



REACH ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOL

# **REACH Academy Charter School**

A Proposed City of Buffalo Charter School

Submitted to:

New York State Education Department - Charter School Office

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## SECTION I – Mission, Key Design Elements, Enrollment and Community

### I. A. Mission Statement and Objectives:

#### *~Our Mission, Our Promise~*

*The Mission of the REACH Academy Charter School is to ensure the achievement of high academic standards for City of Buffalo students through a hands-on authentic learning environment. Scholars of REACH Academy Charter School will learn the value of Service, Leadership, Character and Citizenship, along with effective Communication Skills as evident in reading, writing, mathematical and technological competencies. REACH Academy Charter School will provide the tools for scholars to rise above the limitations often posed by poverty, disability and the struggle to achieve English Language Proficiency.*

#### **Objectives-**

1. To close the gap on poverty, RACS will provide an enormous amount of rich language experiences designed specifically to develop language abilities in vocabulary and background knowledge.
2. The development of strong literacy and language skills make up the basic foundation for all learning. Scholars at RACS will develop strong communication skills as evident in reading, writing, mathematical and technological competencies.
3. While learning to read fluently and comprehending meaning are critical to academic success, it is not enough to bridge the gap for students in poverty. Building background knowledge and increasing vocabulary skills are essential to strengthen the language skills of students from impoverished homes (Snow K., 2013). RACS will provide rich authentic opportunities for students to build the necessary language skills needed to compete in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

#### **Furthering the Purpose of Education Law §2850(2)-**

**§2850(2)(a)** Most importantly RACS will improve student learning and achievement\* by immersing children in authentic learning experiences that are aligned with the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). At RACS, we believe that every child has the right to a bright future. Our authentic learning environments allow for all the needs of the individual child to be considered. Research-based instructional practices will be used. Standards will be set high to reach academic goals, ensuring that every child reaches their full potential. Through progress monitoring, teachers will use data to make sure students are making adequate progress and their needs are appropriately being addressed. Individual learning plans (Section II.D, II.E and II.F) will be created to ensure students are successful in reaching learning benchmarks.

**§2850(2)(b)** RACS will expand learning opportunities for all students at risk of academic failure\*. While a more challenging curriculum may increase the engagement of at-risk students, at RACS we know that student success requires academic supports. A key element in the curriculum will provide students with rich language experiences and strong literacy instruction. By transforming the school culture into one that is student-focused, the school will concentrate on identifying and addressing student needs with the supports and resources each student needs to develop, both academically and personally. Strategies for creating personalized learning environments will include; creating school structures that provide small group learning opportunities, providing more individualized support systems, and developing an academically challenging curriculum and instructional program that helps students make the connection between academic content and the “real world.”

**§2850(2)(c)** Learning is a social practice and cannot happen alone. “By our nature we are social beings and we learn by interacting” (Schwartz. K, 2013). In order to create innovative teaching and learning methods\*, RACS understands that learners have to be at the center of what happens in the classroom. Student activities will have a strong focus on student cognition and growth, which will encourage students to take an active role in their learning and become self-regulated learners who are able to set goals, and monitor their own learning. By utilizing technology to enhance instruction, engagement and learning, student achievement will be increased. Students will be able to tackle more challenging tasks during class where teachers are able to answer questions and provide guidance. This also allows for a level playing field for students who may not have had as much prior knowledge and/or experiences by allowing them to work at their own pace and repeat or extend their learning as needed. The hands-on approach gives teachers

opportunities to provide effective and specific feedback to students, which is proven to increase learning. The strategy of providing student feedback has one of the strongest effect sizes of any instructional practice according to Beesley & Apthorp, 2010; Hattie, 2008. Additionally, RACS will broaden the background experiences and vocabulary of students through unique authentic classroom themes and curriculum units. The units will include student choice that is product-focused and requires critical and creative thinking.

**§2850(2)(d)** RACS will invest in new and ongoing professional learning opportunities for all faculty and staff\* that are aligned with the school's strategic plans, making it a priority to develop the capacity of administrators, teachers and support staff to create rich, engaging experiences for students. Teachers and staff at RACS will be provided with rigorous and ongoing development training from nationally recognized educational consultants, authors, higher education faculty, professional developers, and other curriculum specialists who have dedicated themselves to improving the lives of children in urban settings. Students will be dismissed 2 hours early every Monday for teacher and support staff data team meetings. At these meetings, teachers will meet with the literacy and math specialists as well as administrators to discuss their work and look at student data to drive instruction and develop individual learning plans that address student learning needs. A week-long teacher orientation will be held for new teachers when hired, as well as an additional 2 weeks of professional development for all faculty and staff prior to the start of the school year. All teachers and support staff will be provided with a laptop for access to online resources and materials.

**§2850(2)(e)** RACS will provide parents and students a variety of high quality rich and unique educational opportunities\*. Some of these unique opportunities beyond the classroom day may include Steel Sculpting with the Griffis Sculpture Park ([www.griffispark.org](http://www.griffispark.org)), Recycle-a-Bike, Girls on the Run, and Muhammad School of Music. All of these opportunities will exhibit well-integrated academic content, develop strong relationships between students and peers as well as adults, offer authentic decision-making and allow for the potential of student leadership growth.

Title I schools report that lack of staff training in working with parents is a great or moderate barrier to parent involvement (U.S. Department of Education, 1997). Without the information and skills to communicate with each other, misperceptions and distrust can flourish between parents and school. Through workshops and a variety of outreach activities such as informative newsletters, handbooks, and home visits, parents and school staff will work together to help children succeed in school. RACS may provide workshops such as parenting tips to help families learn about child development and how to support student academic success. Parents may also have the opportunity to learn how to achieve their GED, receive computer literacy training in various Microsoft programs like Word, Excel and PowerPoint, as well as tips for resume building and online job searches.

**§2850(2)(f)** At RACS, the Board of Trustees will form an Academic Committee made up of select Board members, the Head of School, Director of Student Services and the Director of Instruction. The Committee will work together to develop measurable goals for improving student achievement, oversee all academic programs, report out on benchmark assessment results, and perform instructional program audits. The Academic Committee's role will hold the school accountable for student progress in all curricular areas aligned with the New York State assessments\*. The Head of School and the Committee will evaluate the outcomes of the school's plan to ensure the effectiveness of RACS's academic programs and modify as necessary. At the classroom level, a minimum of three benchmark assessments periods including unit assessments in literacy and math will be administered to identify students' instructional levels and/or needs for further diagnostic supports to meet academic goals to achieve the New York State Common Core Standards.

#### Sources Referenced for Section 1.A. – Mission Statement and Objectives

Schwartz , K (2013). 7 Essential Principles of Innovative Learning

Beesley & Apthorp, (2010); Hattie, 2008. *Educational Leadership: Technology-Rich Learning.*

U. S. Department of Education, (1997). *Family Involvement in Children's Education*

\*Evidence that sets forth an educational program that implements one or more of the purposes described in Education Law §2850(2).

### **I B. Key Design Elements:**

#### **REACH Academy Key Design Elements**

The following design elements will make RACS a dynamic, cutting edge, unique school of the 21st Century, well equipped to improve student learning and achievement and materially further the purposes set out in Education Law §2850(2). These design features, which demonstrate the school's core beliefs and values

about education, are woven into the development of every aspect of our school and provide students who are at-risk of academic failure specifically those students who qualify for the Federal Free and Reduced Lunch Program, the opportunity for critical and reflective thinking throughout their educational experience to ensure the achievement of high academic standards.

1. **Instructional Design – *The Six Point Plan to Increasing Student Achievement* will improve student learning and achievement\***. This model encapsulates an effective way to ensure high student achievement as outlined in the school’s mission by allowing for continuous evaluation of student progress and immediate modification to the student’s learning plan when needed. The six points, explained in more detail later are:
  1. Setting Up a Culture of High Expectations
  2. Articulating the Curriculum
  3. Ensuring Best Instructional Practices
  4. Administering Common Benchmark Assessments
  5. Providing Interventions
  6. Monitoring Progress
2. **Authentic Classroom Learning Environments** – It has been clearly documented that student engagement increases when students are cognitively involved and thinking critically about the content. (Wilmington, 2007.) Authenticity has a major impact on student engagement and includes meaningful tasks that are real or have purpose, include student choice, and are product focused (Schlechty, 2002). The classrooms at RACS will be designed as “mini” real world environments based on developmentally appropriate themes. One theme in kindergarten may be the setting of a Supermarket. Classroom themes aligned with the CCSS standards and content may include environments such as: An Airplane/Airport, Exploring the Farm, The Construction of a House, Fairy Tales, etc. As students get older the themes develop into broader, more sophisticated concepts such as: Types of Weather, Exploring Our Emotions, The Rainforest, etc. In fifth grade, for example, themes might include: Types of Whales, Understanding Chemistry, and Physics in Action. As stated in the school’s mission, the classroom design is a hands-on, authentic learning environment intended to broaden the background experiences and vocabulary of students who live in poverty and expand learning opportunities for all students at risk of academic failure\*. It has been reported that an average student going to kindergarten living in poverty has an estimated 4.2 million fewer language experiences than an average middle class student. This study showed that students from poverty hear as many as 30 million fewer words by the time they turn three compared to children from average income households (Hart and Risley, 2004). In order to bridge the gap for those in poverty, an enormous amount of rich authentic language experiences and exposure to a wide range of books across a variety of genres are essential (Snow. and Shattuck, 2014). Each classroom will have a large inventory of authentic texts which will be included in the budget. This will provide parents and students a variety of high quality rich and unique educational opportunities\*.
3. **Balanced Literacy Approach - Literacy Focused** - A basic belief at RACS is that students in poverty need an enormous amount of rich language experiences to bridge the gap that poverty creates. As stated in the school’s mission statement, the students will be provided the tools to rise above the limitations often posed by poverty. Students who are at-risk for academic failure will engage in multiple, focused, literacy experiences throughout their school day. Using Fountas and Pinnell’s model for Guided Reading and Lucy Calkin’s model for The Reader’s and Writer’s Workshop as the basic literacy curriculum, students will receive a highly personalized approach in literacy instruction. This approach will use best practices to improve student learning and achievement by providing scholars with an integrated and comprehensive standards-based literacy program using innovative teaching and learning methods\*. Through the use of mini-lessons, teachers will facilitate literacy standards through the context of on-going, purposeful student work. Students will use “accountable talk” to learn and communicate ideas as they analyze their work based on models that meet the standards. Rituals and routines will be defined, practiced and will be a part of a productive teaching and learning environment. Scholars will contribute in book discussion groups, participate in author genre studies, maintain reading logs and a writer’s notebook, conference with teachers and publish a wide variety of documents. This will provide parents and students a variety of high quality rich and unique educational opportunities\* The balanced literacy

approach will provide a structure and support that will enable all students to acquire the knowledge, skills, habits and dispositions needed to meet or exceed standards in reading, writing, listening and speaking. Other components of a Balanced Literacy Model will also be incorporated such as independent reading and writing, books on tape, word study, vocabulary and research that students will work at daily. This documented growth will demonstrate the school’s accountability for student progress in all curricular areas aligned with the New York State assessments\*. RACS will invest in high-quality, on-going staff development from experienced authors or widely recognized trainers in the field to ensure ongoing professional learning opportunities for all faculty and staff\*. Cost of these invaluable learning opportunities for all staff will be reflected in the budget.

4. **Utilizing Technology to Enhance Instruction, Engagement and Learning** - Gallup’s 2013 State of America’s Schools Report showed that only 55% of US K-12 students are “engaged” in the learning process, while 28% are “not engaged,” and 17% are “actively disengaged.” At RACS, teachers will create situations that encourage students to be engaged. Engaged students are those who are actively learning by dynamically constructing, dissecting, analyzing, comparing, collaborating, contributing, creating and reflecting upon information and ideas. At RACS, technology is a vital tool that will be used to foster student engagement through active learning tasks. Teachers will use technology based instructional methods that encourage students to actively engage with curriculum to increase students’ overall academic engagement. The benefits of including technology are many, including; providing students with real-world problem solving opportunities; providing students with experimental methods for reaching a conclusion, and encouraging students to think about and discuss learning activities during and after a lesson. Additionally, RACS will increase engagement through instructional methods that utilize technology by making use of visual displays (for comparing, constructing, dissecting and analyzing); creating opportunities where students have choices on how they interact with content; allowing for opportunities to collaborate both within the classroom and across classrooms or the world; and by using up-to-date real world news in teaching.

**Sources Referenced for Section I.B. – Key Element Designs**

Hart, B. & Risley, T. R. “The Early Catastrophe” (2004). Education Review, 77(1), 100-118. [http://www.gsa.gov/graphics/pbs/TheEarly\\_Catastrophe\\_30\\_Million\\_Word\\_Gap\\_by\\_Age3.pdf](http://www.gsa.gov/graphics/pbs/TheEarly_Catastrophe_30_Million_Word_Gap_by_Age3.pdf)

Schlechty, P. C. (2002). *Working on the Work: An Action Plan for Teachers, Principals, and Superintendents*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Snow, Catherine and Shattuck, Henry Lee. (March 4, 2014). Improving Reading Outcomes: Getting Beyond Third Grade. Harvard Graduate School Education [http://www.gse.harvard.edu/~snow/Aspen\\_snow.html](http://www.gse.harvard.edu/~snow/Aspen_snow.html).

Snow, Kyle. (October 29, 2013). New Research on Early Disparities: Focus on Vocabulary and Language Processing. National Association of the Education of Young Children. (Online). <http://www.naeyc.org/blogs/gclarke/2013/10/new-research-early-disparities-focus-vocabulary-and-language-processing>

Willingham, Daniel T. (2007) *Why Kids Don’t Like School*. New York: Prentice Hall.

\*Evidence that sets forth an educational program that implements one or more of the purposes described in Education Law §2850(2).

**I C. Enrollment, Recruitment, and Retention:**

**Enrollment: Planned Grades and Enrollment - First 5 years for REACH Academy CS**

Initial Term	School Year	Kdgn.	1 <sup>st</sup> Grade	2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade	3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade	5 <sup>th</sup> Grade	Totals
Year 1	17-18	X	X					160
Year 2	18-19	X	X	X				240
Year 3	19-20	X	X	X	X			320
Year 4	20-21	X	X	X	X	X		400
Year 5	21-22	X	X	X	X	X	X	480

**Proposed Application, Admissions and Enrollment Process** - The New York State Charter School Uniform Application Form will be available by a variety of means, including the school office (once established), the school website, and at any and all forums and recruitment events. Assistance through the International Institute will be provided to those speaking languages other than English. Applications will be accepted beginning February 1st of the previous school year. All interested applicants will be informed that the application must be submitted in person, e-mail or mail, by 3 p.m. on the first Friday in April. If the number of applications exceeds the number of open seats, an Enrollment Lottery will be held publicly one week after the close of the open enrollment period. If the number of applications does not exceed the number of openings, applicants will be called and given instructions regarding completion of registration paperwork. The lottery will begin with the lowest grade level. The procedure will continue until each successive grade level is filled in the same manner. Preference will be given to siblings of current students and residents of the City of Buffalo. Applicants will be informed of the lottery results. Successful applicants will be given a list

of required enrollment documents to bring to the school for processing. Those placed on the wait list will be notified of their numerical position. RACS staff will assist families with completion of all registration documentation, including the Home Language Questionnaire, the Free and Reduced Price Lunch Application and Transportation Requests. Staff will also schedule screening appointments to assure that the programmatic needs of each student are met. The School Nurse will assist families with School Physical and Immunization paperwork and coordinate appropriate health screenings. If an applicant chooses not to register their child, the next name on the wait list will be contacted and offered a spot until all openings are filled. When an opening becomes available during the school year prior to May 1st, the next available name on the wait list will be contacted to offer enrollment beginning with the lowest grade. The wait list order set by the lottery will be followed. After May 1st, openings will not be filled until the following school year. See Admissions Policies and Procedures in Attachment 1.

**Rationale for Enrollment Size** - In year one of operation, RACS will enroll up to 160 scholars in Kindergarten and First Grade. Consistent with the home school district, all Kindergartners who apply must turn 5 years of age by December 31st of their Kindergarten year. In each subsequent year of the initial 5 year charter, RACS will add one grade level until a student body with a maximum of 480 students is reached. Each class will be capped at 20 students. In Year 1, the school will open with four sections of Kindergarten and four sections of First Grade. In Year 2 and beyond, four new sections of kindergarten will be added each year while students continue up to the next grade level. With classes capped at 20, grade levels will not exceed 80 students. Since the Classroom Learning Environments are such an engaging and exciting learning opportunity for students, along with the present dissatisfaction with the Buffalo Public Schools, it is anticipated that the 80 openings will be easily filled each year allowing RACS to meet its enrollment targets and maintain a strong wait list. As RACS prepares to apply for charter renewal, it will be serving 480 students in grades K-5.

RACS will provide quality Kindergarten programming at a time when Buffalo Public Schools are struggling on many fronts. In the course of our public outreach, many parents have expressed frustration at the limited options presented by the Buffalo Public Schools Central Registration system. Families can choose from a list of 35 under-performing schools classified as either a Focus or Priority School by NYSED. They can also compete with the hundreds of other families applying for spots at one of 20 schools in Good Standing. Only 12 of the 20 offer Kindergarten enrollment. Or they can seek out a charter school where roster spots are in high demand and lotteries determine who gets them. Over the past several years, thousands of parents, at the urging of the District Parent Coordinating Council, have asked the Buffalo Public Schools to transfer their children out of failing schools and into a school of good standing.

The Buffalo News on 7/1/14:

*“The District Parent Coordinating Council, citing prior state directives and the district’s inability to find seats for the 2,100 students who already requested transfers, now wants the state to impose a transfer plan. In a written statement, the group notes that absent state intervention, “over 3,000 children will be forced to go to a failing school against their will in Sept. 2014.”*

From the Buffalo News of 3/5/15:

*“The district’s school transfer request program has been in upheaval for a few years. In this year... only about a third 368 or 34% of the 1,090 students who applied for transfers got their wish. That includes 114 who transferred to charter schools in good standing... For 2013-14, about 2,200 students sought transfers from low performing schools up from 500 in 2012 and 300 in 2011...In the end, only 449 students or 22 % of applicants were placed in good schools.”*

District Parent Council President Sam Radford believes the number of transfer requests dropped this year because: “parents don’t apply because they’re telling you we don’t have any seats.” Buffalo News 3/11/15

The Buffalo district is also embroiled in a Civil Rights complaint filed by the DPCC in 2014. The U.S. Department of Education found “statistically significant” differences in acceptance rates for black and white students at criteria-based Buffalo schools. To settle the complaint, the district contracted for a review of admissions criteria. Ultimately, the district agreed to new admissions criteria for two of the schools, eliminated the use of cut scores to rule out students who failed to earn a certain score on admissions and standardized tests, and hired an outside agency to rank applicants. Buffalo News columnist Rod Watson, on 3/11/2015, characterized the district’s response to the Civil Rights issue as “minimal changes.” Gary Orfield, the expert hired to review Buffalo’s practices and suggest changes says, “The response of the city district is really disappointing.” –From the Buffalo News of 2/20/16.

RACS’s Key Design Elements call for an innovative approach and classroom design, featuring a hands-on environment focused on literacy and enriched with technology. The applicant group believes that the best approach is conservative. Starting with Kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> Grade and adding one grade level each of the next four years balances community need with the desire to maintain a culture of excellence, a feeling of “family” and a “sense of community” at RACS.

**School’s Plan to Attract and Recruit Students-**

Targeted Recruitment Minimum Levels by Grade			
	Percent	Grade 1	Grade 2
Total Enrollment for Year 1	100%	80	80
Target Enrollment for Students who have FRLR	79%	63+	63+
Target Enrollment for Students in Special Ed.	22%	18+	18+
Target Enrollment for Students who are ENLs	14%	11+	11+

RACS is committed to meet the high expectations of enrollment and retention targets established by the Board of Regents. RACS will work with various community organizations and parent groups to seek out, enroll and successfully retain a cross-section of students mirroring the demographics of the Buffalo Public School District, with particular attention to students with disabilities, ELL’s, and students who qualify for the Free and Reduced Price Lunch Program. Currently, in the Buffalo district, 79% of students qualify for free or reduced lunch prices, 22% are students with disabilities and 14% are classified as Limited English Proficient. To this end, RACS intentionally selected a neighborhood for the school that has some of the strongest needs. Our plan to meet these recruitment targets at RACS is based on creating a clear and consistent plan getting the word out to the community around

our school, and providing many opportunities for parents/families to express their input. RACS will utilize the following methods to seek out students from the three target populations:

**Targeted Population** - The Targeted Population for RACS is directed to the minority student coming from a depressed socio-economic background in the City of Buffalo. Driven by our mission statement, RACS *will provide the tools for scholars to rise above the limitations often posed by poverty, disability and the struggle to achieve English Language Proficiency*, our entire program is geared toward helping the struggling student who might not otherwise find success in a typical underperforming city school. The key design elements demonstrate a highly engaging environment involving both large and small group instruction that is differentiated and specific to individual student needs which will attract these students. Advertising in community

newspapers, local radio, and television broadcasting events to promote the school’s mission, design, culture and curriculum will begin immediately after approval is granted. Brochures detailing the RACS’s program will be widely distributed anywhere parents might gather or do business. Several Open Houses will be hosted regularly in the months before opening.

Pre-K Program-Students with Special Needs	Address	Town/City	Enrollment
Aspire of Western New York	4635 Union	Cheektowaga, NY	164
Buffalo Hearing and Speech Center	50 East North	Buffalo, NY 14203	73
Center for Handicapped Children	80 Lawrence Bell	Buffalo, NY 14221	54
Cantalician Center for Learning	2049 George Urban	Depew, NY 14043	192
Erie County – ARC	1 Delaware Road	Kenmore, NY 14217	203
Stanley G. Falk School	848 Delaware	Buffalo, NY 14209	534
Summit Education Services	150 Stahl Road	Getzville, NY 14068	292
<b>Total Number of Students Targeted</b>			<b>1,512</b>

Table I.C.1 [http://www.privateschoolreview.com/state\\_special\\_education\\_school/type/4/stateid/NY/pre](http://www.privateschoolreview.com/state_special_education_school/type/4/stateid/NY/pre)

**Students with Disabilities** - According to the New York State Report Card, 22% of the students in the Buffalo Public Schools were classified as special education in 2014-2015. However, according to the 2014-2015 New York State Report Card Data, schools located within a 1.2 mile radius of our proposed school’s location had an average of 24%. These neighboring schools include: Futures Academy, Bennett Park Montessori, Harriet Ross Tubman School, Martin Luther King Multicultural Institute, Herman Badillo Bilingual Academy, Dr. Charles R. Drew Magnet School and Buffalo Elementary School of Technology. True to our mission, RACS will recruit students with special needs by working closely with agencies that provide Preschool Programs for Students with Special Needs (see Table I.C.1). Invitations for informational sessions will be set up, to specifically address how our program will meet the needs of the students with special needs and for parents to tour and learn more about the services offered. Program administrators,

social workers, district CPSE coordinators, special education teachers, parents and students will all be invited to learn more about RACS. Additionally, our recruitment brochures will specifically mention the special education services offered and our special education philosophy of the school will be shared during Open Houses/Information Nights.

**English Language Learners** – According to the New York State Report Card, 14% of the students in the Buffalo Public Schools were Limited English Proficient in 2014-2015. However, according the 2014-2015 New York State Report Card Data, schools located within a 1.2 mile radius of our proposed school’s location had an average of 26%. These neighboring schools include:

Futures Academy, Bennett Park Montessori, Harriet Ross Tubman School, Martin Luther King Multicultural Institute, Herman Badillo Bilingual Academy, Dr. Charles R. Drew Magnet School and Buffalo Elementary School of Technology. In order to recruit students who are ELL’s RACS has partnered with Catholic Charities of Western New York, which offers refugee and immigration assistance programs, which will provide us with additional direction and guidance on recruiting students who are ELL’s (See Partnership Information in Attachment 7). The diverse community groups that represent individuals from all parts of the world who live in the Buffalo area are listed in Table 1.C.2. RACS will

Asian Connection of WNY
Buffalo Chinese School
Chinese Club of WNY
Japanese Group of Buffalo
Jamaican American Association of Buffalo
French Alliance of Buffalo
Hungarian American Social Club
Polish Cultural Foundation
Polish Falcons Club
American Serbian Club of Buffalo
Turkish Cultural Center
Ukrainian American Civic Center
Ukrainian American Youth Association
Ukrainians of Buffalo & WNY
St. David’s Society of Greater Buffalo: (Welsh-Americans)
Hindu Cultural Society of WNY
Islamic Society of Niagara Frontier:
Jewish Community Center

Table 1.C.2.

visit these centers/community groups and offer presentations to their membership to invite prospective students to visit our school. Printed promotional materials will be distributed. Catholic Charities of Western New York also works with connecting students of local refugees upon arrival to the area with local schools.

**Students who are Eligible Applicants for the Free and Reduced Price Lunch Program** - The location of RACS will be one of the biggest draws for students who are eligible for the Free and Reduced Lunch Program (FRLP). In 2014-2015, the Buffalo Public Schools had an average of 79% of the population that qualified for FRLP. However, according the 2014-2015 New York State Report Card Data, schools located within a 1.2 mile radius of our proposed school’s location had an 88% FRLP rate. These neighboring schools include: Futures Academy, Bennett Park Montessori, Harriet Ross Tubman School, Martin Luther King Multicultural Institute, Herman Badillo Bilingual Academy, Dr. Charles R. Drew Magnet School and Buffalo Elementary School of Technology. While recruiting, we will emphasize the location of the school to draw from the local impoverished neighborhood where we will be situated. Additionally, recruitment brochures will be distributed to local homeless shelters, food pantries and local housing projects.

**Strategies to Retain Students: Targeted Population** - In order to retain our targeted population, RACS will provide many opportunities to ensure student success and maintain a high level of parent satisfaction. We will actively seek high-quality minority teachers who share similar backgrounds as our population and who bring cultural understanding of our students. A broad search will occur. Professional staff development for all teachers will include diversity training and acclimating teachers to what life is like for

students living in poverty. Through a backpack program for Kindergarten and First Grade Students, backpacks filled with fun, engaging literacy activities, toys and books will be sent home with students. Parents will be encouraged, but not required, to volunteer in the school and the classroom. Annual anonymous parent surveys will be done to assess parent satisfaction and gain valuable feedback for improvement. Classes will be held in summer and over recess breaks for students to remediate academic weaknesses. Beginning in 2nd Grade, students will be provided with school year planners to manage assignments, class work and notes.

<p><b>The National Alliance for Public Charter Schools offers the following strategies for retaining students with disabilities.</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Adopt Key Instructional Strategies To Support All Students</li> <li>2. Identify Strategic Partnerships and Coalitions</li> <li>3. Hire Intentionally and Well</li> <li>4. Track, Analyze, and Report Data</li> </ol> <p><a href="http://www.publiccharters.org/wpcontent/uploads/2014/01/Special-Education-in-Charter-Schools_20131021T154812.pdf">http://www.publiccharters.org/wpcontent/uploads/2014/01/Special-Education-in-Charter-Schools_20131021T154812.pdf</a></p>
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**Students with Disabilities** – The National Alliance for Public Charter Schools offers the following

strategies for retaining students with disabilities. The RACS will have a culture of high expectations for all students. This will be done through constant communication of the message that all students are welcome and expected to succeed. We will provide a robust curriculum designed by effective teachers who regularly monitor progress to inform targeted and fluid interventions based on common formative assessment data. Having a very structured Response to Intervention (RtI) model will ensure that teams of general and special education teachers meet students' needs as they arise, rather than waiting for students to fail. Teachers will be key participants in grade level teams that share in the accountability of all the students' success, not just placing that responsibility on the Special Education Teacher. By closely tracking their success, RACS will ensure that required retention targets are met while demonstrating students' success in their program.

**English Language Learners** – In order to retain our English Language Learners (ELL), the faculty and staff will integrate cultural traditions of ELL families throughout our school community. Each year, RACS will host a Cultural Night where all families in our school community are invited to share a special ethnic dish that is shared and sampled by all. Cultural Night will invite parents to share a special ethnic or cultural tradition or custom within the school community. Areas of the school will be designated by country and those represented by that country will share individual distinctive customs, traditions or activities that they strongly value. Families will then be able to stroll through the school, learning about the unique differences within our own school community. Maps and flags will be displayed in a prominent place within the building to designate where our students are from. By creating a welcoming school environment that respects the cultural traditions and customs of our students and their families, we will build a strong sense of community within our school environment. The faculty and staff at RACS will encourage native language use at home and suggest that parents read and tell stories to their children in their native language which will also help their reading skills in English. Bilingual books will be available in the school library. The research is clear that strong native language skills contribute to ELLs' academic success throughout their education — in their native language and English. (Haynes, 2007) By explaining to parents that strong native language skills will help their children, we will reassure our parents that we have their children's best interest at heart. One of our greatest challenges will be communicating with ELL's parents. Creating a good translation process will be paramount. We will offer staff training on how to communicate in simplified English on the phone when necessary. The International Institute of Buffalo will work with us on providing Interpreter and Translation Services, which they have available in more than 60 languages. Services will be provided for Parent Teacher Conferences and when needed to appropriately communicate with families. For parents who are not familiar with the U.S. education system, we will offer parent workshops that inform families about the U.S. school system and complex topics such as standardized testing, special education services, grading, parent teacher conferences and homework. Assisting parents in finding ways to help their child with homework will also make parents an integral part of their child's success in school. Parents can check their child's work to see if it is completed nightly and ask their child to tell them about their day in school each evening and keep in regular contact with the teacher. Parents will be encouraged to volunteer in the classroom, main office, lunchroom, and library or in a student club or after-school program. We will encourage our ELL parents to visit their children's classroom on a regular basis so that they become familiar with the classroom, teacher, and school activities especially during reading time. This way parents can follow along with their children while they learn more about read-alouds and how to interact with text. This will help them work together at home to increase reading comprehension.

**Students who are eligible applicants for the free and reduced price lunch program- Understanding our population will be critical to assessing individual needs.** The school will incorporate flexibility to help our students reach success and to lessen the stress often found in families living in poverty. The school will open at least 30 minutes earlier (longer if necessary) every day to provide free supervision for students whose parents must drop them off early in order to get to work. No student will be expected to wait outside in the freezing Buffalo temperatures waiting for the school to open. During this time, students will have access to reading materials and opportunities to complete homework. A free quality after school program will run from the end of the school day until 5:15 pm daily so students are not left home alone unsupervised after school. A School Uniform Policy will be instituted to reduce the burden of shopping for designer clothing and the competition among students often associated with having the most fashionable items. A Uniform Swap will be facilitated annually where parents can trade gently worn uniforms for the

appropriate size needed. A washer and dryer and a shower will be located in the building for the rare occasion when some students need to discretely receive a shower and clean clothes. Extra uniforms, socks, belts and underwear will be made available for students whose families do not have the means to provide these essentials. The School Social Worker will lead a Winter Coat Drive for those parents struggling to purchase quality warm clothing. Monthly Spaghetti Dinners will be hosted to share a meal together, build a strong sense of school community and provide an easy way for families to have an inexpensive meal out after a long work week. An annual Chicken BBQ will also take place during the summer months and will be provided at cost to the families. The School Media Center will be opened at least one evening a week to allow adults to come in and utilize the school computers and access the internet. The Social Worker will pick up students who miss the bus and have no way of getting to school. When parents can't get to school for Parent Teacher Conferences, teachers will offer to have the meeting at their house or place of employment.

