

## Mission Statement

The UFT Elementary Charter School will prepare all students to achieve academic and personal excellence. The school will graduate students fully prepared for a demanding secondary education and help prepare students for meaningful lives as full democratic citizens in a free society.

## Executive Summary

### I. Introduction:

The story of the forward march of freedom and the quest for full democratic citizenship in America is found, in no small part, in the history of American education. This story begins in the earliest days of our country; as Thomas Jefferson wrote:

*I know no safe depository of the ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves; and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion by education.*

*Whenever the people are well-informed, they can be trusted with their own government.<sup>1</sup>*

Jefferson presents a simple but powerful argument: freedom, in all its forms, is best protected in a democracy; in turn, democracy can only be practiced by an educated citizenry. This argument is a testament to Jefferson's faith in his fellow citizens. It is a call to action—a statement of our responsibility to prepare the next generation for its role in our society. And it is deeply optimistic: Jefferson believed that our future as a nation could be assured through the education of our children.

Horace Mann reiterates the argument in his vision of the public school as the “great equalizer” of social classes. Jefferson's argument is exemplified in Jane Addams' pioneering work in adult immigrant education at Hull House. The argument underlies John Dewey's conception of democratic education as public schooling rooted in public life—in what we, as a democratic people, share in common.

Perhaps Jefferson's argument is best demonstrated when our nation rises to its calling and fulfills its democratic promise. During and after the Civil War, Frederick Douglass argued that education was “emancipation,” an indispensable part of the quest of the formerly enslaved to become full and participating American citizens; reconstruction era “freedman” schools met the challenge of that day. During the growth of the labor movement in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, trade unionists created schools to educate members and published newspapers to fight for protections appropriate for citizens with equal status; in that era, “settlement houses” served as schools for many workers and new immigrants. In 1957, the Little Rock Nine personified the indivisibility of democracy and education, as did the “freedom schools” of the civil rights movement. While the work was difficult, the intent has always been simple. As Melba Beals, one of the “Nine,” said when commenting on the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the integration of Central High School, “We wanted access to a good education and a good future.”<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Letter to William Charles Jarvis, 28 September 1820, in Joyce Appleby and Terrence Ball, *Jefferson: Political Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 382.

<sup>2</sup> David Pitts, “Little Rock Nine Speak About 1957 Integration Struggle,” United States Department of State, September 25, 1997, <http://usinfo.state.gov/usa/blackhis/nine.htm>.

## *The Crisis at Hand*

Our democratic principles provide strength and inspiration in times of crisis. Yet today, these very principles are endangered by a grave challenge to the democratic promise of America, a challenge that is creating two Americas, separate and unequal—the achievement gap. On a series of key educational measures, the level of achievement of poor students and students of color falls short of that of wealthier and white students.<sup>3</sup> This gap has real life consequences: in our global knowledge economy, those who have not successfully completed a post-secondary education are economically marginalized and politically disenfranchised. They are left with little prospect for creating meaningful and productive lives for themselves and little sense of their own power to shape our common future as democratic citizens. Bob Moses, leader of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee in the civil rights movement and founder of the Algebra Project, speaks for us when he argues that the road to full democratic citizenship for poor and minority youth must pass through the successful completion of a quality college education, and that this road can only be traveled with excellent literacy and numeracy skills.<sup>4</sup>

The achievement gap is starkly apparent in the East New York neighborhood of Brooklyn. This neighborhood is located within Community School District 19 (CSD 19), where 89 percent of public school students live in poverty and 53 percent are African-American and 40 percent are Hispanic.<sup>5</sup> In 2004, only 37.8 percent of 4<sup>th</sup> grade students in CSD 19 met or surpassed the state standards on the state English language arts (ELA) assessment. By comparison, 49.6 percent of 4<sup>th</sup> graders met state standards citywide. In the 8<sup>th</sup> grade in 2004, this reading achievement indicator falls to 26.7 percent (as compared to 35.6 percent citywide). These statistics mirror the national achievement gap data.

District 19's math data also demonstrates an achievement gap. In 2004, 62 percent of 4<sup>th</sup> grade students met or surpassed state standards on the state mathematics assessment (as compared to 68.1 percent of 4<sup>th</sup> graders who met state standards citywide). In the 8<sup>th</sup> grade in 2004, this figure falls to 33.9 percent (as compared to 42.2 percent citywide).

The statewide comparison is even more stark.<sup>6</sup> The following table compares student mastery of state standards in District 19 to city and state results.

---

<sup>3</sup> There are aggregate score differentials on a vast array of standardized tests; disparate placement rates in more rigorous programs of instruction; and differentials in attendance, drop-out and graduation rates, from pre-school through college. For a full analysis of the gap, see *The Black-White Test Score Gap*, ed. Christopher Jencks and Meredith Phillips (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1998); *Educational Achievement and Black-White Inequality*, ed. Jonathan Jacobson (National Center for Education Statistics: July 2001) [nces.ed.gov/pubs2001/inequality/](http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2001/inequality/); Educational Testing Service, *Parsing the Achievement Gap: Baselines for Tracking Progress* (Princeton, NJ: 2003) [www.ets.org/research/pic/parsing.pdf](http://www.ets.org/research/pic/parsing.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> Bob Moses, *Radical Equations: Civil Rights from Mississippi to the Algebra Project* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001).

<sup>5</sup> District 19 and City demographic and student achievement data provided by the New York City Department of Education, Division of Assessment and Accountability, [www.nycboe.net](http://www.nycboe.net) and <http://www.nycenet.edu/daa>. The percentage of students eligible for free lunch is an indicator of those living in poverty.

<sup>6</sup> 2003 is the latest year for which state data is available. Data provided by the New York State Education Department, [www.nysed.gov](http://www.nysed.gov).

	4 <sup>th</sup> grade	4 <sup>th</sup> grade	4 <sup>th</sup> grade	8 <sup>th</sup> grade	8 <sup>th</sup> grade	8 <sup>th</sup> grade
	CSD 19	NYC	NYS	CSD 19	NYC	NYS
ELA	37.8%	49.6%	64.0%	26.7%	35.6%	45.0%
MATH	62.0%	68.1%	79.0%	33.9%	42.2%	51.0%

Simply put, the academic achievement of students in East New York (the vast preponderance of whom are poor and minority) starts behind their city and statewide peers. As they progress through school, the gap continues and is exacerbated by attendance and stability rates that are lower than the city’s averages.

Despite the achievement gap, East New York has numerous organizations, churches, and civic leaders who bring vitality and resources to the community. These groups include the Education Committee of Community Planning Board 5, Groundwork, and the Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation. The United Federation of Teachers, our partner organization, is also a founding partner of the Brooklyn Education Collaborative, a coalition that aims to revitalize middle-grade education in Brooklyn’s districts 18, 19 and 23. The coalition includes the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN); Cypress Hills Advocates for Education (CHAPE); the 1199 SEIU/Employer Child Care Fund, and the New York University Institute for Education and Social Policy.

Given that East New York is rich in local resources yet educationally underserved, we believe it is a critical place to dedicate our efforts and open an outstanding school that does its part to close the achievement gap.

*Our Mission*

We must combat the achievement gap if we are to bequeath democratic principles and economic opportunity to all members of the next generation. Public educators carry a significant responsibility to address this challenge. In full acceptance of this responsibility, The UFT Elementary Charter School, located in East New York, will provide a first-rate education that significantly improves the achievement of the students who attend the school. Moreover, The UFT Elementary Charter School will be built on democratic principles of respect, tolerance, and liberty so that students will also become practitioners of democracy and civic responsibility. As a result:

*The UFT Elementary Charter School will prepare all students to achieve academic and personal excellence. The school will graduate students fully prepared for a demanding secondary education and will help to prepare students for meaningful lives as full democratic citizens in a free society.*

*Our Heritage*

The UFT Elementary Charter School is founded in partnership with the United Federation of Teachers (UFT). Not surprisingly, the purpose and mission of our school reflects the history and values of American teacher unions. Throughout their history, teacher unions have been dedicated to a vision of education which has freedom and

full democratic citizenship at its very core. Rallying under the American Federation of Teachers' banner "Democracy in Education: Education for Democracy," teacher unions have fought for democracy, academic freedom, and civil liberties at home and abroad. Teacher unions were active participants in the civil rights movement. They supported the creation of democratic teacher organizations and democratic movements around the world.

American teacher unions have also been at the forefront of public education reform. Historically, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) ranks visionary educators among its founding members, the most notable being John Dewey. In response to the 1983 study *A Nation at Risk* study, the AFT and UFT fought for necessary changes in public education, such as the development and adoption of curriculum and achievement standards. Locally, the UFT partnered with the New York City Board of Education to create the Chancellor's District, a reform initiative focused on chronically low-performing schools. This effort significantly increased the percentage of students meeting state standards.<sup>7</sup> Key to this effort was the UFT's nationally recognized Teacher Center, which plays an important role in supporting teacher professional development throughout New York City.

It is this heritage, in the fight for freedom and excellence in education, that the United Federation of Teachers brings to the establishment of The UFT Elementary Charter School. This heritage provides a solid foundation for our work.

### *Albert Shanker*

The UFT Elementary Charter School's partnership with the United Federation of Teachers is inspired by the ideas of former UFT and AFT President Albert Shanker. Shanker is widely credited as one of the founders of the charter school model.<sup>8</sup> In 1988, Shanker outlined a system where groups of teachers could develop a school proposal and receive a "charter" to implement the plan. Certain regulations that stood in the way of the proposal would be waived. The school's faculty would have control over how their per pupil share of funding would be spent. Parents would choose to send their students to, and teachers would choose to work in, the school. The school would be evaluated periodically to determine if goals have been met and if the charter should be extended.<sup>9</sup>

The arrangement Shanker described is the charter school "autonomy for accountability" contract, and he continued to develop these ideas throughout his career. For example, at a time before the adoption of clearly defined state standards and accountability measures, Shanker worried that charter school success would be

---

<sup>7</sup> Deinya Phenix, Dorothy Siegel, Ariel Zaltsman and Norm Fruchter, "Virtual District, Real Improvement: A retrospective evaluation of the Chancellor's District, 1996-2003," Institute for Education and Social Policy, Steinhardt School of Education, New York University, June 2004, p. 26, [www.nyu.edu/iesp/publications/ChanDistRpt.pdf](http://www.nyu.edu/iesp/publications/ChanDistRpt.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> Along with Shanker, credit is given to Ray Budde, based on the ideas he presented in *Education by Charter: Restructuring School Districts* (Andover, MA: Regional Laboratory for Educational Improvement of the Northeast and Islands, 1988).

<sup>9</sup> Albert Shanker, "Restructuring Our Schools," *Peabody Journal of Education*, Spring 1988, Vol. 65, Issue 3, p. 88.

based on popularity rather than quality.<sup>10</sup> He noted that private interests behind a charter school could undermine their benefit as laboratories of innovation for traditional public schools.<sup>11</sup> He observed that in some charter schools, demands on parents become de facto entrance requirements that discriminate against students who most need an educational alternative.<sup>12</sup> But he remained a supporter of the charter model and particularly of the autonomy entrusted to educators. In 1994 he wrote:

*What we really need—at the very least—are statewide curriculum frameworks and statewide assessment systems. Then, students and teachers in every school will know what kids are responsible for learning and whether or not they have learned it. . . . Once those things are in place, why limit charter schools to five or ten or a hundred? Why shouldn't every school be a charter and enjoy the kind of autonomy now being offered to only a few?<sup>13</sup>*

There is little doubt that chartering has deviated from the model first proposed by Shanker. The growth of for-profit educational management organizations, the extraordinary number of novice, inexperienced and unrepresented teachers in charters, and the punitive conversion of failing schools to charter status are a far cry from the voluntary approach envisioned by Shanker as a way to empower teachers and focus on results.

By comparison, The UFT Elementary Charter School represents the best implementation of Shanker's ideas. New York State's Standards create the basis for a "quality framework." Our commitment to combat the achievement gap precludes any effort to "cream" the best students and families. Our partnership with the United Federation of Teachers guarantees that the ideas and innovations learned through this enterprise can impact the larger school system.

