

# **The Struggle for our Public Schools and Against the Charter Threat The Case of New Rochelle**



**The New Rochelle Community Committee for our Public Schools  
January 30, 2025**

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# THE COMMUNITY COMMITTEE FOR OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS



## **The New Rochelle Community Committee for our Public Schools**

In October, New Rochelle parents, residents, and other stakeholders reeled from the shock that the Charter Schools Committee of the Board of Trustees of the State University of New York had approved the proposal to establish Capital Preparatory Charter School in New Rochelle. Many heard the news from Dr. Corey W. Reynolds, Superintendent of Schools, the City School District of New Rochelle who sent a letter to the New Rochelle school community on 11 October 2024.<sup>1</sup>

Shortly thereafter, a group of concerned parents, parent-leaders, teachers, and residents formed the New Rochelle Community Committee for our Public Schools.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nred.org/page/proposed-charter-school>

They are committed, as are educators, parents, and students across the country, to the struggle “to save the precious, delicate, deeply flawed public in public education.”<sup>2</sup>

The New Rochelle Committee first meeting was held on Tuesday, 28 October 2024. The two co-chairs held a planning meeting one week earlier on Tuesday, 22 October 2024.

The members of the New Rochelle Committee are:

- Co-Chair Rosa Rivera-McCutchen, Ph.D., parent of children in New Rochelle public schools; educator; Professor, School of Education, CUNY’s Hunter College and the CUNY Graduate Center.
- Co-Chair Alisse Waterston, Ph.D., parent and grandparent of children who attended/are attending the New Rochelle public schools; educator; Presidential Scholar and Professor Emerita of Anthropology, CUNY’s John Jay College of Criminal Justice.
- Mary Claire Breslin, educator; New Rochelle’s Albert Leonard Middle School teacher; President, New Rochelle FUSE.
- Aisha Cook, parent and grandparent of children who attended/are attending the New Rochelle public schools; educator; New Rochelle’s Columbus Elementary School teacher; Vice President, Pedagogic Staff, New Rochelle FUSE; Incoming President, NAACP New Rochelle.
- Leah Rogove, parent of children who attend the New Rochelle public schools; PTA Council President.
- Jeffrey E. Segall, Ph.D., concerned resident whose children graduated from the New Rochelle public schools.
- Emma Silva, parent of children who attend the New Rochelle public schools; President of the Columbus School PTA; member, New Rochelle Hispanic American Advisory Council.
- Elizabeth Zuckerman, parent of children who attend the New Rochelle public schools; educator, School Counselor, Harry S. Truman Public High School, Bronx.

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<sup>2</sup> Fabricant, Michael and Michelle Fine. *Charter Schools and the Corporate Makeover of Public Education*. New York: Teachers College Press, 2012: (dedication page)

As a first step, the New Rochelle Committee would conduct research to know:

- How the SUNY Charter Schools Committee came to its unanimous decision to allow Capital Prep to open a charter school in New Rochelle especially considering the enormous and outspoken objections from stakeholders across New Rochelle (residents, parents, teachers, administrators, political leaders).
- What claims Capital Prep made in its application to the SUNY Charter Schools Institute.
- What Capital Prep promised in its application to the SUNY Charter Schools Institute.
- How Capital Prep actually performs based on qualitative and quantitative indicators.
- How Capital Prep compares on key indicators with students in New York State and in New Rochelle.
- How and why charter schools have grown in number in the United States overall.

The result of the research effort is this report, *The Struggle for our Public Schools and Against the Charter Threat*, researched and authored by Professor Alisse Waterston.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## **The Struggle for our Public Schools and Against the Charter Threat**

*The Struggle for Our Public Schools and Against the Charter Threat* offers the result of a deep dive into the application submitted by Capital Preparatory Charter Schools New York (CPCSNY; hereafter “Capital Prep”) to the SUNY Charter Schools Institute for the proposed charter named Capital Preparatory Charter School New Rochelle (“Capital Prep New Rochelle”).

The report is also based on a review of scholarly research as well as policy reports, news articles, and primary data provided by government sources, including but not limited to the New York State Education Department (NYSED). It is also based on documents received via our FOIL (Freedom of Information Law) request from the SUNY Charter Schools Institute.

The literature shows a deeply troubling and growing trend that has accelerated in recent years: public education is under dire threat in the United States. This trend parallels the accelerated move towards privatization whereby community services and the resources that support them are transferred from public to private control.

Charter schools threaten public education and contribute to the ongoing assault of public education in this country. As corporate charters, they drain resources from our public schools, taking vital school district funding while under-enrolling English Language Learners, students with disabilities, and students most vulnerable to falling behind. It is an industry devoid of transparency and accountability. This is not opinion. It is a statement of fact.

“Choice” is a main narrative trope invoked by the charter school industry. The industry invokes the language of “choice” to lure parents into believing that sending their children to charter schools over the traditional public schools is a desirable option.

As this report reveals, Capital Prep’s narrative in justifying bringing a charter school to New Rochelle fits with the trends and tropes commonly propagated by charter school senior executives, and the managers and administrators who report to them. At the core, they inflate their own successes while disparaging the public schools, and present unsubstantiated, distorted and irrelevant claims to “prove” the need for their charter school and they do so in the name of “choice.”

This report offers a detailed, close examination of the narrative, specific claims, and promises submitted by Capital Prep.

The findings reveal that Capital Prep put forth unsubstantiated and false claims in its application to the SUNY Charter Schools Institute.

Their assertion that the proposed charter school will serve the underserved, increase graduation rates, offer better curricular and extra-curricular offerings than are already provided in New Rochelle are simply untrue. Capital Prep makes promises it is unlikely to fulfill, while disrupting children's lives and disappointing parents in the process.

On the basis of Capital Prep's history and poor performance, it is clear that Capital Prep New Rochelle does not have the expertise, capacity, skills, resources, equipment, space, and qualified personnel to provide the wonderful education it promises to deliver.

In contrast, the New Rochelle Public School District has the infrastructure, the expertise, the capacity, the skills, resources, equipment, space, and qualified personnel to serve New Rochelle students, even as there is always room for improvement.

Indeed, in its application, even Capital Prep acknowledges that "...the City School District of New Rochelle often is recognized as having effective programs and results."

Capital Prep's proposal reveals the absurd redundancy of starting a school from scratch in in the City of New Rochelle. An instance of wasteful duplication of effort, the proposed Capital Prep New Rochelle charter school would be worthy of the Golden Fleece Award, bestowed upon those individuals and entities that squander public money.

It is incomprehensible that even one penny of public taxpayer money would be funneled to Capital Preparatory Schools, Incorporated.

The results of our research are summarized in this executive summary, supported by detailed evidence, the sources for which are also provided. The summary does not capture the full story; we urge readers to study the full report.

The full report is organized into 7 chapters, as follows:

1. **New Rochelle Against the Charter Threat:** This chapter provides a detailed account of the widespread opposition to the proposed Capital Prep New Rochelle charter school from a diverse cross-section of the community. The opposition includes students, former students, parents, residents, teachers, administrators, leaders of the New Rochelle PTA Council, all members of the Board of Education, and important elected local and state political leaders.

The voices of opposition, presented at a public forum, a signed petition and in thousands of letters, expressed specific concerns about the negative impact of charter schools in general and of Capital Prep in particular, emphasized the strengths of New Rochelle's public schools, and stressed the need to work and advocate within the school system to address any identified gaps.

Despite overwhelming community opposition, the Institute's Charter Schools Committee, mischaracterizing this feedback as mere "complaints," failed to adequately consider community opposition in their decision to approve Capital Prep New Rochelle.

2. **Capital Prep: Assertions and Claims:** This chapter evaluates the claims made by Capital Preparatory Charter Schools (Capital Prep) in their 1,539 page application to establish a charter school in New Rochelle. A significant portion of the application—675 pages (43%)—is dedicated to Capital Prep claims that: 1) they conducted extensive outreach; 2) there was strong interest and demand for the charter school in New Rochelle; and 3) "positive interactions" vastly outnumbered any negative responses to the proposed charter school.

Based on Capital Prep's own submitted evidence, our findings show the outreach efforts to be superficial and that they failed to demonstrate genuine community interest. Despite Capital Prep's claims of extensive community engagement, actual outreach appeared minimal, targeting a narrow segment of the population. Moreover, their outreach failed to include key stakeholders such as the public school superintendent, Board of Education members, and secular community groups, among others.

The data (attendance at "public events" most held in churches; social media metrics) show limited interest and support. Their use of manipulative framing and flawed methods to capture "interest" led to inflated claims. Letters of support (in the application and

those sent to the SUNY Charter Schools Institute, received via FOIL) are few in number, with evidence that a large proportion came from letter writers outside of New Rochelle.

3. **The Case Against Charter Schools:** This chapter offers a brief history of the charter school movement, revealing a poor and problematic record, with dangerous implications for public education, for democratic values, and for democracy itself.

On at least seven indicators, the record on charter schools shows: 1) inconsistent outcomes in terms of student academic performance; 2) distorted metrics that obscure student underperformance; 3) patterns of selective enrollment practices (push-out practices; excluding students with greater needs, creating a two-tiered system where public schools accommodate all students, including students with disabilities and English Language learners, while charters disproportionately serve lower-need populations); 4) exacerbating segregation (including stratification within racialized groups, with higher-achieving students concentrated in charter schools); 5) negative impact on public resources (diverting significant funding from public schools, leaving public schools to serve higher-need populations with diminished resources); 6) lack of transparency and accountability (operating under private management not accountable to the local community and taxpayers; opaque and questionable self-dealing practices; and 7) high rates of teacher turnover and problematic labor practices (use of inexperienced teachers; union opposition).

This record shows charter schools are a direct threat to foundational American values tied to public education and affirms that the solution to educational inequities lies in strengthening public education, the most democratic and inclusive system for delivering quality education.

4. **The Case Against Capital Prep New Rochelle: Promises, Promises:** This chapter provides a detailed look at Capital Preparatory Schools, Inc. ("Capital Prep"), a charter management company, which proposes Capital Prep New Rochelle in partnership with Reverend David Holder and his church in New Rochelle. This section examines Capital Prep's reputation, the charter schools it operates, and, importantly, it provides comparative student academic performance data at Capital Prep's schools.

The results show that Capital Prep's claims of success, self-described as "impressive," "spectacular," and "remarkable," are unfounded and unsubstantiated by actual data. Capital Prep markets itself as a high-achieving network with a focus on college preparedness; our findings reveal discrepancies in their claims. An example is their oft publicized claim that "100% of Capital Prep graduates have been accepted into four-year colleges," which is unverifiable and misleading considering Capital Prep's attrition rates means struggling students are excluded from this statistic.