**Sources Referenced for Section I.C. – Enrollment, Recruitment, and Retention:**

Haynes, J. (2007). *Getting started with English Language Learners How Educators can Meet the Challenge*. Alexandria, Va.: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.  
 Engaging ELL Families: 20 Strategies for School Leaders <http://www.adlit.org/article/42781/>

**I.D. Community to be Served:**

According to the last US Census, Buffalo had 261,310 families. Just over 30% were living below the poverty level. As of 2014, Buffalo ranked as the 4<sup>th</sup> poorest city in the United States. Data from the Buffalo Public Schools for 2014-2015 shows a student population of 32,165. The student population is 49% Black or African American, 21% White, 18% Hispanic or Latino, and 8% Asian or Pacific Islander and 3% Multiracial. 79% of students qualify for free or reduced lunch prices. 22% are students with disabilities and 14% are classified as ELL's. In 2015, Buffalo Public School students in grades 3-8 trailed their statewide counterparts by a significant margin of more than 50% in all grades, as seen below.

Percentage of Students Proficient (Level 3/4)14-15 Buffalo vs. New York State				
Grade	ELA		MATH	
	BPS	State	BPS	State
3	12%	31%	17%	42%
4	14%	33%	18%	43%
5	11%	30%	18%	43%
6	11%	31%	15%	39%
7	10%	29%	12%	35%
8	14%	35%	9%	41%

**Value of the School in the Community-** RACS will be located in the City of Buffalo, NY-either in an area close to Willert Park and the city's Fruit Belt neighborhood or in a secondary location known as the Broadway-Fillmore Area. Both of these

locations offer the challenge of lifting up an area with a high percentage of population living below the poverty level and some of the lowest performing schools in the state. Schools located near either of the proposed locations of the RACS are even further behind statewide proficiency levels. **Student Population and Needs-** The targeted student population that the school will serve is directed to the minority student coming from a depressed socio-economic background in the City of Buffalo. What will set RACS apart from all others will be the innovative, hands-on, balanced literacy program. Class sizes will be capped at 20. The authentic learning environments will create a connection to authentic real world experiences. Scholars will be engaged in thematic-based classrooms and will be

Percentage of 3-8 Grade Students Proficient (Level 3/4) for 2015 In Schools Located Near Proposed REACH Academy Sites				
SCHOOL	ELA		MATH	
	SCHOOL	STATE	SCHOOL	STATE
#32 Bennett Park Montessori ( Priority)	10%	32%	6%	41%
#97 Harvey Austin (Priority)	3%	32%	6%	41%
#99 Makowski Early Childhood	12%	32%	20%	41%
#59 Dr. Charles R. Drew Science Magnet (Priority)	5%	32%	7%	41%
#53 Community School (Focus)	1%	32%	2%	41%
#39 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr Multicultural	3%	32%	2%	41%
#31 Harriet Ross Tubman School(Focus)	2%	32%	6%	41%
#37 Marva J. Daniel Futures School	1%	32%	2%	41%
#91 Build Academy (Priority)	2%	32%	2%	41%
Enterprise Charter School (Priority)	10%	32%	6%	41%
King Center Charter School (relocated outside Target Area as of 9/14)	18%	32%	17%	41%

facilitated by teachers focused on creating an environment where learning is valued and student engagement is high. Using *The Six Point Plan to Increasing Student Achievement*, RACS will, in keeping with its mission, implement a curriculum focused on defying the negative impacts of poverty and cultural hurdles and respond quickly to assure progress. Vocabulary and building background knowledge will be strongly emphasized in order to develop strong literacy skills often diminished by limited resources. RACS will use rich language experiences to bridge the poverty gap that directly affects academic achievement.

RACS will also offer an extended school day (8 hours), a longer school calendar (192 days) and the opportunity to participate in after school clubs. Inter- Session Labs will be scheduled during long holiday breaks and a four-week Summer Enrichment Program will also keep students learning. Understanding the needs of working parents, students can be picked up at 5:15 after the typical work day ends when after school clubs are over. The school will also be open as early as needed to accommodate parents who need to get to work on time in the morning at no charge. School uniforms and a Positive Behavior Intervention System will help to sustain the culture of high expectations with open communication with parents and events that welcome the surrounding community to the school on a regular basis.

**Selection of the Community** - Buffalo is classified as a Focus District. More than 4,000 transfer requests have been made by parents of Buffalo schoolchildren since 2011. Only a fraction of these requests can be accommodated in a system where most of the schools are not in good standing. As the President of the Buffalo Board of Education said on October 26, 2014, “There is a deep urgency to address the plight of Buffalo’s failing schools...these schools have been allowed to fail for too long, and we have no time to waste.”

A Buffalo News editorial (August 15, 2015) called for a focus on efforts to improve literacy in Buffalo. While applauding the work of Read to Succeed Buffalo, the paper acknowledged the work is “benefiting less than 10% of students in the Buffalo School District.” The editorial went on, “The matter of improved literacy will become increasingly important in the years to come,” a reference to projects at Buffalo’s Medical Campus, Waterfront and Riverbend Urban Development parcel that will bring thousands of jobs and billions of dollars in investments to the city. The Buffalo News notes, “New opportunities are going to open up here and it is crucial Buffalo residents have the skills to take advantage of them.” RACS, with objectives centered on providing an enormous amount of rich language experiences, development of strong literacy and language skills and providing rich authentic opportunities for students to build the necessary language skills needed to compete in the 21st century, will teach those valuable skills.

Several members of the Applicant Group are familiar with the neighborhoods, families and facilities that are under consideration for location of RACS. During the course of lengthy Community Outreach, these neighbors and parents have expressed an interest in welcoming a charter school to their community and have been eager for specific information on the opening of the school and procedures for applying. The opening of RACS will mean renovation of a large, currently vacant building, no matter which location is ultimately chosen. The facility will be bright, safe and an asset to the community. Not only will RACS ultimately provide 480 students and their families a new, quality educational alternative, it will provide employment for passionate teachers, administrators and other support staff, with access to top quality professional development programs.

**How the School will Expand or Enhance the Current Educational Options for Students in the District** - Reaching out into the community and neighborhoods we hope to serve has dramatically helped the Applicant Group to enhance the design they had in mind for the school. Speaking with people one-on-one at community forums provided proof that Buffalo residents are unhappy with the scarcity of schools in good standing and the limited chances they have in securing enrollment at any of them. The people we spoke with were also open to the concept of charter schools and, specifically, the accommodations RACS would bring in the form of a longer school day, longer school calendar, unique classroom design, effective intervention strategies, and after-school activities. Currently, district schools have limited after school programs and monthly parent activity nights are virtually non-existent. RACS will provide a desperately needed alternative to the failing Buffalo Public Schools.

**Assessment of Family and Community Support** - Respondents to our website have offered several suggestions which have been included in this most recent draft of the charter, including an idea to offer computer literacy classes for parents as well as students. In trading e-mails with the Broadway Fillmore Alive Community Group, we have developed connections to other possible resources in the area. A discussion with a member of the Buffalo Board of Education led us to look at how we addressed providing an African American curriculum (see Section II.C). The RACSs Facebook page has generated a large number of “likes”, or positive responses. In the course of our discussions with families, community groups, teachers and others, we have shared the vision we have for RACS, and more often than not, the response has been to ask how soon the school would open and when enrollment would begin. The Applicant Group is convinced there will

be family and community support for the opening of the school and high demand for the initial 160 openings. Specific statistical evidence is presented next to support the founders conclusions.

Based on lengthy and diversified outreach spanning 28 months, the Applicant Group is confident enrollment targets can be met. Four hundred twelve surveys were collected at outreach events, with seventy-five percent stating they are likely to apply for enrollment at RACS. Seventy-five percent of parents dissatisfied with their children's current school were residents of the Buffalo Public School District. The survey responses, Social Media interactions, (5,162 hits on the website alone) and one-on-one discussions with parents have produced a list of criteria that are of high or moderate importance to families looking for quality schools for their children. The Applicant Group used this input to develop the design features of RACS to incorporate what parents value: Small Class Sizes, Community Service Experiences, Quality Leadership Opportunities and After school programs are important to over 94 percent of respondents; a Positive Behavior System, the location of the school, a nutritious Breakfast and Lunch and Family and Community Activities are valued by greater than 93 percent; and a school welcoming to all cultures with Learning Labs during school recesses are cited by over 90 percent. The design of RACS will strongly align to what Buffalo parents want and will assure successful recruitment and enrollment. Since RACS is to be located within the Buffalo district, the Applicant Group also looked at conditions that might foster a search by Buffalo parents for alternative placements from the home school. In recent years, there has been an increase in transfer requests for children attending low-performing schools. As of February, 2016, only 20 of 55 Buffalo Public Schools were "in Good Standing." As parents compete to get their children into those 20 schools, wait lists have grown and more than 4,000 transfer requests by parents for a School in Good Standing have gone largely unfulfilled since 2011. Charter school wait lists offer further evidence of demand for quality schools. In May of 2015, more than 1,100 children were on waiting lists for Kindergarten openings and more than 500 were on first grade wait lists for local charter schools. Additionally, legislation was being considered at the state level that would have allowed the dismantling of the Buffalo Board of Education for Mayoral Oversight of the school system. In his letter to the governor, Buffalo Mayor, Byron W. Brown, argued that the Buffalo Public Schools have failed to show "substantive progress on behalf of 34,000 children." A conservative assessment of outreach efforts strongly supports the conclusion that Buffalo parents looking for a quality school will respond enthusiastically to RACS's aggressive recruitment campaign, easily creating sufficient demand to meet enrollment targets throughout the first charter term.

#### Sources Referenced for Section 1.D. – Community to be Served

Data taken from the Buffalo Public Schools website: [www.buffaloschools.org](http://www.buffaloschools.org)  
[www.buffaloschools.orghttp://wivb.com/2014/06/05/buffalo-is-4th-poorest-city-in-nation/](http://www.buffaloschools.orghttp://wivb.com/2014/06/05/buffalo-is-4th-poorest-city-in-nation/)  
<http://www.buffalonews.com/opinion/buffalo-news-editorials/efforts-to-improve-dismal-literacy-levels-are-fundamental-to-the-future-of-wny-20150810>

### **I E. Public Outreach:**

**Types of Public Outreach and Information provided to the Public-** RACS's plan for Public Outreach has employed a multi-faceted approach, beginning in Dec, 2013 and continuing beyond the date of this application. Over the past 28 months, outreach has taken the form of **Public Forums, Discussions with Community Leaders and Organizations**, and both **Social Media** and **Traditional Public Awareness Campaigns**. The following information was provided and disseminated to members of the community informing them about the proposed charter school, the intended location, the targeted student population, the grades to be served and a description of our educational program. For evidence of this, see Table 2: *Public Outreach Information* and Attachment 2b-*Evidence of Public Review Process*.

**Fifteen Public Forums** have been scheduled, advertised and completed to date. It is important to the founders of RACS to reach families in all areas within the City of Buffalo, to accomplish this, forums were scheduled and held in a variety of venues which include areas in North, South, East and West Buffalo. All forums were advertised with at least 2 weeks' notice which were posted on the school's website, Facebook page and in hard copy form that was distributed to area daycare and preschool centers including the location at which the event was scheduled to be held. All forums featured a multi-media presentation, printed materials and one-on-one discussions with attendees. Those attending were also encouraged to complete a survey to assist the Applicant Group in tailoring the school's design to the needs of the community and families to be served. Please see Attachment 2a- Initial Samples of Public Outreach for a sample public notice flyer.

Three members of the Applicant Group were able to address the Buffalo Board of Education on 4/23/14, explaining plans for the school and answering questions from both the BOE members and the public in attendance. A follow-up discussion was held with one of the Board members who shared ideas on student/staff recruitment that are reflected in Section I.C- Enrollment, Recruitment and Retention and in Attachment 8a- Hiring and Personnel Policies/Procedures. Future public forums have been scheduled at the North Buffalo Community Center on April 13, 2016 and discussions are underway to schedule additional outreach forums at both the Delavan-Girder Community Center and at Seneca-Babcock Community Center during the months of April and May 2016.

#### **Methods used to provide for Stakeholder Submission of Public Comment-**

The Applicant Group has made particular efforts to inform and solicit the public about the application and design process for the school. To obtain feedback, the following methods were used:

1. Email: An e-mail address, [reachacademycharter@gmail.com](mailto:reachacademycharter@gmail.com), was established on 12/6/13.
2. Website: REACH Academy Charter School website, [www.reachacademycharter.webs.com](http://www.reachacademycharter.webs.com), also went online on 12/6/13. It offered details on the school mission, proposed location, contact information, event information and an online questionnaire to help provide input on the development of the school and solicit parent and community volunteers.
3. Facebook: A Facebook page was created and launched on 2/8/14 to provide information on the proposed school and update the community on the application process and upcoming community outreach events. The public was encouraged to comment and post to the page.
4. New School Questionnaire: A 2-page questionnaire that was handed out at all outreach events. All community members were encouraged to answer the questions based upon how they felt about the proposed school and its program. All respondent data and public comments that were collected can be found in Attachment 2b- Evidence of Public Review Process.

#### **Addressing Public Comment on the Educational and Programmatic Needs of Students-**

In late 2013, the very idea of a new Buffalo charter school that would meet the challenges of locating in one of the poorest areas of the district head on was borne out of encouragement from community members. Frustration over the closure of one charter school and rumors that another nearby charter school was looking to relocate prompted teachers, parents and others to get behind the effort to form an Applicant Group, look for input from stakeholders and submit a strong application to open RACS. From the start of the effort, Applicant Group members knew they wanted a school that would set high goals for students and staff and become a point of pride for the community. Early work sessions settled on the concept of using real world exposure in RACS classrooms to boost literacy and achievement. Members were also committed to small class sizes, quality after school programs, a PBIS framework and a true school/parent/community partnership. They also needed to know more about what parents wanted, so they began to ask what kind of school parents were looking for. The initial overwhelming message was one of dissatisfaction with a lack of space in well performing Buffalo schools. At each community forum or Open House, surveys were completed and many more ideas came from one-on-one discussions between members of the Applicant Group and attendees. Suggestions also came from the RACS website, an e-mail account and via social media. A picture of what RACS needed to look like began to emerge. Please see Attachment 2b – Exhibit 2b.5 for a complete explanation of the feedback received and how it helped to shape the design of the school. While the Applicant Group formed an initial framework for RACS, ideas, feedback and suggestions were actively sought on many different occasions, in many different settings and over a period spanning 28 months. Outreach results certainly validated the framework that formed the basis for the beginnings of the RACS application effort, but many other ideas came from meeting and talking to hundreds of parents across the City of Buffalo, conferring with partners and then integrating what was learned into a stronger, more responsive plan.

#### **1F. Programmatic and Fiscal Impact**

**Buffalo Area Schools** - The City of Buffalo is comprised of 55 public schools (44 elementary/ 11 high), 15 charter schools (10 elementary/5 high) and 12 Parochial Schools (8 elementary/4 high). The proposed area in which RACS is to be located consists of 9 public elementary schools and 2 elementary charter schools. Of these 11 public schools, only 1 school is listed as a school in good standing. Buffalo Public Schools in the 2015-2016 school year have a projected student enrollment of 34,340 students and a district budget of

\$825,800,000. Buffalo-area charter schools in the 2015-2016 school year have a combined enrollment of approximately 8,025 students. The tuition paid to these schools amounts to \$103,500,000. This figure reflects a \$0.00 per pupil tuition increase in the 2016-2017 school year.

**Fiscal Impact-** In year one, RACS anticipates enrolling 160 students and expects a total revenue of \$2,754,805.00 which is 0.33% of the district’s total budget. In Year 5, we anticipate the enrollment of 480 students with anticipated revenue of \$7,550,415 which is 0.91% of the district’s budget. Considering the district’s total budget in year one and the expectation that the budget is likely to increase by year 5, we believe the fiscal impact to the Buffalo Public Schools to be minimal. Additionally, by the end of RACS initial charter the school would be enrolling 1.4% of the student population while only utilizing 0.91% of the districts per pupil revenue. We believe that given healthy wait lists (2,000 students on lists) in Buffalo area charter schools that serve students in Kindergarten through 5<sup>th</sup> grades and that charter school funding comes directly from the school district, any fiscal impact to area charter schools would be negligible.

**Programmatic Impact-** As of February 2016, 59% of Buffalo Public Elementary Schools were designated as either Priority or Focus. Of the 2000 transfer requests made by families in 2013, 1,401 were for Kindergarten through grade five. However, only 353 transfers made were to schools in good standing. Many of the families affected continue looking for alternative schools for their children. Unfortunately, high-performing charter schools have long waiting lists and private schools are not economically feasible for low-income families. Additionally, as of July 23, 2014, Governor Andrew Cuomo signed 2 bills into law making it mandatory for 5 year olds to attend Kindergarten. We believe that RACS will create a new model for a highly-effective learning environment, develop a school culture focused on excellence and high expectations, offer a choice to families who value academic achievement and a high quality education, promote the qualities of service, leadership, character and citizenship, and lay the foundation for a smooth transition for RACS scholars into high school, college and the job market. The Buffalo Board of Education, Buffalo Public School leaders, and local political and community leaders have all been encouraged to join us in our plans for RACS. Our on-going community outreach tells us that RACS will be the quality educational alternative Buffalo parents have been wanting.

**Table 3. Fiscal Impact**

(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)	(F)	(G)	(H)
Operational Year	Enrollment (# of Students)	Per Pupil Allocation	Projected Per Charter Pupil Charter Cost (BxC=D)	Other Projected District Revenue (SPED funding Food, Service, Grants, etc. (E)	Other Projected Funding to Charter School from District (D+E=F)	Total Budget For District (G)	Projected Impact (Districts Overall Funding) (F/G=H)
2017-2018	160	\$12,355	\$1,976,800	\$778,005	\$2,754,805	\$825,800,000	0.33%
2018-2019	240	\$12,355	\$2,965,200	\$881,308	\$3,846,508	\$825,800,000	0.47%
2019-2020	320	\$12,355	\$3,953,600	\$1,094,210	\$5,047,810	\$825,800,000	0.61%
2020-2021	400	\$12,355	\$4,942,000	\$1,357,113	\$6,299,113	\$825,800,000	0.76%
2021-2022	480	\$12,355	\$5,930,400	\$1,620,015	\$7,550,415	\$825,800,000	0.91%

**Sources Referenced for Section 1.F. – Programmatic and Fiscal Impact**

- <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/accountability/.../AccountabilityStatusfor2014-15.xls>
- <http://www.buffaloschools.org/files/1632/2015-16%20budget%20v05.13.2015.pdf>
- [https://stateaid.nysed.gov/charter/html\\_docs/charter\\_1516\\_def.htm](https://stateaid.nysed.gov/charter/html_docs/charter_1516_def.htm)
- <http://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-signs-bills-enabling-buffalo-and-utica-city-school-boards-require-5-year-old>

**SECTION II – EDUCATIONAL PLAN**

**II A. Curriculum and Instruction:**

At RACS, curriculum will be developed around the New York State Common Core Learning Standards. Several commercially available programs will be infused, but teachers will first go through the curriculum design process which is explained below and infuse these programs or parts of these programs in order to strongly align curriculum to the standards.

**Framework for Teaching and Learning** - Curriculum Design and Instructional Delivery are a part of the greater design element entitled *The Six Point Plan to Increasing Student Achievement*. Maintaining a Culture of High Expectations will be explained in Section II. G. Articulating the Curriculum and Ensuring Best Instructional Practices are contained herein II.A. Administering Common Assessments, Providing

Interventions and Monitoring Progress to Remain on Track can be found in Section II. D. Marzano demonstrates how critical having a clear and viable curriculum is to increasing student achievement (Marzano, 2003). Students in each class in a grade level should be learning the same identified content and skills which are clearly expressed in the school's curriculum map and Units of Study. The common core drives the instruction and will be explicitly mapped out in all units prior to the opening of the school year. Grade level teams will work together to develop each unit of study. This is the 2<sup>nd</sup> step in the *Six Point Plan to Increasing Student Achievement*. See Figure II.A.1. Teachers need ongoing collaborative time to plan units to ensure that high quality engaging learning activities are designed.

Children in poverty have fewer opportunities for strong language experiences than children coming from average middle class homes. Weizman and Snow (2001) found that low-income caregivers speak in shorter, more grammatically simpler sentences. There is less back-and-forth, fewer questions asked and fewer explanations given. As a result, children raised in poverty experience a more limited range of language capabilities. In order to close the gap that poverty creates schools need to provide an enormous amount of rich language experiences designed specifically to develop language abilities in vocabulary and background knowledge. The National Reading Panel (2000) concluded that comprehension development cannot be understood without a critical examination of the role played by vocabulary knowledge. Vocabulary is an essential skill in every subject and should be identified in each unit's lesson plans. When high level vocabulary is used pragmatically, students incorporate these words into their repertoire naturally. Beck et al. (2002) proposes that teachers ask themselves whether their students will be able to explain the new words by using words they already know. If so, this suggests that

the new words offer students more precise or sophisticated ways of referring to the concepts they already know something about. Students learn language through experience and through reading. In developing literacy skills, the big five are critical: phonological development, phonics/word study, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension. Reading and writing are very closely connected as is listening and speaking (receptive/expressive reciprocals.) Multiple opportunities for all are essential in developing strong literacy skills. When authentic experiences are limited as is the case with students from poverty, books can build these skills helping to narrow the gap. Units of Study for the core areas of ELA, Math, Science and Social Studies will be developed immediately with other content areas following. Teachers will have time between units to jointly develop lesson plans for each unit plan involving special area teachers incorporating strong authentic learning experiences for each upcoming unit of study.

**Alignment to Common Core State Standards** - During the planning period and throughout the school year, RACS founders, key staff, and/or selected consultants who specialize in Curriculum Design, Common Core Standards and Common Formative Assessments will work with teachers to develop the comprehensive scope and sequence for the rigorous curriculum for the school. The consultants will include nationally recognized authors and presenters, educators, higher-education faculty, professional developers, and/or other curriculum specialists committed to working with children in urban settings. When new members of the school's learning community join RACS, as part of the in-depth orientation provided, teachers will be trained in the following process for curriculum design:

1. **Identify Units of Study** - Units in ELA, Math, Science and Social Studies will be identified and laid out for the entire school year running.
2. **Prioritize Standards** - Priority Standards or essential outcomes represent a carefully selected subset of



Figure II.A.1 – REACH Academy Charter School's Instructional Model

the total list of grade-specific and course-specific standards within each content area. This subset represents what students must know and be able to do by the end of each school year in order to be prepared to enter the next grade level or course (Ainsworth, 2011). Using Ainsworth’s selection criteria: endurance, leverage, readiness for the next level of learning, and alignment to high-stakes assessments, priority standards will be identified and agreed upon.

3. **Map Priority Standards to Units** – Grade level teams will then determine which Priority Standards will be taught with which units to develop the pacing calendar.
4. **“Unwrap” the Standards** – “Unwrapping” a standard is a process of deconstructing the standard. It is an analysis of the standard in order to understand the learning intention (Ainsworth, 2003). To do this, identify the concepts/skills within the standard and agree on the cognitive demand of each skill.
5. **Determine DOK Ceiling Level for Each Standard** – Using Webb’s Depth of Knowledge Levels (DOK), determining the DOK ceiling of a standard is critical in aligning the cognitive rigor of formative assessments to the end-of-year state summative assessments.
  - a. **DOK Level 1** - Recall and Reproduction
  - b. **DOK Level 2** – Skills, Concepts and Basic Reasoning
  - c. **DOK Level 3** – Strategic Thinking
  - d. **DOK Level 4** – Extended Thinking
6. **Develop Common Formative Assessments (CFAs) Tasks for each Standard** - In order to develop effective CFAs, teams will determine the item type and/or product for the assessment followed by developing the assessment items, student directions, scoring guides, rubrics and/or answer keys. Levels for “Advanced,” “Proficient,” “Progressing” and “Needs More Practice” need to be determined for each standard.
7. **Identify Skills and Content to be Taught** - Skills and content that are required in order to meet the learning standards will be identified at this point in the process.
8. **Identify Learning Activities Needed to Achieve Success on the Common Core State Standards** – Cognitive psychologist Daniel Willingham states that students need to interact with content in a deep and thoughtful manner. Through the use of thematic classrooms, activities involving authentic experiences will be designed to teach the skills and content in order to help students make meaningful connections.
9. **Identify Vocabulary for Each Course of Learning** - Vocabulary including technical vocabulary related to the unit theme and scholarly vocabulary related to the skills and content needs to be identified and explicitly taught in each unit of study.

Units will be universally located and collaboratively developed. Initially, hard copies will be developed and centrally located. Later, once units are refined, they will be accessible online for the entire professional learning community to view. Each unit will clearly articulate the following: ~The common core priority standards that the unit focuses on, ~Learning objectives for each unit, ~The learning activities to achieve each objective, ~Technical vocabulary related to the unit/theme, ~Scholarly vocabulary related to the skills being developed, ~Common formative assessments with proficiency levels defined and ~Interventions and enrichment opportunities. Benchmark Assessments that mimic the New York State Testing Program will be developed to determine students’ proficiency of the standards.

**ELA Curriculum:** A balanced literacy environment will be developed and maintained as the focus of each classroom. The curriculum of the balanced literacy classroom will be achieved through the following components as suggested by the Columbia’s Teachers College Reading and Writing Project: read-aloud, shared reading, phonics/word study, interactive writing, small group instruction (guided reading, strategy lessons, and interventions), reading workshop and writing workshop.

While maintaining a culture of high expectations, the balanced literacy classroom will build on each student’s individual literacy strengths and needs in the continuous development of listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. The workshop model will provide the needed scaffolding of instruction for both reading and writing. The reading of informational text as well as quality literature and academic vocabulary development will serve as a priority in alignment with the NYS CCLS. Common literary themes will be integrated into the curricula throughout the school day.

As a support for teachers and students, special education teachers will collaborate and assist teachers in the development of effective literacy practices as they co-teach utilizing strategies based on best literacy practices. Support by the Special Ed. Teacher will also be provided for interventions based on the Response to Intervention model, progress monitoring assessments, and the development of appropriate instruction to meet

student needs.

**Components of the Balanced Literacy Classroom:** Using the classroom learning environment's theme as an anchor, instruction will focus on skills and knowledge. The learning environment's theme will allow students to question, explore, connect, and research topics in order to build background knowledge and vocabulary. ~

**Read-aloud:** Books for read-aloud will be deliberately selected to support and enhance themes driving instruction. Daily read-alouds will provide students with opportunities to interact with the text and experience characters and plots that support the curriculum while students experience quality literature. Engagement with the texts will provide opportunities for students to converse and develop both receptive and expressive language skills. ~ **Shared Reading:** Shared reading will allow teacher and students to focus on a text together while addressing growth in fluency, print strategies, and writing conventions. Modeling by the teacher during shared reading will serve as a valuable example for students as skills are refined. Shared reading will also serve as a means of addressing specific needs as identified during reading and writing conferences and guided reading. ~ **Phonics/Word Study:** Students enter Kindergarten with a wide range of prior knowledge

concerning letters and sounds and the range of skills continues to present challenges in first grade. Formative assessments followed by progress monitoring will form the basis for understanding each student's zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978) so that individual needs can be met. The phonics and word study curriculum will include phonemic awareness, letter/sound associations, understanding of spelling patterns, and building mastery of high-frequency words as well as automaticity in decoding. ~ **Interactive Writing:**

Interactive writing will provide modeling of letter/sound relationships, spelling and grammatical patterns, and punctuation conventions. The teacher will provide scaffolding of skills in order to provide students with a risk-free environment in which to practice their writing skills prior to working independently during writing workshop. Use of exemplar texts will provide models for themes/genres. ~ **Small Group Instruction (Guided Reading, Strategy Lessons, and Interventions):**

Small group instruction will address the individual needs of students as instruction is tailored to their instructional levels and appropriate text difficulty is utilized. Small group strategy and skill lessons will be addressed through collaborative planning and teaching by classroom teachers using increasingly challenging texts. ~ **Reading Workshop:** Using Lucy Calkins' Units of Study, Reading Workshop will begin with a mini lesson in a small group center that explicitly addresses workshop procedural elements, a targeted skill or strategy, or literary analysis. Students will read independently from a book that they have selected at other centers. Written journal responses will extend the student's opportunity to respond to the literature. Students will address themes as they select from a variety of genres and read at their independent reading level to build stamina and skill. The teacher will instead conference briefly with individual students to assess progress, address fluency and comprehension skills identified during guided reading, and assess whether text difficulty is appropriate for the student to enhance achievement. ~ **Writing Workshop:**

Using Lucy Calkins' Units of Study, Writing Workshop will follow a similar format to Reading Workshop and will begin with a mini lesson in a small group center to model a skill or strategy in a daily small group. Students will write independently and teachers will briefly confer with students to assess progress and discuss a teaching point based on the writing. Explanatory writing, narrative writing, and opinion pieces, as prescribed by the NYS CCLS, will be modeled during small group mini lessons and completed independently at another center by students during Writing Workshop.

**Literacy Time:** The components listed below illustrate how the daily instructional time in English Language Arts will be used:

- |                            |                                      |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| * Guided Reading Groups    | * Large Group Mini-Lesson in Reading |
| * Independent Reading Time | * Reading Vocabulary Work            |
| * Research Activity        | * Listening Center                   |
| * Phonics/Word Study       | * Computer ELA Software Group        |
| * Sight Words              | * Large Group Mini-Lesson in Writing |
| * Guided Writing Group     |                                      |

### Curriculum Resources for ELA

- Earobics Computerized Program for Phonological Awareness (K-2)
- Fountas and Pinnell's; Guided Reading Model (K-5)
- Lucy Calkins' Reader's Workshop Model and Lucy Calkins' Writer's Workshop Model (K-5)
- Fountas and Pinnell's Phonic Lessons/Word Study (K-3)
- Incremental Rehearsal of Sight Words (K-3)

- Fluency; Ladders to Literacy, Paved for Success
- Bringing Words Alive; Beck – for Vocabulary Development

**Mathematics Curriculum:** Teachers will develop Units of Study derived from the Math Modules found on EngageNY.org and a commercially available textbook series such as Math In-Focus, Common Core Edition by Houghton-Mifflin Harcourt – 4<sup>th</sup> Edition, 2015. The program has the following four components:

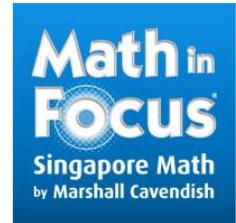
~ **Investigate** – Teacher Directed – Investigate invites scholars to sing, clap, rhyme and discuss colorful, playful scene in the Big Book while the teacher systematically employs and elicits related math talk.