We will show that when freed from bureaucratic regulation and the school district's micro-management, knowledgeable and caring educators, in cooperation with family and community, can design and run a public school guided by democratic principles and the best practices of the educational profession; this school will exemplify a collaborative labor-management relationship that respects teachers' voices; our school will prepare students for high levels of academic achievement and for successful lives as democratic citizens.

### Our Conceptual Framework:<sup>14</sup>

Through our planning team's experience in education and its research of outstanding schools, we designed a conceptual framework as a tool to organize our ideas and guide our school's operation. Specifically, there are three foundation blocks to any school: human resources (the people or "who" of the school); culture (which embodies the

---

<sup>10</sup> Albert Shanker, "Where We Stand: Charter Schools," *New York Times*, 26 June 1994.

<sup>11</sup> Albert Shanker, "Where We Stand: Noah Webster Academy," *New York Times*, 3 July 1994.

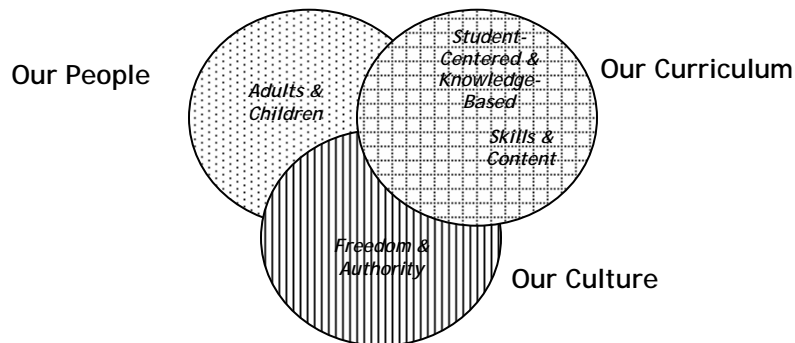
<sup>12</sup> Albert Shanker, "Where We Stand: Parents Under Contract," *New York Times*, 19 November 1995.

<sup>13</sup> Albert Shanker, "Where We Stand: Every School a Charter," *New York Times*, 11 December 1994.

<sup>14</sup> This conceptual framework was developed through our school planning process and was informed by visits to charter schools in the region. A list of schools visited is included in Attachment #57.

school’s mission and organizational rationale or the “why” of the school), and curriculum (the “what” and “how” of the school). Good schools deliberately *plan, implement, and align* these three components—and The UFT Elementary Charter School will be no exception.

But to create an *outstanding* school, each component must internally *balance*. Specifically, The UFT Elementary Charter School will build a culture appropriately balanced between freedom and authority. Our curriculum will balance “student-centered” and “knowledge-based” practices as well as content and skill. Our use of human resources will balance the talents and objectives of children and adults.



While any conceptual framework is only as effective as it is useful, we have found that our three components and the concepts of alignment and balance have helped to organize our ideas and guide our planning. We anticipate that this framework will clarify options when we face future decisions.

### *Our Theory of Action: High-Quality Instruction*

While the components of our framework are interdependent, our school culture and curriculum will be brought to life by our human resources—in particular, our teaching staff. School values will be introduced, developed and modeled by our educators. Our school’s rigorous and challenging course of study can only be implemented through accomplished teaching. When we review the distinguishing factors that will make The UFT Elementary Charter School a success, we return to one feature, and one straightforward theory of action: *high-quality instruction*.

Teaching is an extraordinarily demanding and difficult craft, as accomplished teachers are engaged in at least three distinct, but equally essential, activities. Teachers must master their subject matter to ensure that it is presented with clarity and also at the appropriate level of difficulty; they must use pedagogical strategies and techniques that match the subject material and also students’ abilities; and they must manage a classroom so that student behavior supports learning. It takes a number of years of active classroom teaching, combined with solid preparation, good mentoring and appropriate professional development for a teacher to master all of these professional skills. It stands to reason that a school filled with novice teachers is largely bereft of

excellent teaching; moreover, it lacks the role models on its teaching staff for the development of such instruction.<sup>15</sup>

Without high quality teaching, a school loses balance and often places an inordinate emphasis on other parts of the organization and culture in attempts to compensate for a lack of expertise in its core activity. The best of intentions and the strongest of efforts cannot replace the skills of high-quality instruction. Described below is a detailed plan to recruit, develop, and retain a world-class faculty. With this faculty, The UFT Elementary Charter School will be able to use a rich curriculum that views learning as meaningful and creative work, where teaching practices are learner-centered and knowledge-based. The presence of accomplished educators will allow The UFT Elementary Charter School to build an effective school culture based on respect, trust, and core democratic principles.



What follows is a more detailed picture of our School, organized into three sections that reflect our conceptual framework. Given the importance of high-quality instruction, we begin with a discussion of our human resources, “Our People,” and our plan to build a first rate faculty, implement a sound leadership structure, engage parents as teachers, and help students to be active learners. The next section, “Our Culture,” depicts the school culture to be built by the people of our school community. Particular emphasis is given to the core values and purpose underpinning this culture. The final section, “Our Curriculum,” shows how our people, with the foundation of a solid school culture, will implement a curriculum that combats the achievement gap and helps students achieve academic and personal excellence.

## II. Our People:

### A. *Building a World-Class Faculty*

Numerous studies indicate that a qualified, experienced teacher, expert in pedagogy and subject material, has a more positive effect on a student’s learning than any other school variable.<sup>16</sup> Accomplished teachers are especially important in the education of struggling students and in overcoming the achievement gap for poor and African-American and Latino students.

The UFT Elementary Charter School believes it is pivotal to recruit, develop and retain a world-class faculty. We will recruit the finest teachers who demonstrate a mastery of their work, an unrelenting commitment to their students, and who share our

---

<sup>15</sup> One of the indicators of a failing school is a novice staff with a high rate of turnover; see Kacey Guinn, “Chronic Teacher Turnover in Urban Elementary Schools,” *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, Volume 12, Number 42, August 2004, [epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v12n42/](http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v12n42/).

<sup>16</sup> The Education Trust, “The Real Value of Teachers: If Good Teachers Matter, Why Don’t We Act Like It?” *Thinking K-16*, Volume 8, Issue 1. Spring 2004; The Education Trust, “Good Teaching Matters: How Well Qualified Teachers Can Close the Gap,” *Thinking K-16*, Volume 3, Issue 2, Summer 1998, [www.edtrust.org/NR/rdonlyres/5704CBA6-CE12-46D0-A852-D2E2B4638885/0/Spring04.pdf](http://www.edtrust.org/NR/rdonlyres/5704CBA6-CE12-46D0-A852-D2E2B4638885/0/Spring04.pdf); William Sanders and Sandra Horn, *The Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System: Mixed Model Methodology in Educational Assessment*, [www.sas.com/govedu/education/evaas/mixed\\_model.pdf](http://www.sas.com/govedu/education/evaas/mixed_model.pdf), and *Research Findings from The Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS) Database: Implications for Educational Evaluation and Research*, [www.sas.com/govedu/education/evaas/ed\\_eval.pdf](http://www.sas.com/govedu/education/evaas/ed_eval.pdf).

school's values and goals. Moreover, The UFT Elementary Charter School will provide significant professional development opportunities to cultivate our corps of educators.

We understand that this is no small feat. Nationally, nearly one out of every two new teachers leaves the profession by their fifth year.<sup>17</sup> In New York City, one in every four new teachers leave the Department of Education by the end of their second year, and close to one-half are gone by the end of their fifth year.<sup>18</sup> The problem in charter schools may be even more acute, as they experience a higher turnover rate than district schools and as a consequence may have an almost entirely inexperienced faculty.<sup>19</sup>

The problem of teacher turnover and inexperience has a direct impact on the achievement gap, as turnover is concentrated in school districts that serve poor and minority communities. As a result, the students most in need of highly qualified teachers are being disproportionately taught by predominantly novice, unskilled teachers.<sup>20</sup>

### *Economic and Material Incentives*

The UFT Elementary Charter School will attract and retain a staff of accomplished and experienced teachers through a number of incentives. First, we will match the salary schedule and health, welfare, and retirement benefits available to teachers employed by the New York City Department of Education. This portability of benefits will give us access to a pool of over 80,000 teachers.

Second, The UFT Elementary Charter School anticipates that its teachers will be a chapter of the United Federation of Teachers. As a result, our teachers will enjoy, as a right of employment, certain working conditions and other protections such as due process. Moreover, this partnership with the UFT will provide credibility in the minds of many teachers.

Third, faculty members will be treated as professionals in regard to the material resources at their disposal. They will be provided with a laptop computer, printer, and telephone access. Each classroom teacher will have a spending account for

---

<sup>17</sup> National Center for Education Statistics, *Teacher Attrition and Mobility*, August 2004, [nces.ed.gov/pubs2004/2004301.pdf](http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2004/2004301.pdf); William Hussar, *Predicting The Need for Newly Hired Teachers in the US, 2008-09*, National Center for Education Statistics, 1999, [nces.ed.gov/pubs99/1999026.pdf](http://nces.ed.gov/pubs99/1999026.pdf); National Governors Association Center for Best Practices Issue Brief, "Teacher Supply and Demand: Is There A Shortage?" [www.nga.org/cda/files/000125TEACHERS.pdf](http://www.nga.org/cda/files/000125TEACHERS.pdf); Richard Ingersoll, "Is There Really A Teacher Shortage?" Consortium for Policy Research in Education and Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy, September 2003. [www.ctpweb.org](http://www.ctpweb.org).

<sup>18</sup> New York City Council Committee on Education, "Good Apples: Recruiting and Retaining Quality Teachers in New York City," May 6, 2003; United Federation of Teachers, "Filling a Leaky Bucket: A New Look At The Teacher Shortage," March 2004; and Katharine Stevens, "The NYC Teaching Fellows: A Solution to New York City's Teaching Shortage?" (Unpublished Masters Dissertation, Teachers College, Columbia University) p. 11.

<sup>19</sup> On the rate of charter school teacher turnover and the salaries of charter school teachers, see Michael Podgursky and Dale Ballou, "Personnel Policy in Charter Schools," Fordham Foundation, 2001, [www.edexcellence.net/doc/personnel\\_policy.pdf](http://www.edexcellence.net/doc/personnel_policy.pdf).

<sup>20</sup> "Quality Counts 2003" *Education Week*, [www.edweek.org](http://www.edweek.org). Lynn Olson, "The Great Divide," *Education Week*, 9 January 2003; Kacey Guinn, "Chronic Teacher Turnover in Urban Elementary Schools," *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, Volume 12, Number 42. August 2004, [epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v12n42/](http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v12n42/).

incidental classroom supplies and materials. Faculty will have unlimited access to photocopiers. Subscriptions to professional journals and publications will be available. These details, taken for granted in other professions, will help to create a workplace environment that supports our educators' day-to-day work.

### *Professional Incentives*

The UFT Elementary Charter School recognizes that many non-material pressures drive talented individuals out of the field of education. These pressures include professional isolation associated with a “sink or swim” workplace; managerial disregard or disrespect; and concerns over physical safety.<sup>21</sup> By addressing these professional and workplace issues, we will create powerful incentives for faculty to build a meaningful career at our school.

One such professional incentive is our monthly Community Caucus, where our faculty will have an opportunity to discuss school-wide issues as well as grade-specific and student-specific issues. A second professional incentive includes the opportunity for our teachers to attend local, regional, and national conferences to develop their skills and connect to a national network of charter and other public school educators.

Teachers will be encouraged to become associates of the Urban Educators Forum. The forum brings together New York City educators, noted scholars and researchers to study critical issues, share ideas and explore strategies. This Forum will provide our teachers with opportunities to participate in a variety of innovative leadership experiences, including seminars, action research and publishing to impact classroom practice and the school learning community.

### *Democratic Governance*

Consistent with our mission to prepare students for democratic citizenship, The UFT Elementary Charter School's design will be democratic in its governance and operation. This is another professional incentive as teachers will have a genuine voice in the school's operation. Our Board of Trustees is composed equally of staff, family, community and partner-organization representatives. This structure will provide all stakeholders with a voice in the policy-setting and accountability functions of the board. It provides a balance of “outsiders” and “insiders” so that we have school-level expertise balanced with an external understanding of our school, our purpose, and the attainment of our goals.