Capital Prep's charter schools show underwhelming academic outcomes; at best their outcomes are mediocre. Based on New York State Education Department (NYSED) data, Capital Prep's Harlem and Bronx charter schools underperform on key metrics, such as state standardized tests and Regents exam proficiency. Their academic performance is below state averages in most areas. Moreover, New Rochelle public schools overall outperform Capital Prep on standardized tests, and shows higher graduation rates than Capital Prep (Capital Prep Harlem has a four-year graduation rate of only 57%, well below New Rochelle High School's 83%).

In terms of reputation, Capital Prep has a track record of dysfunction (administrative instability, staffing issues, and chaotic school environment) and connection to scandal. In addition, Capital Prep's financial model involves diverting public funds to private management with limited oversight. Previous reports of self-dealing and opaque practices at Capital Prep in Connecticut amplify concerns. In terms of accountability, Capital Prep is governed by a private Board of Trustees. Its meetings are private. In terms of teacher qualifications and stability, Capital Prep schools have a history of high teacher turnover, further reducing educational stability.

5. **Promises versus Reality:** This chapter examines the claims made by Capital Prep in their application for a New Rochelle charter school and contrasts them with the realities of their operations and practices. The examination underscores a stark gap between Capital Prep's promises and its ability to deliver on those promises. The findings include but are not limited to underperformance, lack of transparency, conflicts of interest, and community opposition, reflecting problems with charter schools in general, documented over time by scholarly research.

This section of the report offers a breakdown of the following problem areas with Capital Prep:

- **Facility Issues:**

- Capital Prep promised to house the school at a building owned by the New York Covenant Church, affiliated with co-applicant Reverend David Holder. The proposed rent for the site at 500 Main Street, \$100,000 per year, is nonbinding and subject to change, raising questions about financial transparency and stability.
- Zoning Issues: The building is zoned for a Sunday school, not a K-12 institution, making it unsuitable for the proposed charter school.
- Construction Status: The building was still under construction as of the first days of 2025, further questioning its viability as a school site.
- Potential Conflicts of Interest: The financial relationship between the church and the school raises concerns about self-dealing, with potential profit-making from public funds.

- **Accountability Issues:**

- The proposed Board of Trustees is privately appointed and not accountable to the New Rochelle community.
- Board meetings are closed to the public, unlike the publicly elected and transparent New Rochelle Board of Education.
- Most board members have minimal or no ties to New Rochelle and are associated with other Capital Prep schools or unrelated enterprises.
- Notable affiliations include ties to Combs Enterprises, linked to Sean "Diddy" Combs, whose controversies cast further doubts on the organization's governance.

- **Teacher Qualifications and Retention Issues:**

- Capital Prep leverages NYSED's looser certification requirements for charter schools, potentially employing uncertified teachers to fill roles.
- High Turnover Rates: Existing Capital Prep schools are plagued by teacher instability, undermining educational quality and consistency.
- Competitive Challenges: Capital Prep's proposed teacher salaries are lower than those in New Rochelle public schools, making it difficult to attract and retain qualified educators, the impact of which negatively impacts children and their educations.

- **Student Outcome Issues:**

- Given Capital Prep's record of poor to mediocre achievement outcomes, it is highly likely that students at Capital Prep New Rochelle will fare no better, leading to parent and student disappointment (at best) and terrible disruption to student education.
- Given Capital Prep's record of high rates of student attrition, it is likely that Capital Prep New Rochelle will engage in selective enrollment practices and push-out practices that not only inflate performance metrics but fail to serve the "underserved" as they promise.

- **Community Engagement and Support Issues:**

- Given Capital Prep's lack of community engagement and its lack of community support (as previously documented), Capital Prep New Rochelle will exacerbate divisions and inequities while diverting precious resources from the public schools and the public sector.

- **Costs and Resource Allocation Issues:**

- The introduction of a charter school would divert funding from public schools, negatively impacting resources available for the majority of students in the district.
- Duplicative Efforts: The charter school offers no clear advantage over the existing public school system, making its establishment redundant and wasteful.

## 6. **Conduct Unbecoming: The SUNY Charter Schools Committee:**

This chapter examines the role and actions of the SUNY Charter Schools Institute's Charter Schools Committee of the Board of Trustees of the State University of New York. The focus here is on the Charter Schools Committee's oversight, biases, and decision-making regarding the Capital Prep New Rochelle charter school proposal. The Charter Schools Committee is tasked with reviewing and approving charter school applications in New York State. It serves as a gatekeeper for ensuring that proposed charter schools meet the necessary legal, educational, and operational standards.

Of significant concern is the questionable handling of evidence by the Charter Schools Committee. It failed to scrutinize the flawed and contradictory data presented in Capital Prep's application in all areas (from community demand for a charter school to Capital Prep's performance metrics). It accepted unsubstantiated claims without question. It failed to question Capital Prep's disparaging, negative depictions of the New Rochelle public schools. Despite clear issues with Capital Prep's outreach efforts, facility plans, and academic track record, the Charter Schools Committee did not rigorously challenge these deficiencies. Instead, the Charter Schools Committee appeared lenient in its evaluation, not holding Capital Prep and its network to the higher accountability standards required by New York State law.

The Charter Schools Committee failed to give serious consideration to stakeholder's concerns in New Rochelle who oppose the charter school. It showed clear bias in mischaracterizing the letters of opposition (referring to them as "complaints"), and demonstrated preference for charter advocates. It failed to prioritize the

community's voice, as required under New York State law for charter school approvals. It even ignored the public statements of opposition by important political leaders, including New York State Senator Shelley Mayer who chairs the NY State's Education Committee.

Despite the critical problems with Capital Prep New Rochelle's proposal and Capital Prep's performance history, the Charter Schools Committee voted unanimously in favor of the application.

## **7. Addressing Gaps: Support New Rochelle Public Schools**

This report reveals what is at stake for our precious public schools in New Rochelle amid the charter school threat. The New Rochelle Community Committee for our Public Schools is committed to resist this threat, and to work alongside the public schools and the community to thoughtfully address identified gaps in specific ways.

The concluding chapter describes the strengths of the existing public school system in New Rochelle, which serves nearly 10,000 students across diverse socioeconomic, ethnic, racial, and cultural backgrounds. New Rochelle public schools offer a range of educational and extracurricular experiences for students, and offer inclusive services to all students, including those with disabilities and English language learners (ELL), without exclusionary practices seen in some charter schools.

Like democracy itself, New Rochelle public schools are not perfect even as they strive to be. The goal of the New Rochelle Public Schools is to provide all the students in the district with a high-quality education, an enormous range of possible extra-curricular activities and experiences, and the tailored social support services they need. In order to address identified gaps and inequities in serving those students and their families who feel underserved, the way forward is to strengthen our public schools, not weaken them.

We conclude with Dr. Carla Woolbright wise words: "Let's come together to strengthen our current public educational system, not decimate it by diverting funds away from it. We all know that it takes a village. We should combine our efforts and focus on making educational opportunities better for all our children and address the root causes of disparities. There is no one-size-fits-all quick fix, but if we approach remedies from a holistic and mindful approach, no doubt we will be successful."

## **New Rochelle Against the Charter School: A Community Objects**

Public Hearing on Proposed Charter School: 07/30/2024



New Rochelle High School graduate Kamara St. Paul describing the quality education she received throughout her New Rochelle public school career, and stating her opposition to Capital Prep’s application.  
30 July 2024

It was a packed New Rochelle High School auditorium on 30 July 2024—mid-summer—a difficult time to gather a crowd. Even so, the people showed up at the public hearing on the proposed “Capital Prep” charter school. The overwhelming majority of public speakers stood committed and adamant in their position *against* the proposal. They gave eloquent testimony, explaining their opposition to a charter school in New Rochelle by Capital Prep or by any other organization.

The public hearing was recorded; speakers can be seen and heard:  
<https://www.youtube.com/live/qXaGQv-D6qE?si=3AnsYWCsHZ38-Jiz>

## Voices of the Community

***We write to express our opposition to Capital Preparatory's application to the SUNY Charter Institute to establish a new charter school in New Rochelle. Our review of the application indicates that Capital Prep falls short in several ways that the SUNY Charter Institute and the Board of Trustees are expressly required to consider by law, and as such should not be approved to operate a charter in New Rochelle.***

**—New York State Senator Shelley B. Mayer, District 37;  
New York State Senator Nathalia Fernandez, District 34;  
New York State Assembly Member Amy Paulin, District 88; and  
New York State Assembly Member Steve Otis, District 92.**

Those who spoke at the public forum are New Rochelle stakeholders: parents, students, residents, teachers, school administrators, community advocates, and local and state political leaders.

Those in opposition to the charter school included:

New York State Senator Shelley Mayer, District 37, who also serves as Chair of the New York State Education Committee.

Yadira Ramos-Herbert who is Mayor of New Rochelle and lives in New Rochelle.

Minister Mark McClean who lives and works in New Rochelle, is President of the New Rochelle branch of the NAACP, and President of the Inter-Faith Coalition of New Rochelle.

Aisha Cook who lives and works in New Rochelle, has a grandchild in New Rochelle's Webster Elementary School, and is a teacher at New Rochelle's Columbus Elementary School who is also 1st Vice President and Education Chair of the New Rochelle branch of the NAACP and its incoming President.

Rosa Rivera-McCutchen who lives in New Rochelle and has children in New Rochelle schools and is Professor of Education Leadership at CUNY's Hunter College.

Mary Claire Breslin, a teacher at New Rochelle's Albert Leonard Middle School, and President of the Federation of United School Employees.

Mary Monton and Leah Rogove who live and work in New Rochelle. have children in the New Rochelle schools and are New Rochelle's PTA Council leadership.

President William Iannuzzi, President of the New Rochelle Board of Education (BoE) who is also Chief Program Officer of the Boys & Girls Club of New Rochelle.

BoE Vice President Adina Berrios Brooks who lives in New Rochelle, has a child in New Rochelle schools, and is Chief of Staff to the Provost, Columbia University.

BOE Second Vice President Makeda Lewis who lives in New Rochelle, and is Associate Director of Diversity Recruitment for the NYC Board of Education.

BoE member Katie Castellano Minaya who lives in New Rochelle, has children in New Rochelle schools, and is also Principal of Ossining's public Roosevelt Elementary.

BoE member Roshanie Ross, with three children in New Rochelle schools.

BoE member Don Vega, parent of a special ed student who attended the New Rochelle public schools.

BoE member Valarie D. Williams, a lifelong educator with the Greenburgh school district.

Valerie Cadet Simpkins, New Rochelle High School Assistant Principal who has children in the New Rochelle public schools.

Dr. Corey W. Reynolds, New Rochelle's Superintendent of Schools.

...And many more....

In fact, 40 speakers stood up to oppose the charter school; four spoke in favor. Among those in favor, two had previously been unsuccessful candidates for the New Rochelle Board of Education having been turned down by voters; one lives outside of New Rochelle; and one was rudely disruptive, requiring escort out of the forum.