~ **Discover** –Teacher Directed - Discover provides hands-on work to allow students to act out or engage actively with the new math idea.

~ **Explore** –Teacher Facilitated – Explore reinforces and enhances concepts as children go one step further with the concept.~ **Apply** –Teacher Facilitated – Apply provides students the opportunity to work independently with paper and pencil to practice the new concept or skill.

### Curriculum Resources for Math

- Math in Focus Singapore Math by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt
- Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Math
- Guided Math by Jan Christianson
- Scholastic Math Inventory (SMI) for Assessment
- *Do the Math* by Marilyn Burns for Intervention



**Social Studies Curriculum:** The teaching and learning of Social Studies and African-

American history and culture will be guided by the NYS CCLS for Social Studies and CCLS for English Language Arts in the Content Areas. Utilizing the resource TCI’s online *Social Studies Alive*, scholars at RACS will learn about the world around them. In exciting and engaging activities, students will be captivated in learning. History Alive is based upon the following five well-established theories:

\* Understanding by Design - Wiggins and McThighe ;\* Nonlinguistic Representation – Marzano;

\* Multiple Intelligences – Gardner; \* Cooperative Interaction – Cohen; and \* Spiral Curriculum – Bruner.

**African-American History and Culture Infusion in Social Studies:** Using the National History Education

Clearinghouse, teachers will develop an intensive infusion of African-American History into the Social Studies Curriculum and into the entire school curriculum. Culturally-responsive literature, where diversity of characters is common, will be readily available in all classrooms. Highlighted will be



influential black politicians, musicians, artists, inventors, scientists, etc. Cultural celebrations, traditions and observances will be recognized and explored. Study of local history will also be incorporated. Additionally, Character and Civics lessons as expressed in our Mission and Charter Specific Goals will also be incorporated into Social Studies lessons.

### Curriculum Resources for Social Studies:

- Social Studies Alive! by TCI
- National Geographic Social Studies Curriculum

**Science Curriculum:** Driven by the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), students at REACH

Academy Charter School will engage in an applied inquiry based science program called *Bring Science Alive!*

by TCI. *Bring Science Alive!* takes a comprehensive approach to teaching science through hands-on investigations, online tutorials, reading, and assessments which all support and build off one another. *Bring*

*Science Alive!* supports language arts instruction in the science curriculum with vocabulary development, reading strategies, a variety of writing activities, and numerous opportunities to develop speaking and listening

skills. Student mastery is measured with rigorous assessments that cover comprehension, science and

engineering skills, and critical thinking. Students will not only learn *about* science but will *practice* science through an inquiry-based, hands-on approach that engages students in scientific work. They will hypothesize,

explore, experiment, analyze and draw conclusions. Science will not be a text-book driven subject; teachers will employ a range of resources, including exploration of the natural environment in the school and

community.

### Curriculum Resources for Science:

- Science Alive! by TCI

- National Geographic Science Curriculum

**Humanities - Music and Art:** Based on the New York State Learning Standards for the Arts, students will:

- actively engage in the processes that constitute creation and performance in the arts (dance, music, theatre and visual arts) and participate in various roles in the arts; be knowledgeable about and make use of the materials and resources available for participation in the arts in various roles;
- respond critically to a variety of works in the arts, connecting the individual work to other works and to other aspects of human endeavor and thought; and
- develop an understanding of the personal and cultural forces that shape artistic communication and how the arts in turn shape the diverse cultures of past and present society.

Scholars at RACS will attend one 30-minute session per week with a music teacher and one 30-minute session per week with an art teacher. They will engage in both guided lessons and independent activities that are designed around both the New York State Standard cross-curricularly to broaden the background experiences/vocabulary associated with the classroom learning environment.

**Physical Education and Health:** Based upon the New York State Physical Education Learning Standards, students will:

- have the necessary knowledge and skills to establish and maintain physical fitness;
- participate in physical activity and maintain personal health;
- acquire the knowledge and ability necessary to create and maintain a safe and healthy environment; and
- understand and be able to manage their personal and community resources.

Students will attend Physical Education class daily outside of the classroom for a 30-minute session.

Whenever possible and feasible, students will go outside to engage in physical activity in fresh air. We at RACS believe that students need to get regular opportunities to exert and expend energy to help maintain sustained focus throughout the day. For this reason, physical education is scheduled daily.

**Technology and Library:** Based upon the New York State Learning Standards for Technology, scholars will:

- access, generate, process and transfer information using appropriate technologies;
- apply technological knowledge and skills to design, construct, use and evaluate products and systems to satisfy human and environmental needs; and
- will apply the knowledge and thinking skills of technology to address real-life problems and make informed decisions.

Students at RACS will attend three 30-minute periods weekly in Library and Computer Lab. Integration of the Common Core English Language Arts standards will be implemented through research, and multiple opportunities for reading and writing. Both the Computer Teacher and Library Media Specialist will support classroom themes and add another dimension to the classroom theme through a cross-curricular approach.

**Curriculum that Furthers the School Mission and Key Design Elements** – The curriculum driven by the New York State Common Core Learning Standards will be specifically designed to ensure the achievement of high academic standards. By delivering the curriculum in a hands-on authentic thematic learning environment built on rich language and learning experiences with a heavy emphasis on vocabulary development, we will ensure every student's success. The curriculum will be delivered in a multitude of venues including; large group, small group, centers and technological methods. These opportunities will allow students with disabilities, ELL's and those less advantaged to reach success. *The Six Point Plan to Increasing Student Achievement* ensures success by providing interventions and closely monitoring progress so that a scholar is not given the opportunity to fail.

**Curriculum Revision Process** - *The Six Point Plan to Increasing Student Achievement* outlines the teaching and instructional framework which drives success. The process will occur yearly during summer staff development. Staff will work together first by outlining the curriculum map for each content area and developing the detailed units of study. The units will continue to be refined, reviewed, shared and enhanced regularly throughout the school year on Mondays during early dismissal when staff will work regularly on the various 6 points of the plan. Staff will work in grade levels and across grade levels when preparing curriculum and instructional strategies. Review of the units will continually occur and will be updated as teachers reflect and refine the units each year. Having units available electronically for all teachers to view will provide opportunities for cross curricular development of topics and sequencing of skills over grades.

Curriculum is a dynamic, living document that is continually changed, updated and developed. After each

unit is carried out, teachers will go through a questionnaire that will be designed to have teachers reflect on the success of each unit. By analyzing assessment data, teachers will determine which learning activities had the most impact on student learning and which yielded the least positive benefits. Curriculum will then be redesigned and redeveloped for the following year. All teachers will have the opportunity to develop activities for each unit.

**Instructional Best Practices:** Ensuring Best Instructional Strategies is the 3<sup>rd</sup> Point in the *Six Point Plan to Increasing Student Achievement* (See Figure II.A.1.). Students learn best when they are actively engaged in their work. Student engagement increases when tasks include authenticity, choice, creative thinking, critical thinking, and those that are product-focused or have an audience incorporated (Schlechty, 2011). Students learn best when faced with genuine challenges, choices, and responsibilities in their own learning. Students need to thoughtfully interact with content to increase understanding (Daniel Wilmingham, 2009). Large group lectures, where students are passively listening are not an effective way of teaching students, yet continue to be a heavily relied upon practice in classrooms across the nation. The classroom environment will be built to enhance learning and provide additional language experiences. Students will be the active participants in the classroom, not the teacher. Teachers should be the facilitator of learning, not the disseminator of knowledge (Rubley and Phillips, 1999.) Active, hands-on concrete experiences are the most powerful and natural form of learning. Students should be immersed in the most direct possible experience of the content of every subject. Investigating students' own questions should take precedence over arbitrarily and distantly selected content (S. Zemelman, H. Daniels, A. Hyde, 2012.) Learning is socially constructed and interactive; teachers need to create classroom interactions that scaffold learning.

**Instructional Strategies:**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. Center- Based Learning                    | 2. Mini-Lessons  |
| 3. Small Guided Group Instruction            | 4. Hands-on Learning Activities  |
| 5. Thematic Classrooms/Experiential Learning | 6. Reader's and Writer's Workshop  |
| 7. Incremental Rehearsal                     | 8. Guided Reading, Guided Writing, Read-Alouds, Shared Reading, Reading Conferences, Writing Conferences |

**The Curriculum will Address the Needs of Special Populations** - The thematic grade-level units will be developed to ensure alignment both horizontally and vertically. They will be designed with a real world connection and/or application for students to be actively engaged learners in authentic learning environments right in their own classroom. Classrooms are inviting, safe, and display authentic learning. Active learning with movement of students doing, talking and collaborating will be evident in every classroom while allowing them to work at their own pace. Students are exposed to a variety of experiences that are suited to help them understand learning concepts. Focus will be on the varying cognitive styles/abilities of individual student needs. Students have access to a wide variety of genres and authors for their choosing. In small group learning situations, students will apply what they know/learn to make decisions and assist them in solving real world problems.

**Meeting Benchmark 1 of the Charter School Performance Framework** – The Six Point Plan to Increasing Student Achievement ensures success on Benchmark 1 of the Charter School Performance Framework. Students will be provided a comprehensive intervention approach that requires finding successful strategies to intervene before a scholar even has an opportunity to fail. Best practices in providing interventions and careful progress monitoring guarantees students' success. (See Section II.D for Assessment for a detailed description on this process.)

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## **II.B. Special Student Populations and Related Services**

**Responsive Plan for Special Student Populations** - At RACS, all students, including those with disabilities, ELL's, and those at risk for deficits in literacy and math skills will have access to a rigorous and high-quality educational experience. Accordingly, all aspects of the school's environment, including programming, curriculum, and instruction, will be inclusive and specially designed for all learners. All scholars, regardless of demographics, language proficiency or disability can demonstrate high levels of academic growth through a structured, focused environment where expectations are clear and support is plentiful. Therefore, a specially designed structured program to ensure that all ELL's (ELLs) and students with disabilities will become proficient readers and writers has been developed. At RACS all students will be given the necessary tools to become citizens who can effectively communicate. The different approaches within the balanced literacy system will help meet all the needs of students at their own level of language development. The classrooms in the balanced literacy system are structured in ways that are predictable and supportive for students who are developing ELL's and those with learning disabilities. With clear, predictable structures, children become more comfortable participating. The predictability of the workshop provides reassurance to a child who struggling or one who is just learning English (Teachers College Reading and Writing Project, 2014.)

Through the balanced literacy approach, instruction can easily be differentiated to tailor to the students' unique needs. The Special Education Teacher and ESL Teacher will both be involved in creating lessons with the Classroom Teacher and modifying lessons to meet specific needs. Teachers will help to tailor lessons to individual student needs and ensure the effectiveness of the approach being utilized. Students with Special Needs will take part in the same learning experiences and opportunities as the general education population. Given the appropriate level of support, they will have access to the same content, and be expected to demonstrate academic growth to accomplish grade level benchmarks. During Reader's and Writer's Workshop and Math Instruction, students will receive a highly personalized approach using best practices to improve student learning and achievement by providing scholars with an integrated and comprehensive standards-based program using innovative teaching and learning methods. RACS will feature an Integrated Co-Teaching model for students with disabilities. Through this active classroom model, both service providers can provide as much direct instruction as needed while pushing into the classroom. Teachers will utilize the 6 formats of Co-Teaching described by M. Friend (1996) as; 1 Teach/1 Support, 1 Teach/1 Observe, Station Teaching, Team Teaching, Alternative Teaching and Parallel Teaching.

ELLs understanding of new concepts will be enhanced in the classroom through instruction that uses routines, embeds redundancy in lessons, provides explicit discussion of vocabulary and structure, and teaches students metacognitive skills (August & Hakuta, 1997). Later in the day, an uninterrupted 30-minute Response to Intervention Block is provided. During this time, no new instruction will be introduced when the ENL Teacher will work with students when critical core instruction will not be missed.

**Accessing Extra-Curricular Programming** - Extracurricular activities play an important role in every child's life. Children with disabilities and ELL's have the right not to be discriminated against on the basis of disability or language proficiency. These activities provide opportunities for them to learn new skills, improve their talents and self-esteem, and develop relationships with their peers.

RACS will follow in accordance with the federal law known as The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA.) This law affords children with disabilities the right to access a "free and appropriate education" with reasonable accommodations. A "free and appropriate education" may include physical education classes, including physical and occupational therapy or adaptive P.E. as well as any extracurricular activities that may be available to the general student population. Under this law, students cannot be discriminated against on the basis of disability. If necessary RACS will implement necessary modifications or provide accommodations for students with disabilities to participate in extracurricular activities. For example, a student in a wheel chair who has a Personal Care Aide (PCA) during the school day to help with personal care needs such as toileting or feeding would be provided a PCA at all extra-curricular events as well.

**Responsiveness of Classroom Environment and Instructional Approach** - "Classroom environments are most effective when they are literate and purposeful, organized and accessible, and most of all, authentic." (Debbie Miller, 2008). Designing the room arrangement is a top priority in balanced literacy classrooms

since the environment directly affects the teaching and learning that takes place in a classroom. At RACS, the classrooms will be a welcoming, joyful place where conversation, collaboration, and inquiry are promoted for all student learners. Students will be actively engaged in their pursuit of knowledge and view themselves as readers, writers, mathematicians, scientists, historians, and explorers. In today's classroom, students come from all walks of life. This includes different cultures, religions, nationalities, and demographics. The job of a teacher is no longer to present the information one way, but in multiple ways to meet the needs of each child. Each child comes to the classroom with his or her own experiences and levels of literacy. In order to build upon each student's schemata successfully, the teacher must be aware of each student's background (Tompkins, 2010.) Using a balanced literacy approach will not only help students to develop literacy skills efficiently, but will also meet their intricate needs through differentiated instruction.

**Processes and Procedures to Identify, Assess and Service Special Student Populations** – RACS will employ New York State certified Special Education Teachers to provide support and instruction to students with disabilities. Additionally, the school will utilize a Director of Student Services to oversee the special education program and ensure compliance with New York State regulations, Charter School law, Child Find, Section 504 and IDEA. As part of the oversight of the special education program, the Director who will be certified as a Special Education Teacher will manage and review the referral process, ensure that mandated services are received and submit annual reports in compliance with 34 CFR §300.750.

The RtI process at RACS will be used to drive decisions around supporting student performance. However, at any time, a parent/guardian may refer their child for special education evaluations to determine if they qualify for special education services. Students who have not yet been identified and have been attending the school will be constantly monitored through the RtI system. During Data team meetings, teachers and administrators will work collaboratively to closely monitor student progress. Teams will meet with the School Based Assistance Team to discuss students who are receiving on-going intensive support and continue to be significantly below grade level to determine if a referral to the Committee on Special Education is warranted. Working closely with Buffalo Public Schools and other home districts, the Director of Student Services will initiate a referral to the Committee on Special Education. A referral to the CSE will be considered only after RtI strategies have proven insufficient to address the student's needs. Once the parents have received the Procedural Safeguards Notice explaining their rights and have signed the Consent to Test Release Form from the home district, the school will comply with the district in securing an in depth assessment by a district school psychologist. The Director of Student Services will ensure all needed individuals are present for the CSE meeting. If a disability is determined, the CSE will develop an IEP. Services for Integrated Co-Teaching (consistent with Buffalo's current Special Education model) will include having the certified special education teacher co-teach in a classroom with 4 to 5 identified students out of 20 for half the day. The Special Education teacher will then co-teach with a different classroom for the second half of the day. A Teaching Assistant will be present in the classroom during the second half of the day. The instructional Special Education program will be evaluated by examining the growth scores of each student and how much the gap has been reduced each year.

**504 Plans** - Students who do not qualify for Special Education Services but still have a disability that impacts their ability to access the curriculum may be eligible for a 504 plan. Under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, a student must be determined to: (1) have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities; or (2) have a record of such impairment; or (3) be regarded as having such impairment. Section 504 requires that a school provide a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) to qualified students who have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. Students who qualify under Section 504 will receive accommodations and modifications. Once the disability is documented, a 504 plan will be developed. The teacher, the parent, The Director of Student Services and other relevant staff will be involved in the development of the plan. The plan can be reviewed and amended as often as necessary, at least annually.

**Screening Process For Students Suspected of Having a Disability:** The Identification of Students with Disabilities - RACS will comply with the Federal Child Find requirements (34 CFR §300.125) which require schools to have a procedure for identifying, locating, and evaluating students with disabilities. Upon new student enrollment, the Director of Student Services will contact the student's home district to request student records and determine if the student had previously been identified as a student with a disability. Those

documents will then be evaluated in order to determine any mandated services and RACS's ability to meet those requirements. If a student's IEP recommends services that RACS is not able to accommodate the child, the school will work with the district's Committee on Special Education, as well as the student's family in order to decide on the appropriate course of action.

**Process and Procedures to Identify, Assess and Serve Students who are English Language Learners -**

RACS will establish a protocol for screening incoming students to determine if any students may be ELL's. All newly enrolled students will be administered the Home Language Questionnaire. If it is determined that another language is spoken in the home, the ENL Teacher will conduct an informal interview with the student and his/her parents in their native language (using an interpreter, if necessary). If after the interview, the ENL teacher verifies that the student may be a potential ELL, he/she will administer the New York State Identification Test for English Language Learners (NYSITELL) to determine a placement for an appropriate program. Any student who scores below the designated proficiency level will be considered Limited English Proficient (LEP) and will be eligible for special language instructional services. The NYSITELL will be administered only once to each incoming student.

**Assessment -** RACS annually determines the level of English proficiency of all students identified as LEP, using the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT) as required by the Commissioner's guidelines and CR Part 154.2)(c). All ELL/LEP students, who have been enrolled in school in the United States for one year or more will also be administered the New York State ELA Assessment. Regardless of performance on the ELA assessment, in order to exit from ELL/LEP classification, students must meet English proficiency as measured by the NYSESLAT.

**Placement and Services:** With the school's structured immersion approach, all ELLs will learn in the same classrooms as English-speaking children. Teachers will be given specific and general training on identifying scholars who continue to experience difficulty on English-related issues. LEP scholars may receive "push-in" English training to facilitate improvement of English, and will be frequently paired with English-speaking scholars in the classroom. In order to maximize our LEP program's effectiveness, parents will be consulted and encouraged to guide their children's placement and service requirements. Each year, after ELLs have been identified as needing LEP services, parents will be invited to meet with teachers and administrators to accomplish a common goal: all scholars will become proficient readers, writers, and speakers and listeners of English.

**Sheltered English Instruction -** We believe that developing a strong proficiency in English as soon as possible will enable all Limited English Proficiency (LEP) scholars to reach the academic goals established for all scholars. Therefore, we will provide Sheltered English instruction to improve a child's English proficiency. Sheltered English Instruction is a methodology for teaching LEP scholars the English language above the beginner level in developing grade level content – content area knowledge, academic skills, and increased English proficiency. In Sheltered English classes, teachers use clear, direct, simple English and a wide array of scaffolding strategies to communicate meaningful input in the content areas to students. Learning activities will connect new content to students' prior knowledge, that require collaboration among students, and that spiral through curriculum material.

**Transition/Exiting:** The school's exit criteria for scholars with limited English proficiency are based on the scholar's achievement or progress measured annually by the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT.) Scores on the NYSESLAT indicate the proficiency level the scholar has achieved each year, and whether or not the scholar's level of English is high enough to exit the LEP program. Evaluation of the ENL program will take place annually involving an analysis of the scholars' growth of the intended benchmarks to English proficiency.

**Programs, Resources and Personnel used to Assist Special Education Students -** At RACS all classrooms will affirm diversity by including students with disabilities and addressing the individual needs of all students. The Director of Student Services will coordinate all services of students with special needs, act as the liaison with the CSE from the Buffalo Public Schools, and support compliance with all state and federal guidelines regarding all services of students with special needs. They will coordinate all related service providers and support organizations that serve students and their families such as wrap around services provided by Catholic Charities of Buffalo. They will also conduct frequent walk-throughs to observe

classroom practices and review academic and discipline data to ensure all students with special needs are being supported appropriately. RACS will meet the needs of students with disabilities by providing:

\* **Special Education Integrated Co-Teaching Services (ICT):** A key element of the co-teaching model is the increased instructional intensity that comes through the collaboration between General and Special Education Teachers. By sharing responsibilities through co-planning, teachers are able to develop a more comprehensive program that can adapt to the needs of all students. Adaptations and accommodations made within the class will be provided for individual students, and in some circumstances, for the entire class.

\* **Accommodations and Modifications:** The Director of Student Services will work with staff members to ensure that all accommodations and modifications for students with disabilities are being implemented in accordance with the IEPs and that specially designed instruction is driving the programs.

\* **Progress Monitoring:** The Director of Student Services will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the special education programming, based on how students perform on their IEP goals as well as their mastery of grade level standards.

\* **Counseling and Psychological Supports:** Services will be provided to improve students' mental and emotional health, including individual and group assessments, interventions, and referrals. When appropriate, or dictated by a student's IEP, individual or group counseling services will be provided. Efforts will be made so that the provision of counseling and psychological services will not cause the student to miss valuable instructional time.

\* **Social and Behavioral Supports:** Services will be provided to improve students' social and emotional growth and encourage age appropriate behaviors. Strategies such as modeling positive character traits and role-playing appropriate social interactions will be implemented. Elements of the school culture will encourage the development of Character, Leadership, Citizenship and Service as outlined in our mission. Appropriate student interactions are outlined in our Design Element; *Maintaining a Culture of High Expectations* and the school's Code of Conduct. All adults on staff will be held accountable for modeling positive interactions and coaching students on decision-making, conflict resolution, and positive communication techniques. For students who demonstrate challenging behavior, a functional behavioral assessment and/or a behavior intervention plan will be completed.

**Processes and Procedures for Providing Specialized Instruction:** RACS will offer Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) to provide a variety of supports for students for a half of a school day and in accordance with the mandated minutes on their individualized education plans. In these classes, students with IEPs learn alongside their general education peers given the support of both a general education teacher and special education teacher, which allows for greater small group work and individualized attention. Additionally all teachers will be trained in and have ongoing training for specially designing lessons which they can adapt to meet the needs of their specific learners

Specially designed instruction will be devised to ensure access to the general curriculum through modifications so that each student can meet the same academic standards as his/her nondisabled peers and to ensure progress toward meeting IEP goals and objectives. Specially designed instruction (SDI) at RACS will adapt, as appropriate, to the needs of the child, the content, methodology, or delivery of instruction to address the unique needs of a child that results from having a disability; and to ensure access of the child to the general curriculum, so that he or she can meet the educational standards. Specially designed instruction will be organized and planned instructional activities provided by the certified Special Education Teacher who will modify, as appropriate the content, methodology, or delivery of instruction. The instruction will be individualized and specially designed for the student with a disability and different from what the general education student receives. The instruction will be linked to the student's IEP goals and objectives. SDI will be planned, organized and meaningful in that it will be an intentional and systematic process that specifically addresses the student's needs as expressed in the IEP goals and objectives.

**Working with the District to Ensure that Eligible Students Receive Services** - The Director of Student Services will communicate with the Committee on Special Education Chair at each district of residence on IEP-related items, service provisions, and other matters of special education. RACS School will provide the services as mandated on the child's IEP if capable of being provided by the school. Occasionally, students will be recommended for specialized schools, or in a limited number of cases, may be referred to specialized programs which the charter school cannot offer. In instances such as this, RACS will work with the home

district and the parent to find the appropriate placement for their child. RACS will also work directly with the district to accommodate and schedule related services as mandated on a student's IEP, which may be contracted out through a private provider such as Optimal Therapy Associates Services (OTAS) to ensure fair and adequate funding for related student services. The Director of Student Services will maintain ongoing communication with the student registrar, the finance department, and/or the CSE of each district of residence to confirm enrollment, confirm services the district will provide, and ensure that funding has been received. The Director of Student Services and the school accountant will meet on a monthly basis to review the funding received from districts, discuss changes in enrollment and related services and monitor projections.

**Overseeing the IEP Process** - The Director of Student Services will oversee the process of managing all IEP records and ensure the compliance of all plans is in place. All confidential documents, such as IEPs and evaluations will be kept in a secure location such as a locked filing cabinet or stored electronically in a secure network folder. Working with IEP-Direct, the home district's electronic system for IEP management, IEPs will be signed in and out of the Director's office for all service providers and Special Education Teachers and other Teachers who work directly with the student.

**Process for Coordinating and Communicating:** At RACS, the General Education Teacher and the Special Education Teacher will have one common planning period together daily where they will work collectively to plan, assess, progress monitor, track goals, and develop IEPs. Data team meetings will also be scheduled once a week for two hours where grade levels will work on various aspects of *The Six Point Plan to Increasing Student Achievement*. During this time, all teachers on the grade level will review and progress monitor data to determine appropriate instruction and intervention for all their students. The two Special Education Teachers will work to provide specially designed instruction for students with disabilities.

**Ancillary Support Services** - RACS is committed to the establishment of systems that fulfill school's mission and support the students, their families and the Buffalo community in overcoming the limitations often posed by poverty, disability and language barriers. For this reason, a partnership has been secured between the school and Catholic Charities of Buffalo. This partnership will bring the *Closing the Gap* program to the school, which connects families with providers of tutoring, mental health, and other support services including food and clothing. In addition, the *Foster Grandparent Program* will bring older adults, from the community, who can make a difference in the lives of children by volunteering in the classrooms of RACS. The school will also provide space, within the school, to Catholic Charities for the purpose of providing Adult Education Services.

\* **Related Services:** RACS will offer Speech/Language therapy, Occupational therapy, and Physical therapy as related services. The school will employ a Speech Language Pathologist. Occupational and Physical therapy will be contracted out to a third party. The Speech Language Therapist (SLP) will screen students annually for speech language and hearing difficulties. The SLP will work with classroom and special education teachers to plan lessons to push into the classrooms as well as provide small group and individual therapy sessions.

\***Technological and Career Ready Supports:** Programs will be offered within RACS to families of students, community members and other persons over the age of 18 that require job skills training. After a long absence, many people find a lack of computer skills a major obstacle to returning to the workforce. Job-readiness skills training programs, such as cover letter and resume writing, Microsoft Office Applications and effective job search techniques, will be designed for individuals in the Buffalo community who are planning to return to work. These services will be offered through RACS as well as through the Wagee's and Tomorrow's Youth Today programs offered through Catholic Charities of Buffalo.

**Gifted Populations** - Believing that all students are uniquely gifted and exceptionally talented in different areas, RACS has developed a structured program that allows individual students to go beyond the expectations. Through our balanced literacy approach, students will have opportunities to explore new topics, research questions they have developed and engage in inquiry-based thinking. Enrichment activities will be offered in all classrooms. Students may also be accelerated to work with students on their own levels in the next grade above their current one. Information will be collected from students, parents, and families through surveys, meetings, and other communications about their satisfaction, questions, and comments about the quality of the special education programming. If data from these sources reveal that students' are not

meeting expected outcomes, an outside independent consultant who specializes in evaluation of Special Education Programs will be contracted.

**Evaluating the Special Education Instructional Program** - To evaluate the efficacy of the school’s instructional special education program and inform and enhance services, the Director of Student Services, Classroom and Special Education Teachers and the Head of Schools will regularly review data from classroom and school wide assessments that indicate whether students are meeting established benchmarks developed on a students’ IEP, as well as those benchmarks set forth for the student body at each grade level. Programmatic audits will also be conducted to make sure special education plan meeting logs and minutes are compliant with state and school guidelines. Teachers will be asked to fill out surveys regarding the value of the training, materials, and resources received in meeting the needs of their special student population.

**Sources Referenced for Section II.B: Special Student Populations and Related Services**

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Miller, Debbie, *Teaching with Intention, Defining Beliefs, Aligning Practice, Taking Action*, Stenhouse, Portland, Maine, 2008.

Teachers College, Reading and Writing Project, 2014. *Research Base Underlying the Teachers College Reading and Writing Workshop’s Approach to Literacy Instruction*. <http://readingandwritingproject.org/about/research-base>. March 25, 2016

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**II C. Achievement Goals:**

The incoming student population will be predominantly from the Buffalo Public School District. The average number of students with disabilities is 22%. The average number of students who are ELL’s is 14%. While the overall percent of students in Buffalo who come from families who qualify for the Federal Free and Reduced Lunch Program (FRLP) is 79%, it is expected that due to the location for RACS the FRLP rate will be more than 90%.

**Buffalo Public Schools Academic Data** – Overall Buffalo Public Schools (BPS) did not see an increase in students meeting proficiency from the 2014 to the 2015 school year on the New York State Assessments in English Language Arts. In both 2014 and 2015, student proficiency rate for ELA was 12%. Statewide, 31% of students met proficiency in ELA in 2015. In Math, Buffalo Public Schools had a 13% proficiency rate in 2014 and showed a 2% increase to 15% proficiency in 2015. Statewide, 38% of students met proficiency in math in 2015. RACS will be a K-5 school after the first charter term is up for renewal. During that time, 320 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> graders will take the New York State Assessments. Currently, 12% of the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students in BPS were proficient on the 2015 ELA state assessment. 14% of the 4<sup>th</sup> grade students and 11% of 5<sup>th</sup> grade students in Buffalo were proficient in ELA. For Math, 17% of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students in BPS were proficient on the 2015 Math Assessment while 18% of 4<sup>th</sup> graders and 18% of 5<sup>th</sup> graders were proficient in math.

**Goals for Achievement**

**Goal I: Using the NYSED Charter School Performance Framework Indicators and Measures for Student Performance, the following tool will be utilized to assess measures of high academic standards.**

	Indicator	Measure	Meets Level
<b>I.1. Student Progress Over Time (Growth)</b>			
I.1.a.	Aggregate Growth	Unadjusted Mean Growth Percentile (MGP) for all students on NYS assessments	State Average
I.1.b.	Subgroup Growth	Unadjusted Mean Growth Percentile (MGP) for all accountability subgroups	State Average
I.1.c.	Performance Index: Aggregate growth to proficiency	Performance Index (which accounts for the number of students who are proficient or those making growth sufficient to achieve proficiency within 3 years or by Grade 8).	Effective Annual Measurable Objective Target
I.1.d.	Performance Index: Subgroup growth to proficiency	Performance Index (which accounts for the number of students who are proficient or those making growth sufficient to achieve proficiency within 3 years or by Grade 8).	Effective Annual Measurable Objective Target
<b>I.2. Student Achievement (Attainment)</b>			
I.2.a.	Aggregate Proficiency	% of students proficient on 3-8 state assessments for all students	State Average
I.2.b.	Subgroup Proficiency	% of students proficient on 3-8 state assessments for all accountable subgroups	State Average
I.2.c.	Similar Schools Comparison	Effect Size in Comparative Regression Analysis controlling for prior academic performance (when possible) and student characteristics	Statistically significant positive effect size

I.2d.	District Comparison	% of students proficient on 3-8 state assessment	Exceeds the district average
I.2e.	Subgroup Comparison	% of students proficient on 3-8 state assessments	Exceeds the district average
<b>I.3. State and Federal Accountability System</b>			
I.3	State Accountability Designation	Reward, Good Standing, Local Assistance Plan, Focus, or Priority School Status	Good Standing

## Goal II: Scholars will demonstrate attributes of Service, Leadership, Character and Citizenship

	Indicator	Measure	Meets Level
<b>II.1. Charter Specific Goal: Scholars will demonstrate attributes of Service, Leadership, Character and Citizenship</b>			
II.1.a.	Service	Data collection will be taken by the Dean of Students	Beginning in Kindergarten, 95% of all scholars will perform 2 hours of age appropriate community service hours per month.
II.1.b.	Leadership	Service Learning Project where 2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade Students and above mentor younger students in the classroom. Data collection will be taken by the School Social Worker or Counselor.	Beginning in 2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade, 95% of all scholars will spend one month (4 hours) working with students in younger grades each school year.
II.1.c.	Character	<i>8 Strengths of Character School Self-Assessment</i> from The Center for the 4 <sup>th</sup> and 5 <sup>th</sup> R's – SUNY @ Cortland by Lickona and Davidson	School-wide overall average score of 2.5 out of 3 on Rating Scale by faculty.