### *Professional Development*

The UFT Elementary Charter School's rich professional development program serves two objectives. First, it will help to attract and retain our faculty. Second, it will help teachers master the skills needed to achieve our foremost academic objective: to

---

<sup>21</sup> Susan Moore Johnson and the Project on the Next Generation of Teachers, *Finders and Keepers: Helping New Teachers Survive and Thrive in Our Schools* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004); Public Agenda, “A Sense of Calling: Who Teaches and Why,” 2000, [www.publicagenda.org/research/research\\_reports\\_details.cfm?list=28](http://www.publicagenda.org/research/research_reports_details.cfm?list=28); Public Education Network, “The Voice of the New Teacher,” 2003, [www.publiceducation.org/pdf/PEN\\_Pubs/Voice\\_of\\_the\\_New\\_Teacher.pdf](http://www.publiceducation.org/pdf/PEN_Pubs/Voice_of_the_New_Teacher.pdf); National Retired Teachers Association of AARP, “Exodus: A Study of Teacher Retention in America,” September 2003, [research.aarp.org/general/exodus.pdf](http://research.aarp.org/general/exodus.pdf).

close the achievement gap and prepare students for a demanding secondary education.

The UFT Elementary Charter School's professional development plan will be grounded in the findings of the National Staff Development Council and the Annenberg Institute for School Reform. It will be anchored by the work of the UFT Teacher Center. We have designated specific time in the school day and year for our faculty to plan, reflect, and learn. Taken in its entirety, this program will cultivate practices that are research- and standards-based, collaborative, and job-embedded.

- *The UFT Teacher Center*

The anchor of The UFT Elementary Charter School's professional development program is the UFT Teacher Center. The Teacher Center is a joint venture of the United Federation of Teachers and the State Education Department and has provided expert professional development services for more than 20 years. There are Teacher Centers in over 300 New York City public schools.

The Teacher Center Professional Development Program will provide a full range of support services. A Teacher Center specialist will be assigned to the School to develop professional development plans aligned with our school's goals and objectives and informed by students' academic needs. The specialist will coach, mentor, and provide in-class support services. A Teacher Resource Center, located at the school, will serve as a hub for professional activities, collaborations and study groups as well as a repository of professional and technological resources and materials.

- *Day-Long Professional Development*

Day-long professional development, conducted every other month at the school, will provide staff with necessary time to build and improve our school. This time will include professional development opportunities so that the faculty can continue to refine their teaching strategies. These day-long sessions will give teachers the opportunity to analyze student assessment data and to further customize instruction. In June, a day-long retreat for the entire faculty will be devoted to reflection on the year's work and progress toward meeting our goals. At this time we will determine next steps for our school in terms of our culture, curriculum, and professional development.

- *Summer Institute*

The UFT Elementary Charter School's Summer Institute is a two-week paid professional development opportunity during which our faculty will prepare for the opening of school. As the creation of a clear culture is critical for the success of our school, our faculty will receive training in the underlying approach and rationale for our culture, its elements, and the specific daily practices that will bring it to life. As The School's Advisory is the primary vehicle for building school culture at that campus, faculty will receive professional development in this area as well.

During the Summer Institute, teachers will begin the detailed planning necessary to implement the curriculum. Our faculty will use this time to prepare unit plans as well

as day-to-day activities. The Summer Institute will allow our entire faculty to jointly consider the achievement outcomes that must be met along with the evaluative measures necessary to verify our progress.

- *National Board Certification*

The UFT Elementary Charter School will encourage teachers to apply for National Board for Professional Teaching Standards certification. As the UFT Teacher Center has been a proponent of National Board certification since its inception, the school will have access to the Teacher Center’s expertise and guidance. With a focus on how teaching impacts our students’ learning, we believe that the path to National Board certification will lead our UFT Elementary Charter School educators to deepen their professional knowledge and effectiveness.

### *Sound Leadership*

Sound leadership will guide The UFT Elementary Charter School. Our Board of Trustees will be composed of parents, educators, and community representatives who bring a breadth of experience and a shared commitment to the school and its mission. Our partner organization, the United Federation of Teachers has fully committed its educational and administrative expertise and resources to support the school’s success. And on a day-to-day basis, the school will be directed by a School Leader.

The School Leader is first and foremost an educator. With a deep understanding of our curriculum and the rich pedagogy we intend to implement, our School Leader’s authority will stem not from title or rank but rather from a mastery of the educational process and an ability to lead and manage. Given our core democratic principles, the School Leader will work to develop a collaborative and trusting school culture that supports staff and facilitates the implementation of the school design.

Assisting and reporting to the School Leader will be a business manager, a coordinator of operations and outreach, and some secretarial support. The business manager will be responsible for the day-to-day financial operations of the school. This person will also interface with the UFT for the provision of administrative services. The school’s coordinator of operations and outreach will manage the school’s numerous compliance, reporting, and accountability functions. With business and academic operations ably performed by this team, the School Leader will have the ability to focus on student achievement.



The UFT Elementary Charter School believes that the combination of these elements will attract, develop, and retain a core of accomplished educators. With a solid faculty that is confident in the fundamentals of their trade, along with the invaluable contribution of the school’s trustees, partner organization, leaders, paraprofessionals, school secretaries and other personnel, our team will deftly handle the challenges associated with starting and running a new school characterized by active student engagement and the development of critical thinking skills. Our team will be able to develop a powerful school culture and sense of community that is democratic and freedom affirming.

## *B. Families as Partners, Stakeholders, and Teachers*

The UFT Elementary Charter School believes that *we are all teachers*. We recognize families as a student's first and often most significant teacher. This recognition provides our school with a strategic orientation: we maintain that the responsibility to educate our students is held broadly by all of the adults in our school community.

Families' contributions are essential if we are to fully realize our mission to prepare students for a demanding secondary education and for life as democratic citizens. Within our school, we anticipate that families will take on three distinct roles: those of *partner, stakeholder, and teacher*.

### *o As a Partner*

To respect the choice made by our families in enrolling their children in our school, we will keep them well informed about their child's progress by providing or conducting the following:

- a. Formal Report Cards
- b. A parent portal at the school's web site with secure student-specific information
- c. In-school computer kiosks for parent use
- d. Regularly-scheduled family briefings to highlight the school's educational progress

### *o As a Stakeholder*

We anticipate that as families become more invested in their child's achievement they will have a greater stake in our overall success. As such, we will provide numerous opportunities for families to serve as stakeholders with greater responsibility for the future of our school, including:

- a. Two seats designated for parents on the school's Board of Trustees
- b. The establishment of a family association and, if necessary, a family committee of the Board of Trustees
- c. Regularly scheduled school celebrations honoring student achievement, cultural events, and school milestones. Celebrations may include pot-luck dinners and family picnics
- d. Regularly-scheduled family nights where families, staff, and students collaborate to organize special events

### *o As a Teacher*

Consistent with our belief that everyone is a teacher; The UFT Elementary Charter School will help families to be better educators. To support this role, we will encourage parents to:

- a. Reinforce the school’s academic expectations and Habits for Life
- b. Attend informal meetings with staff and review their child’s work and progress
- c. Contribute time as family volunteers, resource specialists, and Homework Helpers

The UFT Elementary Charter School will rely on families’ expertise to better understand East New York and its resources. In this regard, our families also serve as teachers not only to their children but to the school.

### *The Family-School Partnership*

Many of the responsibilities expected of families are articulated in The UFT Elementary Charter School’s Family-School Partnership Agreement. This compact specifies the school’s and family’s commitment to a student’s educational success. By articulating our expectations, we can better prepare families for their role and responsibilities. (This agreement is included in Attachment 32: Student Discipline Policy and is not a condition of enrollment.)

### *C. Student as Scholars, Leaders, and Citizens*

The UFT Elementary Charter School is designed to actively engage students in their education. We believe that this involvement and commitment is essential if students are to achieve academic and personal excellence and to prepare for democratic citizenship.

As described below, our curriculum requires students to learn through purposeful action. This view conceives education to be a challenging process of generating, transforming and passing-on ideas. For our students, their experience will be more meaningful than a traditional concept of learning as work separated from all else—mere mental drudgery. Yet the purposefulness of our instruction requires learning to be much more than play—merely a matter of individual interest and preference. The midpoint of these two polar visions will characterize the balance we plan to achieve in our students’ experience. As a result, students will be more than learners—they will be *scholars* who strive for *academic excellence*.

As described below, The UFT Elementary Charter School’s culture is built on a set of core values. The school’s decisions, relationships, and routines will be guided by these values. But only through the active involvement of our students will this culture thrive. As such, we have planned numerous opportunities for students to take responsibility for themselves and their school. These duties increase as students grow and develop, allowing them to become *leaders*.

The last conception is of our students as *citizens*. This concept is essential if we are to meet our core purpose and prepare students for *democratic citizenship*. As described below, our curriculum, extra-curricular activities, and the democratic components and processes embedded within our school culture provide students with many opportunities to become practitioners of democracy.

### III. Our Culture<sup>22</sup>

The UFT Elementary Charter School will develop a school culture that equips students with the values and sense of purpose necessary to fulfill our mission. Students will cultivate the values necessary to achieve academic and personal excellence. Students will also appreciate the larger purpose of their education, so that they enjoy and seek out meaningful lives as full democratic citizens in a free society.

#### A. Core Values and “Habits for Life”: Climbing to the CREST

The UFT Elementary Charter School is founded on five core values that represent our beliefs. They will guide our personal behavior and social interactions. Simply, they are our five Habits for Life. The crest, the peak of a wave or hill, represents the most successful point of an endeavor. With our five Habits for Life, we climb to the CREST.

**Community** is our commitment to work on behalf of the common good. Every member of the school community will have a duty to make a lasting contribution through active participation in school and community endeavors. Our students must embrace this value to prepare for the larger political, cultural, and environmental challenges facing our country and the world. This value is our commitment to resolve differences and conflicts in a tolerant, non-violent way.

**Respect** will be earned by everyone in our school through daily practice of the golden rule and recognition of the inherent dignity of every human being. To earn the respect of others, our interactions will be thoughtful and tolerant, our expectations will be high, we will be forgiving of human failures, and we will be thoroughly democratic.

**Excellence** in all that we do is the goal of every school community member. We believe that excellence is not an isolated act, but a habit. Our students will be expected to work diligently and give their fullest effort, in academics and extra-curricular activities, in self-presentation and in conduct, and in aspirations for life. In order to serve as exemplary models for our students, the adults in our school—our Trustees, school leaders, teachers, staff, and parents—will strive for excellence in our teaching, our nurturing, and in realizing the democratic ethos of our school life.

**Scholarship** is our belief in the importance of our endeavor: we treasure learning. We recognize that learning demands that we understand and wrestle with many ideas, even those with which we may not agree. And we understand that knowledge and the other fruits of learning require that we invest our best effort in our education.

**Trustworthiness** is the foundation of all relations in our school community. Trust will be built through honesty about ourselves and our accomplishments, loyalty to our friends and our school community, and faithfulness to our promises, responsibilities, and values.

---

<sup>22</sup> The UFT Elementary Charter School’s description of school culture, specifically our discussion of core values and core purpose, is based on the vision framework developed by management researcher Jim Collins as described in *Built to Last* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1994) and *Good to Great* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2001).

**FIVE HABITS FOR LIFE: "CLIMBING TO THE CREST"**

<b>Community:</b>	"We work on behalf of the common good of the school and society and resolve conflicts in a non-violent way."
<b>Respect:</b>	"We respect the dignity and worth of every member of the school community, treating each other as we would want to be treated."
<b>Excellence:</b>	"We achieve to our very best, giving each task our full effort."
<b>Scholarship:</b>	"We treasure learning and will work diligently to achieve knowledge."
<b>Trustworthiness:</b>	"We deserve each other's trust because we are honest, loyal, and faithful."

All students ask "Why are we here?" As students are compelled by law to spend their formative years in school, it is a fair question. The "best" students may ask the question out of intellectual curiosity. The "worst" students express the question through misbehavior and lackluster achievement. Regardless of how the question is asked, it deserves an answer.