The voices of opposition did not begin or end on the night of 30 July. *Thousands* of New Rochelle residents and stakeholders expressed opposition to the charter school. New Rochelle School's Superintendent Corey W. Reynolds wrote in a letter to the community:

Nearly 4,000 communiques from community members, organizations, and elected officials stood with us in opposing the proposed charter school in our New Rochelle. Your petitions, letters, phone calls, emails, and testimony at our public hearing demonstrated our community's overwhelming commitment to preserving the integrity of our school district.<sup>3</sup>

In its "Summary of Findings and Recommendations: Proposal to Grant Capital Prep Charter Schools NY the Authority to Operate Capital Preparatory Charter School New Rochelle," the SUNY Charter Schools Institute states that it "received approximately 1,870 mailed letters in opposition to the [charter] school."<sup>4</sup>

We received copies of these letters via a FOIL application. It is notable that the SUNY Charter Schools Institute named the 2,705 page pdf with those 1870 letters, "New Rochelle Mailed *Complaints*," which they are not (emphasis ours). They are letters of opposition. Based on the content of the redacted letters, all are from stakeholders in New Rochelle including parents and grandparents with students in the public schools or who have

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.nred.org/page/proposed-charter-school>

<sup>4</sup> "Summary of Findings and Recommendations"  
<https://www.suny.edu/about/leadership/board-of-trustees/meetings/webcastdocs/CapPrepNewRochelleSOF.pdf>

graduated, graduates of the New Rochelle public school, and members of the New Rochelle Federation of United School Employees, and residents.

In addition to the 1870 resident/stakeholder letters, we received from the SUNY Charter Schools Institute four letters they named "District Comments Redacted." These four District letter writers are unanimous in their opposition to the charter school (we have the unredacted letters):

1. Corey W. Reynolds, Superintendent of Schools, City School District of New Rochelle
2. Makeda Lewis, Second Vice President, City School District of New Rochelle
3. Melissa A. Passarelli and six additional signatories, the Administrative and Supervisory Unit, The City School District of New Rochelle
4. William Iannuzzi, President of the New Rochelle Board of Education, CPO of the Boys & Girls Club of New Rochelle, graduate of New Rochelle High School

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We reviewed every letter provided to us via our FOIL request and discovered that there are *additional letters of opposition, missing from the letters delivered* from the SUNY Charter Schools Institute.

Among the letters the SUNY Charter Schools Institute does not include are those from the following residents that we know submitted (there may be more we don't know about):

1. Dana Asher
2. Lyndsey Blessing
3. Frank Borchetta
4. Michael Cammer
5. Dianne Cox, Ph.D.
6. Natasha Fapohunda

7. Kristine Ferreira
8. Howard Horowitz
9. Marianne Makman, MD
10. Daniel Miller
11. James Mumm
12. Julia Muggia Ochs
13. Alison Rivers, Ph.D.
14. Raya Salter
15. Laura Smykla
16. Katherine Taboada
17. Alisse Waterston, Ph.D.
18. William Weisner
19. Jason Wirchin
20. Carla H. Woolbright, Ed.D
21. Michael Yellin
22. Elizabeth Zuckerman
23. Matthew Zuckerman
24. Tomara P. Young, OD

Among the missing letters are those from the following teachers in the New Rochelle school district that we know submitted:

25. Dana Eliasophe
26. Alison Fricke
27. Christoper Keriazis
28. Mariam Edelson
29. Angeline Obligado
30. Kelsey Rogalewicz
31. Renee Wendling

Among the missing letters are those from the following education stakeholders, most who are affiliated with the New Rochelle school district:

32. Marc P. Baiocco, Ed.D., President, on behalf of the Lower Hudson Council of School Superintendents
33. The Lower Hudson Education Coalition
34. Mary Breslin, President, The New Rochelle Federation of United School Employees (New Rochelle FUSE)
35. Yadira Ramos-Herbert, Mayor, City of New Rochelle
36. Aisha Cook, Education Chair and Incoming President, NAACP of New Rochelle; teacher at Columbus school and resident of New Rochelle
37. Shelley B. Mayer, New York State Senator, District 37
38. Nathalia Fernandez, New York State Senator, District 34
39. Amy Paulin, New York State Assembly Member, District 88
40. Steve Otis, New York State Assembly Member, District 91
41. Steven J. Maloney, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools, Bay Shore Union Free School District
42. Ray Sanchez, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools, Public Schools of the Tarrytowns

It is important to note that the New Rochelle Board of Education is unanimous in its opposition to the charter school. This means that each member is on public record in declaring their opposition.

### §§§

From the SUNY Charter Schools Institute, we received copies of letters of support *for* the charter school via our FOIL application. There were 27 letters, each named "Support for Capital Prep New Rochelle" (as compared to the label "New Rochelle Mailed Complaints," a naming convention that reveals the Institute's bias).

Of the 27 "letters of support," only 12 writers indicate they are residents of New Rochelle. Among the remaining 15, the letter writers are residents of states such as Maryland and Texas, and one is from Republican Congressman Anthony Esposito of Garden City, New York! Of the two letter writers from Texas, one quotes

the Scripture after their (redacted) signature line: "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

### §§§

More on the opposition: Over 1700 people are named signatories of a petition titled, "Oppose the Proposed Charter School in New Rochelle," issued by the New Rochelle PTA Council via Change.Org. Seven hundred and forty two (742; 42%) of the signatories are from people who live New Rochelle. The majority of the remaining signatories are residents of neighboring towns (Bronxville, Eastchester, Hastings-on-Hudson, Mt. Vernon, Larchmont, Mamaroneck, Scarsdale, Tuckahoe, Yonkers, and White Plains, with some from the Bronx and Manhattan). A very few signatories are from out of the area.

These voices—speakers, letter writers, petition signers, representatives of public and community based institutions—are identified by name.

All these documents were delivered to the SUNY Charter Schools Institute and its Charter Schools Committee members who are charged with giving serious consideration to community positions before deciding upon the Capital Prep application.

Did they?

# Capital Prep: Assertions and Claims

**2024 TRANSMITTAL AND SUMMARY FORM**

Please refer to the 2024 SUNY Request for Proposals document available at <https://www.newyorkcharters.org/resource-center/applicants/> when completing this form. Contact [charter.newapp@suny.edu](mailto:charter.newapp@suny.edu) with any questions.

**Proposed School Information**  
(Note: If proposing multiple schools, separate Transmittals is required for each one)

Propose Charter School Name: Capital Preparatory Charter School New Rochelle  
 Education Corporation Name (if different than proposed charter school name): Capital Prep Charter Schools NY  
 Ed. Corp Status:  District  SUNY Ed Corp/Charter School  
 Proposed Opening Date (Month/Year): August 2025 School District of Location (or NYC CSD): New Rochelle

| Proposed Grades to be Served and Enrollment |           |            | Proposed Affiliations (if applicable)   |                       |
|---|-----------|------------|---|-----------------------|
| Charter Year                                | Grades    | Enrollment | Charter Management Organization ("CMO"):  | Partner Organization: |
| Year 1                                      | K, 6-7    | 150        | Capital Preparatory Schools   |                       |
| Year 2                                      | K-1, 6-8  | 240        | CMO Contact Info (Name, Phone):   |                       |
| Year 3                                      | K-2, 6-9  | 360        | Partner Contact Info (Name, Phone):   |                       |
| Year 4                                      | K-3, 6-10 | 480        | NOTE: A CMO provides a majority of educational management services at a school, a partner organization is a non-profit entity that provides space or support to the school but it does not provide a majority of educational management services. |                       |
| Year 5                                      | K-4, 6-11 | 600        |   |                       |

**Lead Applicant(s) Contact Information**

Lead Applicant Name: Rev. Dr. David Holder  
 Applicant is a (check all that apply):  Parent  Teacher  School Administrator  District Resid.  SUNY Ed Corp/Charter School  
 Organization Name (if applicable):  
 Applicant Mailing Address:  
 Phone Number (direct line): Secondary Phone Number: Email Address:

Secondary Applicant Name (if applicable): Baye Adofo-Wilson, Esq, Board Chair CPCSNY  
 Applicant is a (check all that apply):  Parent  Teacher  School Administrator  District Resid.  NY Ed Corp/Charter School  
 Organization Name (if applicable): Capital Prep Charter Schools NY  
 Applicant Mailing Address:  
 Phone Number (direct line): Secondary Phone Number: Email Address:

Capital Preparatory Charter Grades Schools New York (CPCSNY) submitted a 1539 page application to the SUNY Charter Schools Institute’s Charter Schools Committee, chaired by personal injury attorney Joseph W. Belluck.<sup>5</sup>

The application was for the proposed charter school named Capital Preparatory Charter School New Rochelle (“Capital Prep New Rochelle”). The co-applicants were Rev. Dr. David Holder and Baye Adofo-Wilson, Esq, Board Chair, CPCSNY (p.1).

The applicants state that the proposal “reflects” a partnership between Capital Preparatory Schools, Inc. (“Capital Prep”), a charter management company and a local founding team from New Rochelle (p. 10).

<sup>5</sup> The application is available on this link by scrolling down the page to “2024 Proposals.” The second proposal is “Capital Preparatory Charter School New Rochelle”: <https://www.newyorkcharters.org/request-for-proposals/2024-request-for-proposals-outside-nyc-cycle/> Note: it is nearly impossible to find this on the SUNY Charter Schools Institute website (<https://www.newyorkcharters.org/>)

Of the 1500+ page application, 675 pages (43%) were devoted to the matters of “outreach,” “interest,” and “demand”; that is, the extent of their efforts to reach out to stakeholders in New Rochelle, the level of interest indicated by New Rochelle residents and stakeholders, and the extent of demand by parents and guardians of school-age children for the charter school.

Capital Prep claims they engaged in successful outreach, and that there is strong interest in *and* demand for the charter school in New Rochelle.

A close look at the “evidence” submitted by Capital Prep reveals their assertions and claims rest on deeply shaky ground.

This includes their unsubstantiated statement that they “occasionally encountered residents who were unsure or unsupportive, but these interactions were vastly outnumbered by positive interactions” (p. 64). If this were true, where is the evidence?

Here, we document and question the descriptions and claims made in the application beginning with their “public events.” In the words of the applicants, “Throughout the spring, multiple events were held, with both in-person and virtual options, to educate the community about the Capital Prep New Rochelle proposal and accept feedback and community input....Multiple events were held in April and May to ensure the community was well informed regarding the intent to apply in June and to be sure residents had many opportunities to share comments and suggestions. *These events were wonderful opportunities to engage in robust conversations and answer questions*” (p. 62; emphasis ours).