## Goal III: Scholars will have strong Communication Skills

	Indicator	Measure	Meets Level
<b>III.1. Charter Specific Goal - Scholars will have strong Communication Skills</b>			
III.1.a.	Reading Competency	Fountas and Pinnell Leveled Literacy Assessment	Beginning with the Winter Benchmark in Kindergarten, 80% of all scholars will read on benchmark for grade level (See Figure II.A.1 for Draft of Grade Level Literacy Aspirational Goals).
III.1.b.	Writing Competency	Writing Inventory – Collected three times each school year.	Beginning in Grade 1, 80% of all scholars will complete benchmark goals for number of words written monthly during Writer's Workshop (See Figure II.A.1 for Draft of Grade Level Literacy Aspirational Goals).
III.1.c.	Mathematical Competency	Teacher-Created End of Unit Standards- Based Math Assessments – administered 6 times throughout the school year.	80% of scholars will successfully complete (80% or higher) unit assessments at all grade levels.
III.1.d.	Technological Competency	Tech Literacy Assessment by Learning.Com	Beginning in 3 <sup>rd</sup> grade, 80% of all scholars will meet proficiency standards on post assessment.

**Method of Assessing Progress Goals:** Keeping with our mission to ensure the achievement of high academic standards, rigorous student achievement goals have been set and will be used to evaluate academic performance against the New York State Common Core Learning Standards. Figure II.C.1 provides aspirational benchmark goals for each grade K through 5 in literacy. Students will be assessed formally 3 times each year. Data will be collected based upon Fountas and Pinnell's Reading Levels, Number of Books Read and Oral Reading Fluency (ORF). Sight words will be assessed in Kindergarten, Grade 1 and Grade 2. Beginning in first grade, students will be expected to write frequently during Writer's Workshop and a month long writing inventory of student work will be collected 3 times annually from each scholar. Students will maintain a Reading Log of all the authentic texts that they have read which will follow them from grade to grade. Figure II.C.1 also affords the basis for identification of additional academic support needed for Response to Intervention (RtI) services explained later in Section II.D- Assessment System. Due to the strong correlation between depressed socio-economic levels and vocabulary development (Ed Hirsch Jr. 2013), all scholars will be screened using a receptive vocabulary assessment such as the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test - 4 (PPVT-4). Any student not at benchmark will retake the assessment annually to monitor progress.

The school determined this method of evaluation will best measure student progress, deficits and strengths as it reveals the very subtle differences on the reading continuum and allows teachers to provide targeted and prescriptive interventions based on each student's needs.

**Communication of Goal-Specific Evaluation Data -** The school leadership team will communicate and use goal specific data to evaluate the academic progress of the individual students, student cohorts, and the school as a whole utilizing the NYS Department of Education Charter School Office Performance Framework throughout the school year at the end of each academic year, and for the term of the charter contract. Students will be measured based on a "meets standards" to "fall far below standard." Each month,

REACH Academy Charter School  
Literacy Benchmark and Aspirational Goals

	Beginning (Fall) By Oct 30 <sup>th</sup>	Mid-Year (Winter) By Jan 31 <sup>st</sup>	Ending (Spring) By May 15 <sup>th</sup>
Kindergarten Benchmark Goals	Guided Reading – N/A Letters/Sound Correspondence Sight Words – 50 (Read) ORF – N/A	Guided Reading – Level C Books Read – 15 Sight Words – 100 (Read) ORF – N/A	Guided Reading – Level E Books Read – 25 Sight Words – 200 (Read) ORF – N/A
Kindergarten Aspirational Goals	Guided Reading – N/A Letters/Sound Correspondence Sight Words – 100 (Read) ORF – N/A	Guided Reading – Level C Books Read – 30 Sight Words – 200 (Read) ORF – N/A	Guided Reading – Level E Books Read – 40 Sight Words – 300 (Read) ORF – N/A
Grade 1 Benchmark Goals	Guided Reading – Level D Sight Words – 200 (Read and Write) Books Read – 12 ORF – N/A Writing 150 words a month	Guided Reading – Level F Sight Words – 350 (Read and Write) Books Read – 18 ORF – 20 WPM Writing 175 words a month	Guided Reading – Level I Sight Words – 400 (Read and Write) Books Read – 25 ORF – 30 WPM Writing 200 words a month
Grade 1 Aspirational Goals	Guided Reading – Level F Sight Words – 300 (Read and Write) Books Read – 15 ORF – N/A Writing 175 words a month	Guided Reading – Level I Sight Words – 400 (Read and Write) Books Read – 30 ORF – 30 WPM Writing 200 words a month	Guided Reading – Level J Sight Words – 500 (Read and Write) Books Read – 40 ORF – 50 WPM Writing 225 words a month
Grade 2 Benchmark Goals	Guided Reading – Level J Sight Words – 500 (Read and Write) Books Read – 12 ORF – 45 WPM Writing 250 words a month	Guided Reading – Level L Sight Words – 1,000 (Read and Write) Books Read – 18 ORF – 65 WPM Writing 500 words a month	Guided Reading – Level M Sight Words – 1,000 (Read and Write) Books Read – 25 ORF – 85 WPM Writing 500 words a month
Grade 2 Aspirational Goals	Guided Reading – Level K Sight Words – 1,000 (Read and Write) Books Read – 15 ORF – 50 WPM Writing 500 words a month	Guided Reading – Level M Sight Words – 1,000 (Read and Write) Books Read – 30 ORF – 75 WPM Writing 500 words a month	Guided Reading – Level N Sight Words – 1,000 (Read and Write) Books Read – 40 ORF – 95 WPM Writing 500 words a month
Grade 3 Benchmark Goals	Guided Reading – Level O Books Read – 12 ORF – 75 WPM Writing 1,000 words a month	Guided Reading – Level P Books Read – 18 ORF – 90 WPM Writing 1,000 words a month	Guided Reading – Level Q Books Read – 25 ORF – 110 WPM Writing 1,000 words a month
Grade 3 Aspirational Goals	Guided Reading – Level P Books Read – 15 ORF – 80 WPM Writing 1,000 words a month	Guided Reading – Level Q Books Read – 30 ORF – 100 WPM Writing 1,000 words a month	Guided Reading – Level R Books Read – 40 ORF – 115 WPM Writing 1,000 words a month
Grade 4 Benchmark Goals	Guided Reading – Level R Books Read – 12 ORF – 90 WPM Writing 1,000 words a month	Guided Reading – Level S Books Read – 18 ORF – 105 WPM Writing 1,000 words a month	Guided Reading – Level T Books Read – 25 ORF – 120 WPM Writing 1,000 words a month
Grade 4 Aspirational Goals	Guided Reading – Level S Books Read – 15 ORF – 100 WPM Writing 1,000 words a month	Guided Reading – Level T Books Read – 30 ORF – 115 WPM Writing 1,000 words a month	Guided Reading – Level U Books Read – 40 ORF – 125 WPM Writing 1,000 words a month
Grade 5 Benchmark Goals	Guided Reading – Level U Books Read – 12 ORF – 105 WPM Writing 1,000 words a month	Guided Reading – Level V Books Read – 18 ORF – 120 WPM Writing 1,000 words a month	Guided Reading – Level W Books Read – 25 ORF – 135 WPM Writing 1,000 words a month
Grade 5 Aspirational Goals	Guided Reading – Level V Books Read – 15 ORF – 110 WPM Writing 1,000 words a month	Guided Reading – Level W Books Read – 30 ORF – 130 WPM Writing 1,000 words a month	Guided Reading – Level X Books Read – 40 ORF – 145 WPM Writing 1,000 words a month

Figure I.I.C.1

the School Leader to track student performance in accordance to the NYS Education Charter School Office Performance Framework. The board will use this report to track student performance and other metrics to ensure that the school is staying ‘on target’ in all aspects of its Performance Agreement. The Board will receive training during the planning year on the Performance Framework and how to examine data.

The Board will ensure that all statutory requirements measured by the Organizational Framework are met. Each of the criteria from the Organizational Framework which is listed in the “Meets Standard” performance rating will be included in these governance documents and will be monitored on a monthly, quarterly, or annual basis. Each month, the school leader will compile an update for the Board.

**Progress Toward Meeting Achievement Goals** - The teachers will be responsible for using student data to create learning opportunities that allow students to discover ideas and construct knowledge. Staff members will collect informal and formal student assessments on a daily basis, ranging from quizzes, standardized diagnostic, formative or summative tests, observational information, student surveys, exit tickets, and other student work samples. These assessments will be used to inform and monitor instruction and achievement and will be included in student portfolios to demonstrate students’ progress towards meeting academic and non-academic goals. Grade-level and subject-area teams will also examine assessment data and student work samples weekly, checking for alignment between standards, learning targets, instruction, and assessment. These teams of teachers will analyze student work to evaluate the impact of instruction, individual student progress, and the effectiveness of the core curriculum.

This process will be used for the whole school, individual students, and cohorts of students. At RACS data will be reviewed not only at the individual level, but also as a whole school and in student cohorts to monitor specific groups of students and the effectiveness of various programs and interventions. Additionally, data will be disaggregated by demographics and analyzed for possible areas of concern. The

the school leader will compile a report for the Board.

The Head of Schools will be responsible for all school wide student assessment data, as well as for overseeing the administration and analysis of benchmark assessments at each grade level. RACS’s student assessment scores will be analyzed during grade-level data teams, which will be reviewed by the school leaders throughout the school year to identify trends. The Head of Schools along with the school staff will also collect and analyze student academic achievement data based on students’ grades and state testing. Scores will be used in comparison of scores from other schools.

RACS will engage parents through whole school communications, email, letters mailed, and conversations about their children’s progress and data. There will be parent-teacher conferences at the end of each quarter discussing progress toward meeting academic benchmarks. In addition parents and/or teachers may request a parent teacher conference at any time throughout the year.

The Board will use the report from

review of school-wide data will include data sets that are in alignment with the Charter School Performance Framework and will include academic and school culture data such as attendance, as well as the numbers of students who will not be on target to meet grade level benchmarks.

## **II D. Assessment**

**Assessment Aligned to Mission, Objectives, and Overall Educational Priorities:** Using data strategically will drive curriculum development, best practices in instructional delivery and response to intervention plans. The assessments will document the growth and development of our scholars' skills in meeting the New York State Common Core Learning Standards, our school's mission and objectives and educational priorities. Such assessments demonstrate accountability and commitment to high levels of achievement, while showcasing our superior academic model. Our students will take all state assessments as required by law. In preparing for state assessments in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, benchmark assessments will provide reliable formative data to ensure that students are developing strong literacy skills and are on track for success. Teachers in kindergarten and first grade will measure concepts of print, letter recognition, letter naming, sound recognition, sound naming, rhyme identification, rhyme production, syllable blending, syllable segmentation, onset and rhyme blending, initial sound isolation, phoneme segmentation, phoneme addition and sight word recognition. Anecdotal observations and classroom checklists will be collected during daily lessons. Three benchmark periods will be scheduled in the fall, winter and spring to assess students' progress in both literacy and math. Beginning mid-year in kindergarten, the Fountas and Pinnell Leveled Literacy Assessment will determine an independent reading level for all students. Students will be placed in small flexible groups to receive instruction tailored to their individual needs. Sight words will be assessed in Grades K, 1 and 2 and beyond for any student not at benchmark. All scholars will maintain a school-wide Reading Log and teachers will verify books read and comprehended in individual conferences during Reader's Workshop and other classroom activities. For example, students in first grade may be asked to draw a picture and write a sentence explaining the story. Data will be maintained to address students' achievement of the Common Core Learning Standards and also habits, strengths and weaknesses as readers. In keeping with a Culture of High Expectations (Point 1 from design element *The Six Point Plan to Increasing Student Achievement*) every student in each grade will have an aspirational goal of reading 40 books on their independent reading level by the end of each year. The benchmark goal will be set at 25 books by the end of each year for every scholar. Oral Reading Fluency will be assessed each benchmark by using either the commercially available DIBELS or AIMSweb assessments.

One month of writing samples will be collected from each scholar at each benchmark and analyzed against a teacher created rubric for quality based upon developmentally appropriate expectations in writing. A main focus in the instructional program will be on vocabulary development which has been found to be a strong indicator of background knowledge and experience (Fogarty, 2015.) A receptive vocabulary assessment such as The Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test – 4 will be administered to all students upon entering the school. Students found not to be at benchmark will be given the assessment annually. Beginning in 1<sup>st</sup> grade, teacher created assessments comprised of passages with questions aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards will be administered during each benchmark period. The overall benchmarks along with the results of the state assessments will provide strong conclusions for assessing progress of achieving the schools' objectives. In math, unit tests, teacher created assessments and commercially purchased CCLS aligned assessments will be administered. The Scholastic Math Inventory (SMI) will be administered beginning in Kindergarten. Data will be regularly examined so teachers can respond both by adapting instruction and providing appropriate inter-vention supports. Once the curriculum has been agreed upon, common assessments are critical to determine how much learning has occurred. Fidelity of administration is vital throughout the testing process. Benchmark Assessments will be administered 3 times each school year (See Figure II.C.1). End of Unit Assessments will take place during the last week of each unit. This makes up the 4<sup>th</sup> point in the in *The Six Point Plan to Increasing Student Achievement* entitled Administering Common Benchmark Assessments. (See Figure II.A.1.)

**Assessments to Gather Screening, Diagnostic and Proficiency Information:** Assessment instruments will be chosen based on their merit in addressing literacy and math subskills and supporting research. See Figure II.C.1 for Assessment Schedule, Timeline and Aspirational Goals.

**1. Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT-IV)** – administered when students enter school and annually to

those who are not at benchmark to measure receptive vocabulary. Keeping in line with our Key Design Element, receptive vocabulary is critical to students so that they can express themselves clearly, understand lessons and instructions and recognize and understand words that they read (Bryant, 2003.)

2. **500-1,000-Most Common Sight Words Test** – daily sight word inventory maintained in grades K to 2. Research suggests that teaching students to automatically recognize words on sight can greatly improve fluency, and therefore comprehension of text. Perfetti and Hogoboom (1975) found that students who comprehend well are more rapid at oral word decoding than students who are less skilled at comprehension.
3. **AIMSweb or DIBELS** – administered to measure oral reading fluency in all grades at least 3 times a year. Adams (1990) states that oral reading fluency is the most salient characteristic of skillful reading.
4. **Fountas and Pinnell’s Guided Reading Assessment** – administered to measure reading levels at least 3 times annually in all grades beginning with the winter benchmark of Kindergarten. Good reading comprehension is the ultimate goal of reading instruction at all grade levels and for all children, including those who struggle and those with learning disabilities. Accurate assessment of reading comprehension is necessary to know if this goal is being met, to identify children who need remediation, and to help plan future instruction (Louise Spear-Swerling, 2006.)
5. **SMI Scholastic Math Inventory** – to measure mathematical aptitude and administered tri-annually to all. Mathematics assessments can make the goals for learning real to students, teachers, parents, and the public. Assessments indicate to students what they should learn. They specify and give concrete meaning to valued learning goals. (Mathematical Sciences Education Board; National Research Council, 1993)

**Processes of Administering Assessments, Analyzing Assessment Information and Developing Resultant Action Plans:**

Classroom Teachers along with Special Education Teachers and Teaching Assistants will all work collaboratively to administer assessments within the normal flow of the school day. The belief is that instruction should not be stopped in order to assess, but rather assessments should be weaved into the natural ebbs and flows of the classroom environment. After the two week benchmark window has concluded, teachers will be asked to share their results with both administration and their grade level teams. This data will be the focus of weekly grade level data

team meetings. Data will be analyzed and students will be grouped in categories of; “at or above benchmark,” “within one year of benchmark” and “more than one year below benchmark” for each assessment. Teams will work collaboratively to develop individual learning plans for each student not on benchmark. **\*Response to Intervention (RtI):**

In addition to creating an enriched learning environment where progress monitoring occurs consistently, RACS will develop a formal RtI process to ensure that struggling students are identified and provided with the necessary supports. See Figure II.D.1 for the Pyramid of Tiered

Interventions. During weekly Data Team meetings, teachers and administration will work collaboratively to closely monitor student progress and develop individualized plans to address student needs. Through a systematic RtI plan, a student’s academic needs will be identified. Benchmark assessments will be administered to all at a minimum of three times per year. Based on the results, teachers will create individual academic learning plans to address the specific needs for any student not on benchmark. The process begins with the collection of baseline data. A performance goal will be developed based on the students’ specific academic, behavioral and/or emotional needs. Research-based interventions will be delivered to the student and progress toward the goal will be tracked and monitored to determine if the intervention proved successful. If the student is not responding to the intervention, the Data Team will design an intensive instructional intervention plan that focuses on skills that filter and define the student’s academic antecedent that is causing him/her from making adequate progress. RACS will collaborate with Jim Wright, a specialist in the area of RtI as well as refer to various research-based databases such as What Works Clearinghouse;

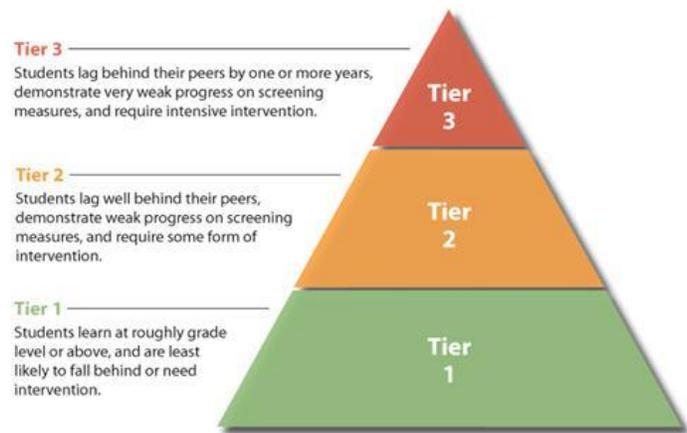


Figure – II.D.1 – Pyramid of Interventions

Florida Center for Reading Research and Intervention Central which all provide research based instructional strategies for students who are struggling.

**\*Tier 1-Core Instruction:** Tier 1 Intervention will provide research based instruction and positive behavioral intervention supports to all students and can support any student in the classroom who is slightly behind. Students will receive instruction using research-based best practices in core curriculum aligned to the NYS Common Core Learning Standards. Tier 1 supports may involve reteaching students struggling with a particular concept. Classroom teachers will provide targeted and differentiated lesson plans and instruction to ensure that student needs are being met, particularly those who are not performing at grade level. Progress monitoring will be conducted on all students to identify any gaps or trends that may be hindering students' performance. Through professional development with renowned educator Jim Wright, teachers will receive ongoing training on intervention strategies and data collection.

**\*Tier 2-Strategic Interventions:** Tier 2 Intervention may be provided by the Classroom Teacher or a Special Education Teacher. Tier 2 intervention will typically be 2 to 3 times a week in a group of 3 or 4 students during the RtI block. Tier 2 interventions focus on the areas of student need or weakness that are identified in the screening, assessment or progress monitoring reports. Similar ability groups will be comprised. Commercially available researched-based intervention programs that have demonstrated a positive impact will be utilized to address their specific needs. Students identified for Tier 2 will remain in the intervention for the length of the classroom learning unit (4 to 6 weeks.) Goals for success will be incorporated on the student's Individual Learning Plan. Bi-monthly progress monitoring will occur to ensure that the student is progressing toward achievement of the learning goals. At the completion of each unit, assessments of specific goals will inform the team if the student should remain in Tier 2 or continue on a different tier for either more or less support.

**\*Tier 3-Intensive Interventions:** Tier 3 intervention will provide students with intensive interventions that are increased in frequency and duration based on targeted assessment results. Instruction at Tier 3 will be provided by a Special Education Teacher or Speech Pathologist in groups up of to 3 students for five days a week. The progress of students at Tier 3 is monitored weekly. Students who are placed at this level are most at-risk and will continue interventions for the entire year. Most students identified as needing special education support will also receive Tier 3 interventions. Data teams will design an intensive intervention plan that focuses on skills that filter and define the student's academic antecedent that is preventing him/her from making progress. Individualized plans will be developed for all students who are receiving Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions.

Regular parent communication will ensure that parents are aware of their child's progress. For students in Grades K-5, Report Cards will be standards-based using a rubric scale of; "3", "4" or "Not Yet." Coinciding with the core design element of *Maintaining a Culture of High Expectations* is the belief that students WILL reach high academic standards. Failing is not an option. Rather than assigning students a "1" or a "2", students will be expected to achieve Mastery and will not be graded until Mastery is achieved. Teacher annual goals and professional performance reviews will be tied to student performance on assessments and student growth scores. State assessments and Benchmark assessments will yield valuable information and provide specific direction toward future instruction. Reliance of descriptive evaluations of student growth, including observations/anecdotal records, conference notes, and performance assessment rubrics are a necessary piece in understanding the breadth of students' needs and will be a vital component of the assessment cycle.

**Assessment Data to Inform Key Decision to Improve Academic Outcomes** – Assessments will be regularly administered and multi-purpose. Assessments will be utilized to: identify student's educational needs; revise education goals and standards; evaluate teaching effectiveness; provide instructional feedback to students; grade student achievement, evaluate the quality of the curriculum; fulfill state required reporting purposes; and evaluate program strengths and areas to improve.

**State Assessments** - Success with high achievement on the New York State Assessments will demonstrate that we have reached our objectives and fulfilled our mission. The objectives of broadening background knowledge and vocabulary in order to help students become stronger readers, writers, listeners and speakers will be met when students reach proficiency on the New York State Assessments. During the term of the initial five year charter, RACS will administer the New York State English Language Arts Assessments and

The New York State Mathematics Assessment in grades 3, 4 and 5. The New York State Science Assessment will be given in 4<sup>th</sup> grade.

**Locally Developed Assessments** – Following the process explained in Curriculum and Instruction, Section II.A, teachers will develop quality assessments aligned to the New York State Common Core State Standards to regularly inform their instruction. After prioritizing standards and mapping out the units for the year to determine which standards will be taught when, instructors will develop assessments prior to the unit development. Depth of Knowledge (DOK) levels will be specified. Questions will be written to assess student understanding of the “unwrapped” concepts and skills at the appropriate DOK level. Teachers will match items to the rigor of the skills as outlined in the standard. Scoring guides will be developed. The scoring guide is a written set of specific criteria describing different levels of student proficiency relative to assessments. (Ainsworth, 2011). Scoring guides provide quick and accurate feedback on student learning, which allows teachers and students to make correct inferences about student learning. (Brookhart, 2014.) Assessments may be in the form of written tests, class assignments, exit tickets etc. and may be performance based. Analysis of results will later be aligned with actual state assessment results. Determination will be made if the assessment has real predictive value and what the correlational value of the locally developed assessment is with the state assessments.

	Indicator	Measure	Meets Level
<b>II.1. Charter Specific Goal: Scholars will demonstrate attributes of Service, Leadership, Character and Citizenship</b>			
II.1a.	Service	Data collection will be taken by the Dean of Students	Beginning in Kindergarten, 95% of all scholars will perform 2 hours of age appropriate community service hours per month
II.1b.	Leadership	Service Learning Project where 2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade Students and above mentor younger students in the classroom. Data collection will be taken by the School Social Worker	Beginning in 2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade, 95% of all scholars will spend one month (4 hours) working with students in younger grades each school year.
II.1c.	Character	8 Strengths of Character School Self-Assessment from The Center for the 4 <sup>th</sup> and 5 <sup>th</sup> R’s – SUNY @ Cortland by Lickona and Davidson	School-wide overall average score of 2.5 out of 3 on Rating Scale by faculty.
II.1d.	Citizenship	Classroom Learning Environment with Citizenship Unit of Study.	Beginning in Grade 4, 95% of all scholars in 4 <sup>th</sup> grade will participate in a unit of study on citizenship and successfully complete culminating project.

Table II.D.1 – Measures of Charter Specific Goals and Proficiency Levels.

In order to assess the level of accomplishment of our mission, other charter specific goals will be assessed at least annually. The measure and level of proficiency is described above for attributes such as Service, Leadership, Character and Citizenship in Table II.D.1 and below in Table II D.2 for Reading, Writing, Mathematical and Technological Competencies also found in Section II.C.

	Indicator	Measure	Meets Level
<b>III.1. Charter Specific Goal - Scholars will have strong Communication Skills</b>			
III.1a.	Reading Competency	Fountas and Pinnell Leveled Literacy Assessment	Beginning with the Winter Benchmark in Kindergarten, 80% of all scholars will read on benchmark for grade level. (See Figure II.D.1 for Draft of Grade Level Literacy Aspirational Goals)
III.1b.	Writing Competency	Writing Inventory – Collected three times each school year.	Beginning in Grade 1, 80% of all scholars will complete benchmark goals for number of words written monthly during Writer’s Workshop (See Figure II.D.1 for Draft of Grade Level Literacy Aspirational Goals)
III.1c.	Mathematical Competency	Teacher Created End of Unit Standards Based Math Assessments – administered 6 times throughout the school year.	80% of scholars will successfully complete (80% or higher) unit assessments at all grade levels
III.1d.	Technological Competency	TechLiteracy Assessment by Learning.com	Beginning in 3 <sup>rd</sup> grade, 80% of all scholars will meet proficiency standards on post assessments.

Table II.D.2 – Measures of Charter Specific Goals and Proficiency Levels.

The process described above will be the very heart of the instructional program. All key decisions will be a result of the academic needs revealed through the data analysis process. Personnel and Budgetary decisions will be driven by the academic needs of the students. The purchase of research-based intervention programs will be dictated by the specific deficits of students. For example, an analysis of a group of students’ assessment results revealed that students scored low in decoding and reading comprehension but high in listening comprehension. This will prompt teachers to find a research-based intervention program aimed at

improving fluency. Staff development needs will be determined by what the student data reveals as well. As another example, students in the primary grades were found to have depressed writing abilities overall at the end of the school year. From that point, staff development in the upcoming school year may be geared to Instructional Best Practices in Writer's Workshop for the primary grade teachers. All key decisions will be made based on what the data reveals as where efforts need to focus in order to improve academic outcomes.

**State Assessment Requirements and Relevant Policies of the Board of Regents:** RACS will remain current and up to date on all assessment requirements involving the New York State Testing Program as well as relevant policies of the Board of Regents (BOR). This includes methods of administration and scoring of assessments required by SED to ensure the highest integrity and security of the state assessments. By being familiar with the monthly minutes from the BOR meetings and monitoring all email correspondences from SED, the school will be abreast of all current issues before the BOR.

**Plan for Measuring Educational Performance and Progress:** Regular, clear and concise reporting of students' growth and achievement will take place in several formats:

- **Individual** – In order to inform instruction, individual student growth will be shared with classroom teachers. Through a web-based Parent Portal, parents will be regularly updated of students' growth by daily assignments, quizzes and unit tests sent home. Progress reported in the teacher's electronic grade book will be updated to the Parent Portal throughout the school year. Parents will be informed of student growth formally with Report Cards and parent conferences. Valid and Reliable measures such as benchmark data from standardized assessments, reading levels and math inventories will all be communicated to both the parent and the student. Training on the access and navigation of the Parent Portal and the interpretation of student progress will be provided by the school throughout the school year.
- **Grade Level/Cohorts** – In order to plan and prepare effectively for providing prescriptive support for every student in the grade, Data Teams will share data regularly. Benchmark assessments will help teams to assemble appropriate groups for RtI services. Grade level data will also be shared with the entire faculty both at faculty meetings as well as displayed prominently in the staff work room. The Head of School will share information with the Board of Trustees through regular presentations at Board Meetings. Both on-going benchmark data and State Assessment Achievement and Growth Scores will be presented.
- **School Wide Results** – School success on State Assessments will be shared with the community via our school website and to the SED in the Annual Report of Progress submitted each year.

RACS will have one individual who will act as In-Take Coordinator and Chief Information Officer to accurately and effectively report student data in the Student Information Repository System (SIRS). A student management system, such as PowerSchool or Infinite Campus that easily communicates with Level 0 while meeting the schools reporting needs, will be carefully chosen. All required reporting to Level 0, 1 and 2 will be in accordance with SED requirements such as BEDS Day Reporting and Teacher Student Data Linkage.

#### **Sources Referenced for Section II.D: Assessment**

- Adams, M. J. (1990). *Beginning to read: Thinking and learning about print*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Ainsworth, L. (2011). *Rigorous curriculum design: How to create curricular units of study that align standards, instruction, and assessment*. Englewood, Colo.: Lead Learn Press.
- Bryant, D. P. (2003). Vocabulary instruction for students with learning disabilities: A review of the research. *Learning Disability Quarterly*.
- Louise Spear-Swerling, Assessment of Reading Comprehension September, 2006.  
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- Mathematical Sciences Education Board; National Research Council. (1993.) *Measuring What Counts: A Conceptual Guide for Mathematics Assessment*. National Academies Press: Washington, D.C.
- Perfetti, C. A. & Hogoboom, T. (1975). Relationship between single word decoding and reading comprehension skills. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 67, 461-469.

## **II E. Performance, Promotion and Exit Standards:**

**Promotion Standards Aligned to Mission, Educational Program and Assessment System:** RACS committed to high standards of academic achievement for all our scholars. We will continuously enrich our curriculum and provide rigorous instruction to better meet our scholars' needs. In keeping with Point 1: Maintaining a Culture of High Expectations from the design element *The Six Point Plan for Increasing Student Achievement*, the expectation will be that students WILL succeed. Not only do we hold our students to high expectations, but ourselves as well. We are successful when our students are successful. Failure is not an option. Grade retention will not be a common occurrence as faculty will intervene immediately so that no

scholar is so far behind that grade retention is inevitable. When students perform poorly on assessments, RtI will be immediately put into place so that failing a grade is almost never a necessary option.