The UFT Elementary Charter School is founded on a single core purpose. Our values are in service to this core purpose. It guides our mission statement. It answers the most important question a student may ask. It provides everyone in our school community a shared sense of our common, and noble, enterprise:

**UFT ELEMENTARY CHARTER SCHOOL CORE PURPOSE:**

To prepare students for the challenges, responsibilities, and opportunity of democratic citizenship.

*C. Elements of Our Culture*

The UFT Elementary Charter School recognizes that dominant elements of the larger mass culture frequently have a negative influence on our core values. The mass culture and media often bombard our students with messages that promote conspicuous consumption, advertise instant gratification, glorify violence, and encourage passivity in the face of injustice.

The UFT Elementary Charter School maintains that this mass culture plays a causal role in the existence and persistence of the achievement gap.<sup>23</sup> As a result, we have

<sup>23</sup> This position, as well as the argument that a different culture is required to abolish the achievement gap, is forwarded by Abigail and Stephan Thernstrom in *No Excuses: Closing the Racial Gap in Learning* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2003). Yet it is important to note the rather different way in which The UFT Elementary Charter School understands the workings of culture. Where the Thernstroms identify the "culture problem" as specific to the cultures of African-Americans and Latinos living in poverty, we see the problem as one of American mass culture generally, with young people living in poverty simply having less cultural capital to counter the negative messages of that mass culture.

no choice but to build a counter-culture of respect for the human dignity of all individuals in which worth is defined by who we are and what we accomplish. Our culture will emphasize the value of community and common endeavors. We will emphasize to our students the liberating power of hard, purposeful work, which is the necessary foundation of and the only realistic path to educational achievement and successful lives.

The UFT Elementary Charter School will build its culture on the practices, identified through a robust amount of educational literature, that serve to close the achievement gap. We will do much more than simply issue a “no excuses” demand (with the implicit message that students are just not trying hard enough).<sup>24</sup> Rather, our culture will articulate high expectations, our faculty will deeply believe in our students’ ability to meet those standards, and we will put into practice specific supports, feedback and counseling to help students improve their work.<sup>25</sup>

Programs that have been successful in bridging the achievement gap have taught students how to use teamwork and a cooperative team ethos for studying and academic work.<sup>26</sup> It is far easier to reach the crest of a mountain as part of a team than by acting alone. To help us develop such a culture, we plan to utilize elements of programs designed for that purpose, such as the NAACP’s ACT-SO and Bob Moses’ Algebra Project.

The UFT Elementary Charter School recognizes that culture is made manifest through specific symbols and actions. These elements of culture include *symbol, language, costume, routines, rites of passage, rewards and consequences, music and art, and celebration*. These categories provide a framework for our school to build culture in a deliberate and consistent way.<sup>27</sup>

---

<sup>24</sup> The UFT ELEMENTARY Charter School recognizes that the achievement gap is caused by poverty and economic deprivation. For research pertaining to the causal role of poverty on the achievement gap, see Valerie Lee and David Burkham, “Inequality at the Starting Gate: Social Background Differences in Achievement as Children Begin School,” Economic Policy Institute, 2002; Richard Rothstein, “Class and Schools: Using Social, Economic, and Educational Reform to Close the Black-White Achievement Gap,” Economic Policy Institute, 2004.

<sup>25</sup> These are the findings of Stanford psychologist Claude Steele, in his pioneering work on the ‘stereotype threat’ and programs that can counter it. See Claude Steele, “Stereotype Threat and African-American Student Achievement” in Theresa Perry, Claude Steele, and Asa Hilliar Claude Steele, “Stereotype threat and the test performance of academically successful African Americans,” *The Black-White Test Score Gap*, ed. Christopher Jencks and Meredith Phillips (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution press, 1998.)

<sup>26</sup> John Ogbu, *Black American Students in an Affluent Suburb: A Study In Academic Disengagement* (New York: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2003).

<sup>27</sup> During our research we found that successful schools employ these elements of culture to articulate and reinforce core values, core purpose, and school mission. For example, at North Star Academy Charter School in Newark, college *symbols* adorn each class to reinforce the school’s college-prep mission. At Elm City College Preparatory Charter School in New Haven, *language* such as the REACH acronym captures the school’s core values in a memorable and accessible way. Roxbury Preparatory Charter School in Boston uses school uniforms, a form of *costume*, to reinforce the orderliness of the school. The morning meeting of Bronx Preparatory Charter School in New York is a *routine* used to gather as community. At Amistad Academy in New Haven, students earn their school shirts upon signing the school compact, a powerful *rite of passage*. At KIPP schools, “scholar dollars” are part of a token economy that generates rewards and consequences for student behavior. *Music* helps to reinforce and celebrate values at the Excellence Charter School of Bedford-Stuyvesant during the “Read, Baby, Read” call and response. At the Bronx Charter School for the Arts, student *art* work is regularly *celebrated* in hallway “installations.”

## Morning Meeting/Community Gathering

This daily morning meeting will build school community around a common pursuit of our Habits for Life. This meeting will focus on community building routines, the sharing of exemplary work, displays of strength of character, and on inspirational messages and school announcements. The content and tone of this meeting will reflect our core purpose by stressing the school's democratic and egalitarian qualities. Activities will include songs and call and response. Morning meeting will nurture respectful and civil interaction.

## Town Hall

More extensive than the Community Gatherings, a monthly Town Hall will serve as a way for students to participate in a democratic forum. At Town Hall we will address major issues facing our school and the world, celebrate students whose accomplishments exemplify our Habits for Life and Habits for Thought, and engage in democratic decision making. These meetings will be organized with student input and will provide student leadership opportunities.

## Community Congress

The school's classrooms will hold Community Congresses. During these Congresses, students will have the opportunity to facilitate discussions, assume community responsibilities, and address classroom concerns. Classrooms will have student leaders of daily routines, such as attendance recording and calendar noting.

## Student Leadership and Promotion

As students mature, they will gain greater responsibility for the development and care of our school. The school will have numerous opportunities for students to lead within and take ownership of our school, from "safety officers" to "learning leaders" and "lunchroom leaders." As students are promoted from one grade to the next, a significant rite of passage will include the passing of responsibilities from class to class.

Sample Elements Of Our Culture	
<i>Symbol</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "CREST" Rubric</li> <li>• "ABCs" Rubric</li> </ul>
<i>Language</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Habits for Life"</li> <li>• "Habits for Thought"</li> </ul>
<i>Costume</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School Dress Code</li> </ul>
<i>Routines</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Gathering/ Morning Meeting</li> <li>• Community Congress</li> <li>• Advisory</li> <li>• Town Meeting</li> <li>• Community Service</li> </ul>
<i>Rites of Passage</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grade-level duties</li> <li>• Promotion to Upper School and Senior Institute</li> </ul>
<i>Rewards and Consequences</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discipline Policy</li> <li>• Parent-Student-School Compact</li> <li>• Student Leadership</li> <li>• Special trips for CREST achievers</li> </ul>
<i>Music and Art</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Songs, call and response</li> <li>• Classroom and common area displays of student art and projects aligned with CREST values</li> </ul>
<i>Celebration</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "LEADERS" Awards</li> <li>• Certificates for CREST achievers</li> <li>• Family dinners, picnics, and celebrations</li> </ul>

## Dress Code

The UFT Elementary Charter School's student dress code will build community and school pride while reducing status issues often associated with wearing expensive clothes. Students will be required to wear polo shirts (short sleeves in warmer weather and long sleeves in cooler weather) or sweatshirts emblazoned with the school logo, available in a range of colors, accompanied by black or blue slacks. This look will be academic and neat.



The UFT Elementary Charter School recognizes that any authentic culture must grow and develop over time. School culture is much more than the sum of discrete institutionalized moments of the day; the attributes described here are merely a beginning. Over time, we will infuse our core purpose and Habits for Life throughout the multitude of interactions in a school day to ensure that many small yet reinforcing details create a school that is relentless in its pursuit of academic excellence and steadfast in its belief that the best way to prepare democratic citizens is through the repeated and consistent practice of democracy.

## IV. Our Curriculum<sup>28</sup>

The UFT Elementary Charter School will maintain a pedagogical balance in an educational world increasingly polarized between two opposing approaches to learning. Educational leaders, researchers and teachers have long debated the relative importance of the educational process, on the one hand, and the content which is being taught, on the other hand. Taken to its most extreme terms, as it too often is, this debate yields two unhelpful conceptions. On the one hand, there is an assumption that learning is an entirely self-directed process in which knowledge is constructed when the student decides when, what, and how to learn. On the other hand, there is a didactic notion that knowledge is transmitted solely through a skill and drill regimen so that students can regurgitate information.

It is our view that a good education balances both learner-centered and knowledge-based approaches. We understand learning to be arduous but creative work: a student learns best when engaging real life problems and issues, and crafting solutions to them, using the 'raw material' of human knowledge. Our conception of a balanced education allows us to draw upon the best teaching practices, which use process to deliver content knowledge in a powerful manner. We believe that a solid foundation of knowledge coupled with opportunities to solve problems and think independently and critically will provide the intellectual foundation necessary for democratic citizenship.

### *High Academic Expectations*

---

<sup>28</sup> A more detailed description of our curriculum, including specific content to be taught in each grade and subject area, along with research supporting our curriculum, can be found in Attachment 14.

The UFT Elementary Charter School will have high expectations for every student. Our expectations begin with the floor established by New York State standards. Specifically, to be promoted into the 5<sup>th</sup> grade, students must meet or exceed standards on the 4<sup>th</sup> grade English language arts and mathematics state assessments.

### *Intensive Focus on Literacy and Numeracy*

The school will focus its academic program in kindergarten through 2<sup>nd</sup> grade on the development of foundational literacy and numeracy skills. This focus is implemented through a daily, three-hour intensive instructional block for literacy and mathematics instruction. Given that our intention is to open the school in September 2005 as seamlessly as possible, at this juncture we have decided to use two educational programs currently in use in New York City public schools—Harcourt Trophies and Everyday Mathematics. As a result, some of our teachers will be familiar with the curriculum. Also, the Teacher Center has already designed professional development services aligned with these two curricula.

Trophies includes a balance of direct targeted instruction, small group instruction, and independent practice with engaging literacy activities. Trophies also addresses phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension, the five areas identified by the National Reading Panel as essential for effective literacy instruction.

The school will build its mathematics instruction around Everyday Mathematics (EDM). If used correctly and started with the earliest grades, EDM allows students to apply their mathematics to real-world situations by mastering basic arithmetic skills and constructing a deep conceptual understanding of mathematics. EDM develops number sense and “mental math” skills, builds critical thinking skills and provides students with a variety of problem-solving strategies.

### *Writing Workshop*

The school will use the Trophies writing program to prepare all students to be proficient writers. The program includes response to literature, writing organization and focus, writing strategies, author’s craft, use of literary devices, editing and revising, and grammar use. This writing workshop will include explicit teacher-directed instruction, modeling by teacher and students, guided practice, and application through independent writing. Students will have time to practice and refine their process as writers during a daily writing block.

### *Early Intervention*

The school will identify students who are not making adequate progress as readers, and provide early intervention. Appreciating that skill attainment varies as children develop, our small group instruction time will support the different trajectories of developing readers. This intensive instruction will systematically introduce skills in a sequenced manner and give students multiple opportunities to practice their newly-acquired skills.

### *Center Exploration and Early Childhood Focus*

The school recognizes that early-childhood students need a bridge from their home experiences to the world of formal education. The daily use of learning centers is a developmentally appropriate setting to provide differentiated ‘hands-on’ work for our students and to bridge this divide. Centers will give educational opportunities to integrate dramatic play, blocks, art, music and various content areas. Additionally, our centers will be places where students learn social skills. Centers will look different in various grades to reflect students’ maturing ability. While centers in kindergarten may include centers such as a housekeeping corner and sand and water areas, the centers in 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grades may focus on math and literacy manipulatives.

### *The Integrated Afternoon*

Using the New York State Social Studies and Science Core Curriculums as a framework, teachers will create integrated, standards-based three- to four-week units of study. These units will provide students with the opportunity to experience and understand the interconnectedness of all curriculum areas. Units will include essential questions, content information, and engaging hands-on activities. As we build these units, we will supplement the state curriculums with other resources. For example, we are in the early stage of reaching out to the developers of the Core Knowledge curriculum and are reviewing Core Knowledge materials to determine if and how they can best enrich our curriculum.