The applicants provide some information on the events, including dates held and venues (pp. 77-83). There are several issues with the information provided, which are identified alongside each event presented in the application. It is important to note that except one in-person location (held in a restaurant) and one online event, all the

events were held in churches. Clearly, churches are only one “community” venue. Where are the others? Where are the secular community venues?

Overall, the applicants provide no information about the number of people who attended each of these events and, importantly, among those who did attend, how many were unique visitors. In addition, there is no indication whether or not attendees are affiliated with Capital Prep or with the New York Covenant Church (the two organizational applicants).

### **Specific Events**

- Held at New York Covenant Church in Bronxville, NY on April 21, 2024. There seem to have been 3 attendees. Their names are redacted on the sign-in sheet so there is no way to know who they are and whether or not they are affiliates of the applicants. A photograph indicates the venue was empty (p. 76).
- Held on zoom, April 25, 2024: On a reporting table with headings, it appears there were 27 attendees. Their names are redacted; there is no way to know whether or not they are affiliates of the applicants (p. 77).<sup>6</sup>

In the second to last column of the table, there is a cut off question that reads, “Are you interested in en...” (see p. 77). Under that column, 18 of what appears to be 27 attendees, answered “No.” Only one answered “Yes,” and the remaining either wrote N/A (2 people); left it blank (2), wrote “I have no school age kids” (1); “would like to learn more” (1), wrote “5<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>” (1); or wrote “don’t know” (1).

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<sup>6</sup> Aisha Cook attended the zoom meeting and reports, “[Nearly all if not] all the comments were in opposition to the charter school.”

*What was the complete question? Why is it cut off? Given the responses, is it reasonable to assume the whole question was, "Are you interested in enrolling a child in the charter school?" If this is so, two out of three are not interested in enrolling a child in the charter school.*

- Held at New Union Church of New Rochelle, May 10. There seem to have been 4 attendees. Their names are redacted on the sign-in sheet. In response to the statement in column 3, "I have a student who will be able to attend Capital Preparatory New Rochelle," all 4 wrote "No" (p. 78).
- Held at St. Catherine AME Zion Church, "Pastor's Breakfast," May 14. The number and names of the attendees are redacted. Moreover, why does this event count as a public event? (p. 79).
- Held again at New Union Church of New Rochelle, May 17. There seem to have been 2 attendees. Their names are redacted on the sign-in sheet, and they provide no other information in the columns. The applicants included a photograph that shows what might be 6 people. Who are they? How many are from Capital Prep/New York Covenant Church, the applicants? (p. 80).
- Held again at New Union Church of New Rochelle, May 20. There may have been 3 attendees. Names are redacted. The heading in Column 3 states, "I have a student who will be able to attend Capital Charter New Rochelle. Please indicate yes or no." One person responded, writing "Yes." In column 4, they wrote, "1st, 11th" in response to the heading, "If you answered yes, please indicate what grade your student is currently in" (p. 81).
- Held at SuggarPlums, a restaurant in New Rochelle., May 22. It is possible there were 3 attendees. Their names are redacted from the sign-in sheet and they provide no other information in the columns.

The applicants included a photograph that shows what might be 4 people (2 of the 4 appear to be school-aged children). Who are they? How many are from Capital Prep/New York Covenant Church, the applicants? (p. 82).<sup>7</sup>

- Held at New Union Church of New Rochelle, May 24. There is no sign up sheet provided. Is it correct to assume there were no attendees? (p. 83).

Taken together, these “public” events indicate the applicants made little effort to reach out to the larger New Rochelle community. The fact is there was minimal attendance (none in some cases) and, in the case of the online event, the vast majority of attendees seemed to indicate no interest in sending their children to the charter school.

This is in contrast to the large number of people who attended the public forum at New Rochelle High School on July 30.

### §§§

There is more. In a section titled “Newsletters Summary,” Capital Prep states they produced six newsletters, sent to 182 subscribers” with 112 of them opening up the newsletter (pp. 82-90). What is the relevance of this information if not to imply that this “reach” indicates interest or need in bringing a charter school to New Rochelle? Of course, it is just as likely that the recipients are monitoring Capital Prep in order to reject the effort to have a charter school in New Rochelle. Thus, the critical information about the recipients—who they are and why they “subscribed” to the newsletter—is missing from this eight page series of “documents.”

Moreover, as the cover page of the newsletter indicates, Capital Prep has used the newsletter to spread unsubstantiated information about

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<sup>7</sup> Aisha Cook attended the restaurant event, and reports, “Only people opposed were there. No one showed up in support of the charter.”

their efficacy. On what appears to be the newsletter cover page and in a prominently highlighted box are the words: "Did You Know? 100% of Capital Prep graduates have been accepted into 4-year colleges & universities."

How do we know this is true? Capital Prep, like all charter schools, is *not* accountable to the public. In New York, they are required to report to the SUNY Charter Schools Institute whose Board of Trustees oversee charter school performance, and to the Board of Regents. According to New York's Education Law § 2857, Section 2, "college entry rates" is one among several performance measures required to be part of the charter school's "report card."<sup>8</sup>

Our investigation was unsuccessful in discovering Capital Prep's report card on the claim about their 100% college acceptance rate.

This deep dive into Capital Prep's application reveals further issues. Take the claim about their strong social media presence that they suggest indicates "reach," "interest," "demand." Capital Prep writes about the power of social media, especially Facebook (p. 63). They write, "Facebook has more than 3 billion monthly users and is still the largest and most popular social media platform in the world." Capital Prep's very next sentence, "With that in mind, the founding team shared information widely on this platform."

To the careless reader, these two statements—one coming immediately after the other—might leave them with the impression that Capital Prep has great reach on the most popular social media

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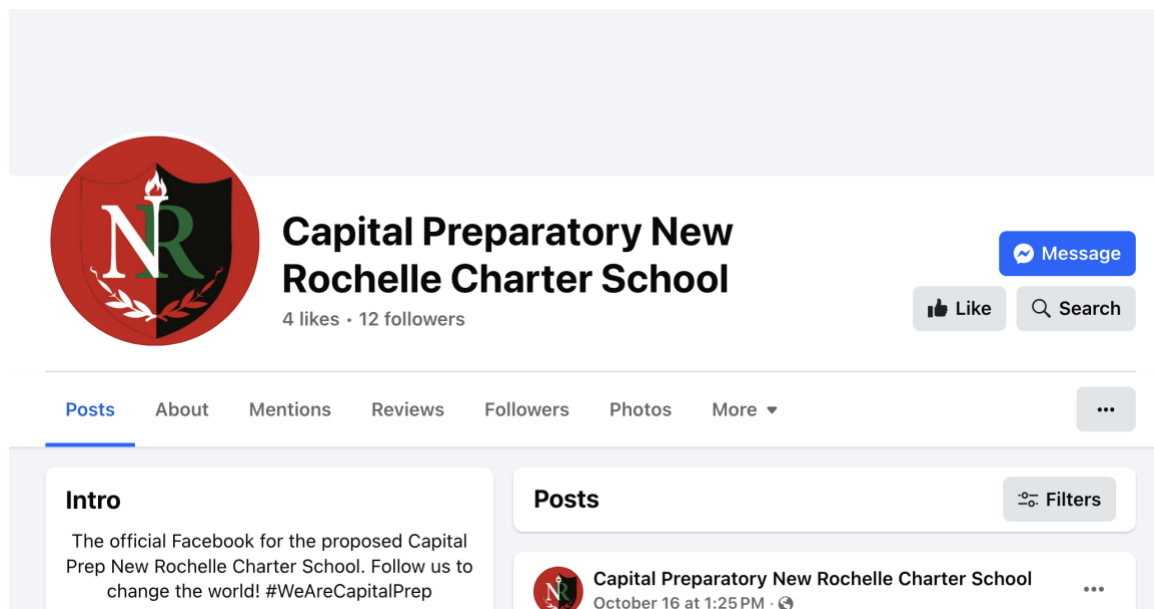
<sup>8</sup> "Each charter school shall submit to the charter entity and to the 9 board of regents an annual report. The 13 annual report shall be in such form as shall be prescribed by the 14 commissioner and shall include at least the following components: (a) a charter school report card, which shall include measures of the comparative academic and fiscal performance of the school, as prescribed by the commissioner in regulations adopted for such purpose. Such measures shall include, but not be limited to, graduation rates, dropout rates, performance of students on standardized tests, college entry rates, total spending per pupil and administrative spending per pupil. Such measures shall be presented in a format that is easily comparable to similar public schools. Source:

<https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/laws/EDN/2857>

platform. Twenty-eight pages later, Capital Prep continues with its misimpressions (p. 91). In large, bright red font they announce 6,693 impressions “across all platforms” with their Facebook presence receiving the majority at 5372, noted in large, green font.

A social media “impression” does not translate to “reach” or “engagement” with the content. It simply means the total number of times a post or an ad appears on a user’s screen.

So, what is Capital Prep’s actual reach in terms of user’s engagement with their Facebook page? As revealed in the screenshot captured on 4 October 2024, *the Capital Preparatory New Rochelle Charter School page generated on that platform the smallest of reach: only “4 likes and 12 followers”* (the list of followers is “not available”).



It is clear that Capital Prep’s presentation of outreach (by means of in-person meetings and social media) is meant to go beyond simply documenting the steps taken, which could have been listed in two-three pages. Instead, Capital Prep took up 32 pages in an obvious attempt to imply community “interest” and “demand” for the charter

school, neither of which is substantiated by the material presented. Indeed, Capital Prep states that these outreach efforts provided residents “information about how to demonstrate their support for the effort...” (p. 62; public events) and were designed “to facilitate the process of accepting input and feedback regarding the needs of students and families (p. 63; social media).

Included among those 32 pages, is a one-pager that lists Capital Prep’s outreach to “local officials/ state officials/ community groups” (p. 94). On this page, only the outreach effort is noted. Here, Capital Prep does not try to imply these officials are supportive or not of the charter school proposal. We do know that four of the 14 public officials have declared openly their objection to Capital Prep’s application, from the mayor of New Rochelle (Yadira-Ramos) to the state senator (Mayer), and state legislators (Otis; Paulin).

Glaring omissions from this outreach effort to “officials” and “community: groups include: the New Rochelle District Superintendent of Schools Dr. Corey W. Reynolds, a key official; members of the New Rochelle Board of Education; the leadership of the New Rochelle Parent-Teacher Council; and secular community groups.

Beginning on page 95 through page 738 (643 pages), Capital Prep offers so-called evidence of community interest and demand for the charter school. This is an enormous amount of material to sort through, perhaps intended to ensure nobody will look too closely.

Nevertheless, we did. Our careful examination reveals that here, too, Capital Prep has not made its case, as detailed in the following sections.

