [REDACTED].

**b. Media Contact:** Nancy Medina, (718) 391-8730 or AstraAcademy2014@gmail.com.

**c. Founding Group Members:**

**Nancy Medina:** PhD in Chemistry (ABD), SBL, SDL, MPh, M.S., M.A. TESOL, Bi-lingual and Special Education at Boricua College (in progress). Nancy has been an adjunct lecture/instructor in CUNY for over eight years. She has worked with under-credited and over-aged students for the Young Adult Borough Center in several capacities - as a Teacher Coach, ELLs testing coordinator for the NYSESLAT, and program supervisor for ELLs enrichment programs. She successfully managed and supervised a National Science Foundation teacher education program and has extensive experience in the business world in a managerial and supervisory capacity. Nancy is experienced with Project Based Learning unit planning.

**Catherine Ervin:** BS Biology, MA Special Education. Catherine Ervin is an Assistant Principal at John D. Wells Middle School in Brooklyn, New York. As the supervisor of math and science for the last ten years she has been instrumental in her school taking first place in the borough-wide Lego Robotics competition.

**Sylvia Moya:** Bachelors in Biotechnology, Hunter College (CUNY), M.A. Secondary Science Education. Sylvia has been teaching Chemistry and Living Environment in a high-needs, low-income school in the Bronx. She partners with NYC Chem Matters, the State Pre-College Enrichment Program at Columbia University, and the Helen Hayes Hospital. Sylvia is currently working on obtaining her certification in school building leadership. Sylvia will serve as Lead Teacher.

**Cynthia Rodriguez:** Bachelors in Spanish Language and Literature with a minor in English and Caribbean Studies from Hunter College (CUNY). Cindy constructs websites for schools and for Catering & Consulting food services. She has raised thousands of dollars in funding for schools and private events through fund raising and grant writing. Cynthia was instrumental in the establishment of a 501(C) non-profit Parent Association at PS 198M and will serve as our Operations Director.

**d. Names of Proposed Board of Trustees:**

**Geraldine L. Cochran, Ed.S:** Geraldine is program coordinator for the Science and Mathematics Education Research Collaborative at the Rochester Institute of Technology, the chair of the Committee on Minorities in physics for the American Association of Physics Teacher (AAPT), and the vice-chair of the Committee on Women in Physics for (AAPT). She has an extensive educational background in mathematics, physics, and education. She

brings thirteen years of discipline-based education research and five years of program management to this position. Geraldine will serve as President of the Board.

**Veronica Jorge:** M.S. in Adolescence Education. Veronica has over thirty-four years experience in U.S. and international education and business. She is a member of Phi Delta Kappa (Professional Association for Educators) and ASCD (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development). Veronica will serve as Chair of the Board.

**Dr. A. Armitstead:** Doctor of Chiropractic (DC) degree from the University of Bridgeport and University of Bridgeport Chiropractic College. She has attended over 250 hours of seminars on topics including applied kinesiology, sports injuries, rehabilitation, neurology, and nutrition. She became certified in Applied Kinesiology and is one of 300 practitioners in America that is certified in Advanced Clinical Training of Nutrition Response Testing. Dr. Armitstead is a member of the American Chiropractic Association and New York Chiropractic Association. Dr. Armitstead will be a Board member.

**Dr. François Laforge:** PhD in Chemistry from the Graduate Center, CUNY. François is a research scholar in the Department of Chemistry at Princeton University. He has taught high school students with culturally diverse backgrounds first at the Eurocampus in Manilla, Philippines and then at the International School of Boston, Boston, MA. François is a long-time activist advocating for workers with a current focus on Latin-American immigrants. François will serve as a Board member.

**Sonia Larmore:** Bachelors degree in Accounting from Hunter College. Sonia started her accounting career as an accounts payable bookkeeper for Vera Wang. Since then her career has expanded to auditing, personal, and corporate taxes. Sonia will serve as Treasurer of the Board.

**Dr. Tushar S. Udeshi:** Graduated from Columbia University School of Dentistry and completed his residency programs at Robert Wood Johnson followed by three years of work experience at the Refuah Health Center. Currently, Dr. Udeshi works in the private sector and as the director of residency at the Helen Hayes Hospital. Dr. Udeshi will be a member of the Board.

**e. Replication or Network Information:** Not Applicable

**f. Application History:** The founding team and board members have not applied to this or any other charter entity to open any proposed school.