At the culmination of each unit, a performance-based task will demonstrate students’ achievement of standards-aligned outcomes. These exhibitions may include oral presentations and/or written reports, and may be presented through different media and technologies. Students will be able to self-assess their work and engage in classroom discussions.

### *Two Teachers Per Classroom*

Two teachers will staff every classroom from kindergarten through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. In this way, we will create a smaller teacher to student ratio than found in most public schools. This ratio will allow us to provide more intensive and individualized instruction and assessment of student progress. Moreover, we anticipate pairing a more senior teacher with a less experienced teacher so that their collaboration becomes a form of professional development. Additionally, each early-childhood grade will have a paraprofessional.

### *More Time to Close the Achievement Gap*

The UFT Elementary Charter School recognizes that time is a precious resource, particularly for some students who may start school far behind their peers in foundational literacy and mathematical skills. Consequently, students will have an opportunity for an extended school day. From 3:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m., students will participate in after-school enrichment activities that are aligned with the school day. Students requiring additional academic intervention will participate in an after-school

Homework Club. We anticipate that this after-school program will be run by a community-based organization (CBO) working in partnership with our school.

### *Assessment and Evaluation*

The UFT Elementary Charter School believes that our educational program must be based on useful and reliable information about our students' academic strengths, needs, and progress. Effective teaching is dependent on consistent assessment that results in reliable data; in turn, this data informs classroom practice. As described in more detail in Attachments 15 and 16, we will use a variety of instruments, including the New York State Assessments, Terra Nova, and school-developed evaluations to establish baseline information, regularly check students' progress, and verify progress toward our goals.

### *"Habits for Thought"*

The UFT Elementary Charter School's curriculum will prepare students to master the necessary content and skills required by state standards. But what holds all of this together? And in years to come, what will they retain and recall from their years of schooling?

The UFT Elementary Charter Schools will weave five "Habits for Thought" throughout all areas of our curriculum, which we call the ABC's of Critical Thinking. These five habits provide an intellectual logic to our students' course of study.<sup>29</sup> We believe that these five habits, having been regularly practiced and mastered in our school, will give our graduates the cognitive tools to think through any problem or challenge that they face throughout their lives. As we meet our mission to prepare students for their responsibilities in our democratic society, these habits will allow graduates to ask good questions and develop meaningful answers—two essential talents of a well-educated citizen.

The Habit of Analysis requires students to separate and distinguish a subject into component parts. Among the parts, we will look for patterns and relationships, causes and effects. This habit for thought is captured in our questions: *"What makes up the things we are studying? What causes what?"*

The Habit of Breadth of Perspective asks students to look at circumstances and questions from a variety of angles and in doing so discover new facts and unexpected answers. It requires students to consider how circumstances and questions might have been approached in the past or in other contexts (precedent and analogy), and how they might be approached differently in the future (alternatives). In math, breadth of perspective calls upon students to look at a practical problem and its solution in different ways; in science, students will develop and test a number of hypotheses concerning a phenomenon being studied; in English language arts, students will develop different characters and voices in their writing; and in social studies, students will consider how historical experiences and events shape perspectives and views of the world. Through this habit, we will cultivate an awareness of the importance of

---

<sup>29</sup> These ideas are inspired by the "habits of mind" pioneered by Deborah Meier, *The Power of Their Ideas: Lessons from America from a Small School in Harlem* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995) and the Coalition of Essential Schools.

dissent and minority views, developing the sense of civic responsibility for the protection of freedom of expression and minority rights, which is so crucial for our democracy. This Habit of Thought is captured in our questions *“What are different ways one can see and understand something we are studying? How might things be different?”*

The Habit of Connection focuses students on the interrelatedness of knowledge, across disciplines, and on the significance of knowledge for the world outside of the school. Connecting ideas is the first step in developing meaningful theories and hypotheses. Connecting our learning to the larger community and world will allow our students to understand the significance of their work and studies, and answer the question: *“Why is this important?”*

The Habit of Discourse recognizes that the pursuit of knowledge is rarely an isolated activity. Ideas are shared, adapted, rejected and adopted. One important feature of schooling is that students are physically together. In this circumstance, it would be a missed opportunity if students learned in a largely silent and individualistic manner. Our Habit of Discourse expects that we share ideas in a meaningful way with arguments that are coherent and logical and supported by evidence. When we engage and challenge each other, to sharpen our ideas and our skills, we are essentially asking, *“When we engage in dialogue (written and spoken), are our arguments persuasive?”*

The Habit of Examining and Using Evidence demands that our students carefully inquire into, with an open mind, the facts before them, and that they base their conclusions on those facts. Our students will ascertain whether or not the evidence for a conclusion is reliable and be will able to recognize and correct errors. This habit for thought is captured in our questions: *“How do we know what we know? How can we recognize and correct error?”*

**FIVE HABITS FOR THOUGHT:  
THE ABC'S OF CRITICAL THINKING**

**ANALYSIS** *“What makes up the thing we are studying? What causes what?”*

**BREADTH OF PERSPECTIVE:** *“What are different ways one can see and understand the thing we are studying? How might things be different?”*

**CONNECTION:** *“Why is this important?”*

**DISCOURSE:** *“When engaged in dialogue (written and spoken) are our arguments convincing?”*

**EVIDENCE:** *“How do we know what we know? How can we recognize and correct error?”*



The UFT Elementary Charter School believes that learning and knowledge develop out of active engagement with real, practical problems; out of identifying and contending with key questions and issues posed by these problems; and out of considering the full range of possible solutions and answers to those questions and issues, in order to

determine which solutions or answers work best. The curriculum presented here will provide a framework to build our culture of inquiry, rich with an intellectual pursuit of ideas, impatient with easy answers or assumed truth. In short, we believe our democracy will be well served by the critical citizens who graduate from our school.

## VI. Conclusion

Presented here is our vision. This school will be built on values that support and embody our democratic purpose. It was designed and will be made by educators whose expertise and collaborative ethic will guide students to personal and academic excellence. It will be crafted with materials and content that challenge us all to acquire knowledge and skills and engage real-life problems.

We also present a set of tools, a theory of action and conceptual frameworks, to better understand the coherence of our ideas. In the hands of our educators, these tools will help develop and refine our work.

Consistent with our concept of instruction, this school will be built through the arduous but creative labor of our educators, in a manner that allows their insights to shape what will become *their* creation—a school, and through common purpose, a small society where students want to learn and teachers want to work.

• • •

## Partner Organization

This application is filed in conjunction with the United Federation of Teachers Educational Foundation Inc., a 501(c)3 organization. The United Federation of Teachers (UFT) will also support the school, operating through the Educational Foundation and directly. In this application, all references to the UFT's involvement in the school presume working through the Foundation as partner organization (except for instances where the charter school is permitted to contract directly with the UFT for services). Following this preamble are signed letters of commitment which outline the terms of this partnership.<sup>30</sup>

The United Federation of Teachers Educational Foundation, Inc.

The mission of the United Federation of Teachers Educational Foundation, Inc. is to initiate, conduct, and sponsor programs in educational and related fields. The purpose of such programs is to improve and increase educational services for students, parents, and staff.

### Preamble

The United Federation of Teachers (UFT) is the union of the educational professionals who teach and care for New York City's 1.1 million public school children. The UFT has undertaken the founding and sponsorship of The UFT Elementary Charter School. The UFT does so out of its longstanding and abiding commitments to the education and well-being of the city's children and to the welfare and professional standing of the adults who assume responsibility for their learning and growth. The UFT has a long and proud history of advocacy on behalf of both students and teachers, and this partnership with The UFT Elementary Charter School, together with its sister, the UFT Secondary Charter School, is a continuation of this tradition.

### The UFT Mission and Legacy

For the UFT's members, teaching is as much a mission as it is a profession. Teachers work out of a desire to make a difference in the lives of young people; this sense of purpose serves as an important guide in their life's work as educators and unionists. Among other things, it was the recognition that students' learning conditions are inseparable from teaching conditions that convinced teachers of the need for a strong collective voice and powerful labor organization to advocate for school children as well as for themselves. Our conviction that "teachers want what children need" (as one early slogan of the UFT put it), goes back to the very foundation of American teacher unionism. The first member of the American Federation of Teachers and of its New York City local was none other than John Dewey, perhaps the best known

---

<sup>30</sup> In preparing the attached agreement with the United Federation of Teachers, The UFT Elementary Charter School researched and reviewed partnership agreements, charter management organization/educational service provider (CMO/ESP) contracts, and working relationships between a number of charter schools and their partner organization or vendor, including the following: partnership agreements between the Community Partnership Charter School and the Beginning with Children Foundation and between Harlem Children's Zone Promise Academy Charter School and Harlem Children's Zone, Inc.; CMO/ESP contracts between Bronx Lighthouse Charter School and Lighthouse Academies and between Peninsula Preparatory Charter School and Victory Schools, Inc.; trademark license agreement between KIPP STAR College Prep Charter School and the KIPP Foundation; and the working relationship between Harlem Day Charter School and Sheltering Arms Children's Services.

proponent of active student engagement in learning and teacher professionalism and empowerment, as well as social and economic reforms that would improve the lives of children. Dewey's democratic vision of public education, that of schools which were "of, by and for" the community they served, provided a firm conceptual foundation for the first generations of American teacher unionism, as it still does for us today.

A half century after Dewey signed the first AFT union card, New York City's newly born UFT, fresh from its victory in collective bargaining elections, presented its first set of bargaining demands to the Board of Education. In addition to the goals of improved salaries and a grievance procedure, this list of demands included actions to improve the conditions and resources for students. The protections provided by that first collective bargaining agreement and by the support of a strong union have proven pivotal in giving New York City teachers the confidence needed to speak out on behalf of the education of students without fear of recrimination or repercussion.

The legacy left to the UFT and the AFT by their founders is one of visionary educational leadership in the service of school children and teachers. Both organizations stood up in support of fundamental principles that were strongly contested at the time and only later became commonly accepted. When *Brown v. Board of Education* went before the Supreme Court in the early 1950s, the AFT was the only American teacher organization to join with the plaintiffs and filed an amicus brief calling for an end to racial segregation in public schools. When still a small and fledgling organization, the AFT expelled all locals which would not integrate, at a considerable cost to itself in numbers. The leaders of the UFT and AFT marched in civil rights demonstrations, organized freedom schools in the South, and joined Dr. King in non-violent civil disobedience.

When the emergence of a global knowledge economy placed new demands on America's schools, the UFT and the AFT did not shirk from the challenge of *A Nation At Risk*, but led the "standards movement" to improve the rigor and raise the quality of the educational system. The UFT and AFT rejected the notion that the quality of teachers and schools was a management responsibility that teacher unions could ignore; they helped conceive and start initiatives, such as the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards and programs of peer intervention and evaluation, in which teachers took direct responsibility for ensuring the quality of the profession. Long before it became an accepted idea, the AFT and UFT embraced the notion that educational excellence was a union goal, and built what is today the most widespread and effective network of educational professional development in the United States, with New York City's Teachers Centers at the lead. And it was the president of the UFT and the AFT, Al Shanker, who first formulated and popularized the innovative idea of charter schools, public schools free of stifling bureaucracy, over-regulation and top-down micro-management of teachers and schools.

Today, at the start of a new century, the UFT picks up the baton passed on by John Dewey, Al Shanker and the other men and women who have preceded us, and take on a new educational challenge: founding two public charter schools. In the best tradition of the union, these schools will be located in a community with great educational need, East New York, where the schools will serve students who will benefit most from this new opportunity. In February 1998 on her first day as President of the UFT, Randi Weingarten said that the union's vision is for every school to be a place where parents

want to send their children and teachers want to teach. The UFT believes that these two charter schools will fulfill that vision. They will be models of academic excellence, democratic education and teacher professionalism and will realize the old AFT motto: “Democracy in Education—Education for Democracy.”