### **Letters of Support**

Even as Capital Prep frames the letters as indication of *widespread community* support of the charter school in New Rochelle, their own materials challenge that conclusion (the section on letters of support may be found on pp. 96-116). Of the 21 letters, eight are from—and

thus limited to—representatives of religious institutions or religiously affiliated entities, including affiliations of the Capital Prep New Rochelle applicants themselves (New York Covenant Church; New York Covenant Community Development Corporation). One letter was from the alumni chapter of the New Rochelle/White Plains branch of the fraternity, “Kappa Alpha PSI.”

Capital Prep provides only eleven letters from residents. The names of the letter writers are redacted by the SUNY Charter Schools Institute, which means the authors can neither be independently identified nor verified. Every letter is identical save the number of years residency. Even so, Capital Prep asserts that “each [letter] has been carefully examined” and that “the letters received outlined the educational needs of the New Rochelle community, the desires of residents for this charter school efforts, and overall encouragement for the proposal” (p. 63). Given that each letter, worded in exactly the same way, are short on substance, it is difficult to believe Capital Prep carefully examined each letter, that each letter demonstrated education needs in New Rochelle, and that they articulate the desires of New Rochelle residents.

Nevertheless, on the number of letters alone, Capital Prep has not succeeded in showing support for the charter school. Moreover, it is deeply problematic that nearly all the organizations in support of the charter school are religious; secular organizations actively involved in New Rochelle are absent.

### **The “Interest” Form**

The hundreds of pages of “interest forms,” offered as evidence of interest and demand by New Rochelle residents also comes up terribly short (pp. 117-738).

First, Capital Prep is not an objective, neutral party gauging interest or demand. They have a vested interest in prejudicing the form itself and interpreting the results in their favor.

The names on all the forms are redacted by the SUNY Charter Schools Institute; therefore, readers have no idea who the respondents are, where they live, if they are independent of the applicants, of those affiliated with any or all Capital Preparatory Schools, of the New York Covenant Church, or if they are family members, fictive kin or close affiliates of the applicants. We do not know what proportion of respondents actually live in New Rochelle, what proportion live elsewhere and where those other locations are.

Even if we assume the respondents are independent of the applicants, it can only be said with any degree of certainty that *the form measures the number of parents with school-age students who want to explore the relevance of Capital Prep to their children's education*. The form, given only to people who expressed some interest, means that the results are not a measure of broad community interest nor is it a measure of school-age parental/guardian interest.

Capital Prep states that they "carefully designed [the] questions in the Interest Form: "to provide information to help [residents] stay informed" and "to signal their support for the school" (p, 64).

In fact, Capital Prep carefully designed the form *not* to gauge *community interest* and *not to provide information* to ensure residents are informed. "Community interest" cannot be gauged when Capital Prep limits respondents to: 1) "parents/guardians who are interested in sending your child to Capital Prep New Rochelle and/or 2) are a community member who would like to express general interest in the school." Moreover, ensuring residents are informed cannot be accomplished when Capital Prep declares "Together we will change the world." Such a statement is presuming, biased, and prejudicial.

**Please fill out this form if...**

1. You are parent/guardian who is interested in sending your child to Capital Prep New Rochelle, and/or
  2. You are a community member who would like to express general interest in the school.
- Thank you for your support. Together, we will change the world!

Had Capital Prep carefully designed the "Interest Form," as they claim, respondents would not have given contradictory answers. For example, on the first of the interest forms submitted in the application, the respondent gives incongruous answers (p. 118, section 2).

Please indicate the number of children from your household who would be entering kindergarten at Capital Prep New Rochelle in the 2025-26 academic year.\*

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- Other:

Here, they indicate they have 1 child "from their household who would be entering kindergarten at Capital Prep New Rochelle in the 2025-26 academic year."

On the same page, the respondent checked off the opposite answer. To the prompt, "If you do not have a child (or children) entering kindergarten, 6th, or 7th grade/s in the 2025-26 academic year, please indicate your reason for filling out the form below," the respondent answered: "I am the parent of a child/children who fall out of these categories but would, in the future, be interested in applying for them to attend Capital Prep New Rochelle."

If you do not have a child (or children) entering kindergarten, 6th, or 7th grade/s in the 2025-26 academic year, please indicate your reason for filling out the form below:\*

- I am the parent of a child/children who fall out of these categories but would, in the future, be interested in applying for them to attend Capital Prep New Rochelle
- I do not currently live in the area but I am (or might be) moving to New Rochelle and

Which is it?

Then there is the matter of the counts. Under the heading, "Documented Support through Interest Forms," Capital Prep writes, "At the time of submission, *243 residents* from New Rochelle and the surrounding area had confirmed their support for Capital Prep New Rochelle *using this method*" (our emphases) (p. 65). Yet, they submitted 186 "interest forms"; that is, 57 short of their claim (pp. 117-738, 621 pages of the application form).

Further, our deep dive into the material reveals that Capital Prep came up with numbers that are inconsistent with their claims.

Capital Prep claims that 79 parents of children who will be in kindergarten, sixth, or seventh grades in the 2025-26 school year are interested in applying for a seat for a total of 83 students for those entry grades.

Our review of the "interest forms" on which Capital Prep's numbers are based, show the claim to be untrue. Only 38 respondents indicated at least one child who would be eligible (i.e., kindergarten, 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> grade) to apply for a seat at the charter school for a total of 53 children.

It is important to note that on this question, Capital Prep asks for the number of children *from your household* who would be entering kindergarten or 6<sup>th</sup> grade or 7<sup>th</sup> grade at Capital Prep New Rochelle in the 2025-26 year, without qualifying if the respondent has authority to make schooling decision for these children. This led to responses from grandparents, great grandparents, and siblings, information volunteered by some in the comments section. It is unknown how many of the 38 respondents have the authority to make the schooling decision for children in their households.

It is notable that of the 186 respondents, 148 (80%) indicate they do not have a child entering kindergarten, 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> grade in the 2025-2026 school year.

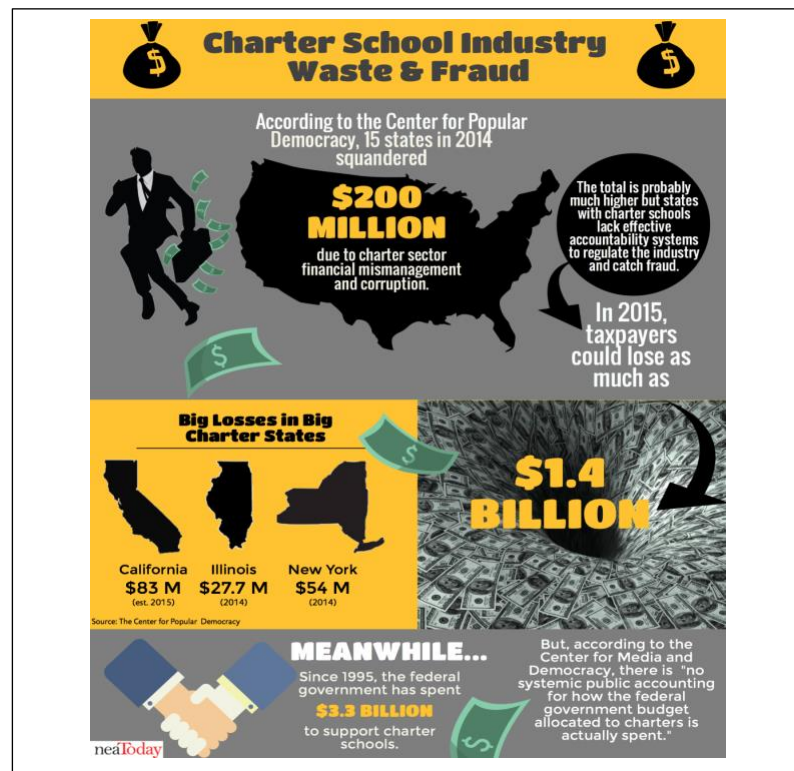
Further, Capital Prep claims that there are 76 families who “have children who fall outside of the grades for year one enrollment, but have an interest in enrolling in the future, or who live outside of New Rochelle but may be moving to the area.” Here, again, the numbers provided by Capital Prep do not conform to the documents they submitted. Sixty-four (64) respondents checked the box. Because the question conflates two separate conditions—those who “may” someday move to New Rochelle and those who have children who may or may not apply to the charter school—it is impossible to interpret the results. It is also important to note that a large proportion of respondents to this question are the same individuals who indicated they have children entering kindergarten, 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> grade in the 2025-2026 school year.

How can any of these figures, based as they are on deeply flawed methodology and refutable findings, demonstrate “demand”? The answer is, they cannot.

Capital Prep has not made a case for community interest and demand for a charter school in New Rochelle.

Actual facts do not appear to matter to Capital Prep. For them, what matters is a narrative they have not substantiated.

# The Case Against Charter Schools



By the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, the principle of free public education began to form in the United States. By the 1830s, the principle took hold, ultimately leading to a national commitment to provide universal access to free education, a backbone of democracy. For a long time, the commitment did not extend to non-whites and girls; it took multiple struggles to guarantee the national commitment for all.<sup>9</sup>

In a country marked by racism, xenophobia, and sexism, the struggle to guarantee true universal access to quality, free education has been long, challenging, and ongoing.

<sup>9</sup> Kober, Nancy and Diane Stark. History and Evolution of Public Education in the US. Center on Education Policy. Graduate School of Education and Human Development. The George Washington University, 2020: 1-8.  
<http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED606970.pdf>

The original concept of charter schools was rooted in these struggles. As social welfare Professor Michael Fabricant and social psychologist Professor Michelle Fine explain, the 1980s saw a progressive vision by education reformers “to create small, engaging educational settings within-low income communities, where children of poverty, of color, and immigrants could be educated well, cared for, and nurtured academically with intent.”<sup>10</sup>

Ten years later, the vision was coopted by the charter school movement, launched with the opening of the first charter school in Minnesota in 1991.<sup>11</sup> As Fabricant and Fine put it:

There soon came a moment when the social justice motor was appropriated and reengineered by philanthropic, corporate, hedge-fund and real estate interests...The charters of today have been catapulted into a corporate movement associated with a relentless attack on teachers and teacher unions, the ideological critique of public education as “in crisis,” and consequent seductive advertisements for families to exit the public sector.<sup>12</sup>

Today, charter schools across the United States have grown exponentially. This despite that the academic outcomes of charter schools overall have *not* proven to be superior to those of the public schools.

At best, as education scholars Professor Julie Dallavis and Professor Mark Berends note, scholarly research on charters “show that charter schools have inconsistent effects on student achievement scores.”<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Fabricant and Fine, op.cit.: 2.

<sup>11</sup> Dallavis, Julie W. and Mark Berends. “Charter Schools After Three Decades: Reviewing the Research on School Organizational and Instructional Conditions.” *Education Policy Analysis Archives*. Volume 31 Number 1, 2023: 1-30.

<sup>12</sup> Fabricant and Fine op.cit.: 2.