**Promotion Policies:** Response to Intervention (RtI) Academic Support is designed to ensure student success. It is critical that scholars have reached a level of grade mastery that encompasses both the necessary content and skill sets needed. As indicated on our Student Report Card, students will receive a Level 4 for Mastery, a Level 3 for Proficiency and a “Not Yet” for anything below this level. This will immediately signify to the parents that their child’s level of academic accomplishment is not yet up to expected benchmarks. Intense interventions will ensure that students make acceptable growth. Due to the negative social and emotional impacts of retention and the substantial amount of research that does not support retention as a viable intervention (J. David, 2008<sup>1</sup>), RACS will carefully evaluate whether having a scholar repeat a grade would be beneficial. Promotion from grade-to-grade will be based on a range of indicators, including whether scholars have met specific, grade-level benchmarks in English Language Arts, Math and Science. In certain rare cases, research has shown retention to be a viable practice without demonstrating the strong negative correlation typically associated with the practice (Jimerson, Woehr, and Kaufman, 2007.) Cases where students are excessively absent from school due to a severe medical condition would be one example. In the rare event that a student’s promotion is in doubt, teachers and school leaders and the child’s parent, will use a range of indicators to formulate the decision, including formative and summative assessment data, anecdotal observations and notes, attendance record, standardized test data, RtI data, and examples of student work (portfolios) to determine whether or not to retain the student. For students who are being considered for retention, parents will be alerted about the Performance and Promotion process as early as December and no later than February 1 of the current school year. Once a student is identified as being in jeopardy of promotion, teachers will create a targeted academic plan to help prevent retention. Faculty will work with the scholar’s family to offer suggestions for out-of-school interventions and suggestions for home-based activities. Summer school will be available for any student who is recommended for retention.

For students who have received an excessive amount of interventions throughout the entire school year, but fails to make suitable progress toward benchmark expectations, a referral to the Committee on Special Education may be made to determine if a learning disability exist. This number will be within the range of The Buffalo Public School’s rate for students with disabilities, which is 21%.

**Sample Promotion Standards for 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade and 4<sup>th</sup> Grade:**

- Meeting Grade Level Benchmarks for ELA, Math, Science and Social Studies
- Proficiency on State Assessments

**Scholars with Special Needs:** Scholars with IEPs and those in the process of evaluation will be promoted based on individualized-promotion criteria, in addition to the indicators stated above.

**Exit Standards:** In order to complete the elementary academic requirements at RACS and move on to middle school, a student must demonstrate mastery of skills, and content in English Language Arts, mathematics, and science at the fifth grade level or above. These exit standards will be based on the Common Core Learning Standards. Student mastery of these standards will be evaluated using results from state exams, and internal school assessments and grades.

**Sources Referenced for Section IIE - Performance, Promotion and Exit Standards:**

<http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/mar08/vol65/num06/Grade-Retention.aspx>

David, J. (2008). Reaching the Reluctant Learner. *What Research Says About Grade Retention*, 65(6), 83-84.

Jimerson, S.R., Woehr, S., & Kaufman, A.M. (2004). Grade retention and promotion: information for parents. National Association of School Psychologists. Bethesda, MD.

**II. F. School Schedule and Calendar: A Typical Student Day at REACH Academy Charter School -** In order to help the reader visualize a typical day at RACS, this example is provided to clearly demonstrate how the instructional day will look for our scholars. This example takes place in a Kindergarten Room in the Supermarket Learning Environment. The classroom is designed to look just like a mini supermarket. For this half of the day, the Special Education Teacher pushes into the classroom using the Integrated Co-Teaching Model. The pair alternates in using the 6 formats of co-teaching that Marilyn Friend has identified (Friend, 2015.) The day begins with the start of a two hour literacy block where students will meet with the teachers for a brief **Large Group Mini-Lesson** in reading. The teachers use the Team Teaching format for the mini lesson. Team Teaching involves both the Classroom Teacher and Special Education Teacher presenting the lesson with each “playing off” of the other while sharing the instructional role. Clear evidence is present that

reveals that the teachers planned together in order to integrate their roles seamlessly within the delivery of the lesson (Friend, 2015.) Beginning with a hook, the teachers talk about the different areas of a grocery store such as; the frozen section, the canned goods, produce, dairy products etc. They hold up pictures of each of the main areas of the store and ask the students to guess the “theme” of each area. They then go on to say that authors also have “themes” when they write and we call this the “main idea.” She then reads three brief passages and asks students to guess the main idea or the theme of each passage (R.I.K.2). After the mini-lesson, the students sit on the carpet and listen to a **Read-Aloud** by the teacher. The teacher reads the story *Something Good* by Robert Munsch. (Figure II.F.1). While reading, the Special Education Teacher highlights



Figure II.F.1: *Something Good* by Robert Munsch is a story about Tyya's dad who won't buy anything good at the store - no ice cream, no candy, no



Figure II.F.2: Graphic Organizer for categorizing characters, setting and conflict in a story.

unfamiliar vocabulary, points out text features and identifies the characters, setting and the conflict in the story (S.L.K.2). Students each have a copy of the text and follow along as they listen to the teacher reading. Located in a pocket in the back of each book are felt pieces which individually depict the characters, setting and conflict in the story. Students then are asked by the teacher to place each of their pieces (Figure II.F.2) in the appropriate category on their felt boards (R.L.K.3). Before transitioning, the students must share their felt boards as the “Exit Ticket” in order to complete the activity. The Classroom Teacher and the Special

Education Teacher walk around and ensure that students understand the concepts and provide feedback to individual students who are struggling. Literacy Centers begin and the Classroom Teacher then pulls a small homogeneous group of students over to a kidney shaped table for a **Small Guided Reading Group**. This format known as the Station Method of Co-Teaching which involves each teacher working with a small group of children who rotate among various stations to complete the different tasks related to the same instructional content or objective (Friend, 2015.)

The Classroom Teacher begins the lesson by holding up the sight word “the.” She has each of the students take their magnetic letters and asks them to spell the word “the” on the table in front of them (R.F.K.3c). The students are asked to write the word “the” on their papers. The teacher discusses how good readers look at pictures to help them to understand what the word on the page is when they don’t know it. She tells them to look for the word “the” in this book. She hands out one copy of the book *The Supermarket* by Katalina Page (Figure II.F.3) to each student. She asks them what they think the book will be about and writes down their predictions. Together they read the book out loud pointing to each word as they go. When completed, the teacher reviews the students’ predictions about the text. Texts involving the Learning Theme will be included to continue to broaden background knowledge and build vocabulary, but students’ exposure to quality texts will not be limited to working only with books related to the Learning Theme. While the Classroom Teacher works with a group of students in the small guided reading group, four other literacy centers will take place simultaneously. The Special Education Teacher accompanies the four or five identified students who have IEP’s, rotating through these other centers and providing the appropriate amount of support needed. The time spent with students with disabilities will be in accordance of law mandated by the number of minutes on their IEP. At the **Vocabulary Center**, four students are each given 10 coins to play with and

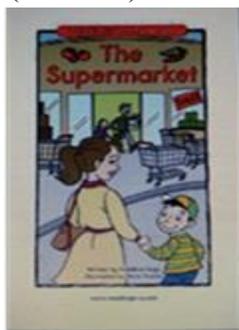


Figure II.F.3- *The Supermarket* uses bright picture and two-word sentences to label products typically found at a supermarket

the rest of the pile of coins goes in the middle. Students pick a pack of vocabulary pictures that are placed face down in the center. Each package of pictures is from a different category of “The Supermarket”. Today, the students chose the “Fruits” pack. Taking turns, students place a picture card without looking at it on their forehead. The other three students describe the vocabulary picture that they see without saying the word (S.L.K.4). When the student guesses the word correctly, they receive a coin (L.K.4). The student who described the word correctly gets a coin. If a student slips and says the word, he/she has to give a coin to the pile. Gradually, as the weeks in this unit go on, more and more difficult vocabulary words (pictures) that are inherent in the learning environment are incorporated such as; cash register, produce, bakery, receipt, etc..

When students' reading vocabulary expands, the pictures will be replaced by words. Students tally up their coins and write it on a clipboard in the center as the Exit Ticket (K.CC.5). Students clean up their materials and prepare to move to the next center. At the next center, a group of four students work at the **Phonics/Word**

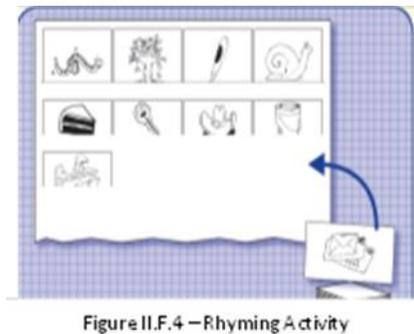


Figure II.F.4 – Rhyming Activity

**Study Center** located near the checkout area of the market. Here the students watch a short video demonstration that the teacher has pre-recorded on a tablet. The teacher shows the students how to play a rhyming game (Figure II.F.4). They must take a card from the pile and place it under a picture that rhymes with it. They continue until all the pictures in the deck are gone (R.F.K.2a). When the warning bell rings, the students gather up the cards and put away all the materials for the next group to use. At the fourth center another group of four students are working on a computer

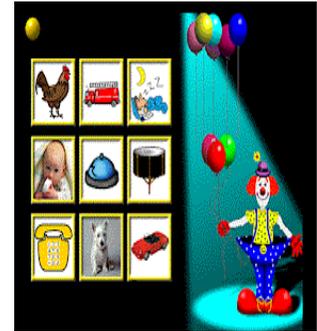


Figure II.F.5 - Earobics® - builds children's skills in phonemic awareness, auditory processing, and phonics, as well as the cognitive and language skills required for comprehension.

program entitled **Earobics** (Figure II.F.5), which is a computer software program designed to facilitate phonological awareness (R.F.K.2) and has shown to have a 25 point percentile gain in students' knowledge of alphabets ([www.whatworksclearinghouse.com](http://www.whatworksclearinghouse.com)). Students work on their own computer located in the Service Center of the Supermarket. Students put on headphones and play the interactive games while strengthening their pre-reading skills. The last four students are working on **Sight Words** using the Folding-In Flash Card Method (Baranek, Fienup, & Pace, 2011.) with a *Foster Grandparent* provided through our partnership with Catholic Charities. Students practice sight words on flash cards. Each student starts with seven known sights words and three unknown sight words in their deck. After the student is able to go through their deck at least three times without missing a word, three additional unknown words are added daily to their deck. (Figure II.F.6) ([www.interventioncentral.org](http://www.interventioncentral.org)). Students rotate through the centers while the teacher works with each Guided Reading Group. Students have practiced the routines and expectations of the centers and are now able to independently complete the task without direct oversight from the teachers.

After the 90 minute reading block is over, the teachers begin the Writing Workshop and bring the students together for a brief mini lesson in writing. Both the Classroom Teacher and the Special Education Teacher co-teach the mini lesson and discuss how we often write lists to help us remember things (W.K.8). The Classroom Teacher asks the students how many of them have ever seen their mother, father, grandparent, etc. use a grocery list when they go shopping. The Special



Figure II.F.7 – Writing Activity

Education Teacher holds up several examples of shopping lists. They explain that a grocery list helps you to remember what to buy once you get to the grocery store. Today, scholars are going to create their own shopping lists. Your job they explain to the scholars is to locate five items throughout the Grocery Store that you think you need to buy. Write the name of each item on your list and draw a picture above it. See Figure II.F.7. Students walk around the classroom looking for items such as butter, milk, eggs etc. to include on their lists. They write one item on each page of the grocery list filling in a short sentence with the name of the item needed to purchase. As students are writing their lists, the teachers are walking around helping students who appear to struggle



Figure II.F.6 – Sight Words – Fold-In Flash Card Method

with hearing the sounds in the word that they picked and reminding them that the word is also written on the product they found. They each conference with one student at a time and provide suggestions on items to purchase. Students are encouraged to pick different and unique items.

After writing is over, students get up and head to the gymnasium for their daily 30 minute Physical Education Period. During P.E. class, students can run, jump and play getting exercise to burn excess energy to help focus them back in the classroom.

After the first of two specials is over, students head back to their classroom for their math lesson. With

the daily learning target on the white board, the teachers begin with a large group lesson by explaining what the learning target is for the day. Students have a quick fluency lesson and are asked to count by twos on the page in front of them. After three minutes are up, the Classroom Teacher asks who has the highest number and responses are compared to find the counter who counted the most twos. The Special Education Teacher chants and claps along with the rhythm of the counting as the whole class chorally counts by twos together. For today’s math lesson, the teachers use another format of co-teaching call Parallel Teaching. For this form of Co-Teaching, the class is split into small groups with each co-teacher responsible for implementing the same lesson to a group. The lesson is made up of IDEA, “Investigate,” “Discover,” “Explore,” and “Apply.” During the “Investigate” portion of the lesson, the each teacher demonstrates that a set of two items is equal to the numeral 2 (K.CC.3.) She shows several sets and models writing the number two next to the sets. During the “Explore” phase the teacher finds a box of Pop Tarts on a shelf in the grocery store. She holds up the box and shows the scholars the Number 2 on the outside (K.CC.3.). She opens the box of Pop Tarts and show how one packet contains “two” Pop Tarts” inside. Students then are asked to locate other products in the grocery store that has two items in a package during the “Explore” phase of the lesson. Lastly, students “Apply” the concept and fill out an “Exit Ticket” by matching the number 2 to sets of two items on their sheet. (K.CC.4b.).

After the one hour math block has been completed, students go to the cafeteria for a 30 minute lunch period. During the afternoon portion of the day, the Special Education Teacher departs to another classroom that is on a reciprocal schedule while a Classroom Assistant joins the class for the afternoon. The next part of the day includes a 30 minute RtI-ELA period and a 30 minute RtI-Math period. A Common Formative Assessment showing where students’ specific strengths and weaknesses lie and Individual Student Academic Plans have previously been developed for each student in RtI. (See Section II.D for more information on this process.) During this time, differentiated instruction takes place and a Reading Specialist and a Math Specialist respectively push in to provide daily tiered interventions along with the Teacher and Teaching Assistant. Students then go onto the second special of the day (e.g. art, music, computer lab or library.) After students come back from this special, a thirty minute Science and a 30 minute Social Studies lesson take place.

For the Social Studies lesson, the Learning Target is for students to recognize that people have basic needs (food, shelter and clothing) and wants (toys, games, treats.) By the completion of the lesson students will identify the difference between basic wants and needs (K.9a – Economic Systems.) The teacher explains what the concepts of “needs and wants.” During this lesson a small paper grocery bag is filled with different items from the supermarket. Some of the items fulfill basic “needs” and others are considered “wants.” The teacher holds up each item and students raise their thumb if they think it’s a “need” or a “want.” As an exit ticket, students draw a picture of one “need” and one “want” at the conclusion of the lesson.

For the Science lesson, the Learning Objective taken from the Next Generation Science Standards for Kindergarten is for students to analyze data to determine if a design solution works as intended to change the speed of an object with a push or a pull (K-PS2.2 Motion and Stability: Forces and Interactions.) For this lesson students will take an empty shopping cart and time how many seconds it takes to go down a ramp. They will repeat this several times. Next they repeat the same process, but with a half full grocery cart and again with a full shopping cart. The data is again collected and recorded. The teacher then leads the group to investigate possible causes for the change of speed of the cart and to draw conclusions that the weight of the cart slows the speed down.

After a solid six hours of engaging instruction split up with two specials and a lunch, the students’ day is now completed. Dismissal occurs and the one hour after school program begins. Instead of homework, scholars in Kindergarten and First Graders take home a “Literacy Backpack.” Each backpack is uniquely filled with phonic, language and vocabulary materials and toys. The Backpack remains with the family for two weeks and parents are asked to record daily task completion. Examples of



Figure II.F.8 – Leapfrog Fridge Magnetic Word Builder

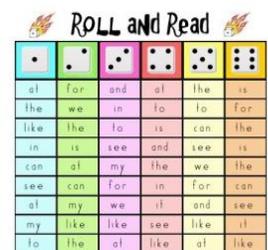


Figure II.F.9 – Roll and Read Site Word Game

literacy materials include; Leapfrog Fridge Magnetic Word Builder (see Figure II.F.8), Roll and Read Sight Game (see Figure II.F.9), Vocabulary Bingo Game, Decodable Books and Rhyming Games. After the two weeks are over, the Literacy Back Packs are turned in and a new unique Back

Pack is sent home with the child. The student/staff schedules and proposed calendar are in Attachments 3a, 3b and 3c. The table below illustrates the daily and weekly total instruction minutes in each subject area.

**Teachers’ Work Week Organized** – The Teacher Work Week will be arranged on a 5 day cycle weekly. Teachers will have two 30 minute planning periods daily. The Classroom Teacher will have at least one common planning time with the Special Education Teacher that she works with. Additionally, each week teachers will work with their grade level teams on Mondays from 2:15 to 4:15. Utilizing *The Six Point Plan to Increasing Student Achievement*, teachers will work on the various parts of the model during Monday weekly planning time under the guidance of the Head of Schools and later the Director of Instruction. For example; at the beginning of the school year, teachers will work toward organizing their units of study, mapping out the standards, developing rigorous assessments and creating engaging learning activities. After the first benchmark assessment window, teachers will utilize this time to closely examine the data, develop tiered interventions and create Individual Learning Plans for each student not at benchmark. As the new quarter draws closer, the teachers will then create common assessments and rubrics outlining the student proficiency and mastery levels for the following quarter. The cycle continues throughout the year and teachers are given time to accomplish all aspects of *The Six Point Plan*. Additionally, during the first 4 or 5 months of the school year, utilizing the Lesson Study Model, where an author such as Frank Serifini (*The Reading Workshop: Creating Space for Readers*) or Sharon Taberski (*On Solid Ground: Strategies for Teaching Reading K-3*) will come and work with teams of teachers each modeling lessons and responding to questions for teachers once a month for the first four or five months of the school year. Teachers are supported in the workshop model and are given on-going support in order to grow and develop their craft.

**Differences in Teacher Schedules** – The teachers’ and students’ schedule are attached in Attachment 3a and 3b. One outstanding aspect of the student and teachers schedule is that the school will dismiss early on Mondays so that teachers will have a two hour planning time built in weekly. The after school program will be extended on Mondays from 2:15 to 5:15 for parents who are not able to make arrangements for the shorter school day on Mondays.

Subject	Total Daily Instructional Time	Total Weekly Instructional Time
ELA	120 mins. daily	600 mins./weekly
Math	60 mins. daily	300 mins./weekly
Social Studies	30 mins. daily	150 mins./weekly
Science	30 mins. daily	150 mins./weekly
P.E.	30 mins. daily	150 mins./weekly
Art	1x 30 mins. weekly	30 mins./weekly
Music	1x 30 mins. weekly	30 mins./weekly
Library	2 x 30 mins. weekly	60 mins./weekly
Computer Lab	1 x 30 mins. weekly	30 mins./weekly
RtI - ELA	30 mins. daily	150 mins./weekly
RtI - Math	30 mins. daily	150 mins./weekly

**Length of the School Day and Year:** For RACS, the lengthened school day will run from 8:15 a.m. to 4:15 p.m. approximately 90 minutes per day longer than that of the Buffalo Public Schools. The after school program will run from 4:15 p.m. to 5:15 p.m. On Mondays, the formal school day for students will end at 2:15 p.m. to allow teachers a 2-hour block for collaborative planning and professional development (2:15 p.m.- 4:15 p.m.). The free afterschool program will begin earlier on Mondays, starting at 2:15 p.m. and ending at 5:15 p.m. Samples of weekly student and teacher schedules are included in Attachment 3a and 3b respectively.

The annual calendar for RACS is 192 days, approximately 7 days longer than the Buffalo Public

Schools. Combined with the extended school day, scholars at RACS will be in session an equivalency of more than 40 school days longer, or two months, compared to their counterparts in the home school district. The academic year will begin in late August and end in late June. Each year, all staff will return in August for two full weeks of Professional Staff Development and New Teacher Orientation will begin the previous week.

(Year One will be the exception when teachers will spend six weeks prior to the school opening on Professional Development) See Attachment 3c for a copy of the 2017-2018 School Calendar.

**Summer Program:** A Summer Program and Holiday Recess Labs will be offered when students are off on breaks. Programs both for enrichment and remedial support will be offered. Half-day sessions running for 4 weeks will take place during the summer months. Holiday Recess Labs running 5 days in duration will be offered during the winter and spring breaks. Both programs will focus on supporting struggling students as well as providing enrichment opportunities for all those interested in exploring new and creative learning opportunities.

**Time for Professional Development** - High-quality professional growth opportunities will be offered through

a variety of venues. (See Section III.E. - Staff Development) Initially, in the beginning of the first school year, the Instructional Staff Summer Institute which will contain teacher orientation, curriculum writing, and staff development, will take place for all staff members lasting for 6 weeks starting on July 17, 2017 and ending on August 25, 2017. In subsequent years, this training will last 2 weeks in duration and a third week will be required for all new staff. Furthermore, new teachers will be invited to meet monthly with the Head of Schools on a variety of topics intended to support their acclimation to the school and the various supports available to them. Following the lesson study model, additional staff development will also be provided focused on best practices for instructional delivery for all teachers. This model involves bringing in an author or an expert in a particular area such as Reader’s Workshop or Guided Math for teachers (typically 2 grade levels together) receive subs for approximately two hours. The consultant meets with the teachers for around 45 minutes to go over an intended study point. Next, the specialist goes into one of the classrooms where they demonstrate the lesson with the students for a class period. Lastly, the group reconvenes after watching the demonstration lesson and they debrief to address specific questions from teachers. The subs then rotate to another group of teachers and the day continues in the same manner. The consultant continues to provide on-going support and a schedule of visits takes place approximately once a month for the first 4 or 5 months into the school year. Professional Growth Credit will also be available on an approval basis. Groups of teachers may present a project that they would like to collaborate on after school hours. Approved blocks of 15 hours will be contractually included in the budget for these opportunities for teachers to explore. Teachers will also have the time to work collaboratively in grade level meetings, 2-hours each week, during early dismissal on Mondays. Teachers will use this time during the school day for a variety of activities such as Curriculum Planning and Alignment of the New York State Common Core Standards, Development of Common Formative Assessments, Data Team Planning, Articulation of Student SMART Goals, Formulation of Response to Intervention Plans, and Progress Monitoring and Reflection. Teachers also will have at least 300 minutes of additional individual or collaborative planning time during specials periods throughout the week. Additionally, based upon their individual goals and overall needs of the school, teachers may opt (with prior approval) to go to additional outside conferences or training throughout the school year. Monthly staff meetings will focus on topics relevant to the school’s needs and will be designed to invoke self-reflection upon increasing student achievement. Lastly, four, school-wide Superintendent’s Conference Days will be aligned to the Buffalo Public School calendars where building professional development will be specific to faculty needs for increasing student achievement (Since BPS does not announce their schedule for conference days until closer to the start of the school, these days will be TBD).

**II G. School Culture and Climate:**

**MISSION of REACH Academy Charter School**

*~Our Mission, Our Promise~*

*The Mission of the REACH Academy Charter School is to ensure the achievement of high academic standards for City of Buffalo students through a hands-on authentic learning environment. Scholars of REACH Academy Charter School will learn the value of Service, Leadership, Character and Citizenship, along with effective Communication Skills as evident in reading, writing, mathematical and technological competencies. REACH Academy Charter School will provide the tools for scholars to rise above the limitations often posed by poverty, disability and the struggle to achieve English Language Proficiency.*

**R.E.A.C.H. School Pledge**

I am a REACH Academy Student  
 I pledge to READ 30 minutes everyday  
 To be **RESPONSIBLE** throughout my day  
 To be sure to keep **EVERYONE AND MYSELF SAFE**  
 To **ALWAYS BE PREPARED** to work, learn, and play  
 I promise to create a **CARING COMMUNITY** at school and at home  
 I will **HAVE RESPECT** for myself, my peers, and my teachers.  
 I will **REACH** higher!



RACS will strive to provide a strong positive culture that emulates the established vision and goals and exudes high expectations. The Mission Statement of RACS will be clearly visible upon entering the school and throughout the learning environment.

To reinforce the ideology that RACS focuses on a collaborative climate that promotes safety, responsibility and a common drive towards excellence, a building wide school pledge will be recited daily during morning announcements.

**A Culture of High Expectations - Social Learning Environment**

The first and overarching point in our design element *The Six Point Plan to Increasing Student Achievement* is the establishment of a Culture of High Expectations. The culture in a school is very important and our focus will be on high expectations for student success which is everyone’s responsibility in the school. This will be seen and felt everywhere you go in the school.

**Student Discipline Policy** - RACS will adopt a discipline policy that promotes student learning by ensuring a safe and orderly learning environment. Our proposed School Discipline Policy (Attachment 4) sets forth the rights and responsibilities of students, and identifies the different kinds of infractions that are subject to disciplinary measures. The discipline code is in compliance with all laws regarding discipline of students with disabilities; including procedures the school will follow in order to determine whether a behavior was a manifestation of the child’s disability. In accordance with the Dignity for All Students Act, the School Discipline Policy defines and prohibits both harassment and bullying.

Students at RACS will be referred to as “scholars” a person with an aptitude for study. Our scholars will be motivated to be lifelong learners and will work diligently to set and achieve their learning goals. They will recognize the importance of education as a lifelong guide to achievement. To consistently promote our mission, a strong focus on character, service, leadership and citizenship will be present and supported by RACS’s core values. Scholars, teachers, staff, and visitors of the building will be kind and respectful at all times. Adults will model the qualities of service, leadership, character and citizenship, which include many essential elements of a respectful community environment. These include responsibility, safety, being prepared, and demonstrating traits of a caring community member. RACS will evoke feelings of community at every turn of the corner. Each aspect of the day will be orderly and will not disrupt learning at any time. Staff, scholars, parents, and volunteers will feel welcomed, appreciated, invigorated, and supported, which, in turn, will create a positive atmosphere for scholars to thrive in.



**Student Behavior Management and Discipline-** RACS will implement a school-wide Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) system that will be the driving force behind positive behavior management and discipline. The above REACH Academy Charter School Matrix is indicative of the expectations of all that enter RACS. Through effective

Expectations	Everywhere	Hallways & Stairs	Bus	Bathroom	Cafeteria
<b>R</b> Responsible	-Enter room quietly -Sit down in assigned seat -Take out necessary materials -Follow electronics policy	- Transition Silently - Hands & Feet to yourselves	- Follow adult directions - Secure Seat Belt	- Wash and dry your hands. - Clean up after yourself.	- Appropriate conversation level. - Follow adult directions.
<b>E</b> Everyone is Safe	- Hands, feet, and all objects to yourself - Remain in seat - Use materials appropriately	- Stay to the right - Walking feet	- Stay in seat - Hands, feet, and all objects to yourself. - Appropriate Voice level	- Keep hands, feet, and all objects to yourself. - Report spills	- Stay in assigned seating area and stay seated - Eat your own food - Wait in line patiently
<b>A</b> Always Prepared	- Eyes on speaker - Have Necessary Materials - Appropriate Dress Code	- Have a Pass - Eyes Forward	- Arrive at Stop on Time - Know Bus # and Color	- Have a Pass	- Get everything you need before you sit - Arrive with lunch pass
<b>C</b> Caring Community	- Keep areas clean and organized - Say "Please" and "Thank You"	- Keep hallways & stairs litter free	- Enter/exit bus and building peacefully - Keep the bus clean	- Keep Bathrooms clean. - Flush	- Clean up your space - Wait for adult direction to dispose of trash
<b>H</b> Have Respect	- Follow Directions - Wait your turn - Accept Consequences	- Walk silently - Hands off of all walls and displays.	- Use polite and peaceful language.	- Privacy is key! - Personal space of others.	- Use appropriate table manners - Respond to adult directions

teacher, staff and scholar education, the PBIS model will prove to be effective in; reducing student problem behaviors, improving perception of school safety, reducing the number of office discipline referrals and suspension.

To emphasize the importance of this program, RACS will have an orientation for parents and families

for the students prior to the first day of school. This orientation will include a discussion about the culture of high expectations, the goals of the PBIS model and a descriptive outline of the behavioral expectations as it is connected to this design.

A school wide discipline policy (Attachment 4) will be distributed to all parents, scholars and staff and will serve as a basis of behavioral management and consequences. This policy ensures that scholars and staff are following the RACS Matrix at all times. Positive reinforcements and celebrations will promote the core values and beliefs that are instilled in the culture of high expectations and the climate of the RACS community.

To support teachers and scholars ensuring consistent and fair practice is implemented at all times, ongoing professional development focusing on PBIS strategies, classroom management and conflict resolution will be provided to all teachers and staff. It is a priority at RACS to ensure that scholars are in the classroom as much as possible to ensure consistent and uninterrupted instruction.

In the event that a scholar needs time to refocus outside of the classrooms setting with minimal distractions, the support of a counselor in the Redirection Room will be available to help students reflect on their behavior and establish a plan for returning to class. Teachers and staff will promote a positive environment that incorporates a variety of management techniques. They will communicate openly with scholars to build a substantial rapport. Teachers and staff members will model healthy relationships, verbal and nonverbal communication skills, and problem solving strategies. A passion for success and dedication to learning will resonate throughout the building. They will embrace the spirit of each child, emphasizing and upholding the unique strengths and learning styles of each child and empowering them to be college and career ready. Responsibility, safety, preparedness, respect and consistency are crucial in creating this positive learning environment. Expectations for appropriate behavior will be taught, practiced, reinforced and celebrated.

**Physical Learning Environment-** The physical learning environment will be safe, orderly and conducive to learning. The school will be a place that promotes scholar success and achievement. The halls will be neat and organized, yet bursting with scholar work and exemplars. Our expectations will be well displayed throughout.

Students will wear uniforms to school every day. The Uniform Policy, which is included in Attachment 4- Student Discipline Policy, will be enforced on a daily basis. Staff and administration at RACS will work with parents/guardians to ensure that every scholar is provided with the appropriate attire to meet uniform expectations. Protocol for uniforms will be clearly explained to families to ensure cooperation.

Parents will partner with teachers in the education process. RACS will be a helpful, supportive and productive environment that welcomes families and community members. Open communication will be mandatory between parents and all school teachers and staff. Parents will be well informed of their child's progress and level of support within the building, receiving progress reports and updates on a regular basis. RACS will place particular importance on community involvement and outreach. Monthly Community Events will be held at the school and relationships will be forged with community members and groups, with an eye toward working together on programs that can enhance the education and lives of our scholars.

Scholars will feel physically and emotionally safe within the school environment. Scholars will have a feeling of ownership in their school and participate in decision making. Student achievement will be acknowledged, celebrated and praised. Scholars will be empowered to contribute to their school culture and climate through service and academic excellence. They will be encouraged and motivated to challenge themselves to achieve success in the school community.

**Evaluation of School Environment** - Evaluation of the school culture will be derived from a variety of sources. Parent and student surveys will be administered anonymously each year. Perceptions about feeling safe in the school will be included in the collection of data. Teachers will be asked for their input. Other sources of data used to evaluate the school environment will come from the VADIR (Violent and Disruptive Incident Report), the number of referrals to the Redirection Room and the number of In-School and Out of School Suspensions.