### A “Public School” in the Fullest Meaning of the Term

The establishment of The UFT Elementary Charter School will mark a return to the original conception of charter school developed and promoted by Al Shanker, for a UFT charter school will be a “public school” in the fullest and richest meaning of the term. It will, of course, be financed with public funds, open to all the children of the community and city, and accountable to the public through all of the assessments given by all public schools. But The UFT Elementary Charter School will also make a distinctive contribution to all public schools in New York City, rather than a school conceived in competition with other public schools. The UFT has no proprietary interest in starting a UFT educational corporation and no desire to build a UFT chain of schools. The fruits of the school’s educational labors will be a public educational resource shared with the teachers and public schools within the city.

The UFT believes that The UFT Elementary Charter School will reveal the great bounties of educational knowledge and skill that could be tapped in all public schools, if only teachers were allowed to function as true educational professionals. It will demonstrate just how educationally innovative and excellent all public schools could be, if only there was genuine collaboration between management and labor. It will show that educationally sound and wise decisions could be made in every public school, if only educators and parents were given real voice in governance and the decision-making process. And it will prove that accomplished, high quality and experienced teachers can be recruited to and retained in public schools serving communities with high concentrations of educational need, if only these teachers know that they will be accorded the respect, voice and collective bargaining protections every professional educator should have. Like John Dewey’s laboratory schools, The UFT Elementary Charter School will make a distinctive contribution to a public conversation on teaching and learning, a contribution centered on the development, implementation, and critical examination of best educational practices which can be employed in every public school.

What is more, The UFT Elementary Charter School will make a contribution to the revitalization of public life and public service in New York City. The school mission statement declares that it will prepare all students to achieve academic and personal excellence, and that it will graduate students fully prepared for a demanding post-secondary education and for meaningful lives as full democratic citizens in a free society. One could conceptualize this mission in terms of three themes that run through the organization of the school: character, service and scholarship. The school will be educating students with character, who will be true to the moral and civic values which will guide the school, as these values guide the union, and which provide the essential moral fabric of a democratic society. The school will be educating students for service, to fulfill the duty that all citizens have to each other and to the common good, so powerfully captured in the central union value of solidarity. And the

school will be educating students as scholars, who will bring the pursuit of learning and knowledge to all that they do.

The challenge of establishing and running The UFT Elementary Charter School as a public school of academic excellence, democratic education and teacher professionalism will be great, but the UFT will provide the support and expertise necessary to meet this challenge.

*PERSONNEL POLICIES  
OF THE  
UFT ELEMENTARY CHARTER SCHOOL*

*PREAMBLE:*

*TEACHER PROFESSIONALISM AT THE UF ELEMENTARY CHARTER SCHOOL*

The UFT Elementary Charter School will be based on a philosophy of teacher professionalism.

For teachers, professionalism is nothing new. Under the most difficult and trying circumstances, teachers have demonstrated again and again an unswerving commitment to the education and care of their students; it is part of who teachers are, of why they are called to teaching. What will be different at The UFT Elementary Charter School is that this commitment to teacher professionalism will be shared by the school itself. The UFT Elementary Charter School will enter into a compact with its teachers, in which it provides the necessary supports and resources for teachers to work as educational professionals; in return, teachers will hold themselves to the highest standards of teacher professionalism.

What are the goals and the aspirations of a philosophy of teacher professionalism?

We follow the core propositions articulated by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards in identifying six central themes of teacher professionalism.

*Professional teachers are committed to students and their learning.*

- They prepare and use lesson plans, units of study and course curricula which meet professional educational standards
- They recognize the different educational needs of their students and fashion their instruction to meet those needs
- They treat students fairly and equitably, modeling in their interactions with students the idea of the innate worth and dignity of every person
- They understand how students develop and learn, and nurture the entire development of the student

*Professional teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students.*

- They understand how knowledge in their subject area is created, organized and linked to other disciplines
- They possess a mastery of the pedagogical skills needed to teach their subject to students
- They engage in professional discourse and work with other educators, inside and outside of the school, to maintain and broaden their knowledge of their subject area and their mastery of the teaching craft

*Professional teachers manage and monitor student learning.*

- They place student learning and engagement at the center of all activities in the classroom
- They use multiple instructional strategies and techniques in their teaching

- They know how to orchestrate learning in whole class, small-group and individual work settings
- They regularly assess student progress, using multiple forms of assessment

*Professional teachers think systematically about their practice, and learn from their experience.*

- They reflect on their educational choices and experiences, and learn from each other
- They draw on education research and scholarship to improve their practice

*Professional teachers view themselves as part of an educational community.*

- They participate in democratic school governance, contributing their thoughts and judgment to all important educational and organizational decisions in the school
- They work collaboratively with other teachers to develop the academic program and curriculum of the school, and to generally advance the effectiveness of the school
- They work in partnership with families to educate their children

The UFT Elementary Charter School will be responsible for establishing a school environment which respects and promotes educational professionalism. It will:

- provide teachers with the essential physical tools of their craft, from appropriately furnished classrooms to school-based access to copying facilities, a telephone and the Internet
- organize the school day and year and school space in ways that provide a wide array of meaningful opportunities for teachers to meet and work together
- respect the professional consensus of the teaching faculty and the professional choice of individual teachers at the Charter School on the following educational matters: the development of the school program and curriculum; the selection of textbooks and other instructional materials and technology; class offerings; student assessment methods and grading; the format of lessons and lesson plans; and pedagogical and instructional techniques, strategies and methodologies
- ensure that a program of intellectually challenging and meaningful professional development for the teaching faculty, devised with the full participation of teachers, is provided
- establish a system of collegial teacher observation, inter-visitation and evaluation, derived from the practices and principles set out in “Teaching for the Twenty-First Century” and outlined below
- set forth procedures for the hiring of new staff which gives that authority to a Staffing Committee, the majority of whom are teachers, as outlined below
- establish a system of democratic school governance which will vest important educational decisions in the educational professionals working in the school, as outlined in the application of The UFT Elementary Charter School
- establish a procedure of professional conciliation, staffed by an educator external to the school, to resolve professional disputes in the school, as outlined below.

## *PERSONNEL POLICIES OF THE UFT ELEMENTARY CHARTER SCHOOL*

### *I. OFFER OF TERMS OF SERVICE OF EXISTING COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENTS*

The UFT Elementary Charter School will offer to employees all of the terms and conditions of the existing collective bargaining agreements between the New York City Department of Education and the United Federation Teachers as they pertain to teachers, guidance counselors, social workers, lab specialists, school secretaries and para-professionals. All due process rights accorded to individual UFT members under the collective bargaining agreements between the New York City Department of Education and the United Federation of Teachers will be offered to employees of The UFT Elementary Charter School.

### *II. NON-DISCRIMINATION*

The UFT Elementary Charter School is committed to promoting mutual understanding and respect among individuals from different races, ethnic groups, religions, genders and sexual orientations, and to respecting freedom of conscience and freedom of association. Consequently, The UFT Elementary Charter School and its Trustees will not discriminate against any employee on the basis of race, creed, color, national origin, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, handicapping condition, age or membership or participation in, or association with the activities of any employee organization.<sup>35</sup> Further, The UFT Elementary Charter School and its Trustees will not require any employee to complete an oath or other affirmation of loyalty unless they are required to do so by law. Specifically, The UFT Elementary Charter School and its Trustees will not dismiss, demote, discipline or otherwise act against any employee because of his or her participation in a strike or its related activities unless they are required to do so by law (Article 3).

### *III. SEXUAL HARASSMENT*

The UFT Elementary Charter School is committed to establishing and maintaining a positive learning and teaching environment and workplace, in which all employees are able to excel in their professional work. To that end, The UFT Elementary Charter School will not tolerate acts of sexual harassment, or related acts of intimidation and retaliation. For the purposes of personnel policy at The UFT Elementary Charter School, sexual harassment consists of interaction between individuals of the same or opposite sex that is characterized by unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when: (1) submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment and/or evaluation; (2) submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for tangible employment decisions affecting such individual; or (3) such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work or academic performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working or educational environment.

---

<sup>35</sup> Article 2 of the *Agreement between the Board of Education of the City School District of the City of New York and United Federation of Teachers, Local 2, American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO, November 16, 2000 to May 31, 2003*. Additional references to this Agreement will cite the relevant Article.

If an employee believes that he or she has been subjected to sexual harassment, the employee should immediately contact the School Leader or a member of the Board of Trustees on its Personnel and Grievance Committee specifically designated to receive complaints of sexual harassment. All reports of sexual harassment will be investigated by an individual who is not involved in the alleged harassment and will be kept confidential to the extent consistent with a full and thorough investigation of the allegation.

If an investigation confirms that sexual harassment has taken place, the School Leader or the Board of Trustees shall take appropriate corrective action which may include, but is not limited to, placing a letter in the offending employee's personnel file, suspending the offending employee, or termination of the offending employee.

#### *IV. OTHER FORMS OF HARASSMENT*

If an employee believes that he or she has been subjected to a form of harassment or intimidation other than sexual harassment, he or she may make a "special complaint" to the Board of Trustees. Upon receipt of a "special complaint" charging harassment or intimidation, a process analogous to the special complaint process set forth in the collective bargaining agreements between the New York City Department of Education and the United Federation of Teachers shall be put into motion. This special complaint process will include a joint investigation by the Board of Trustees and the UFT, attempts at informal resolution, a formal hearing before a subcommittee of the Board of Trustees, if necessary, and fact finding before an independent arbitrator, if necessary (Article 23).

#### *V. CONFIDENTIALITY*

Employees of The UFT Elementary Charter School have a right to confidentiality and privacy in all personnel matters, to the extent consistent with full and thorough investigations of alleged deeds of wrongdoing and to the extent permissible by the Freedom of Information Law.

#### *VI. HEALTHY WORKPLACE*

Smoking will be prohibited in and around The UFT Elementary Charter School and at The UFT Elementary Charter School activities.

#### *VII. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST*

An employee of The UFT Elementary Charter School has a "conflict of interest" when he or she may derive private gain or benefit through the exercise of their official UFT Elementary Charter School duties. It is essential that all individuals be independent and impartial in the performance of their duties at The UFT Elementary Charter School, in order to maintain public confidence in the integrity of the school; therefore, any employee who finds himself or herself in such a conflict of interest should disclose the conflict to the School Leader or Board of Trustees and recuse himself or herself from participating in decision-making on issues where that conflict is present.

No employee of The UFT Elementary Charter School shall accept individual gifts of any kind in excess of fifty dollars (\$50), including but not limited to money, goods, food, entertainment or services from any individuals, schools or corporate entities serving as a vendor or potential vendor to the school; elected officials or their representatives; candidates for public office and their representatives; and political party officials and their representatives. Specifically exempt from this monetary limit are the gifts the parents of an entire class of students may give collectively to the teacher(s) of that class. Other exemptions may be granted by the School Leader and/or Board of Trustees. Offers of prohibited gifts, even when refused, should be reported to the School Leader or Board of Trustees.

### *VIII. SALARY AND WORKING CONDITIONS*

#### *A. Salary*

Employees of The UFT Elementary Charter School shall be paid an annual salary, paid weekly in equal increments over the course of a calendar year. For non-managerial categories of employees represented by the United Federation of Teachers, the amount of the salary will be established by the salary schedule for that category of employee in the New York City public schools, as set forth in the collective bargaining agreements between the New York City Department of Education and the United Federation of Teachers. These employees will be placed on the same step and the same differential of the schedule that they would receive were they an active employee in the New York City public schools. For the purposes of determining salary credit on that schedule, time of service in the New York City public schools will count as if it were time of service in The UFT Elementary Charter School.

Where an employee has worked a fraction of the regular school year, the summer vacation portion of his or her salary will be paid on a pro-rata basis during the months of July and August (Article 3 F).

For certain designated work beyond the regular school day and school week, non-managerial categories of employees who may be represented by the United Federation of Teachers will be paid an hourly wage. This wage will conform to the wage for 'per session' work set forth in the collective bargaining agreements between the New York City Department of Education and the United Federation of Teachers (Article 15 A). For certain designated professional development activities beyond the regular school day and school week, employees will be paid an hourly wage. This wage which will conform to the wage for 'staff development' set forth in the collective bargaining agreements between the New York City Department of Education and the United Federation of Teachers (Article 3 B). Hourly wages will be added to the regular annual salary of the employee for the purposes of calculating pension benefits.