<sup>13</sup> Dallavis and Berends op.cit.: 2.

Fabricant and Fine observe two telling patterns. On one hand, charter school advocates highlight a few success story schools—what they call “exemplary” charters. These exemplary programs, the authors argue, are not representative of the larger universe of charters, which do not show impressive outcomes despite the hype.<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, “...exemplary public schools are rarely used to paint a positive spin on urban public education. Instead, they are routinely bracketed as ‘the exception.’”<sup>15</sup>

There is much at stake. Fabricant and Fine identify four fading American values at risk with the rise and prevalence of charter schools (emphases in the original):

- Public education as foundational to civic *participation* and *democracy*;
- Schools with *strong accountability* to youth, parents, and community;
- *Sustainability* of educational communities over time; and
- The *equitable distribution* of resources and opportunities for all children.<sup>16</sup>

However flawed may be public schools in the US, and however the four values have not been fully realized in the past and the present, these principles and values must not be abandoned.

Assessing the evidence, Fabricant and Fine conclude that charter schools are “a wedge institution to marginalize and shrink the public sector,” and that puts the principle of universal access to free public education and the four values at risk.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.: 37.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.:16-17.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.: 5

<sup>17</sup> Fabricant and Fine, op.cit.: 3.

## **How Charter Schools Fail the Grade**

From the early days through the present, charter schools, as a movement and in practice, have failed to live up to the hype. Charter school proponents consistently stick to narratives that tap into: distortion and exaggeration about flaws in public schools and the public sector; exaggeration and falsities about the capabilities and efficiencies of the private sector; parental concerns and worries; true inequities without identifying actual sources of those inequities; misleading notions of “choice”<sup>18</sup>; and demonizing portraits of public school teachers and of the unions that protect them. Taken together, these narratives have had strong influence on some political leaders, on state decision-makers who decide on charter school applications, on some parents, and on the wider public.

The lessons of the past 30 years with charter schools should lead to serious skepticism, not satisfaction with their efficacy. The lessons should also lead to deep concern about the clear pattern of disinvestment in public schools over the same decades and the consequences of that disinvestment. Overall, the problems, the failures, the weaknesses, and the shortcomings of charter schools should by now have led to the conclusion that investment in our public school system is the solution to ensure the delivery of quality education to all our children. The solution to serving any child who is underserved is to provide our public schools the resources needed to deliver on those needs. The public schools have the infrastructure and stand ready to deliver innovative solutions—solutions that are at hand.

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<sup>18</sup> Charter schools seek to mimic the private school sector and to do so with public funds. On the matter of private schools, it is worthwhile to note that the Capital Prep applicants state, without citation, that 22% of school-aged children in New Rochelle attend private schools (2022-2023); they use this information to advance the “school choice” narrative. In contrast, the City School District of New Rochelle cites a study conducted by the Western Suffolk BOCES’ Office of School Planning and Research (January 21, 2022) that “about 14% of local students attend private schools” (<https://www.nred.org/article/634272>).

What is missing—what is needed—is the political will to commit to the public sector and move away from the trend towards privatization.

Scholarly data and analyses have demonstrated over and over again, areas of weakness, failure, and negative impact of charter schools. Peer reviewed studies have identified eleven major negatives that reveal a “promise-evidence gap.” A meta-analysis of the literature shows that charter schools:

- Do no better than public schools on quantitative indicators, such as student achievement scores.
- Make distorted claims about efficacy on a number of indicators (e.g., attendance, graduation rates, etc.).
- Engage in student selection bias, which means they can “choose” to include certain students while excluding others.
- Exploit student selection to gain recognition as so-called “high performing” charter schools.
- Fail to adequately and independently serve students with disabilities and English language learners.
- Exacerbate racial segregation and racialized intragroup segregation.
- Engage the scandalous practice of returning more “difficult” students back to the public schools and doing so once they receive funds from the public school for a given year (those funds do not get returned to the public school along with the student).
- Create harm to students as a result of charter school instability.
- Suffer high teacher turnover rates.
- Cause harm to the traditional public schools.
- Drain vital funding from the public schools.
- Are devoid of transparency and accountability given they operate with private boards and are not accountable to local communities and taxpayers.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> For a small sample of the literature, see Dobbie, Will, & Fryer, Roland G. “Charter Schools and Labor Market Outcomes.” *Journal of Labor Economics*, 38(4), 2020: 915–957. <https://doi.org/10.1086/706534>; Nelson, F. Howard, Robert A. Fox, and Nina K. Buchanan. (2017). The Case Against Charter Schools. In *The Wiley Handbook of School Choice*, 2017: 252–266. John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119082361.ch17>; Clark, Melissa A., Philip M. Gleason, Christina Clark Tuttle. Marsha K. Silverberg. “Do Charter Schools Improve Student

## The Case against Capital Prep New Rochelle: Promises, Promises

"...parents enticed by Capital Prep are calling it a disaster. Fourteen people, including parents, students, and former employees, describe an extremely dysfunctional school environment marked by high teacher turnover and frequent violence. Without a full teaching staff, students could go months without being taught some subjects and instead be found sitting in the lunchroom for hours at a time. Leadership has been unstable: The school has had seven principals or interim principals in seven years. In spite of big-name backers, teachers say they were short on necessities like chairs and computers, and botched record-keeping has resulted in incorrect grades, transcripts, schedules, and test data. Fights and schoolwide lockdowns created an atmosphere of fear and chaos. Parents who sought answers found management uncommunicative and adversarial..."

—reporter Sangeeta Singh-Kurtz, March 2024  
"The Chaos Inside Diddy's Charter School," *The Cut*

Singh-Kurtz's exposé may have been prompted by the scandals surrounding Sean "Diddy" Combs, the rapper with deep ties to Capital Prep Charter Schools NY.<sup>20</sup> Combs, accused of sexually assaulting minors among other serious offenses, is currently in federal custody at the Metropolitan Detention Center in Brooklyn awaiting trial for sex

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Achievement?" *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 37 (4), 2015: 419–436. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0162373714558292>; Ni, Yongmei. "The impact of charter schools on the efficiency of traditional public schools: Evidence from Michigan." *Economics of Education Review*, 28 (5), 2009: 571–584. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econedurev.2009.01.003>

<sup>20</sup> Guardian Music. "Puff Daddy founds charter school in Harlem." *The Guardian*. March 29, 2024. Accessed 6 December 2024. <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2016/mar/29/puff-daddy-sean-combs-founds-school-in-harlem>; Mitchell, Alex. "P Diddy opens Co-op City Charter School on Former College Campus." *BronxTimes*. September 4, 2020. Accessed 6 December 2024. <https://www.bxtimes.com/p-diddy-opens-co-op-city-charter-school-on-former-college-campus/>; Botello, Camille. "P. Diddy pays surprise visit to Bronx charter school he donated \$1M toward opening." *BronxTimes*. October 19, 2022. Accessed 6 December 2024. <https://www.bxtimes.com/diddy-visits-bronx-school/>

trafficking and racketeering (as of 3 January 2025). That scandal and those ties may have opened the door to revealing publicly something deeply insidious about the operations of the charter schools under the Capital Prep banner.

In her article, Singh-Kurtz states that "Capital Prep Schools disputed the accuracy of this story but declined to go into any specifics," having received a written response from the communications and development director in Capital Prep's Network Office. She also states that "Steve Perry did not respond to her requests for comment."

Capital Prep may deny the charges levied by the parents, students, and staff who spoke with the reporter, but the issues they raise are consistent with the serious problem areas identified in scholarly analyses, including but not limited to "instability," "high teacher turnover rates," and "distorted claims," all the while siphoning public school funds.

Dr. Stephen Perry is the CEO of Capital Preparatory Schools, Incorporated (Employer Identification Number: 43-4669846; DLN: 17053108339041), since it received 501(c) (3) status stamped on 14 May 2012. Some might consider him a celebrity, too, given his close ties with the rich and famous as well as his presence on mainstream media platforms. He features himself on his LinkedIn page as "America's Trusted Educator." He also touts himself and Capital Prep as, essentially, education justice warriors, consistently emphasizing how terrific are his "network of institutions."



**Sean "Diddy" Combs Officially Opens Capital Prep Harlem Charter School**  
Founder of Capital Preparatory Schools Dr. Steve Perry, Sean "Diddy" Combs and Harlem Charter School Principal Danita Jones officially open Capital Prep Harlem Charter School.  
August 29, 2016, NYC.

Behind the glitz is a shadow story of what some might consider a predatory enterprise that masks its failures and highlights its successes without the means to independently corroborate them.

In a series of three online reports, Dr. Robert Cotto Jr, a scholar of urban education history and policy and currently Director, DEI Campus and Community Engagement at Trinity College Hartford, Connecticut, offers a telling exposé of Capital Prep's activities in that state.

Capital Prep Harbor in Bridgeport, Connecticut, is one of three Capital Preparatory Schools, Inc.'s holdings, and touted throughout its proposal (the application) to open Capital Prep New Rochelle.

It is worthwhile to read and study Dr. Cotto's reports in full.<sup>21</sup> Here, we highlight key points that raise serious questions and should have—and should continue to—cast doubt on Capital Prep's claims of magnificence:

- “[A] proposed new charter school [in Middletown, Connecticut] would be overseen by Capital Prep, Inc., a private charter management company that takes a fee of 10% of any public funds that would go to the charter school... transferred into a private company with few rules. It's unclear where this money goes and is transferred into a private company with few rules. It is a murky space of public-private organizational interaction. This shift of public funds to a new, semi-private school comes as advocates struggle for better access and funds for public education, healthcare, progressive income taxes, and other social safety net support.”
- “A non-profit, charter management company 501(c) [was established] at the school's address [1304 Main Street, Hartford] called Capital Preparatory Schools, Inc. (i.e., Capital Prep, Inc.). With some assistance from the Superintendent at the time, this non-profit company became an enterprise meant to privatize public schools in Hartford. The original idea was for the principal and the administration to use the company to privatize the Capital Prep Magnet and ‘replicate’ Capital Prep in other public schools.”