## SECTION III – ORGANIZATIONAL AND FISCAL PLAN

### III A. Applicant(s)/Founding Group Capacity:

#### **Applicant Group Background Information and Proposed Roll:**

Name	Current Employment	Relevant Experience/Skills and Role for Founding Group	Proposed Role(s)	Candidate Determination
Dolores Prezyna	State University of New York College at Fredonia – Adjunct Instructor	Dolores Prezyna, proposed Board President, has extensive educational experience both as an educator, and as a school administrator. She recently earned her Doctorate in Educational Leadership. She holds a C.A.S. in Educational Administration, an M.S. in Education with a Concentration in Reading, and a B.A. in English. Along with her administrative certificates, she is New York Certified in Reading, Elementary Education and English. Dr. Prezyna is retired from the Frontier School District where she served as the Principal of Blasdell Elementary School for 15 years. She has also served as an Assistant Principal, English Language Arts Coordinator and Reading Specialist. Currently she is working as the Student Teacher Supervisor at SUNY Fredonia. Previously Dr. Prezyna was an Adjunct Instructor at Medaille College in the Literacy Department.	Board President	Dr. Prezyna’s background in both school leadership and elementary literacy will be an invaluable asset as we lay a strong foundation for a high achieving school in Buffalo.
Linda A. Marszalek	Buffalo Public Schools* – Elementary Building Administrator	Mrs. Marszalek is an educator who brings more than 27 years of experience to this new role as founder of the RACS. She has extensive experience in leadership roles, including posts as a Chief Academic Officer and Head of School, Principal, Assistant Principal, Dean, Teacher and Speech Language Pathologist. Mrs. Marszalek is well known as a champion of instruction that is based on student achievement, culture building for teachers and staff, academic intervention services and responsible financial stewardship. She received her C.A.S. in Educational Administration and her M.S. in Education from the State University of New York College at Buffalo.	Founder	Mrs. Marszalek has a proven history of documented success. Having received a Highly Effective Growth Score from SED placed her among the top 6 percent of principals in the State.
Lisa A. Rogers	Cantalian Center for Learning* – Co-Principal and People Incorporated – Individual Residential Assistant	Ms. Rogers holds an M.S. in Ed from Buffalo State College and a C.A.S. in Educational Administration and Supervision. She also has certifications in School and District Administration and Special Education K-12. She has served as an administrator and teacher in Buffalo area schools for 13 years, with extensive experience in the implementation of a school-wide Positive Behavior Intervention System, Coordination of After School Programs, and the Development of Classroom Management and Response to Intervention Strategies. Ms. Rogers will serve as a Director overseeing operations, student discipline and student services.	Dean of Students/ Director of Student Services and Operations	Ms. Rogers has a strong background for positively impacting school culture and facilitating an effective and closely monitored student discipline program.
Michael D. Olsen	BPS- Technology Education Teacher and Enterprise Charter School - Technology Coordinator	Mr. Olsen brings extensive background in Facilities Management and Technology Services to the RACS. He has spearheaded the search for the location of the school and set the bar high for the design, efficiency and suitability of the building. Mr. Olsen has also served as a Director of Facilities, Chief Information Officer, Instructional Technology Coach and Technology Education teacher in Buffalo area schools. He obtained both his Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees in Technology Education. Mr. Olsen will serve as a member of the board of trustees.	Board of Trustees- Vice President	Mr. Olsen’s extensive background with technology and facilities will bring a strong expertise as the school commences.
Robin Nellis	Global Concepts Charter School - District Data Coordinator	Ms. Robin Nellis is currently the Data Coordinator (DDC/CIO) for a local charter school. Her responsibilities include; oversight of the student management system, in-take coordination of new students, district billing and student enrollment/attendance. Previously, she served as the Administrative Assistant to the Head of School at a different charter school overseeing the operations of a busy school office. Ms. Nellis earned a Bachelor’s of Arts Degree in English from the State University of New York College at Geneseo. Ms. Nellis will serve as CIO, In-Take Coordinator and Board Clerk for RACS.	Board Clerk, Intake Coordinator and Chief Information Officer	Ms. Nellis’s attention to detail and precision makes her the best candidate to oversee the student management system and correspondences of the board.
Ryan Caster	Freed Maxick CPAs, P.C.- Certified Public Accountant (CPA)	Mr. Caster is a Certified Public Accountant who is the proposed Board Treasurer. Mr. Caster holds both a Bachelor’s of Science Degree in Accounting and Accounting Information Systems from Canisius College in Buffalo, NY. Mr. Caster has been a practicing Certified Professional Accountant in the State of New York for more than ten years. Mr. Caster is currently a Senior Manager in the Audit & Assurance Department at Freed Maxick CPAs, P.C., specializing in the healthcare and higher-education industries. Mr. Caster also currently serves as the Board Treasurer for multiple not-for-profit organizations located within the City of Buffalo. Additionally, Mr. Caster is the current President-Elect for the Western New York Chapter of the Healthcare Financial Management Association. Mr. Caster brings a strong background in accounting and finance, coupled with his involvement serving local not-for-profit organizations in a leadership	Board of Trustee- Financial Officer	Mr. Caster’s strong background in financial management and non-profit organizations make him a vital member of both the Founding Group and Board of Trustees

**Applicant Group Identification** - Beginning in August of 2013, the Lead Applicant – Linda Marszalek and several other members of the founding group were approached by parents of students that live on the East Side of Buffalo. They expressed the need for a school to be established that would encompass many of the attributes that serve as the foundation for what has become the proposed RACS. The members of the applicant group were assembled primarily by the Lead Founder, Mrs. Linda Marszalek, beginning in Sept. of 2013. Members were recruited based upon their unique area(s) of strength that would be required to successfully plan, write and carry out the opening and sustained operation of a charter school in the City of Buffalo.

**Applicant Group – Proposal Planning and Writing** - The applicant group met regularly (1-2 times per week) over the past 28 months. During the first several meetings, the school’s proposed name, mission and key design elements were discussed. From there, a framework was developed to outline the essential requirements needed to serve the student, family and community demographic that is predominately found on the East Side of Buffalo, New York. As the planning progressed, each member was assigned a list of subsections within the New Charter School RFP that the applicant was uniquely qualified to head up. Each member was responsible for the research, contacting of outside sources and the writing of the response. Once each section was completed, the section was passed to an internal member and an external source for evaluation. Once the section was vetted by all, it was added to the final application.

**Primary Author of Proposed School** - The application is a joint collaborative effort in which all members were primarily led by Mrs. Linda Marszalek. No paid outside sources were utilized in the planning, writing or evaluation of this application.

### **III B. Board of Trustees and Governance:**

**Board Roles and Responsibilities:** The Board of Trustees of RACS will be responsible for ensuring that the school is operating in compliance with its charter and all applicable state and federal laws as well as overseeing the school’s progress towards achieving its mission of preparing students for success in and beyond high school. Major responsibilities of the Board will include setting strategic goals for the school, approving the annual budget, responding to parent complaints, overseeing and annually evaluating the Head of School using the State Approved Principal Evaluation Tool. The Board President, along with the Executive Committee of the Board, takes on the role of acting as the final point of accountability for the school in its relationship with the Board of Regents as the chartering entity. The Board of Trustees is entrusted with the charter agreement by the Board of Regents and is responsible for making sure that the school is upholding the promises contained in the charter agreement. If the school does not live up to the terms of its charter agreement, the school’s Board must answer directly to the Board of Regents.

**Board Structure:** The Board will have no fewer than 5 and no more than 11 members at any time. The founding board members will serve staggered initial terms of 1, 2 or 3 years as described in the table below; members who join the board after the initial meeting will serve 2-3 year terms. The Founding Board of Trustees, upon the receipt of a school charter, will seek out additional candidates to further diversify the Board of Trustees and fill all remaining seats. The Board will hold monthly public meetings throughout the school year and will have an annual full-day retreat each summer. Board meetings will be conducted in accordance with Robert’s Rules of Order and the school’s bylaws.

Parents and the public will be welcome to attend Board meetings, which will provide the opportunity for public comment and an opportunity to directly address the Board with concerns. The *By-Laws* that govern the RACS’s Board of Trustees are contained in Attachment 5b and provide more detail regarding the procedure for conducting board meetings, public notice of charter school board meetings and the method of appointment or election of trustees.

#### **Officers of the Board will have the following general responsibilities:**

- The Board President has general supervision, direction, and control of the policies of the school, subject to board control, and such other powers as the board may prescribe. When present, he/she will preside at board meetings.
- The Vice-President acts in the place of the President, if the President is absent or unable to fulfill his or her duties, and when so acting will have all the President’s powers and be subject to the same restrictions.

- The Treasurer acts as custodian of school funds and will provide the appropriate segregation of duties to create strict internal fiscal control policies. He/she will inform the Board of the school’s ongoing fiscal condition.
- The Secretary will be responsible for keeping the minutes of the Board, maintaining records of its membership and decisions, interpreting the by-laws in the case of a dispute and any other duties the Board may prescribe.
- The Board will have three permanent standing committees: Personnel, Finance and Academic. The President may create ad hoc committees to handle emergent issues such as facilities or fundraising. The Treasurer will chair the Finance Committee on a permanent basis, but the chairs of other committees will be appointed by the Board President and may rotate among the members. At an appropriate interval, the chairs of any permanent and standing committees will provide a report of committee activity to the Board-at-Large.
  - The Personnel Committee, chaired by the appointed Board Member, is responsible for, but not limited to, drafting and/or revising personnel policies for board approval, reviewing job descriptions, establishing a salary structure, and annually reviewing staff salaries, and reviewing the benefits package. The Personnel Committee is also responsible for reviewing all personnel recommendations brought before the Board by the Head of School, except the selection of the position of Head of School. The Board-of-Trustees will handle all future school leader searches and the annual evaluation of the school leader.
  - The Finance Committee, chaired by the Treasurer, coordinates the board’s financial oversight responsibilities. The Finance Committee is responsible for developing annual budgets in conjunction with the short and long-term plans of RACS and submitting them to the Board of Trustees for review and vote. The budget is reviewed periodically by the Finance Committee to be updated with current information. Additional responsibilities include oversight of the school’s audit requirements, facilities and financial management initiatives. The Finance committee is supported by the Head of School and contracted accountant.
  - The Academic Committee works to ensure the school is meeting its accountability goals related to student achievement, helps ensure the academic quality and credibility of the school as an academic institution and supports the Head of School in the maintenance, promotion and improvement of the academic standards set forth in the charter. The primary responsibilities of the Academic Committee include: advising the Board on the School’s core activities of teaching and learning; recommending to the Board the adoption of academic policies consistent with the school’s vision, mission and strategic plan; adopting procedures to effect Board-approved academic policies; building and enhancing the quality of the school’s academic programs at all levels; advising the board on the academic aspects of the strategic direction of the school; and working in conjunction with the Head of School to monitor and advance the quality of all academics.

**Proposed Founding Board of Trustees:** In addition to fulfilling legal requirements, RACS Board of

Trustees will be composed of individuals who support the school's mission, believe in it, and seek to promote it. Advocating for the charter school and its educational philosophy is an important function of the

Trustee Name	Voting Y/N	Position on the board (e.g., officer or constituent representative)	Length of initial term
Dolores Prezyna	Y	Board of Trustees - President	3
Michael Olsen	Y	Board of Trustees - Vice President	1
Christine Mann	Y	Board of Trustees- Treasurer	2
Ryan Caster	Y	Board of Trustees - Member	3
Leslie Scott	Y	Board of Trustees - Secretary	1
Reserved- Parent	Y	Board of Trustees – Member	2
William Yelder	Y	Board of Trustees – Community Member	3

board and involves promoting the mission and goals of the school within the community. The RACS’s founding Board of Trustees represents a diverse group with a broad array of experiences and skills that is capable of launching, overseeing and growing this high-quality charter school.

**Skills/Qualifications:**

- **Dolores Prezyna**, proposed Board President, Dr. Prezyna has extensive educational experience both as an educator as well as an administrator. She earned her Doctorate in Educational Leadership, CAS in Educational Administration, Masters of Science in Education with a Concentration in Reading, and a

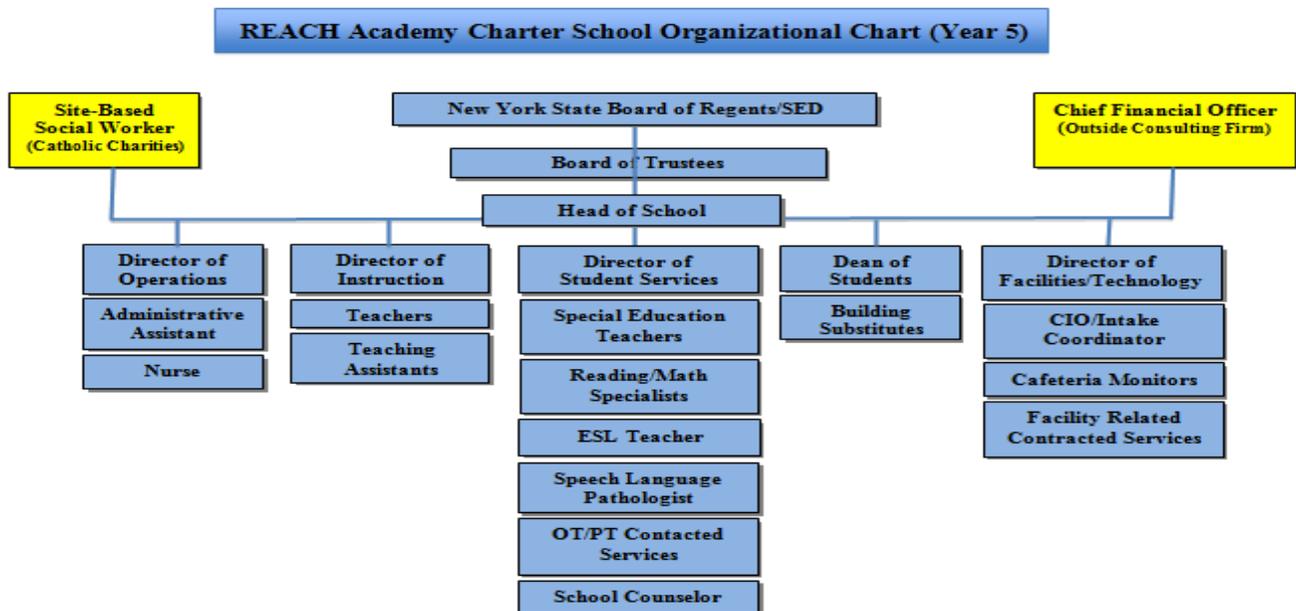
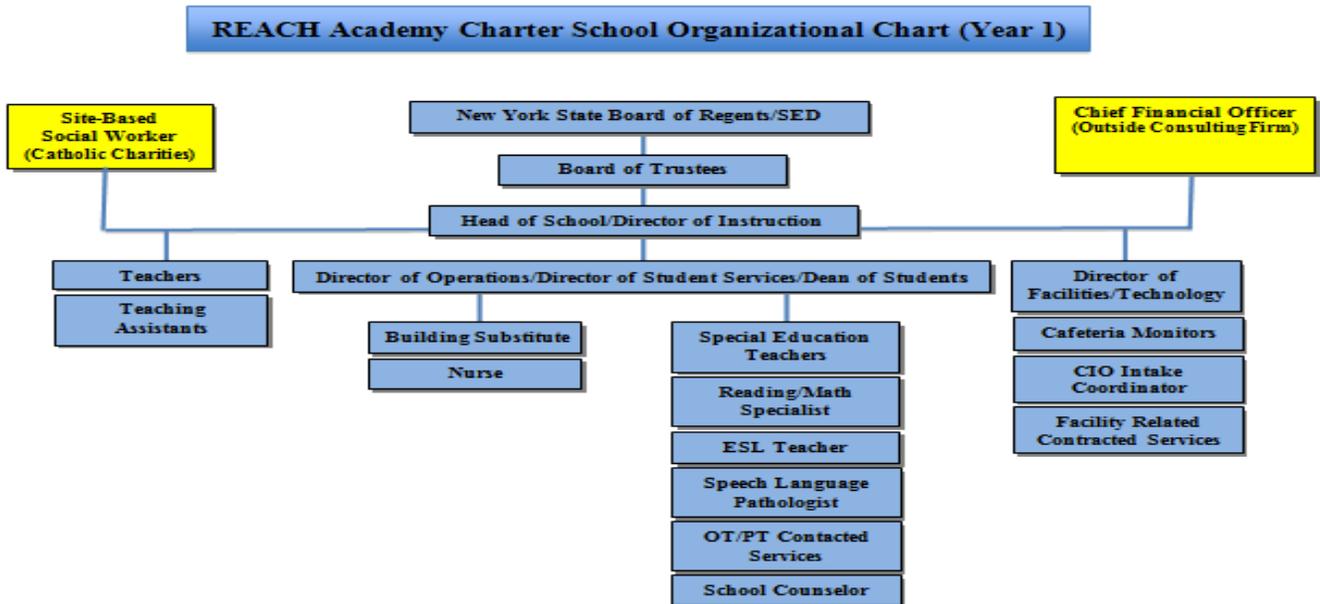
Bachelors of Arts in English. Dr. Prezyna is retired from the Frontier School District, where she served as the Principal of Blasdell Elementary for 15 years. She has also served as an Assistant Principal, English Language Arts Coordinator and a Reading Specialist. Previously, Dr. Prezyna has worked at Medaille College as an Adjunct Instructor in the Literacy Department. Currently she is working as the Student Teacher Supervisor at SUNY Fredonia.

- **Michael Olsen**, proposed Vice-President, has been an educator for 13 years, 9 of which were in the City of Buffalo, working in both public and charter schools. Mr. Olsen brings experience in charter school operations, procurement practices, school data networking and facility management. He has also served as a Chief Information Officer, Director of Facilities, Instructional Technology Coach and Technology Education Teacher in Buffalo area schools. He obtained both his Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Technology Education from the State University College of New York at Buffalo.
- **Christine Mann**, proposed Board Member, Ms. Mann holds a Masters of Business Administration (MBA) from Canisius College in Buffalo and has just been named the Director for Infusion Services for The Dent Neurologic Institute. Previously, she served as the Chief Executive Officer of a medical practice, where she oversaw a staff of 45 and a \$33,000,000 budget. Christine supervised the business, personnel and financial operations of the practice, which, in the 14 years she was there, had tripled in size. While operations and revenues had grown, Ms. Mann implemented a plan to reduce operating costs and maximize profits. Christine has previously used her business competence to lead sales and marketing programs in Eastern and Central Europe. Ms. Mann brings a strong background in leadership, negotiations and Human Resources to the RACS Board.
- **Ryan E. Caster, CPA**, proposed Board Treasurer, holds both a Bachelor of Science Degree in Accounting and Accounting Information Systems from Canisius College in Buffalo, NY. Mr. Caster has been a practicing Certified Professional Accountant in the State of New York for more than ten years. Mr. Caster is currently a Senior Manager in the Audit & Assurance Department at Freed Maxick CPAs, P.C., specializing in the healthcare and higher-education industries. Mr. Caster also currently serves as the Board Treasurer for multiple not-for-profit organizations located within the City of Buffalo. Additionally, Mr. Caster is the current President for the Western New York Chapter of the Healthcare Financial Management Association (HFMA). Mr. Caster brings a strong background in accounting and finance, coupled with his extensive involvement serving local not-for-profit organizations in a leadership capacity.
- **Leslie Scott**, proposed Board Secretary, has earned her law degree from American University, Washington College of Law and a Bachelor of Arts in Biopsychology. Ms. Scott has extensive experience in the areas of legal research, legal writing, oral advocacy, special education law and criminal law. In her free time, Ms. Scott mentors at-risk inner-city youth, tutoring students in reading and writing, and volunteering at a center for displaced lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth.
- **William Yelder**, proposed Community Representative, brings community perspective to board governance. He is also a connection to community partners and advocates for the school. His experience as a past and current member of several community organizations such as Board Member of Citizen Action of New York, Member of PUSH Buffalo, and Member of Clean Air Coalition for Health/ Justice of Western New York. As community representative he will be the “go to” person representing the interests of the community surrounding RACS. The Community Representative will work hard to forge partnerships with other community agencies and stakeholders and serve as their liaison to the Board. This representative will help direct continuing outreach and assist in the planning of regular events welcoming the community into our school.
- **Parent Representative** - The purpose of incorporating a parent representative on the board is to ensure that there is always a parent stakeholder on the BOT and that parents have a way to connect to the governance of the school and that Board members have a window into the life and concerns of our parent community. This person will attend monthly Family Council Meetings to; report to the parent community on relevant board business; receive feedback from parents to communicate to the board; report any needs that the board may have that can be met by the parent body; assist in the planning of school events; and be in attendance at school events.

### III C. Management and Staffing

**Management Needs and Priorities** - The organizational structure of the school in Year 1 will involve having 8 classrooms; 4 in Kindergarten and 4 in first grade. Each class will have one classroom teacher. A teaching assistant will be split between two rooms, working in each class for half of the day. Since recruitment targets are set at approximately 22%, mirroring that of the home school district, for students with special needs, it is expected that every class will have a special education teacher working in it for half the day with up to 4-5 identified students or 22% of the class. These special education teachers will also be split between two classrooms, they will work with students opposite of the teacher assistants to provide the mandated services that are included on the students IEP. Scholars will go to physical education every day. Music, art and computer lab will be one time a week, while library will be twice a week. Funding for these positions is based on projected student enrollment, enrolled students with disabilities and enrolled students labeled as ELL's reflected in Attachment 9 entitled *Budget and Cash Flow Templates*.

#### Organization Chart – Staffing Structure and Reporting Responsibilities (Year 1 and Year 5)



The Head of School will oversee the budget development, board communication, fiscal oversight and instructional and programmatic leadership. Later, as more grades are added and the instructional span

broadens, a Director of Instruction will be hired to assist the Head of School in carrying out the instructional leadership. Given the small number of students in the early years, one person will share three administrative roles which will develop into three positions as more students are added and needs develop. Similar to the

Staffing Chart	Number in Position				
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
<b>Number of Students</b>	160	240	320	400	480
<b>School Year</b>	17-18	18-19	19-20	20-21	21-22
<b>Position</b>					
Head of School/Director of Instruction	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	
Head of School					1.0
Director of Instruction					1.0
Director of Operations/Students	1.0				
Director of Operations		1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Director of Student Services/Discipline		1.0			
Director of Student Services			1.0	1.0	1.0
Dean of Students (Discipline)			1.0	1.0	1.0
Director of Facilities/Director of Technology	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
CIO/Intake Coordinator	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Administrative Assistant		1.0	1.5	1.5	1.5
Classroom Teachers (4 FTE/grade level)	8.0	12.0	16.0	20.0	24.0
Special Education Teachers (2 FTE/grade level)	4.0	6.0	8.0	10.0	12.0
Teaching Assistants (2 FTE per grade level)	4.0	6.0	8.0	10.0	12.0
Counselor	0.5	0.5	1.0	1.0	1.0
Speech Language Pathologist	0.5	0.5	1.0	1.0	1.0
Reading Specialist	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.5	1.5
Math Specialist	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.5	1.5
ENL Teacher **	0.5	0.5	0.6	0.6	0.8
Physical Education/Health Teachers	1.0	1.5	2.0	2.5	3.0
Art Teachers	0.2	0.4	0.6	0.8	1.0
Music Teachers	0.2	0.4	0.6	0.8	1.0
Library Media Specialist	0.6	0.8	1.0	1.2	1.5
Technology Education			0.8	1.2	1.5
Building Substitutes	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0
Nurse	0.5	0.75	1.0	1.0	1.0
Cafeteria Monitors (.2)	0.4	0.6	0.8	1.0	1.2
Social Worker *	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
<b>TOTAL FTEs</b>	<b>28.4</b>	<b>39.95</b>	<b>52.9</b>	<b>63.6</b>	<b>74.5</b>

role of an Assistant Principal, in year 1 with only 160 students, this position will oversee student services, discipline and day-to-day operations. As the school grows by year 3 of the charter; the position will morph into a Director of Discipline, Director of Student Services and a Director of Daily Operations. **Management Roles and Responsibilities** - Ultimately, the Head of School oversees the entire organization of the school. Under his/her authority are key individuals to help support and manage the daily operation of the school. The role of Instructional Leadership and Curriculum Development will be handled by the Head of Schools. A Director of Instruction will be added in year 5 when the student population has grown to assist the Head of School in carrying out this critical role. During the first year, one person will share the role of Director of Student Services, Director of Operations and Dean of Students. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> year, the school will employ a full- time Director of Operations. This individual's main role will be to oversee the details of the daily operations including

managing the front office staff, personnel and human resources, school events and routine emergency preparedness. In Year 3, a full time Director of Student Services will be added who will oversee the Special Education Department, RtI services, the After-School Program and oversee the Athletic Department. The Dean of Students will handle discipline and ensure a safe and orderly school environment is maintained. She will also lead the school in developing a positive culture with high expectations using the PBIS system. The Head of School will oversee budget development and financial management in conjunction with an outside accounting firm, who will handle payroll, accounts payable and receivables and all financial statements. The

Head of School will also contract out legal services, when appropriate, to handle legal compliance and consultation.

**Qualifications of the Future Head of School** – The future head of RACS will be a visionary leader who has the capacity, experience and fortitude to establish and then lead a School Community toward greatness. This transformational leader will recruit the strongest personnel and focus them together on building an organization yielding the highest results. Jim Collins discovered when analyzing the research for his book *Good to Great* that the leaders who ran the “great” organizations were all “Level 5” leaders. According to Collins (2001), there are five attributes that typify the Level 5 Leader: they are self-confident enough to set up their successors for success; they are humble and modest; they have “unwavering resolve;” they display a “workmanlike diligence – more plow horse than show horse; and they give credit to others for their success and take full responsibility for poor results. RACS will recruit and hire a Level 5 Leader. In terms of practical experience, the leader will have; at least 5 years of teaching experience, at least 8 years as a building administrator with experience in both a public district and a charter school and at least 5 years working with intercultural students coming from disadvantaged households. The leader will have a strong background in special education with a solid understanding of literacy and language development. He or she will have demonstrated experience with the following: designing curriculum with the Common Core State Standards, using data to drive instruction, developing assessments and providing interventions, administering teacher evaluations, negotiating collective bargaining agreements, overseeing a multi-million dollar budget, facilitating board governance and managing personnel and overseeing human resources.

**Recruitment and Selection of the School Leader** – A nationwide search will be conducted to recruit the most qualified candidate. The board will complete a rigorous, interview process to select the finalist.

**Staffing Plan for Effective Implementation of the Educational Program** - The teaching staff in the first year will consist of eight classroom teachers for grades Kindergarten and grade one, four inclusion special education teachers, four teacher assistants. Part-time teachers will include a Speech Pathologist, English as a New Language Teacher, Music Teacher, Art Teacher, and a Library Media Specialist. Since all scholars will be going to Physical Education daily, a full time Physical Education Teacher will be hired. The teaching staff and instructional support staff will grow in number as the school grows with new grades levels and increased enrollment. The school will increase each year by 80 students and the number of teachers will also increase proportionately. See Table IIIC.1 for the Five Year Staffing Chart.

RACS will use several sources to generate a pool of qualified applicants once a determination has been made that a vacancy exists. These sources may include job postings in local newspapers, mailings, informal networking, college recruitment offices, teacher job fairs, on-line internet services, and the Buffalo Urban League. These venues will provide RACS with a myriad of opportunities to recruit qualified candidates with the requisite skills to execute specific functions. The above strategies will allow RACS to address potential human resource challenges as the school grows to scale over the course of the charter term. We will use the practices outlined in The School Leader’s Toolbox, a collection of resources focused on recruitment, evaluation, retention of high performers, performance accountability, and building a professional school culture used by the nation’s top charter schools to recruit, manage and support a high-performing teacher workforce. RACS selects applicants for employment for all positions including the hiring of teachers, administration, non-certified instructional personnel and other school employees on the basis of education, certification, experience, character, alignment with the School’s mission and philosophy, necessary credentials, and ability to perform their required duties. Candidates will go through a series of interviews that include panel discussions, demonstration lessons and writing samples. Interview teams will consist of parents, board members, administrators, teachers and support staff. The school is committed to evaluating each applicant and employee on the basis of personal skill, experience and merit. The school is also committed to hiring staff that possess experience, understanding and expertise in working with our targeted at-risk population, specifically students who are eligible for the Free and Reduced Lunch Program. The school will make every effort to ensure that both the letter and spirit of the laws prohibiting discrimination are fully implemented in all of its working relationships. RACS will take all appropriate steps to verify the information provided on an employment application. These steps may take place before or after commencement of employment. Any misrepresentation, falsifications or omissions of any information or

date on an employment application may result in exclusion from further consideration for employment and/or termination of employment.

**Non-Certified Teachers:** To determine appropriate experience, training and skills of non-certified teachers, RACS will define the values and professional qualities that the school expects of its teachers and that best respond to the needs of the student population and the school community. Staff members will be involved in the interview and selection process. RACS believes in and is committed to the principles of equal opportunity and Affirmative Action. It is the policy of RACS to affirmatively recruit and select employees in accordance with the requirements of the job. RACS shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, age (except when age is a bonafide criterion for employment), veterans' status, sexual orientation, or disability. Disabled individuals are encouraged to apply for positions provided such disability, with reasonable accommodation, does not preclude the employee from performing the essential function of the position. All school employees will be required to submit a fingerprinting clearance in conjunction with the Laws of New York 2001, Chapter 180. The responsibilities and qualifications of specific staff members are found in the job descriptions found in Attachment 8a entitled *Hiring and Personnel Policies and Procedures*.

**Staff Needs Aligned to the Budget** - Table III.C.1 is aligned to the five year budget plan reflected in Attachment 9 entitled *Budget and Cash Flow Templates*. Both the staffing plan and the five year budget plan reflect how the increased student population over time is carefully planned and fiscally prepared.

**Staff Needs Aligned to Educational Program** - Table III.C.1 demonstrates how the staffing needs increase as the student population grows over the five years of the charter. As the student population grows to 480 students, administrative support intensifies. For example, a full-time Dean who handles discipline and leads the culture of high expectations with a strong PBIS program is not needed for 160 Kindergarten and First Graders. However, for a school with 480 students ranging up to 5<sup>th</sup> grade, a full time Dean of Students is warranted. Therefore, in Year 1, one person will be able to oversee daily operations, student discipline and student services. Other staffing related budget assumptions include having a Special Education Teacher and Teaching Assistant present in each class for half of the day to align with the educational program needs of the school.

**Plan to Attract and Retain Effective Staff Teacher Recruitment:** Talented leaders and teachers are critical to the success of high-quality charter schools. RACS will conduct local and national searches for the best qualified faculty and staff utilizing job boards such as the ones hosted by the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, National Charter School Resource Center, as well as advertising in local media outlets. We will also network with other high performing public, private and charter schools.