## **II. PROPOSED CHARTER SCHOOL INFORMATION**

**a. Proposed School Name:** Astra Academy Charter School

**b. Proposed School Location:** South Bronx, NY, Community School District (CSD) 8. Astra Academy has conducted extensive research on appropriate non-Department of Education (DOE) facilities in CSD 8 to determine market value for the required real estate acquisition and have identified 5 facilities that can serve as permanent space. This has been accounted for in our proposed budget. We will also submit a request to the NYC Department of Education's Office of Portfolio Management for possible co-location space in CSD 8. After researching NYCDOE's enrollment for CSD 8, we have identified 3 facilities that are under enrolled and could serve as incubation and/or permanent space.

**Planned grades and enrollment: in each of the years of the proposed charter term:** Astra Academy will serve students in grades 6-12 at full capacity (year 7). Through the first charter, it will serve students grades 6-10.

	<b>Year 1 2014-15</b>	<b>Year 2 2015-16</b>	<b>Year 3 2016-17</b>	<b>Year 4 2017-18</b>	<b>Year 5 2018-19</b>
<b>Grade 6</b>	80	80	80	80	80
<b>Grade 7</b>		80	80	80	80
<b>Grade 8</b>			80	80	80
<b>Grade 9</b>				80	80
<b>Grade 10</b>					80
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>400</b>

- c. **Proposed Management and/ or Partner Organization(s):** Not Applicable
- d. **Proposed School Mission:** Astra Academy Charter School’s mission is to provide a rigorous academic program to all students but with a strong focus on English language learners. We will prepare our students to be completely proficient in Spanish and English with the objective of having them complete high school eligible for a bilingual designation on their diplomas. Through our affiliation with the International Baccalaureate program for Middle Schools and High Schools, and completion of our Career Institutes, our students will gain a unique edge as they prepare to apply to, and enter, universities of their choice and the workforce.
- e. **School Overview:** We strongly believe in cultivating an environment that is welcoming, joyful, and supportive and where learning and language development experience is supported. Our students will graduate bilingual and biliterate in English and Spanish. The model of instruction will be designed to achieve academic success in both languages based on models that supports all students, particularly English language learners. The following Key Design Elements set Astra Academy apart from other schools:
- **Dual Language Program:** Students who are native English speakers and English language learners will be placed in advisories together. This will allow for students to serve as language models for each other, giving each group of students an opportunity to show mastery in their native language as well as develop their second language. Traditional bilingual and ESL programs will be offered as needed.
  - **Project-based Learning (PBL)** with flexible grouping will be at the heart of the instructional approach used at Astra Academy. PBL provides a context and structure for integrating academic, technical, and career skills and cultural dispositions into holistic learning opportunities (Berger, 2003; Boss & Krauss, 2007; Trilling & Fadel, 2009). The **smart use of technology** is a strong component of PBL and all classrooms will have a one-to-one computing ratio.
  - **Data-Driven Instruction** will provide a high degree of student ownership in the instructional framework of PBL. As students are working in small groups, teachers will circulate to question students, take note of their conversations, and observe how well they are researching and analyzing information. Every six weeks, at the end of formal units, there will be school wide assessments to gauge student progress in English, Spanish, and the core subjects. Re-grouping and modifications to IAPs and IEPs will be based on demonstrated progress. As part of the International Baccalaureate for Middle Schools and High Schools, students will be regularly and meaningfully assessed using formative assessment tools and informal observation so that teachers may accurately drive their instruction (Moss, C., Brookhart, S., 2009).

- **Career Institutes:** From sixth grade through the end of eighth grade students will rotate through our Career Institutes: (1) Culinary, Digital and Media Arts, (2) Environmental Science (3) Engineering, and (4) Pre-Med. After rotations, students will be matched with the institute of their choice and they will remain in the chosen institute until graduation. Academically aligned internships, job-shadowing opportunities, study abroad, and student exchange programs will be offered for grades eight through twelve. (All core subjects will be taught in the mornings and Career Institutes will be taught in the afternoons).
- **Increased Instructional Time (7:30am - 4:00pm):** The increased instructional time will provide more time to learn and will accommodate our Career Institutes.
- **Teacher Development and Support:** We will employ a Professional Learning Community and teacher's schedules will include time for reflection, cross-disciplinary lesson planning, coaching, modeling, and to receive feedback from weekly classroom observations (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2012). Ongoing teacher PD will focus on all aspects of our Key Design Elements, understanding and integrating NYS Standards and the Common Core in PBL and Dual Language curricula, and on establishing and maintaining our school's culture.
- **Summer Academy:** This will be an accelerated 3-week course to help students make gains in becoming proficient in English and/or Spanish. Students will have an opportunity to take a class with students at the same proficiency level as their peers and hone in on developing in the areas most needed. Students wishing to accelerate their studies may also attend the Summer Academy.
- **Astra Parent Academy:** We will employ create the Astra Parent Academy to offer our parents and members of the community courses in Fluency and Literacy in their native tongue, English as a Second Language, Computer Literacy, Intro to Microsoft Suites, Math Skills, and Parenting (Sheldon 2007). Parents will receive a stipend or other incentive for regularly attending the Academy. Parents will also have a voice in determining other courses for the academy.