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<sup>21</sup> Cotto, Robert Jr. “Seeing A Charter School Proposal As A Redevelopment Scheme: The Case of Capital Prep School, Inc.” April 29, 2023. Accessed 17 November 2024. <https://learningfromthecity.blog/2023/04/29/seeing-a-charter-school-proposal-as-a-redevelopment-scheme-the-case-of-capital-prep-school-inc/>; Cotto, Robert Jr. “Capitalizing on the Closure of a Latino School: The Case of Capital Prep Schools, Inc., Part 2.” May 27, 2023. Accessed 17 November 2024. <https://learningfromthecity.blog/2023/05/27/capitalizing-on-the-enclosure-of-latino-schools-the-case-of-capital-prep-schools-inc-part-2/> ; Cotto, Robert Jr. “Unanswered Questions On New Charter Schools in CT: Case of Capital Prep Schools, Inc., Part 3” June 7, 2023. Accessed 17 November 2024. <https://learningfromthecity.blog/2023/06/07/unanswered-questions-on-new-charter-schools-in-ct-case-of-capital-prep-schools-inc-part-3/>

- “This same management company with the Capital Prep name would be used to launch new charter schools in Connecticut and New York while beholden – and paying fees – to Capital Preparatory School, Inc.”
- “In this case, dispossession of a school [the Bernard-Brown school in Hartford] foreclosed on a Puerto Rican and Latino school with a legacy civil rights program in bilingual education. Furthermore, the dispossession of this public school enabled the profiting of the Capital Prep principal as the business under their name used the program and mailing address for a new company to create franchise schools with the same brand name.”
- “Let’s look at Capital Prep’s record of selective enrollment or choosing their students...Since the beginning, that school had selective enrollment by a. [originally] being a magnet school and b. displacing mostly Latina/o/x students...Selective enrollment may also be the case with the Capital Preparatory Schools, Inc. brand. Over the last decade, the private charter school franchise formed from the magnet school expanded in Connecticut and New York. As an example of differences in enrollment, take a look at Capital Prep Harbor School in Bridgeport, CT. In terms of enrollment, Capital Prep Harbor Charter School in Bridgeport had 7.6% of students identified as “English Learner” and 10% of students in special education for last year (2021-22). However, Bridgeport Public Schools had 23% “English Learner” students and 19% students in special education [source: Connecticut State Department of Education, 2023].”
- “[Capital Prep] features college-prep and, ironically, a social justice theme. Capital Prep, Inc. advertises as an early college and social justice program. Both those school themes exist in various public schools now.”

- “Students and families are offered a school option on paper, but the choices may not be available to all in practice.”
- “Selective enrollment can also have an impact on the supposed overall results of a school or district. Take graduation and college attendance data claims, for example. The Capital Prep Harbor School recently advertised that “100% of our graduating seniors have been accepted into 4 year colleges and universities.” But looking further into the numbers, it turns out that in 2021-22 there were 56 students in the 11th grade at Capital Prep Harbor Charter School. But this year (2022-23) there are only 43 students in the 12th grade. That’s almost a quarter of the class – 13 students – that did not go from grade 11 to 12? Where did these students go? Did they not fulfill some requirement to get to senior year? Were they pushed out of the school? Did they make another “choice”? In part, this cohort attrition is an issue with how graduation rates are now calculated. But it also shows the limits of simple numerical claims of success.”
- “Charter schools get roughly \$11,000 in [Connecticut] state public funds on a per student basis to fund the school. Run by private, self-selected boards, these schools report to the State Board of Education every few years and, for some, a Charter Management Organization (CMO) like Capital Prep Schools, Inc. Charter schools also pull away public school district funds through special education, transportation, and can redirect new state public funds that would have otherwise gone to public schools.”
- [Looking at] the charter school board, or “founding team” ...raises questions about self-dealing, which is a common problem of semi-private charter school policy. In other words, the public funds for the charter school would be redirected to benefit not the school, per se, but people and their organizations that manage the charter school and related companies. Indeed, top scholars on charter

school policy and law have suggested that these actions happen because of loopholes that allow for self-dealing. In the future, the loopholes must be closed, at minimum.”

- “How much is Capital Prep. Schools Inc. accumulating from taking resources away from public schools? How does this taking of public funds to give to a private, unaccountable company help the goals of public education in this state? These situations are currently allowed by law with some regulation mostly on reporting at the charter school level. In other words, you can FOIA request most public info from Capital Prep Harbor School, but not Capital Prep Schools, Inc. Only these 990 forms are available from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). Several scholars have also raised questions about how the holes in this regulation of this system can allow for various forms of corruption, waste, not directly serving students, and undermining of public education more broadly.”

### **Capital Prep Fails the Grade**

Capital Prep makes claims on its website and in its application that it is “successful,” using adjectives such as “impressive,” “spectacular,” and “remarkable” (pp. 19-20). A closer look at its performance and rankings reveals a different story. Overall, Capital Prep shows, at best, mediocre performance. Despite the behind-the-scenes practices (from selective enrollment to returning more “difficult” students back to the public schools) that advantage the charter, Capital Prep’s mediocre performance is all the more concerning.

As we examine Capital Prep’s performance, it is important to understand that the indicators of performance are problematic in two essential ways:

1. The Base: the “base” in statistics is the denominator; that is, the total number or population that forms the basis of the statistic being provided. For example, the “base” in a charter school statistic of test scores for a particular grade is the total number of students

in the particular charter school grade or for the school overall is the total number of students in the charter school. The “base” in the public school statistic is the total number of public school students, including those students “sent back” or returned from the charter school. The public school population is not self-selected: all children in the district are eligible to enroll and attend the public school. The population universes for the two types of schools (charter; public) are distinct. Comparing them is like comparing apples to oranges.

2. To complicate matters further, in New York State, parents can “opt out” of state testing for grades 3-8.<sup>22</sup> These tests are used as key indicators of a school’s performance. Given that parents may “opt out” of having their children take the tests, the public school scores do not reflect the total universe of the student population. According to North Arrow, an organization that provides data for nonprofits using interactive mapping, 29.20% of students in the New Rochelle School District opted out of state testing in 2023.<sup>23</sup> According to Chalkbeat, opt-out rates in New York City’s charter sector are low.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, according to geographer Dr. Olivia Ildefonso, the demographic profile of most parents who opt out of state testing are the affluent whose children are high achieving.<sup>25</sup> These findings suggest that because the test scores are

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<sup>22</sup> For details on this policy, see “Fact Sheet 23-02: Facts for Parents on Opting Out of State Tests for 2022-2023” <https://www.nysut.org/resources/all-listing/research/fact-sheets/fact-sheet-opting-out-parents>; see also the New Rochelle School District pages: <https://www.nred.org/article/695772>;

<sup>23</sup> North-Arrow.Org. “New York’s Opt Out Movement: Tracing a Decade of Test Refusals.” Accessed 5 December 2024. <https://northarrowmyi.maps.arcgis.com/apps/dashboards/3f0e4cab4a5c498f9663b509efcd7299>. These data align with data provided by the New Rochelle School District of refusal rates of 30% for the ELA (English Language Arts) tests and 29% for the math tests.

<sup>24</sup> Zimmerman, Alex. “NYC’s Opt-Out Rate Doubled in the Wake of the Pandemic.” April 26, 2024. Accessed 5 December 2024. <https://www.chalkbeat.org/newyork/2024/04/26/nyc-opt-out-rate-doubled-in-the-wake-of-the-pandemic/>

<sup>25</sup> Ildefonso, Olivia. “A Decade of New York’s Opt-Out Movement.” April 7, 2024. Accessed 5 December 2024. <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/efb5bcd31d3344b498d8313a64a64f98>

unrepresentative of overall student performance, the testing data for the New Rochelle School District may be skewed against it.

Together, these two factors prejudice in favor of charter schools: the first because the self-selected charter school population is distinct from the wider public school population; the second because more among the select charter school students are taking the grades 3-8 state tests as compared to the public school students.

Considering these important conditional factors, we would expect the charter school performance to be sky high. This is not the case for Capital Prep schools, which, as noted above, show, at best, mediocre performance:

The New York State Education Department (NYSED) data on charter schools is available online here: <https://data.nysed.gov/>. NYSED reports on data on students (student enrollment counts by gender, grade, economically disadvantaged, ethnicity, LEP (limited English proficiency), and (students with disabilities) SWD; and on student performance (as indicated by Regents examinations and state tests in grades 3-8 among other tests/assessments).

NYSED Report cards for Capital Prep Schools:

The data in the sections on “Regents Examinations” and on “New York State Standardized Tests” are provided by the New York State Education Department (NYSED) for each of the two New York Capital Prep schools:

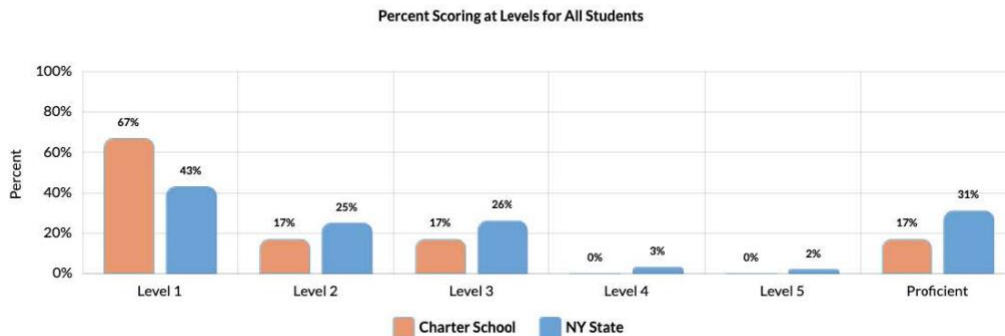
1. NYSED’s 2023-24 Report Card for Capital Prep Harlem Charter School: <https://data.nysed.gov/essa.php?year=2024&instid=800000084243>
2. NYSED’s 2023-24 Report Card for Capital Prep Bronx Charter School: <https://data.nysed.gov/essa.php?year=2024&instid=800000090780>

## Regents Examinations

The 2023-2024 data show that as compared to students overall in New York State, Capital Prep’s Harlem Charter School student proficiency performance is below par on every one of the New York State Regents Examinations. Note that to graduate high school, all students in New York were required to pass five Regents exams in 2023-2024.<sup>26</sup>

Capital Prep’s Harlem Charter School student proficiency on the New York State Regents Examination for Algebra I is below par as compared to students overall in New York State (by 14 percentage points below the proficiency level of New York State students for the August 2023 and January 2024 exams; by 28 percentage points for the June 2024 exam).