**Teacher Retention:** Teacher retention will also be a top priority. Effective school leadership dedicated to retaining highly effective teachers increases teacher longevity and scholar success. RACS intends to attract and retain effective teachers by offering a supportive professional environment, including: professional development, high-quality mentoring, and a salary that is competitive to other schools throughout Buffalo. The responsibilities and qualifications of specific school staff members are described in the attached job descriptions (See Attachment 8a – *Hiring and Personnel Policies and Procedures*). As the school grows between Year One and Year Five of the charter, additional personnel will be hired to service the growing enrollment of the school. Staffing needs will be strongly dictated by the needs of the students. Our anticipated aggressive outreach towards students with disabilities and ELL's will necessitate adequate instructional staffing for those students. We will seek to retain teachers by providing or promoting the following:

- **High Quality and Authentic Professional Development**
- **Strong Collaborative Environment**
- **Professional Work Environment** - RACS will create an environment that is professional and collegial. Central to this will be creating and maintain a culture of high expectations that is inclusive of all individuals. We will create a safe environment that values the input of all individuals.
- **Generous Benefit Package:**
  - **Medical Insurance-** The Board of Trustees will select a medical insurance plan, which may include more than one option of provider or provider networks; that the school will provide to each full-time regular employee. Employee co-payment for health coverage may be required.

- **Dental Insurance-** The Board will select a dental insurance plan that will be offered to full time employees.
- **Vision Care-** The Board may select a vision care plan that the will be provided to each employee.
- **Short-Term Disability Insurance-** The school will carry short-term disability insurance in accordance with New York State Law. Such insurance allows payment in the event of certain injuries, illnesses or other disabilities occurring outside of the workplace, including pregnancy. Any employee wishing to claim disability pay must file appropriate reports and forms with the Head of School or his or her designee. Such employee also is responsible for filing any other necessary forms, applications, or other information as required by applicable government policies.
- **New York State Teacher Retirement System** (to qualified individuals) - Upon approval by the Board of Trustees, the school will submit an application to join the Teachers' Retirement System, and if accepted, all teachers, substitute teachers, administrators, guidance counselors and teacher assistants shall be eligible for membership in the System. The school will assume all obligations of participating employers as determined by the System, including liabilities for employer payments and record keeping.

**How Base Salaries and Increases will be Determined** - In order to retain a healthy work force, a competitive salary will be offered. The base salary will be in the average range for teachers in Western New York. For teachers with verified years of experience, additional steps may be offered. On average, teachers with a Master's Degree on Step 1, is approximately \$40,000 for this area of the state. In order to balance our staff with both experienced and newly certified teachers, teachers' starting salaries have been earmarked as \$50,000. In order to be able to offer a range of salaries based upon experience and need, salaries will range from \$40,000 to \$60,000 in Year 1. Salary increases will be determined by the Board of Trustees based upon rate of per pupil tuition increases, school academic success and cost of living adjustments.

**Addressing Human Resource Challenges** -The Head of School in conjunction with the Director of Operations will handle personnel and human resource challenges. When necessary, an attorney specializing in labor relations will be consulted to handle difficult legal challenges. The school will follow the personnel policies found in the Board Policy Manual and the Employee Handbook that the Board of Trustees has developed.

**Student Assessment Data to Drive Key Decisions** - Student assessment data will drive key decisions in the recruitment, evaluation, retention and support of appropriate personnel. For example, if students in the intermediate grades are struggling with meeting benchmarks in math, and an opening exists in the fourth grade, an experienced teacher with proven success in math will be recruited. Financial incentives will be given to teachers for receiving student growth scores on state assessments falling in the effective and highly effective range. Lastly, state assessment data will be incorporated into each staff members' evaluation results.

### **C.1. Charter Management Organization**

RACS does not have a Charter Management Organization.

### **C.2. Partner Organization** – See Attachment 7- *Partnership Information*

### **III D. Evaluation:**

**Evaluation of Educational Programs** - The Head of School, Director of Instruction and Director of Student Services will monitor and report on curriculum programs, interventions, and assessments throughout the school year. Benchmark data reflecting student growth and achievement will be collected three times throughout the school year (See Section II.D. for *Assessment*). Reports will be made to both the Board of Trustees and the faculty and staff on the results of both benchmark data and state assessment results to determine if the school is on track for meeting the school goals (See Section II.A for *Achievement Goals*).

**Improving Instruction, Student Learning and Teacher Performance** - Immediate, specific and targeted feedback has been found to be one of the most powerful impacts on student improvement (Hattie, 2012). The results of these data collected will be utilized in grade level weekly meetings for analysis, planning for interventions, teacher reflection and impacting instruction. Further explanation for how grade level teams will use data to respond to student need, see Section II.D on *Response to Intervention*.

**Annual Reports:** The annual report will serve as the programmatic audit for the school. The information in the report is based on the accountability plan. To determine progress towards goals as noted in the

accountability plan, student benchmark assessment data will be collected and analyzed to determine the effectiveness of the program. If programmatic changes must be made, the school will revise and submit necessary changes to NYSED for approval.

### **Evaluation of the School's Operational Effectiveness and Fiscal Soundness**

Operational Effectiveness – RACS will monitor its effectiveness by the number of parent complaints formally brought forth to the Board of Trustees, as well as the number of discipline infractions and expulsions as determined by the Violent and Disruptive Incident Report (VADIR). Monthly anonymous surveys by the staff will also yield valuable feedback on the effectiveness of daily operations.

Fiscal Soundness - The pursuit of educational excellence and increased student achievement are the basis of our purpose as an entity. Therefore, the budget process will be driven from the perspective centering on our mission, vision and objectives. Those items that have the most impact on achieving the school goals will be focused upon the most. Initially, during the first year of operation, the Head of School will meet with the CFO weekly to monitor and discuss the actual versus projected expenditures year-to-date. RACS will be diligent in remaining within the allocated yearly budget as well as meeting the target financial reserve. Ensuring a clean and positive annual audit and devising appropriate purchasing procedures aligned to New York Procurement Laws. The fiscal soundness of the school will also be based on reaching the specified reserve amount left after the school year has ended which will be contained in the annual board goals and also the determination of an outside independent annual audit.

**Plan for the Evaluation of Teaching** - RACS, in accordance with Annual Professional Performance Reviews (APPR) of teachers and building principals, will adopt the Marshall Teacher Evaluation Rubric. RACS will provide supervision and support in the context of multiple mini observations throughout the year in addition to the end of year culminating Marshall Rubric.

Administrators will make frequent informal walk-throughs in classrooms. Teachers will receive written feedback for these visits with comments and suggestions as necessary. Utilizing data drawn from these walk-throughs, the school will adopt the Marshall Teacher Evaluation Tool from the New York State approved list of Teacher Evaluation Tools. The Marshall Tool will yield a score of up to 60 points covering six different domains. In addition to the 60 points, the teacher's individual growth scores of up to 20 points will be taken from the State Assessment Ratings. The last 20 points will be derived from the building's State Assessment overall growth score. Each teacher will then be given a HEDI Score of either Highly Effective, Effective, Developing or In Need of Improvement. Any teacher scoring at a level of Developing or In Need of Improvement will be placed on a Teacher Improvement Plan (TIP) for the following year. For teachers who work outside of a state assessment growth score area, the overall building score will count as 40% of their composite score. Prior to state assessment years when growth scores are not yet rendered, the Marshall score out of 60 points will be converted to an overall percentage to determine a HEDI Score.

In the culminating end of year evaluation tool, the Marshall Teacher Evaluation Rubric focuses on six domains, including: planning and preparation for learning, classroom management, delivery of instruction, monitoring, assessment, and follow-up, family and community outreach, and professional responsibilities. Each of these domains is further divided into 10 criteria and rated across four performance levels for each criterion. The four performance levels include Highly Effective, Effective, Improvement Necessary, and Does Not Meet Standards.

**School Administrators' Evaluations** - School Administrators will be evaluated in a similar fashion. Using the Marshall Rubric for Administrator Evaluations, the Head of School will evaluate all other administrators in the building. The Academic Committee of the Board of Trustees will evaluate the Head of School using the Marshall Rubric for Administrators. The overall score will be derived from 40% of the overall school's Student Growth Measure (SGM) and 60 points from the Marshall Administrator's Rubric yielding a HEDI score for each administrator. Any administrator receiving a HEDI score of Developing or In Need of Improvement will be immediately placed on an Improvement Plan.

**Board of Trustees Evaluation** - Each year the Board of Trustees will begin the year with the development of its annual board goals. These goals will be derived from the School's Achievement Goals found in Section II.A as the basis and additional goals will be added specific to the Board's current needs. The Executive Committee will oversee and monitor the progress of these goals. At least twice annually, they will present

progress on the goals to the entire board. The Board will be annually evaluated using the 360 degree feedback model. This process allows for the identification of competencies related to the job as well as the development of an action plan to improve upon as a school. The board will also develop annual goals at the start of each school year and evaluate their accomplishments from the previous year.

**Family and Student Satisfaction** - Each year, parents of RACS scholars will be asked to fill out an anonymous confidential survey to rate every aspect of the school, from teachers and leadership to homework requirements and the Code of Conduct. Parents will be given the surveys after the first year when reregistering their students for the next school year. These data will be collected, analyzed and utilized to make adjustments as indicated. Additionally, parent satisfaction surveys will be available on the school website at all times. Student satisfaction surveys will be administered anonymously. A Google form survey (via electronically) will be administered quarterly to students. Teachers will receive their results to reflect and improve their instruction.

**Evaluation of Organizational Partnerships** - Each year a meeting will occur to set annual goals for the organizational partnerships that the school maintains. At least once a year, the Executive Committee of the Board along with the Head of School will review the goals and determine the effectiveness of the partnership and determine if any revisions are needed to be instituted.

**Sources Referenced for Section III.D. – Evaluation**

Hattie, J. (2012). *Visible learning for teachers: Maximizing impact on learning*. London: Routledge.

**III E. Professional Development and Training Plan:**

RACS’s high-quality professional development and training plan will support effective development and implementation of the education program and effectively address the needs of administrators and teachers. The establishment of a professional learning community through a multi-layered approach will ensure that students are achieving the highest academic standards. This will allow for ongoing and embedded professional development while providing teachers and administrators, both new and experienced with the skills and knowledge needed to ensure student achievement as well as personal growth as an educator. Providing quality professional development will allow for the creation of a supportive environment where staff members will be more likely to have success in the classroom and ensure the long-term investment in the school. Archibald (2011) found that high-quality professional-learning opportunities for teachers contain the following five

characteristics:

- Aligns with school goals, state and district standards and assessments, and other professional - learning activities
- Focuses on core content and modeling of teaching strategies for the content
- Includes opportunities for active learning of new teaching strategies
- Provides the chance for teachers to collaborate
- Includes follow-up and continuous feedback.

The *Staff Development Plan for REACH Academy Charter School* contains all five of these characteristics.

**Instructional Staff Institute (6 weeks prior to the start of school) -**

As RACS grows; setting professional development priorities is of critical importance. During the first year of operation, setting a school-wide culture of success will be one of the top priorities. Driven by the core design element, *The Six Point Plan* for

Staff Development for <i>The Six Point Plan</i>	Types of Training	Professional Consultants or Models Incorporated
Point 1 Maintaining a Culture of High Expectations	Understanding Poverty	Marva Collins
	Resilience Training	Retired BPS Teacher
	The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People	Steven Covey’s
	21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership	John Maxwell
	The Power of Positive Students	William Mitchell
	Diversity and Lasting Impressions	Franklin Covey
	Discipline with Dignity	Thomas Kalkey
	PBIS Training	Brian Mendler
	DASA Training	Site Facilitator from Catholic Charities
	Blood Borne Pathogens Training	School Nurse
Sexual Discrimination Training	Director of Operations	
Point 2 Articulating the Curriculum	Readers & Writers Workshop Guided Reading	Jeanne Tribuzzi Amy VanderWater Frank Serifini Sharon Taberski
	Common Core Training, Unit Development, and Curriculum Mapping	Head of Schools
	Singapore Math (In Focus)	In Focus, Houghton Mifflin Trainer
	Scholastic Math Inventory (SMI)	Scholastic Inc., Trainer
	Balanced Math Program Guided Math Groups	Jan Christiansen
	Extensive work with teachers will be done to develop lessons, model for them and provide immediate feedback for improving their craft with Readers and Writers Workshop	Jeanne Tribuzzi

*Increasing Student Achievement* and aligned with our school mission, the staff development plan for the school will be multi-dimensional and responsive to each aspect of our school’s instructional model. At the end of each school year, the professional development plan will be assessed to ensure its positive impact on student learning. All teachers at RACS will be provided in-depth high-quality training during a six week long professional development session in the months of July and August as indicated on the *Proposed School Calendar* in Attachment 3c. In addition, ongoing trainings throughout the school year will take place to support the implementation of best practices that align with the core values of the school. The professional development training plan engages the entire school staff and leadership team in an ongoing cycle of learning, starting with key topics and programs, which will begin at the Pre-Opening Summer Institute and continue throughout year 1 and beyond. For a complete list of professional development topics and training facilitators see Table III.E.1 above.

<b>Point 3</b> Ensuring Instructional Best Practices	Behavioral Coach will work directly with teachers to set up positive classroom learning environments that: build relationships with students, run with smooth transitions and efficiency, and optimize learning. He or she will model expectations, guide practices and give immediate feedback to teachers who struggle with classroom management.	Brit Parham
<b>Point 4</b> Administering Common Assessments	PPVT-IV AIMSWeb or DIBELS Scholastic Math Inventory (SMI) Fountas & Pinnell’s Leveled Literacy Assessment Kit	Teacher Leaders Company Trainers
<b>Point 5</b> Providing Interventions	Response to Intervention Training	Jim Wright- <i>Interventioncentral.org</i>
	Leveled Literacy Intervention	Heinemann – Irene Fountas & Gay Su Pinnell
	Will turn key professional learning sessions including coaching, demonstrating and modeling specific to individual needs.	Teacher Leaders
<b>Point 6</b> Monitoring Progress to Remain on Task	Data team training will allow teachers to examine and learn from their student data	Head of School
	Data Analysis will help demonstrate effective ways to examine results and track progress	Jim Wright
	Driven By Data	Paul Bambrick-Santoyo (2010)

Table III.E.1 – Professional Development Topic

During the planning phase, RACS founders, all staff, and selected consultants who specialize in Curriculum Design, Common Core Standards and Common Formative Assessments will develop the comprehensive scope and sequence of the rigorous school curriculum. The consultants may include nationally recognized authors and presenters, educators, higher education faculty, professional developers, and other curriculum specialists committed to working with children in urban settings, which can be seen on Table III.E.1 above. When new members of the school’s learning community join RACS, they will be provided with in-depth training with our authentic curriculum design.

**Components of the Instructional Staff Institute:** Teachers Administrators and Teaching Assistants will be trained in the following processes:

**\*Instructional Delivery:** A week-long workshop will be designed to engage select teachers in an in-depth investigation of the content and process of RACS’s authentic curriculum model aligned to the Common Core State Standards. Grade-level teams will work with professional consultants like Jeanne Tribuzzi and Amy VanDerwater to develop Units of Study around the Common Core State Standards using the Reader’s and Writer’s Workshop Model from Lucy Calkins. Teachers will be able to earn up to 30 hour of hourly pay for curriculum development.

**\*Curriculum Design:** The following steps outline the process for deconstructing the standards and building curriculum units for each grade level and subject area.

**~Identify Units of Study** - Units in ELA, Math, Science and Social Studies will be identified and laid out running in length from 4 to 6 weeks in length.

**~Prioritize Standards** - Priority Standards or essential outcomes represent a carefully selected subset of the total list of grade-specific and course-specific standards within each content area. This subset represents what students must know and be able to do by the end of each school year in order to be prepared to enter the next grade level or course (Ainsworth, 2011). Using Ainsworth’s selection criteria: endurance, leverage, readiness for the next level of learning and alignment to high-stakes assessments, priority standards will be identified and agreed upon. Map Priority Standards to Units – Grade level teams will then determine which Priority Standards will be taught with which units and will be in alignment with the pacing calendar.

~**Unwrap” the Standards** – “Unwrapping” a standard is a process of deconstructing the standard. It is an analysis of the standard in order to understand the learning intention (Ainsworth, 2003). To do this, one must identify the concepts and skills within the standard and agree on the cognitive demand of each skill.

~**Develop Common Formative Assessments (CFA) Tasks for each Standard** - In order to develop effective CFAs, teams will determine the item type and/or product for the assessment followed by developing the assessment items, student directions, scoring guides, rubric and/or answer key. Levels for “Advanced,” “Proficient,” “Progressing” and “Needs More Practice” need to be determined for each standard.

~**Identify Skills and Content to be Taught** - Skills and Content that are required in order to meet the Learning Standards will be identified at this point in the process.

~**Identify Learning Activities Needed to Achieve Success on the Common Core State Standards** – Cognitive Psychologist, Daniel Willingham, states that students need to interact with content in a deep and thoughtful manner. Through the use of Thematic Classrooms, activities involving authentic experiences will be designed to teach the skills and content in order to help students make meaningful connections.

~**Identify Vocabulary for Each Course of Learning** - Vocabulary including technical vocabulary related to the unit theme and scholarly vocabulary related to the skills and content will be identified and explicitly taught in each unit of study.

~**On-Going Support and Staff Development (Throughout the School Year)** - RACS will use designated times for the implementation of effective professional development sessions that are meaningful, differentiated, and targeted for teachers as described in Table III.E.1. Weekly conversations and walk-throughs by administration will ensure teachers are getting instructional recommendations to further their practices in the classroom. These observations, coupled with student achievement data, will drive data meeting discussions as well as identify the need for individual coaching sessions.

\***Lesson Study Model:** The Lesson Study Model is designed to assist teachers in producing quality lesson plans and to gain a better understanding of student learning. Lesson study is a simple idea. If you want to improve instruction, what could be more obvious than collaborating with fellow teachers to plan, observe, and reflect on lessons (Lewis 2002.) In the Lesson Study Model, teachers carefully explore how student learning, thinking and behavior change as a result of the lesson. This practice leads to instructional improvement as teachers become more knowledgeable about how their students learn and their instruction impacts student thinking. Teachers will collaborate with professional consultants as well as their grade level team each month for the first half of the year and then every two to three months thereafter. Within the lesson study, the team collaboratively plans, teaches, observes, revises and shares the results of a single class lesson. Teachers will work through these steps; Form a Team: Teams will be composed of 3-6 instructors with a Professional Consultant, Develop Learning Goals: Team members will articulate what they would like students to know and be able to do as a result of the lesson, Design the Lesson: The team will then design a lesson to achieve the learning goals, Plan the Study: The team will decide how to observe and collect evidence of student learning, Teach and Observe: The Professional Consultant will then teach the lesson while others observe and collect evidence of student learning, Analyze and Revise: The team will discuss the results and assesses student progress toward learning goals, and Document and Disseminate: The team will document the lesson study and share their work with colleagues.

\***Weekly Professional Development at Scheduled Grade Level Data Team Meetings** - RACS will provide its teachers and staff with weekly time to collaborate and assess student data. Students will be dismissed early each Monday for 2-hour grade level data team meetings as indicated on the *Proposed First Year Calendar* in Attachment 3c. During this time, all teachers in a grade level will meet to discuss the following: improving classroom strategies, discussing feedback on lesson plan sharing, sharing teaching practices, interpreting data assessment, collaborating on effective practices, and developing individual learning plans to address student learning needs. Teachers will work cooperatively in teams developing their curriculum units. Both the Head of School and later the Director of Instruction will facilitate the process. Resources such as Reading Workshop and Writing Workshop Kits by Lucy Calkins and Guiding Reading Materials by Fountas and Pinnell will be readily available for planning rich, engaging lessons driven by the New York State Common Core Standards.

\***Monthly Professional Development at Scheduled Staffing Meetings** -Ongoing professional development will also be embedded into monthly staff meetings as indicated on the *Proposed School Calendar* in

Attachment 3c. This will allow all grade levels to engage in cross-curricular and instructional conversations to foster academic performance. Additionally, the staff meetings will provide opportunities for reflecting on opportunities for continuous improvement, addressing operational aspects of the school, and providing school wide opportunities for professional learning and growth. Possible topics for ongoing school-wide professional learning and monthly staff meetings may include: continued curriculum mapping for school growth, opportunities to create and share learning in authentic ways, and share out celebrations of student and teacher successes.

**\*New Teacher Mentoring/Instructional Coaching** - Specialists in a particular area will work with teachers who struggle. For example, a teacher who needs help with classroom management will work with a Behavioral Coach. The coach, who may come into the school weekly as a consultant, visits the teacher's classrooms and gives necessary support by either modeling or advising the teacher on how to improve. This powerful feedback is immediate and growth can quickly and easily be seen over a short period of time. Experienced staff members may also mentor other teachers who are new to RACS or those who may have received a poor review on a teacher evaluation. Mentors will help those teachers understand and utilize evidence-based instructional practices. Evidence of professional practice for mentoring will be gathered through teacher self-identified goals, classroom observations and data reviews. Mentoring will be sustained throughout the school year to challenge and support student excellence. The Head of Schools will determine those teachers who need mentoring for poor teacher evaluation scores and provide them with a performance plan that has established measureable goals; they will be reviewed and updated at agreed upon times with the Head of School.

**\*Full Day Professional Development, (Scheduled on the Proposed School Calendar)** - In addition to the above opportunities, four full days will be set aside in the calendar to host school wide professional development on the scheduled conference days as indicated on the *Proposed First Year Calendar* in Attachment 3c

**\*Summer Staff Development for School Board and Administration** -

*Summer Administration Retreat:* The effectiveness of RACS will depend significantly on the effectiveness of its school administrative team. Each year during the month of August, the administrative team will attend a three-day retreat off campus as well as the annual state leadership conference. This will allow the school leaders collaborate and grow as a team and to reflect on the school's previous year's goals in order to help shape the vision for the upcoming school year.

*Summer Board Retreat:* The Board of Trustees at RACS will attend a full one-day retreat during the month of July or early August where they will develop and set forth a set of strategic goals to help the administrative team and the school move toward fulfilling their vision for RACS's future.

**Evaluation and Review of Professional Development** - Curriculum is a dynamic document that is continually changed, updated and developed as reflection occurs. After each unit is carried out, teachers will go through a questionnaire that will be designed to reflect on the success of each unit. By analyzing assessment data, teachers will determine which learning activities had the most impact on student learning and which yielded the least positive benefits. Curriculum will then be redesigned and redeveloped for the following school year.

Review of the units will continually occur and will be updated as teams of teachers reflect and refine their units each year. Having units available on the internet for all the teachers to view will provide opportunities for cross-curricular development of topics and sequencing of skills over grades. Having units available for parents to view holds the school accountable to be faithful to the units that they develop. Teachers will also be asked to identify ongoing professional development needs through an end-of-year review, which will be used to plan the annual Summer Institute prior to the start of the new school year.

The Professional Development and Training Plan will be evaluated and reviewed by the Academic Committee of the Board of Trustees. Evaluation of the plan will include an analysis of both subjective data such as teacher evaluation surveys as well as objective data including results of benchmark assessment and state assessment data. RACS will continually seek to improve its professional development. To achieve this, surveys will be distributed after each session. These surveys will provide school leadership team with anonymous feedback and constructive analysis.

**Addressing the Needs of Special Population** - Professional development sessions will include training teachers on addressing the needs of students identified as at risk of academic failure, students with disabilities, and ENL students. Consultants such as Jim Wright from Intervention Central a leading expert on RtI will facilitate sessions during the Summer Institute and throughout the school year, during monthly Lesson Study Days, as well as on school wide professional development days. Together Jim Wright will work with grade levels to develop and implement an effective tiered intervention approach.

~*RtI Planning*: The development of a strong prescriptive system that responds to students' specific academic needs including those students who may be at risk, students with disabilities and those who are ELL's will be implemented. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the RtI plan outcomes will be completed. If needed, a new intensive instructional intervention plan, with a focus on identifying the antecedent of a student's academic deficiency, will be developed by the data team. Discussions during data meetings will focus on student progress within their RtI plan and students will be placed accordingly within flexible RtI tiers. See Section II.D for a more in depth look at the RtI process.

~*Data Interpretation*: Teachers and administrators will be examining the data deeply to learn more about students' learning and possible gaps in their understanding. Data analysis from state assessments will be available from the Western New York Regional Information Center (WNYRIC) for data teams who will meet regularly to learn more about the errors that students incorrectly choose on their assessments. The Head of School and later the Director of Instruction will prepare the data from previous assessments for teachers to analyze. Teachers will also interview students about errors on practice assessments and determine their thought process in formulating answers. As mentioned earlier, children in poverty often lack the background experiences and vocabulary, which may interfere with the ability to perform on an assessment. Teachers will use this critical feedback in developing future lessons and in providing RtI services that are prescriptively designed to meet students' needs.

~*Progress Monitoring*: We must constantly and consistently, across all domains, monitor and reflect on our practice determining if we miss, met or exceeded our target. As we monitor and realize progress, the 6<sup>th</sup> point in *The Six Point Plan for Increasing Student Achievement*, we continually re-adjust our target in a forward direction. If we exceed our target goal, then our outcome must also be moved to reflect this accelerated growth. If we fall short of our target, first we must determine why the intervention was not successful and then determine how to proceed. A Root-Cause Analysis will occur when interventions aren't working for individual students. Program Evaluations will occur semi-annually for the Special Education Program, ESL Services, and Response to Intervention Services.

Staff Collaboration is essential for Response to Intervention (RtI) development and progress monitoring. It involves having regular data team meetings with grade level teams in examining the data. On-going staff development with nationally renowned RtI expert, Jim Wright, will facilitate this part of *The Six Point Plan for Increasing Student Achievement*. Based on these plans, we project that **all students** will demonstrate academic growth after each unit. Any student who does not show immediate growth, an analysis of why improvement was limited will take place after each learning unit before major delays occur. It will be determined if the intervention needs to be changed or if there is another factor interfering with growth.

**Retention of Administrators and Teachers** - The support from an effective leader and meaningful professional development are two significant variables in a teacher's satisfaction regarding a particular school assignment. High teacher turnover leads to a decrease in student achievement (Ronfeldt, Lankford, Loeb and Wyckoff, 2011). Through a variety of high-quality professional development opportunities, teachers will continue to grow and develop their craft. In *Creating a Culture of High Expectations*, Point 1 of the *Six Point Plan to Increasing Student Achievement*, several factors will contribute to a strong professional climate that only produces exceptional results;

- Rigorous Recruiting and Hiring Procedures – hiring only the best,
- Solid Salary Schedule and Rich Benefit Package – understanding that human resources are the strongest asset that an organization has,
- Investing in High Quality Staff Development – investing in nationally known experts will demonstrate the value that learning plays in the organization,
- Training by Explicitly Setting Expectations – setting expectations for demonstrating a positive attitude and believing in students' ability for success.

- Providing Ample Opportunities for Collaboration - building in time to work together will build strong relationships,
- Immediately Addressing Issues – addressing behaviors that do not reflect the desired values and expected attitudes of the school add to a strong positive focused culture.

**Teacher Planning and Collaboration** - Research suggests that collaboration with colleagues around student instruction is an essential part of every teacher’s job and results in rising student achievement. (Carrie R. Leana, 2011). At RACS, teachers will work extensively every week on developing the best lessons that have the strongest instructional impact on student achievement.

**Plans to Build Organizational Capacity, Share Resources and Best Practices** - Through the weekly grade level data teams, as well as staff trainings with professional consultants and planning sessions, the school will build organizational capacity, share resources and ensure that best instructional practices are being carried out consistently throughout. A Teacher Resource Room will be located in the school where professional resources such as books, articles and ’s will be shared and made available. Student resources will also be gathered and inventoried to build capacity for student materials and interventions for all teachers to use. A succession plan will be devised from the conception of the school in order to later duplicate the exceptional results into a network of high quality charter schools.

**Sources Referenced for Section III.E. – Professional Development**

Ainsworth, L. (2003). *"Unwrapping" the standards: A simple process to make standards manageable*. Denver, CO: Advanced Learning Press .  
 Ainsworth, L. (2011). *Rigorous curriculum design: How to create curricular units of study that align standards, instruction, and assessment*. Englewood, Colo.: Lead Learn Press.  
 Archibald, S. "High Quality Professional Development for All Teachers: Effectively Allocating Resources" (Washington: National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality, 2011), available at <http://www.gtcenter.org/sites/default/files/docs/HighQualityProfessionalDevelopment.pdf>.  
 Ronfeldt, M., Loeb, S., & Wyckoff, J. (2011). How Teacher Turnover Harms Student Achievement. *American Educational Research Journal*, 4-36.  
 Leana, C., Fall 2011. *The Missing Link in School Reform*. Stanford Social Innovation Review: Informing and Inspiring Leaders of Social Change. [http://ssir.org/articles/entry/the\\_missing\\_link\\_in\\_school\\_reform](http://ssir.org/articles/entry/the_missing_link_in_school_reform) April 1, 2016  
 Lewis, C. (2002). Lesson Study: A Handbook of Teacher Led Instructional Change. *Research for Better Schools*.

**III F. Facilities:**

**Proposed Facility & School Location-** RACS is proposed to be located on the East Side of the City of

Buffalo. Several existing buildings have been identified in this area that would be suitable for the establishment of a school. In order to recruit, enroll, retain and serve our target population as described in Sections I.C and I.D, the proposed facility will be located on the eastside of Buffalo. 115 Ash Street is a 90,000 square foot property. It is situated on a 2-acre lot with parking for up to 120 vehicles, located within a quarter-mile from an expressway and it is within a short walking distance from several public transportation routes. The building itself is a former charter school and is currently vacant, is finished space and classroom ready. The facility has all required mechanical systems in place including, but not limited to, fire suppression (sprinkler system), HVAC with emergency shutdown in case of smoke/fire, electrical, plumbing and burglar/fire alarms The building is complete with 38 classrooms, 14 half-sized classrooms (studies), administrative office suite, nurse/health office, physical education center, cafeteria (complete with

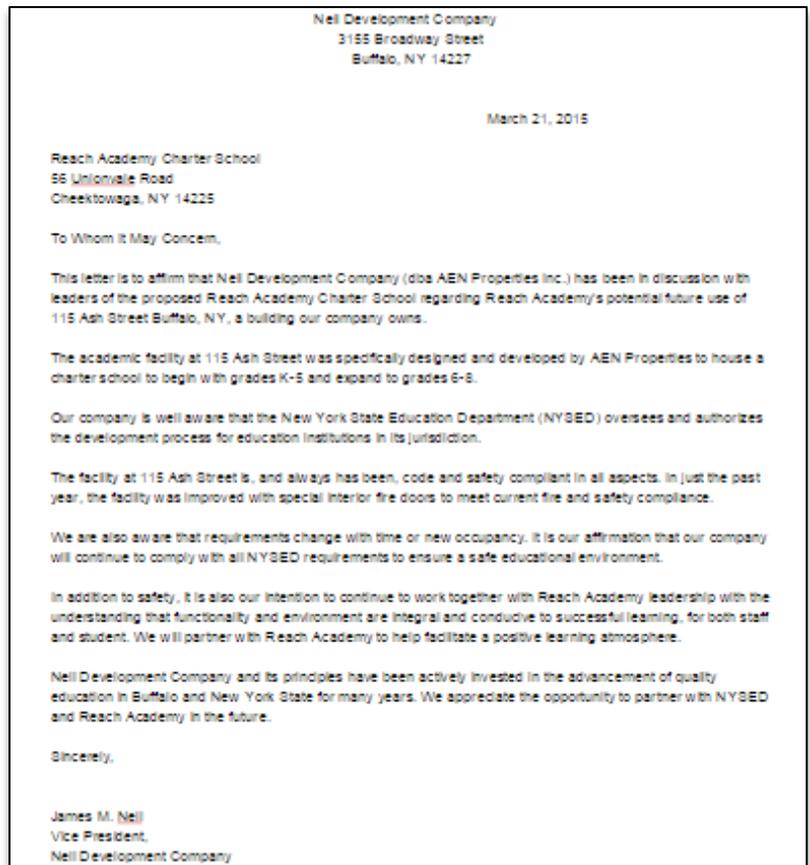


Figure III. F.1

kitchen), library, two computer labs and an elevator. Members of the applicant group have been in contact with the property owners for the past 32 months. During this time the following has been discussed:

1. Timeline for Charter Application Process;
2. Facility needs to bring facility and grounds into SED code compliance;
3. Lease-to-own options and payment schedule; and
4. Timeline for facility acquisition, property insurance, SED facility inspections and application for a Certificate of Occupancy.