Opportunities to engage in per session and staff development work shall be posted in the school, and employees of The UFT Elementary Charter School who apply to do such work will be selected consistent with the rules for such selection set forth in the collective bargaining agreements between the New York City Department of Education and the United Federation of Teachers (Article 15).

Employees of The UFT Elementary Charter School will have the ability to be paid through an electronic funds transfer program at no cost to them (Article 3 G 1), and to participate in the NYC Transit Check program or its equivalent (Article 3 G 2).

Employees of The UFT Elementary Charter School who are required to serve jury duty will be paid their full salary for the period of their service (Article 16 G).

When inclement weather or other conditions would prevent the regular functioning of The UFT Elementary Charter School on a scheduled school day, the School Leader may declare a “weather day” closing the school for that day. An orderly process for notifying the media and parents shall be developed and implemented. At the discretion of the School Leader or Board of Trustees, a weather day may be made up by adding an additional day to the school calendar.

#### *B. Health Insurance and Welfare Fund*

Employees of The UFT Elementary Charter School will be provided with a choice of health and hospital insurance coverage from among designated plans in accordance with the terms governing such insurance set forth in the collective bargaining agreements between the New York City Department of Education and the United Federation of Teachers. The UFT Elementary Charter School will pay the full cost of such coverage, and provide a choice of insurance coverage equivalent to that provided to employees of the New York City public schools.

Employees of The UFT Elementary Charter School will be full members of the UFT Welfare Fund and will receive the same supplemental benefits (e.g., prescription coverage, dental coverage, eyeglass coverage, hearing aid coverage) they would receive from the Fund as an employee in New York City public schools (Article 3 G 2).

Employees of The UFT Elementary Charter School will have the ability to participate in a health care flexible spending account and dependent care assistance program (Article 3 G 3 and 4).

Employees of The UFT Elementary Charter School will be reimbursed for medical expenses not exceeding \$750 undertaken as a result of a condition resulting from an injury in the line of duty (Article 3 H).

The domestic partners of Employees of The UFT Elementary Charter School will be eligible for the same coverage under the teachers’ health insurance and welfare fund they would receive if they were married spouses of the teachers (Article 3 G 2).

Employees of The UFT Elementary Charter School with spouses or domestic partners also covered by the UFT Welfare Fund will have the ability to “coordinate” benefits in the same way that other families with dual Welfare Fund coverage may “coordinate” their benefits.

Employees of The UFT Elementary Charter School, their families and their domestic partners will be eligible for purchasing the continuation of their benefits in their health insurance plan and in the UFT Welfare Fund, as provided by the COBRA law.

### *C. Reimbursement*

Employees of The UFT Elementary Charter School may be reimbursed for the following expenses when they are authorized in advance by the School Leader or Board of Trustees, who shall set appropriate spending limits: travel, lodging and meals while on official school business, and specific purchases of materials for school use.

### *D. Pension*

Eligible employees will be enrolled in the Teacher Retirement System and will receive the same pension credits and same pension benefits they would receive if they were an active employee in the New York City public schools (Article 4).

Employees of The UFT Elementary Charter School will have the ability to participate in a Tax Deferred Annuity program equivalent to the program which would be available to them if they were an active employee in the New York City public schools (Article 4 D).

### *E. School Day and School Year*

Employees of The UFT Elementary Charter School will work the same school day and same school year as employees in their job category work in New York City public schools. For categories of employees represented by the United Federation of Teachers, this school day and school year will be in conformance with the terms governing those matters set forth in the collective bargaining agreements between the New York City Department of Education and the United Federation of Teachers (Article 6).

The school day for teachers, lab specialists and para-professionals at The UFT Elementary Charter School is thus currently 6 hours and 40 minutes long. (Article 6 A). The school year for teachers, lab specialists and para-professionals shall be a minimum of 180 days, and will begin in September on the first Tuesday after Labor Day and will end before the last two weekdays in the month of June (Article 6 B).

The school day for guidance counselors at The UFT Elementary Charter School is thus currently 7 hours long, exclusive of lunch. The school year for guidance counselors will be the school year for teachers, plus the last two weekdays in June.

The school day for school secretaries at The UFT Elementary Charter School is thus currently 7 hours and 20 minutes long, inclusive of lunch. The school year for school secretaries will be the school year for teachers, plus the last two weekdays in June.

The school day for lab specialists at The UFT Elementary Charter School is thus currently 6 hours and 30 minutes long, exclusive of lunch.

For two regularly scheduled days during the months of October through May, the school day will be extended forty minutes for all employees to meet for purposes of professional development. On two weekday evenings, once in the fall and once in the spring, teachers and guidance counselors will be required to be in attendance at the school to meet with parents and discuss the progress of their students.

All employees of The UFT Elementary Charter School will have time scheduled in their daily programs for a duty-free lunch.

#### *F. Teacher Programs*

Teachers at The UFT Elementary Charter School will have time scheduled in their daily programs for lesson preparation and other professional tasks, in conformance with the terms governing those matters set forth in the collective bargaining agreements between the New York City Department of Education and the United Federation of Teachers (Article 7).

Opportunities at The UFT Elementary Charter School to perform non-teaching duties in lieu of teaching a class or classes shall be posted in the school, together with a set of qualifications and objective selection criteria for the position. Teachers shall be selected for such positions in a manner consistent with the rules for 'compensatory time' positions set forth in the collective bargaining agreements between the New York City Department of Education and the United Federation of Teachers (Article 7).

Prior to each term of school, teachers at The UFT Elementary Charter School will be asked their preferences for the classes they will teach and their daily program, and these preferences will be honored wherever feasible, in conformance with the terms governing those matters set forth in the collective bargaining agreements between the New York City Department of Education and the United Federation of Teachers (Article 7).

All classes in a teacher schedules shall conform to the class size limits set forth in the collective bargaining agreements between the New York City Department of Education and the United Federation of Teachers.

#### *G. Non-Teacher Assignment and Workloads*

The assignment of guidance counselors, social workers and lab specialists at The UFT Elementary Charter School to tasks performed by employees in other job categories which are outside of their area of professional expertise will conform to the terms set forth in the respective collective bargaining agreements between the New York City Department of Education and the United Federation of Teachers.

The workload of guidance counselors and school secretaries shall conform to the terms in the respective collective bargaining agreements between the New York City Department of Education and the United Federation of Teachers.

Para-professionals at The UFT Elementary Charter School will be eligible to participate in a Career Training Program under the same terms and conditions as the para-professionals working in New York City public schools.

#### *H. Absences and Leaves of Absence*

Employees of The UFT Elementary Charter School will be provided the number of excused sick days and personal business days established under the terms of the

collective bargaining agreements between the New York City Department of Education and the United Federation of Teachers (Article 16). Currently, a total of ten sick days, one per each working month, is allowed, and up to three of those days may be used for personal business days (Article 16 A 1). Employees may accrue unused days in a “bank” for future use, and may borrow up to twenty days from that bank. (Article 16 A). Employees may also donate unused sick days in their banks to another employee of The UFT Elementary Charter School in need (Article 16 A).

Employees of The UFT Elementary Charter School will be granted an excused day of absence with pay when such absences would be so covered were they an active teacher in New York City public schools (Article 16 and 7N). Employees of The UFT Elementary Charter School will be granted an absence for purposes of religious observation when such absences would be so covered were they an active teacher in New York City public schools, and they will be paid for that day according to the formula used by the New York City Department of Education for such days.

Upon resignation or retirement from The UFT Elementary Charter School, employees will be able to ‘cash in’ unused days in their ‘bank’ at the rate established in the collective bargaining agreements between the New York City Department of Education and the United Federation of Teachers (Article 16).

Employees of The UFT Elementary Charter School who are eligible will be permitted to take sabbatical leaves for education and for the restorations of health, including tuberculosis. The conditions of eligibility for such a sabbatical will be the same as the conditions of eligibility for employees in New York City public schools; however, the time of service required for a sabbatical must be time at the Charter School itself. Employees of The UFT Elementary Charter School on sabbatical will be paid according to the formula for sabbatical pay used in the New York City Department of Education and set forth in the collective bargaining agreements between the New York City Department of Education and the United Federation of Teachers (Article 16 B, C and D).

Employees of The UFT Elementary Charter School will be eligible for unpaid leaves of absences for the purposes set forth in the collective bargaining agreements between the New York City Department of Education and the United Federation of Teachers (e.g., study, restoration of health, one year international teaching exchange, personal affairs, care of family and health, military service, maternity/paternity, vocational high school externship) and the By-Laws of the New York City Department of Education (Article 16, E and F). Employees on unpaid leaves of absences will be granted all of the benefits and rights they would have received were they teachers on unpaid leaves in the New York City public schools (e.g., Special Leave of Absence Coverage (SLOAC)).

### *1. Injury in the Line of Duty*

Employees of The UFT Elementary Charter School may be accorded an injury in the line of duty status when they are injured as a result of an incident that occurs in the course of their school duties and without any negligence on their part, when this injury meets the conditions for injury in the line of duty status established by the Department of Education Regulations and when the nature and extent of the injury has

been verified by a medical examination of the UFT's Charter School doctor. Teachers will not be debited sick days while on approved injury in the line of duty status.

Employees of The UFT Elementary Charter School who are injured in the line of duty will be covered by Workmen's Compensation. Where Workmen's Compensation does not provide the full coverage that employee would have received were he or she employed in New York City public schools at the time of the injury in the line of duty, The UFT Elementary Charter School will make up the difference to make the employee whole.

## *IX. HIRING, RESIGNATION AND LAYOFFS OF STAFF*

### *A. Hiring of Staff*

In the period of the selection of the founding staff of The UFT Elementary Charter School, the Board of Trustees will first select the School Leader of the school. The Board will appoint an Ad-Hoc Staffing Committee from its numbers and others it may co-opt for this purpose, and this Committee will (1) promulgate a posting which identifies qualifications for the position of School Leader, and lists objective criteria upon which the selection will be based; (2) advertise the position through this posting; (3) interview a number of qualified candidates for the position; and (4) recommend to the Board of Trustees their three top candidates in rank order. The full Board of Trustees will make the final selection of the School Leader.

Following the selection of the School Leader, a Staffing Committee will be constituted which shall consist of the School Leader and four Trustees, two of whom must be appointees of the President of the UFT. This Staffing Committee will (1) promulgate postings which identify the qualifications for the positions on staff, and list objective criteria upon which the selections will be based; (2) advertise the positions through these postings; (3) interview a number of qualified candidates for each position; and (4) make the decisions on whom should be offered a position (Article 18, G).

In subsequent years, the Staffing Committee shall consist of the School Leader, the UFT Chapter Leader, members of the UFT Chapter, members of the Parent Association and others, where appropriate. The majority of the members of this committee must be teacher members of the UFT Chapter, selected by that chapter; all UFT members of the Committee must have received a satisfactory rating in the previous year. This Staffing Committee will (1) promulgate postings which identify the qualifications for the positions on staff, and list objective criteria upon which the selections will be based; (2) advertise the positions through these postings; (3) interview a number of qualified candidates for each position; and (4) make the decisions on whom should be offered a position (Article 18, F).

In order to ensure that all hiring of staff at The UFT Elementary Charter School conforms to the highest standards of fairness and reasonableness, all UFT Elementary Charter School Staffing Committees will have several members who have participated in the UFT/DOE training sessions for the SBO Transfer and Staffing Plan, and all UFT Elementary Charter School Staffing Committees will conform to the rules and procedures outlined in the manual for that plan.

Unsuccessful candidates for positions at The UFT Elementary Charter School who are members of the UFT may challenge the basis for the Staffing Committee's decision through an expedited arbitration before an arbitrator with educational experience, jointly selected by the Trustees of The UFT Elementary Charter School and the President of the UFT.

#### *B. Full-Time and Part-Time Staff*

Most employees selected by The UFT Elementary Charter School Staffing Committees and hired by The UFT Elementary Charter School will be regular, full-time employees, and will be provided the full salary, benefits and working conditions described in this Personnel Handbook and provided to regular, full-time employees working in the same job categories in New York City public schools.