**Briefly Describe the School's Target Population and the Community that the School**

**Intends to Serve:** Astra Academy will target students identified as English language learners (all levels) in CSD 8, grades 5-12, including those with disabilities.

**III. ENROLLMENT AND RETENTION TARGETS**

**Recruitment and enrollment:** Astra Academy will make concerted efforts to attract, recruit, and retain students with disabilities, English language learners, and students who are eligible for free and reduced price lunch. Our outreach programs will extend to all district elementary school programs particularly those that service English language learners. In addition, we will contact local community based programs and churches to recruit English language learners and students who are eligible for free and reduced price lunch. We will meet or exceed enrollment and retention requirements for these students as required by New York Statutes Sec. 2852(9)(b)(i).

**Those Identified in the School's Mission:** Astra Academy will target immigrant students living in CSD 8. We will work with the New York Immigration Coalition to target newcomer students to provide them with workshops on public school choices.

**English Language Learners:** Our focus is on English language learners. Placement and Individual Academic Plans (IAP) for all ELL students will be determined by benchmark state and in-house assessments administered prior to the first day of classes. We will conduct ongoing assessments every six weeks to determine student needs and to update IAPs. The NYSESLAT

will be administered every year as required by New York State and data will be used accordingly. All our classrooms will have co-teachers with one of the teachers being bi-lingual. All students will take 7 years of classes in their native tongue as research shows that mastery in one's one language translates to easier second language acquisition.

**Students with Disabilities (SWDs):** Astra Academy will encourage parents to enroll SWDs in our school. All our classrooms will have Integrated Co-Teaching and we will have one Learning Specialist that provides Special Education Teacher Support Services per grade. We will hire highly certified teachers with dual certification in ESL, Bilingual and Special Education. We will meet, and try to surpass, goals outlined in students' IEPs. Additionally, the very nature of our PBL instructional model will allow SWDs to be integrated into each classroom in the least restrictive form.

**Students Eligible for Free or Reduced Lunch:** 79% of students in CSD 8 are eligible for free or reduced priced lunch. We will communicate school's mission to as many families through our information sessions, flyers, website, and through support from community organizations.

#### **IV. PUBLIC OUTREACH AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT:**

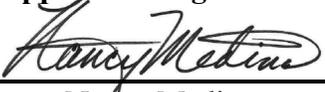
The founding directors have planned and facilitated community meetings, created and distributed informational mailings, created a website ([www.AstraAcademy.com](http://www.AstraAcademy.com)) with information on Astra Academy that includes an on online survey, and garnered letters of support and parent signatures.

**a. Public Outreach:** Introduction letters and brochures were sent to elected officials, parents, community organizations and churches in June-August 2013. Emails were sent to Mr. Ruben Diaz, Jr., the Bronx Borough President and we have been in communication with his office – particularly Mr. Wilhelm Ronda, Director of Planning and Development. An informational Meeting was held at the Hunts Point Community Library specifically targeted to parents of elementary school children who would be potential students in Astra Academy.

**b. Community Support:** Reaction to Astra's proposal has been positive and parents and the community voiced their opinion - parents stressed the need for additional options for students who have limited English proficiency. They have also expressed interest in our Career Institutes but were concerned about a discontinuity in education for ELLs and in the Career Institutes if we opened as a middle school only. We believe in listening to our parents and community and expanded our proposed charter to include grades 6-12.

**The following additional activities are planned to provide information and garner further support:** We have requested to be placed Community Board #2's agenda throughout fall 2013. Petition Drives and Meet and Greet with parents of elementary students at public and private elementary schools and community meetings at Public Libraries and community organizations throughout District 8. Outreach to elected representatives is continuing.

#### **V. Lead Applicants' Signatures and Date:**

	09/03/2013
Nancy Medina	Date
	09/03/2013
Catherine Ervin	Date