Upon securing a charter, the school will contact the property owner and enter into discussions to finalize the items above.

**Meeting the Needs of All Students, Occupancy Requirements and ADA Compliance** - 115 Ash Street was designed and built in 2 phases, the first in 2003 and the second in 2005. At that time, the school adhered to building code requirements. Since that time, the Manual of Planning Standards for School Building 2014 along with State and Local Building Codes have been updated to reflect more stringent regulations for both ADA Compliance and Fire Safety. In 2014, the building was outfitted with smoke barriers to conform to these new standards. Prior to the opening of the school, additional work is required to bring the facility into full compliance, this work includes the installation of rescue windows and additional sealing of wall penetrations through fire-rated walls. This work will be completed by the building’s owner once a lease agreement has been signed. Please see Figure III. F.1

Occupied Space Requirements	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
	160	240	320	400	480
<b>General Classrooms</b>	8	12	16	20	24
<b>Special Ed. - Studies/Offices</b>	4	6	8	10	12
<b>Redirection Room</b>	1	1	1	1	1
<b>Art Classroom</b>	1	1	1	1	1
<b>Music Classroom</b>	1	1	1	1	1
<b>Library/ Media Center</b>	1	1	1	1	1
<b>Computer Lab</b>	1	1	1	2	2
<b>Physical Education Center (Gym)</b>	1	1	1	1	1
<b>Cafeteria w/ attached Kitchen</b>	1	1	1	1	1
<b>Nurse Office</b>	1	1	1	1	1
<b>Offices</b>	5	5	5	5	5
<b>School Nurse</b>	1	1	1	1	1
<b>Lavatory Suite Boys/Girls/Faculty</b>	2	2	3	4	4

**Facility Needs Based on Educational Plan & Anticipated Enrollment** - The number of required general education classrooms in years one through five is 8, 12, 16, 20, and 24 respectively. These classrooms will be appropriately selected and designed so that they are aligned with Key Design Elements 1, 2, 3 and 4. Included in the above, 4 of the general education classrooms will be outfitted with a 2-piece lavatory to serve the Kindergarten students. In addition, 2 half-size classrooms “studies”, per grade level, will be required for Special Education, English as a New Language (ENL) and Response to Intervention (RtI) instructional pullouts. These studies will be located adjacent to the students’ homeroom, and support *The Six*

*Point Plan to Increasing Student Achievement* by hosting Point 3-Providing Interventions. As these intervention services will be provided to students in an area close to the room, they are pulled aside to maximize instructional time and minimize transition time. Three special-area classrooms will be utilized for music, art and information technology classes. One double-sized classroom will serve as the school library and media center. The administrative area of the school will consist of 1 security vestibule for visitor sign-in and identity verification, a main reception and waiting area that will house administrative assistants, and offices for the administrative/professional staff. One split office, complete with waiting area, lavatory, treatment room and double-locked medication storage area will be utilized by the full time school nurse. One general purpose room (large enough for student lunches, physical education classes and school events), a kitchen and a staff meeting/lunch room are required, at the minimum. The chart above drills down the required administrative, professional and instructional space by year of operation as RAC’s enrollment increases.

**Facility Costs, Related Budget Assumptions, Renovation Timeline** - A breakdown of costs associated with facility leasing/purchase, buildout and renovation, occupancy requirements, inspections and the outfitting of classrooms is reflected in Attachment 9- *Budget and Cash Flow Template*. The property owner has offered significant flexibility in staggering monthly lease payments to be more in line with the growth of the school. Reduced lease payments will be incurred in the early years of the lease. Work to plan facility renovations will commence immediately following the signing of a lease agreement on or about January 1,

2017. The renovations will be completed no later than May 30, 2017 in preparation for inspection by, local code enforcement, insurance company and members of SED.

**Sources Referenced for Section III.F – Facilities**  
<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/facplan/documents/MPS-2014.pdf>

**III G. Insurance:**

Pursuant to Education Law § 2851(2) (o), RACS will carry the following insurance coverage: General and Professional Liability Coverage, Student Accident, Property and Property Loss Coverage, and Worker Compensation. In addition, RACS will also carry New York State Disability Coverage and Directors and Officers Coverage.

Table III.G.1 outlines types of policies, limits of coverage, limits and estimated cost of premiums. Supporting “good faith” documentation, obtained from Mr. Steven Mayo, Vice President of Walsh Duffield Insurance Companies, has been provided for the purposes of filing this proposed application and for formulating the proposed school budget. Walsh Duffield is a well-known local insurance company, which provides insurance services to at least 9 other area charter schools. As per the Terms of Operation of the Charter Agreement, RACS will have all insurance policies or insurance binders in place and in effect as of July 30<sup>th</sup> of the year in which the schools charter is granted. These premiums have been included in the Operational Budget for RACS

<u>Policy Type</u>	<u>Insured Limit</u>	<u>Policy Premium</u>
General and Professional Liability Coverage	\$1,000,000 per occurrence or \$2,000,000 aggregate	\$6,000- \$7,000
Student Accident	\$25,000	\$700 - \$800
Property and Property Loss Coverage (Replacement Cost)	\$2,000,000	\$3,000
New York State Disability Coverage		\$21- Male Employee \$46- Female Employee
Directors and Officers Coverage	\$1,000,000	\$5,500 Year 1 \$3,000 Year 2 and beyond
Worker Compensation	Based on \$2,000,000 Payroll	\$18,000- \$20,000

Table III.G.1

(Attachment 9 – *Budget and Cash Flow Template*).

The selected insurance carrier will have no less than an A rating such as The Hartford or Philadelphia Insurance Companies.

**III H. Health, Food, and Transportation Services:**

**Health Services:** RACS will comply with all health service requirements applicable to public schools, including Education Law §§901-914 and §136.2(d)(2) of the Commissioner’s Regulations. The budget assumes an on-site licensed practical school nurse (LPN) that will be hired to provide health care services to scholars (see *Management and Staffing* in Section III.C). The nurse will be responsible for the treatment of ill or injured scholars, storage of and the dispensing of medication with a doctor’s prescription, maintenance of accurate records and correspondence with scholars’ families, completion of a health assessment for each child; evaluation of and screening of children’s vision, hearing, growth and dental condition, assessment of Scoliosis and collection of all required up-to-date immunizations (in accordance with NYS requirements and religious beliefs.) In addition to the nurse, at least two faculty or staff members will be trained in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and the use of the automated external defibrillator (AED) equipment. Cumulative health records will be stored in secured filing cabinets accessible only by authorized persons, to include the nurse, the Head of School and the Dean of Students. All visits to the school nurse, including reason and treatment, will be documented in each scholar’s file located in the Student Management System. Injuries requiring more extensive medical treatment will be taken to the closest hospital emergency room. The child’s parent will be notified as quickly as possible. As part of the School Admissions Process (Attachment 1 – *Admissions, Policies and Procedures*), families will be required to provide at least three emergency contacts. Contacts will be updated regularly, in order to remain current in the event of scholar illness or injury.

During professional staff training days before the beginning of the new school year, all faculty, staff, and administration will receive training regarding RACS’s health policies, procedures and protocols for health-related emergencies.

**Food Service:** RACS plans to contract with Buffalo Board of Education Food Service Department to provide daily breakfast, lunch, and midday or afterschool snacks to our students. The decision to contract with

Buffalo Board of Education Food Service stems from 2 guaranteed facts. First, every team of food service staff is led by a Certified Food Service and Safety Manager who is on site from the beginning of food delivery and prep to the end of post service sanitation. Secondly, the Food Service Commissary and Onsite Food Service Manager ensures that all meals are aligned with the School Nutrition Association guidelines.

The proposed facility plan calls for a full service kitchen outfitted with the necessary freezers, coolers, cookers, warmers, and preparation and wash stations. Food service staff will be able to perform all required storage, preparation and sanitation duties within the provided kitchen area. The serving of meals will take place in the cafeteria itself where a meal serving line will be provided. RACS administration will ensure that all SED and local health codes are enforced and that all food is handled with the highest regard according to The United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Department of Agriculture (USDA), and the Erie County Department of Health (ECDOH).

RACS will participate in the National School Lunch and Breakfast Program in order to provide free or reduced-price breakfasts and lunches to our students who qualify based on family income. To determine eligibility, all School Registration Packages will include the Free or Reduced Priced Lunch Application. No student registration will be accepted without a completed enrollment package. This will ensure an accurate count of all students who qualify for free, reduced or full pay lunch. Applications will be kept on file and entered into the student management system for quick reference and auditing purposes.

**Transportation Services:** According to Sections 2853(4)(b) and 3635 of New York State Education Law, RACS will work with the Buffalo Public Schools Transportation Department to provide bus transportation for the students of RACS. The Director of Operations for RACS will be responsible for coordinating transportation for all students residing within the City of Buffalo limits at a distance of no less than 0.7 of a mile but no greater than 15 miles from the students identified bus pick-up point to RACS. Students residing less than 0.7 miles from the school will walk to and from the school. Additionally, RACS will work with Buffalo Public Schools to provide transportation for students who have been identified as residing in temporary housing under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act or who require special transportation accommodations as identified on the students' IEP or 504 plan. As shown in the *School Calendar* (Attachment 3c), RACS will have a number of days throughout the school year when the Buffalo Public Schools will not be in session. On these days the contracting with a transportation vendor will be necessary for the bussing of students to and from RACS. The school will plan for this beginning in the month of April of the preceding school year, as the school will secure pricing from the current transportation vendor for Buffalo Public Schools. The school will communicate the finalized school calendar and its expectations to the transportation vendor prior to the start of the first day of school. The current transportation vendor for Buffalo Public Schools (First Student Transportation) routinely provides bussing to charter schools when Buffalo Public Schools is not in session. These costs that will be incurred by RACS School are reflected in the operating budget (Attachment 9 – *Budget and Cash Flow Template*).

### **III.I – Family and Community Involvement**

**Cultivating Family Involvement** - Getting parents vested in the school's mission is critical to developing a shared vision of how the school will carry out the achievement goals. A position is reserved on the board for one parent who will serve on the Board of Trustees to give a parent's prospective in the development of board policy and governance of the school. Parents will be welcome to visit the school at any time or even to come with their child and have lunch. A Parent and Family Council will be developed right after registration begins before the school even opens in September and will immediately be involved in the development right from the early stages. The Parent and Family Council group will assist with school events, fundraisers and community service projects. The school will offer meeting space and other services to facilitate the development of this group. Each month a Family Event will take place that will focus on a different value that the school holds strongly. For example, one month, an ELA night will take place where literacy will be celebrated. Students will show off their writing abilities after listening to a storyteller and getting to take home a free book. Another family event will be Cultural Night where parents each bring in an authentic ethnic dish and share samples to the school community. During the past 27 months when the charter proposal has been developed, parents have shared their insights on what they value most in a school which have helped to form the basic tenets of our application. Through surveys gathered from the fifteen public forums we hosted and through the RACS website and Facebook page, we have received input from parents and

families about what the school should be like. The feedback surveys found that parents valued; a positive behavioral support system, an environment that is welcoming to all cultures, an open door policy for parents and a leadership program for students. These values reflected from the community which we will serve have all been woven into the basic design of our school. A list of these suggestions can be found in Table 2, Attachment 2a- *Initial Samples of Public Outreach* and Attachment 2b- *Evidence of Public Review Process Exhibit 2b.5*.

**Cultivating Community Involvement:** RACS is intended to serve families on the east side of Buffalo where most students are at-risk for academic failure due to low income and poor economic conditions. We have developed strong ties within the community. For example, the founders were invited and attended a mass at the First Centennial Baptist Church located in the heart of our intended location on Father's Day of this year. The Reverend Pastor Allen Core invited us up during the sermon where the congregation prayed over us and for us in opening this much needed respite for the students in their community. While attending another community forum at an Open House for parents at the True Bethel HeadStart, preschool personnel shared with us their frustrations about the state of the Buffalo Public Schools. They shared that they work so diligently to give kids a head start in being ready for kindergarten and then are left to sending these children to mostly failing schools with little hope for success. We received a phone call from the Erie County Sheriff's office indicating their interest in working with us. They discussed the programs they do with local schools and offered the assistance of their department after we opened.

**Community Partners:** Catholic Charities of Buffalo, our main partner (see Section III.C.2 – entitled *Partner Organizations* and Attachment 7- *Partnership Information*) will have a major impact in furthering our mission. As we partner with them, we will have access to over 300 of their institutional partnerships that they are connected to for both our students and their families. Through *The Closing the Gap Program*, a site based facilitator will be integrated into our school and be the liaison for these services. Additionally, we look forward to having the *Foster Grandparent Program* volunteers work in our kindergarten and first grades to help with the achievement of literacy skills at one of our learning centers in each classroom. Junior Achievement of Western New York will also partner with us and provide us with their Elementary School Program in Grade K-5. Volunteers will come into each grade level and provide five 30-minute lessons to our students. The lessons provided align well with our authentic learning classrooms. Service which is one of our core values found in our mission statement is strongly emphasized in this program.

### **III J. Financial Management:**

**Financial Systems, Procedure and Responsibilities:** RACS's Board of Trustees ultimately has the final responsibility for the fiscal oversight and management of the school's revenues and expenditures and fiscal policies and procedures. The school will contract out to a local accounting firm to fill the position of Chief Financial Officer (CFO), who will work closely with the Head of School, and who will have responsibility for the school's financial management. Under the direction of the Head of School governed by the Board, the CFO will prepare the annual budget for the Board's review and approval. BOCES Policy Development Department will draft financial policies and procedures for adoption by the Board of Trustees. The CFO will oversee management of RACS's accounting and finance functions. The Head of School and the CFO will review expenses regularly to ensure that spending remains consistent with the budget, and will provide monthly reports to the Board. The Board will ensure that the budget supports the school's mission and educational priorities and that the financial management plan thoroughly accounts for all aspects of the school's operations and expenses in a fiscally responsible manner. The school will follow appropriate fiscal procurement policies and practices required in the Procurement Guidelines established by the State Procurement Council pursuant to State Finance Law §161(2)(d).

**Tracking and Protection of Student and Financial Records:** Under the guidance and supervision of the CFO, the Chief Information Officer/Intake Coordinator (CIO) will be responsible for tracking student enrollment and attendance, Title I eligibility and special education and ESL enrollment as it relates to state and federal entitlements and other grants. The CIO will develop processes and procedures for tracking student enrollment and attendance, eligibility for free-and reduced-priced lunch, special education and ESL services. The Head of Schools and Director of Student Services will meet with the CFO on a monthly basis to review all financial statements to ensure the processes for tracking special service populations are precise. The CIO will track the eligibility of each student from the student recruitment phase, during registration, and

throughout the school year. She/he will be responsible for ensuring that student data and financial records are secure and protected. All student and financial records will be housed on an onsite secure server and backed up nightly to an off-site secure server. The CIO will also be responsible for tracking all support provided through federal entitlements and other grants as well as maintaining accurate accounts of recruitment and retention targets.

**Annual Financial Reporting and Independent Financial Audit:** The CFO is responsible for ensuring that timely and accurate financial statements are prepared for the end of the fiscal year. The Board will select and hire a public accounting firm to ensure that the school's financial records adhere to Generally Accepted Accounting Principles. An independent auditor will be selected to conduct the annual required financial audit comparable in scope to audits conducted for other public schools. The audit will cover all financial reports required by NYSED, including a statement of financial position, a statement of cash flows, a statement of activities, and a schedule of expenses. The audit will also include a report containing any significant findings in the financial processes of the school. The audit report will be reviewed by the Finance Committee and then will be presented to the full Board. Additionally, RACS will comply with any requests for audits to be completed by the state comptroller's office.

### **III K. Budget and Cash Flow:**

The RACS's budget reflects the need for staffing and services to address our mission to create a hands-on, authentic learning environment to ensure the achievement of high academic standards. The balanced, self-sustaining budget for the planning period and five years of operation include:

#### **Staffing**

- One Classroom teacher for every 20 students
- Special Education Co-Teachers sharing the instructional role with the general education teachers providing the appropriate support to students in accordance of law as mandated minutes on their IEPs. (Section II.F)
- Certified Teaching Assistant providing support to children during the half of the day that include RtI with the General Education Teacher (Section II.F)
- Special Area Teachers for enrichment in the Arts and Music. Other specialized teachers such as a Library Media Specialist, Technology Information Teacher and a Physical Education Teacher will be on staff also.
- A Speech Language Pathologist, an ENL Teacher and a Guidance Counselor who will service the needs of designated students
- A school based Nurse to service the health needs of all students.
- An Administrative Team providing expertise and leadership in overseeing the school, providing management of special populations, organization of human resources, supervision of student discipline and coordination of the school curriculum
- A Social Worker and Foster Grandparents provided through Catholic Charities
- Competitive salary structure and benefits for both public and charter schools including enrollment in The New York State Teacher Retirement System (NYSTRS)
- Outsourced food service through BPS at no cost
- Outsourced transportation with BPS at no cost for BPS school days; the budget includes funding for transportation on non-BPS school days.

#### **Facilities**

- Several opportunities have presented themselves as potential sites for the school.
- Utility costs and maintenance are estimated based on historic prices and on square footage desired.
- It is expected that we will either lease a building or lease to own a building for RACS.
- Contracted services to include custodial, maintenance and grounds operations
- Unique authentic learning environments that resemble "real world" setting for students have been included in the budget.

**Escrow Account** - The budgeted amount for dissolution is \$25,000 per year during the first three years of operation, for a total of \$75,000 to be held in an escrow account. The budget has been developed conservatively in estimating revenue and known sources of revenue have held consistent for the entire charter period. Should the need for emergency funds to meet potential budget or cash flow challenges arise, RACS

has engaged in dialogue with area lenders that have a history of investing in charter schools. Once approval has been received, a potential line of credit will be secured. The line of credit will be accessed only by approval of the Board. The CFO will handle accessing revenue from State and local sources in a timely fashion to assist RACS's ability to maintain appropriate cash flow and reduce the need for short-term borrowing.

Based on the critical need for high quality schools on Buffalo's east side, along with the response from the community and the experience of other charter schools in Buffalo which have waiting lists, we do not expect difficulty in maintaining projected enrollment. To address the possibility that enrollment expectations are not met, the Head of School and CFO will formulate a contingency plan during the planning period to address this issue, which would include reasonable reductions in staffing and other curtailments with a minimum impact on the instructional program. RACS's budget and cash flow template are included in Attachment 9 – *Budget and Cash Flow Template*.

### **III L. Pre-Opening Plan:**

TASK	PERSON (S) RESPONSIBLE	BEGIN DATE	FINISH DATE
<b>Hold Organizational Board of Trustees Meeting</b> -adopt BOT by-laws, establish meeting schedule, set up committees, approve school fiscal policies, draft FOIL/Open Meetings policies, distribute Code of Ethics, notify SED within 5 days, appoint BOT Clerk. Recruit additional BOT members. Apply for 501 c3, Apply for regent's certificate of incorporation.	BOT	6/2016	10/2016
Initiate search for Head of School/ Hire Head of School by 1/2017	BOT	10/2016	1/2017
Designate legal counsel, accountant, insurance agency, and establish banking relationship.	BOT	11/2016	12/2016
Authorize negotiations on lease/purchase of school facility. BOT to notify SED of building agreement.	BOT	12/2016	1/2017
File paperwork for grant funding.	BOT	1/2017	1/2017
Develop job descriptions for key leadership and other staff positions.	BOT	1/2017	1/2017
Strategize student and staff recruitment and authorize appropriate methods	BOT	1/2017	1/2017
Secure temporary office space. Create secure filing systems for BOT files.	BOT- Facilities	1/2017	1/2017
Determine start-up supplies and establish vendor list.	BOT	1/2017	1/2017
Schedule continuing Community Outreach and collection of surveys, etc. Post all events on website.	BOT-Outreach	1/2017	1/2017
Begin design of Classroom Learning Environments	BOT- Facilities	1/2017	3/2017
<b>BOT Monthly Meeting</b> – Finalize building acquisition and notify SED, set schedule for building renovations, hire Head of School create the school's FERPA policy, apply for tax exempt status.	BOT	1/2017	2/2017
Fill other administrative positions, establish payroll and billing systems.	BOT/Head of School	2/2017	2/2017
Contract for transportation and food services and Foster Grandparent mentors.	Director of Facilities	3/2017	3/2017
Create a Facility Completion Schedule	BOT/ Director of Facilities	3/2017	3/2017
Establish PBIS framework and order signage, draft Student Handbook and Student Code of Conduct.	Director Of Operations	2/2017	6/2017
Begin distribution of the NYS Charter School Uniform Application Form on the school website and at temporary school office.	Intake Coordinator	2/2017	4/2017
Begin organizing August Professional Development sessions and initial after- school offerings.	Director of Operations	5/2017	5/2017
<b>BOT Monthly Meeting</b> – Fill remaining BOT seats, place curriculum materials, technology, and furniture. Set schedule for PD and After School program. Determine school uniform code.	BOT	3/2017	3/2017
Begin recruitment of academic staff and set up securing background checks and fingerprinting.	BOT, Head of School	3/2017	3/2017
Arrange for supplemental transportation services.	Director of Operations	3/2017	3/2017
Inspect facility renovations.	BOT, Head of School, Director of Facilities	3/2017	3/2017
Create and print all registration forms to be used for enrollment. Copy school calendar and uniform policy for inclusion.	Director of Operations, Intake Coord.	3/2017	3/2017

TASK	PERSON (S) RESPONSIBLE	BEGIN DATE	FINISH DATE
Collate registration documents into Enrollment Packets in advance of Lottery.	Intake Coordinator	3/2017	3/2017
<b>BOT Monthly Meeting</b> – Hear updates on facility readiness, enrollment, and other ongoing preparations.	BOT	4/2017	4/2017
Finalize hiring of academic staff and school nurse.	BOT, Head of School	4/2017	4/2017
Continue design of Classroom Learning Environments	Head of School, Teaching Staff	4/2017	6/2017
Acknowledge receipt of all enrollment applications and send all applicants update on the status of need for lottery and lottery details.	Intake Coordinator	4/3/2017	4/3/2017
Hold Lottery to fill Kindergarten and First Grade openings.	Intake Coordinator	4/17/2017	4/17/2017
Notify all parents of the results of the Lottery by sending a Welcome (Enrollment) Packet or Wait List Status.	Intake Coordinator	4/20/2017	4/27/2017
Post all Enrollment Packet documents on the school website, with instructions for submission. Have Enrollment Packets available in temporary school office	Intake Coordinator	4/20/2017	4/20/2017
Schedule Kindergarten Screening and post on website.	Director of Operations	4/2017	4/2017
Begin planning Pre-opening Family BBQ and Open Houses.	Administrative Team	4/2017	6/2017
Organize secure filing Cabinets for Student, Vendor and Medical files.	Office Manager, Director Operations	4/2017	4/2017
<b>Monthly BOT Meeting</b> – Updates on all remaining pre-opening plans, including Staff Orientation, community outreach, hiring and building preparation.	BOT	5/2017	5/2017
Begin accepting Enrollment Packets for new students. As they are processed, schedule appointments for any necessary screenings to be held in June.	Intake Coordinator	5/2017	8/2017
Create and secure student files.	Intake Coordinator	5/2017	Ongoing
Request records of new students.	Intake Coordinator	5/2017	Ongoing
As enrollments are processed, forward transportation requests to appropriate districts.	Intake Coordinator	5/2017	5/2017
Develop and advertise RFP for maintenance and cleaning services.	Director of Facilities	5/2017	5/2017
Finalize RtI Plan.	Head of School, Director of Student Services	5/2017	5/2017
Set up school e-mail and Student Management System (e.g. PowerSchool).	Technology Coordinator	5/2017	5/2017
Image computers and create inventory system for all technology.	Technology Coordinator	5/2017	6/2017
<b>Monthly BOT Meeting</b> – Full report on status of pre-opening plan, Open House and opening ceremony.	BOT/Head of School	6/2017	6/2017
Order remaining supplies for school and all classroom supplies.	Director of Operations, Office Manager	6/2017	6/2017
Notify CSE of opening and provide a list of all students.	Director of Operations	6/2017	6/2017
Formulate school Safety Plan.	Director of Facilities	6/2017	6/2017
Obtain Certificate of Occupancy	Director of Facilities	6/2017	6/2017
Arrange for all building signage.	Director of Facilities	6/2017	6/2017
Set up School Nurse's office. Set up medical files for Physical and Immunization records. Order defibrillator (s).	Nurse, Director Student Services	6/2017	6/2017
Hold Kindergarten and other screenings.	Kindergarten Staff & Nurse	7/2017	7/2017
<b>Monthly BOT Meeting</b> – Tour of school. Approval of school budget.	BOT	7/2017	7/2017
Staff Orientation begins	All Staff	7/6/2017	7/17/2017
Enter all student data into Student Management System	Intake Coordinator	7/2017	Ongoing
Create Master Schedule	Head of School	7/2017	7/2017
Begin setup of classrooms, studies, PBIS signage, Bulletin Boards.	All Staff	7/2017	8/2017
Installation of all technology completed.	Technology Coordinator	7/2017	8/2017

TASK	PERSON (S) RESPONSIBLE	BEGIN DATE	FINISH DATE
Finalize food and transportation arrangements.	Director of Operations	7/2017	7/2017
<b>Monthly BOT Meeting</b> – Status of pre-opening plans and final preparations for school opening. Finalize BOT participation in all events.	BOT	8/2017	8/2017
SED Pre-opening visit.	BOT, Head of School	7/2017	8/2017
Professional Development period begins. In year one, all staff will report. In subsequent years, New Teachers will report first and returning staff will join in for the final week of PD.	All Staff	7/17/2017	8/25/2017
Family BBQ and Open House	BOT, all Admin/Staff	8/19/2017	8/19/2017
REACH Academy Charter School Opens.	BOT, all staff and students	8/28/2017	8/28/2017

### **III M. Dissolution Plan:**

RACS, in the event of school closure, will faithfully carry out school closing procedures as set forth by the State Education Department of New York and in compliance of Education Law §§219 and 220. These procedures include, but are not limited to:

**Transition Team-** Upon notice of a vote to close by the Board of Regents (BOR), The Board of Trustees and the administration of RACS will form a transition team to lead all school closure “Action Items” as prescribed in the *Closing Procedures Guide and Checklist for New York State Charter Schools Authorized by the Board of Regents*. This team will consist of SED appointed staff, the President of the Board of Trustees, Head of School, Chief Financial Officer, Director of Operations, Director of Facilities, Director of Student Services and Representation from the Parent and Family Council. A Closure Plan will be developed by this team and sent to the Board of Trustees for a vote to ratify the plan. Upon the adoption of the Plan, the members to the Transition Team will designate all tasks to appropriate staff for completion.

**Notification(s) -** RACS will provide in written form notification to all stakeholders of the BOR’s vote to close the school. The information contained in this letter will detail the decision to close the school, a timeline for closure, a help line to call for information and online resources for all families and staff. These stakeholders include: students, parents, faculty, partnering organizations and community members.

**Parents-** Within five business days of the BOR vote to close. RACS will notify student families, in writing, of the decision to close the school. This letter will provide a school closure timeline and include a school phone number for parents to call for information. In addition, a school meeting will be scheduled to convey important closure information to all students and families. In order to provide the best educational choices for the students and families of students, a “Local Schools Night” will be scheduled to bring representatives from other local schools to the school so that students and parents can be informed as to what other educational programs are available. A list of these schools and openings by grade level will be provided. RACS will work closely to ensure a smooth transition for all students and families.

**Faculty-** Within 5 business days of the BOR vote to close, the Board of Trustees and Administration of RACS will notify all faculty of the decision to close the school. Information will be distributed to all staff on the timeline for closure, transition plan for students and faculty, employee benefits and compensation and contact information for questions. The expectation of uninterrupted instruction will continue until closure commences will be conveyed.

**District of Record and Other Schools-** Within 5 days of the accepted closure plan, RACS will notify, in writing, all districts from which each student resides of the schools closure. These districts will be invited to participate in the “Local Schools Night” to assist in the smooth transition for students and families.

**Closure Reserve Funds-** Required by the NYSED, RACS will allocate \$25,000 per year for the first 3 years of its initial charter totaling \$75,000 to be held in a separate bank account for the purposes of dissolution funds (Attachment 9 – *Budget and Cash Flow Template*). These reserve funds will be used for required legal, financial or other expenses related to the dissolution of the school. When notified of closure, RACS will transfer these funds from the escrow account as prescribed by the NYSED Charter School Office.

**Financials-** Upon notification of closure, RACS’s Chief Financial Officer (CFO) will begin a full audit of RACS’s liquid and fixed assets. The CFO will contact, in writing, all creditors and vendors to inform them of the school closure as well as settling all outstanding debts and the closure of accounts. The CFO will furnish

copies of all financials and report on the school financial position within 30 days of the closure notice. The CFO will provide monthly financial updates to SED.

**Inventory and Distribution of Assets** - Within 45 days of the Notice of Closure, RACS will contract with a 3rd party assessor to inventory all fixed assets. The inventory will include all fixed assets, their location and fair market value. Copies of all reports will be provided to NYSED.

**Upon the Closure of the School** - The RACS Board of Trustees will vote to disperse all fixed and liquid assets to either BPS or to a charter school within the City of Buffalo limits.

**Transfer of Student Records**- Within 30 days of the last day of instruction and in compliance with Section 2851(2)(t) of the New York State Charter Schools Act, RACS will:

- a. Insure all enrolled student records are complete and copied. Create a list detailing each student record and destination record was sent to.
- b. Send the copies of student records to schools that have requested them for student enrollment.
- c. Contact the families of enrolled students to communicate that records have been transferred and provide copies of student records to the parents/ guardians.
- d. Transfer all student records that remain to the home district. Documentation will be provided to SED.
- e. Transfer of Final Records and Reports- The Head of School or BOT appointed designee will be responsible for the final submission of all required documentation to SED.