The UFT Elementary Charter School Staffing Committee may also select and The UFT Elementary Charter School may also hire part-time employees. Part-time employees serving in a regularly scheduled position will be eligible for full health insurance and welfare fund benefits if they are scheduled to work at least one-half of the regular full time schedule of employees in that job category. Part-time employees serving in a regularly scheduled position but scheduled to work less than one-half of the regular time schedule of employees in that job category will not receive health insurance and welfare fund benefits (Articles 7 and 13).

#### *C. Abandonment and Resignation of Position*

An employee of The UFT Elementary Charter School who is absent twenty (20) consecutive days without notice shall be deemed to have resigned, unless the employee can subsequently demonstrate that he or she had reasonable cause for failing to notify the school. Denial of an employee's claim of reasonable cause may be appealed to the Board of Trustees under the provisions for grievances set forth in this Personnel Policy (Article 5).

An employee of The UFT Elementary Charter School who wishes to resign his or her position must provide the school with a written and signed statement of that intention, and do so a minimum of two weeks prior to the desired date of resignation (Article 5).

Requests for the withdrawal of a resignation on the part of tenured staff shall be effectuated, subject to a medical examination to demonstrate fitness and the approval of the Board of Trustees, provided that the application of withdrawal is made within a five year period following the resignation (Article 5).

#### *D. Phasing Out and Elimination of Positions*

From time to time, it may become necessary to phase-out and/or eliminate, either temporarily or permanently, positions within The UFT Elementary Charter School. When such situations occur, the seniority rules for excessing and lay-off which would apply in New York City public schools under the terms of the collective bargaining agreements between the New York City Department of Education and the United

Federation of Teachers will be applied. When an employee of The UFT Elementary Charter School is laid-off and the school later restores the position in which he or she was working, that employee shall have the same “right of return” he or she would have had if the employee had been excessed or laid off from a New York City public school (Article 17).

#### *X. OBSERVATIONS, EVALUATIONS AND PERSONNEL FILES*

The UFT Elementary Charter School is committed to attracting and retaining an excellent professional staff. To this end, it will use a high-quality system of evaluation and performance review as part of a larger program of professional development which will be shaped by the collective voice and participation of the professional staff. Each individual employee will have meaningful choices in his or her professional growth, and method of evaluation and performance review, with an emphasis on collegial interaction and sharing. The range of individual options for evaluation will be those available to employees in the New York City public schools through the document, “Teaching for the Twenty-First Century,” which is attached to the collective bargaining agreements between the New York City Department of Education and the United Federation of Teachers (Article 8).

Under this system, evaluations and performance reviews are based on peer exchanges and assessments which link the school’s educational goals, the school’s professional development program and professional staff member’s performance, giving due recognition to the range of abilities and experiences among the different members of the school’s professional staff. These evaluations and performance reviews will have as their frame of reference the characteristics of quality professional teaching which are delineated in the preface to this personnel policy, “Teacher Professionalism at The UFT Elementary Charter School” (Article 8).

Every employee of The UFT Elementary Charter School will have an official personnel file, containing letters, memoranda and other documentation of their performance at the school. Every effort will be made to have the employee personnel file include commendations for work well done. No material may be placed in an employee’s official personnel file without the knowledge of that employee. An employee has the right to appeal, through the grievance process outlined in this Personnel Policy handbook and set forth in the collective bargaining agreements between the New York City Department of Education and the United Federation of Teachers, the placement of negative material in his or her file. Material which is found to be inaccurate or unfair will be removed from the file (Article 21).

The School Leader is the rating officer of The UFT Elementary Charter School, and has the ultimate authority and responsibility for rating all professional staff. Ratings will conform to the rules for ratings laid in the collective bargaining agreements between the New York City Department of Education and the United Federation of Teachers and NY State Education Law (Articles 8 and 21).

##### *A. Professional Career Continuum of The UFT Elementary Charter School*

All employees of The UFT Elementary Charter School appointed to a professional position in the school shall begin their career at the school as probationary employees.

An employee who has completed three years of satisfactory probationary service, and demonstrated through his or her annual performance reviews that he or she has a mastery of the professional knowledge and skills required of that position, will be awarded tenure. A new employee who left a tenured position in the New York City Department of Education to come work in The UFT Elementary Charter School may apply to have the last two years of probationary status waived after the completion of one year of satisfactory service at the school, and the Board of Trustees may waive up to two years of the requirement of satisfactory service for such teachers. A tenured employee of The UFT Elementary Charter School will be accorded rights and privileges analogous to those provided to tenured professional educators under the collective bargaining agreements between the New York City Department of Education and the United Federation of Teachers and Section 3020A of NY State Education Law (Article 21 G).

A tenured teacher who has demonstrated a record of exceptional teaching and strong educational leadership skills through his or her annual performance review, work with students and colleagues in the school community, and work in the professional educational community may be accorded the status of 'lead teacher' in The UFT Elementary Charter School. A 'lead teacher' will assume additional responsibilities of educational leadership in The UFT Elementary Charter School, and will be paid an additional stipend for the performance of those duties, equal to that provided to the position of lead teachers under the collective bargaining agreements between the New York City Department of Education and the United Federation of Teachers.

## *XI. DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES*

### *A. Summons*

An employee of The UFT Elementary Charter School may be summoned by the School Leader to a conference which may lead to disciplinary action. The employee is entitled to be accompanied by the UFT Chapter Leader or, at the discretion of the summoned employee, by another member of the UFT Chapter.

An employee of The UFT Elementary Charter School may be summoned by the Board of Trustees to a conference which may lead to disciplinary action. The employee is entitled to be accompanied by a representative of the UFT. When summoned to a conference by the Board of Trustees, the employee must receive a minimum of two days written notice and a written reason for the summons, except where an emergency situation exists or where considerations of confidentiality are involved.

### *B. Suspensions*

An employee of The UFT Elementary Charter School may be suspended pending the hearing and determination of charges against him and her, where the alleged misconduct is of a serious nature. Any employee so suspended shall receive full compensation pending the determination of the charges and the imposition of a penalty, except in cases where the alleged misconduct is so serious that the employee should be suspended without pay pending the outcome of the disciplinary process. The following are a list of examples of actions that would be considered to constitute a case of misconduct so serious that it could lead to suspension without pay: the felony

sale, possession or use of a controlled substance or drug paraphernalia as defined in Articles 220 or 221 of the penal code; any crime involving physical or sexual abuse of a minor or a student; any felony committed on school property or during the performance of school duties; any felony involving firearms as defined in Article 265 of the penal code. A finding of the Board of Trustees that there is sufficient probable cause to believe that an employee has committed an offense so serious as to merit suspension without pay may be appealed to a arbitrator jointly selected by the Board of Trustees and the UFT to review cases of 'probable cause.' The time limits for the adjudication of cases involving suspension without pay set forth in the in the collective bargaining agreements between the New York City Department of Education and the United Federation of Teachers shall be applied (Article 21).

### *C. Termination As A Result of Failure To Perform Satisfactorily Teaching Duties*

For probationary teachers, a year end evaluation rating of 'unsatisfactory' is notice of termination of service, effective the start of the next school year. A probationary teacher who is rated 'unsatisfactory' shall be entitled to have this rating reviewed by the Board of Trustees, in a process analogous to that employed for probationary teachers in the New York City Department of Education as set forth in the collective bargaining agreements between the New York City Department of Education and the United Federation of Teachers and Department of Education By-Laws. These procedures for review are as follows:

- A three-person committee of professional educators shall be established; one selected by the teacher, one selected by the Board of Trustees, and a third selected by both parties from a list agreed upon by the Board of Trustees and the UFT. This committee will hear the case of the School Leader on behalf of the 'unsatisfactory' rating and the case of the teacher for reversing the rating
- The committee will make an advisory recommendation to the Board of Trustees within twenty (20) days after the hearing
- The costs of the Board of Trustee's representative shall be paid by the Board; the costs for the UFT representative shall be paid by the teacher. The costs of the mutually selected member of the committee shall be shared by the Board of Trustees and the teacher
- Upon receiving the recommendation of the Committee, the Board of Trustees will make a final decision (Article 21)

A probationary employee terminated for specific cause prior to the issuance of a year end rating will have the right to appeal that decision to a Personnel and Grievance Committee of the Board of Trustees.

A year-end rating of 'unsatisfactory' for a tenured teacher is not an automatic notice of termination of service, but it may be used as documentation in proceedings to terminate services. A tenured teacher has the right to appeal a year-end 'unsatisfactory' rating to a Personnel and Grievance Committee of the Board of Trustees.

The termination of the services of a tenured teacher for failure to perform satisfactorily teaching duties or for other due cause will follow procedures analogous to those set forth for tenured teachers (3020A hearings, so named after the

authorizing section of law) in the collective bargaining agreements between the New York City Department of Education and the United Federation of Teachers and in New York State Education law. These procedures will employ the due process protections employed in 3020A hearings – they will be hearings before an independent arbitrator jointly selected by the Board of Trustees and the UFT, who will issue a decision which is binding on The UFT Elementary Charter School. The hearings will include a discovery process for both parties, a burden of proof on the part of The UFT Elementary Charter School, a right to cross-examine all witnesses by both parties and a right to mount a case in defense of the teacher. (Article 21, Section 3020A of New York State Education Law).

#### *D. Peer Intervention Programs*

In the spirit of progressive discipline and professional development, a tenured employee of The UFT Elementary Charter School who receives an ‘unsatisfactory’ rating for the first time may be offered an opportunity to enroll in a program equivalent to the Peer Intervention Program provided to tenured teachers in the New York City public schools under the terms and conditions of the collective bargaining agreements between the New York City Department of Education and the United Federation of Teachers. Participation in such programs should assist the teacher in addressing deficiencies in their professional skills and performance.

### *XII. DISPUTE RESOLUTION, APPEALS AND GRIEVANCES*

The UFT Elementary Charter School is committed to the organizational principles that, as a general rule, it is important to attempt to resolve complaints and problems within the school community, through informal, problem-solving discussions among the parties, and that formal complaint and grievance procedures should be employed only after attempts at informal resolutions and agreements have failed. Regular meetings between the School Leader and the UFT Chapter Committee, held at least once a month, and ad-hoc informal meetings, should provide a forum for hearing and resolving complaints and problems.

Where there are disputes within the school over educational issues (e.g., curriculum mandates, textbook selection, program offering and scheduling, student assessment, pedagogical and instructional strategy, technique and methodology) which have not been resolved informally, the UFT Chapter may seek ‘professional conciliation.’ This ‘professional conciliation’ process is analogous to the process set forth the collective bargaining agreements between the New York City Department of Education and the United Federation of Teachers. Upon receipt of a UFT Chapter request for professional conciliation, an independent educator trained in conflict resolution and jointly chosen by both the Board of Trustees and the UFT would meet with the School Leader and the UFT Chapter in an effort to find a mutually agreed upon, educationally satisfactory solution to the dispute (Article 24).

Where informal, problem-solving procedures have failed to resolve a complaint or a problem, a formal appeals or grievance process, analogous to the grievance set forth in the collective bargaining agreements between the New York City Department of Education and the United Federation of Teachers, would be used. A decision by the Board of Trustees, the School Leader or their agents which an employee believes to be

a violation of the policies contained in this Personnel Policy handbook could be appealed and grieved.

1. Step One of the grievance process would be with the School Leader. Upon receipt of a grievance, the School Leader must hold a hearing and deliver a written decision.
2. Step Two of the grievance process would be with the Personnel and Grievance Committee of the Board of Trustees. Upon receipt of an appeal of a Step One decision, the Chair of that Committee must hold a hearing and deliver a written decision.
3. Step Three of the grievance process would be with an independent arbitrator, who would hold a hearing and issue a binding ruling.

As with the grievance process in the collective bargaining agreements between the New York City Department of Education and the United Federation of Teachers, the decisions to file grievances and appeals belongs to the individual grievant[s] at Steps One and Two and to the UFT at Step Three.

### *XIII. CHAPTER LEADER TIME*

In the event that teachers elect to be represented by the United Federation of Teachers, in the first and second year of The UFT Elementary Charter School the UFT Chapter Leader will be relieved of professional duties to conduct official UFT Chapter business. Commencing the third year of the school, the UFT Chapter Leader will be relieved of one teaching period to conduct official UFT Chapter business.