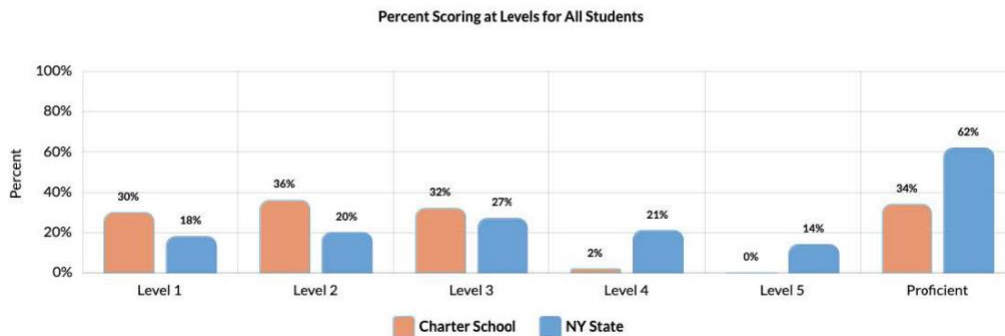
### ANNUAL REGENTS EXAMINATION IN ALGEBRA I (AUGUST 2023 & JANUARY 2024) (2023-24)



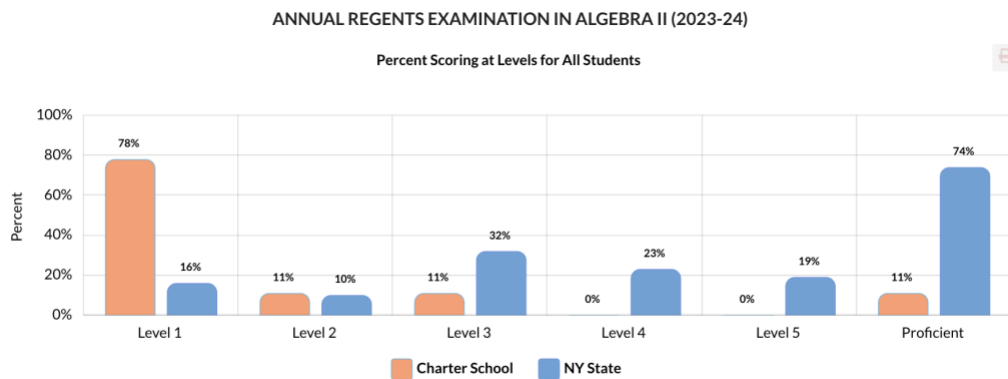
<sup>26</sup> According to the New York State School Boards Association, the five-category ratings range from 1-5 where 1 is the lowest (“does not demonstrate knowledge and skills”) and 5 is the highest, with 4 “the minimum required for graduation with a Regents Diploma” and 5 “considered mastery level of a subject.”

<https://www.nyssba.org/news/2014/06/06/on-board-online-june-9-2014/regents-scores-now-on-a-5-level-scale/>

## ANNUAL REGENTS EXAMINATION IN ALGEBRA I (JUNE 2024) (2023-24)

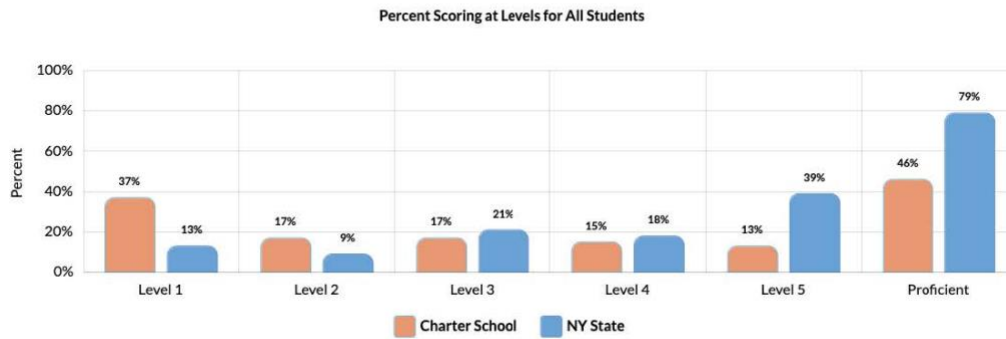


Capital Prep Harlem student proficiency on the Regents Examination in Algebra II is also well below par (by 63 percentage points):



Likewise, Capital Prep's Harlem Charter School student proficiency on the New York State Regents Examination English Language Arts (ELA) is well below par as compared to students overall in New York State (33 percentage points below the proficiency level of New York State students).

## ANNUAL REGENTS EXAMINATION IN ELA (2023-24)



The same holds true for all the other Regents Examinations:

- Geometry: Capital Prep Harlem (CP): 8% proficiency. New York State (NYS): 57% proficiency. CP is below par by 49 percentage points.
- Living Environment: CP: 43% proficiency. NYS: 62% proficiency. CP is below par by 19 percentage points.
- Physical Setting/Earth Science: CP: 24% proficiency. NYS: 67% proficiency. CP is below par by 43 percentage points.
- Physical Setting/Chemistry: CP: None took the test. NYS: 65% proficiency.
- Global History and Geography II: CP: 40% proficiency. NYS: 77% proficiency. CP is below par by 37 percentage points.
- US History and Government: CP 34% proficiency. NYS 78% proficiency. CP is below par by 44 percentage points.

Capital Prep’s Bronx Charter School student proficiency on the New York State Regents Examination is on par or above par with students overall in New York State for those exams taken by the charter school students.<sup>27</sup> Capital Prep Bronx Charter school students took four out of the 10 Regents Examinations. Note: This school has students in grades 6-10 according to the National Center for Education Statistics.<sup>28</sup>

- Algebra I, August 2023 and January 2024: None of CP’s Bronx Charter School students took the test. NYS: 31% proficiency.
- Algebra I, June 2024: CP: 80% proficiency. NYS: 62% proficiency. CP is above par by 18 percentage points.
- Algebra II: CP: None took the test. NYS: 74% proficiency
- English Language Arts (ELA): CP: 77% proficiency. NYS: 79% proficiency. CP is on par (below by only 2 percentage points).
- Geometry: CP: None took the test. NYS: 57% proficiency.
- Living Environment: CP: 63% proficiency. NYS: 62% proficiency. CP is on par (above by only 1 percentage point).
- Physical Setting/Earth Science: CP: None took the test.
- Physical Setting/Chemistry: CP: None took the test. NYS: 65% proficiency.
- Global History and Geography II: CP: 94% proficiency. NYS: 77% proficiency. CP is above par by 17 percentage points.
- US History and Government: CP: None took the test. NYS 78% proficiency.

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<sup>27</sup> NYSED Capital Prep Bronx Report Card:

<https://data.nysed.gov/essa.php?year=2024&instid=800000090780>

<sup>28</sup> National Center for Education Statistics Capital Preparatory Bronx Charter:

[https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/districtsearch/district\\_detail.asp?Search=1&State=36&County=Bronx+County&DistrictPageNum=2&ID2=3601223](https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/districtsearch/district_detail.asp?Search=1&State=36&County=Bronx+County&DistrictPageNum=2&ID2=3601223)

Combined, students in Capital Prep’s New York charter schools performed below par on proficiency in 9 of the 13 Regents exams taken by Capital Prep’s students as compared to students in New York State overall. On the Regents exams that they actually took, Capital Prep students performed above par on 2 out of the 13 exams. Capital Prep students performed at par in 2 out of the 13 exams.

How can these results be considered “impressive,” “spectacular,” and “remarkable” as Capital Prep claims, especially as a set of schools billed as “college preparatory”?

### **Standardized New York State Assessments: Grades 3-8**

Keeping in mind the qualifiers that charters have a lower rate of opting out of the state tests than public schools overall, and that the “base” in a charter school (self-selected populations) and the public schools (not self-select populations) are distinct, comparing scores can be misleading since the advantage accrues to the charters (see pp. 44-45 of this report). Thus, we would expect Capital Prep’s charter schools would outperform on state assessment tests as compared to New York State schools (that include public and charter schools). As the following NYSED performance data show, New York State schools outperform Capital Prep’s charter schools in most subject areas:

#### Capital Prep Harlem Charter School

- Math, Grades 3-8: Capital Prep Harlem (CPH): 27% proficiency. New York State (NYS): 51% proficiency.
- Math, Grade 6: CPH: 42% proficiency. New York State (NYS): 51% proficiency.
- Math, Grade 7: CPH: 46% proficiency. New York State (NYS): 57% proficiency.
- Math, Grade 8: CPH: 8% proficiency. New York State (NYS): 41% proficiency.

- English Language Arts, Grades 3-8: Capital Prep Harlem (CPH): 63% proficiency. New York State (NYS): 46% proficiency.
- English Language Arts, Grade 6: CPH: 42% proficiency. New York State (NYS): 44% proficiency.
- English Language Arts, Grade 7: CPH: 76% proficiency. New York State (NYS): 50% proficiency.
- English Language Arts, Grade 8: CPH: 63% proficiency. New York State (NYS): 52% proficiency.
- Science, Grades 5-8: Capital Prep Harlem (CPH): 40% proficiency. New York State (NYS): 44% proficiency.
- Science, Grade 8: CPH: 15% proficiency. New York State (NYS): 34% proficiency.

For English Language Learners (ELL), there are no test results for the five Capital Prep Harlem students noted in the table:

**NEW YORK STATE ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE ACHIEVEMENT TEST (2023-24)**

New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Tests (NYSESLAT) are administered in grades K through 12 to all English Language Learners (ELLs). ELLs are students who, by reason of foreign birth or ancestry, speak or understand a language other than English and speak or understand little or no English, and require support to become proficient in English and are identified pursuant to Section 154.3 of Commissioner's Regulations.

| Grade    | Total |      | Not Tested |     | Tested |      | Entering |   | Emerging |   | Transitioning |   | Expanding |   | Commanding (Proficient) |   |
|----------|-------|------|------------|-----|--------|------|----------|---|----------|---|---------------|---|-----------|---|-------------------------|---|
|          | #     | %    | #          | %   | #      | %    | #        | % | #        | % | #             | % | #         | % | #                       | % |
| Grade 9  | 1     | 100% | 0          | 0%  | 1      | 100% | -        | - | -        | - | -             | - | -         | - | -                       | - |
| Grade 10 | 2     | 100% | 1          | 50% | 1      | 50%  | -        | - | -        | - | -             | - | -         | - | -                       | - |
| Grade 11 | 2     | 100% | 0          | 0%  | 2      | 100% | -        | - | -        | - | -             | - | -         | - | -                       | - |

Capital Prep Bronx Charter School

- Math, Grades 3-8: Capital Prep Bronx (CPB): 54% proficiency. New York State (NYS): 48% proficiency.
- Math, Grade 6: CPB: 24% proficiency. New York State (NYS): 51% proficiency.
- Math, Grade 7: CPB: 49% proficiency. New York State (NYS): 57% proficiency.
- Math, Grade 8: CPB: 20% proficiency. New York State (NYS): 41% proficiency.

- English Language Arts, Grades 3-8: CPB: 60% proficiency. New York State (NYS): 46% proficiency.
- English Language Arts, Grade 6: CPB: 40% proficiency. New York State (NYS): 44% proficiency.
- English Language Arts, Grade 7: CPB: 68% proficiency. New York State (NYS): 50% proficiency.
- English Language Arts, Grade 8: CPB: 69% proficiency. New York State (NYS): 52% proficiency.
- Science, Grades 5 and 8: Capital Prep Harlem (CPB): 49% proficiency. New York State (NYS): 44% proficiency.
- Science, Grade 8: CPH: 29% proficiency. New York State (NYS): 34% proficiency.

For English Language Learners (ELL), there are no test results for the four Capital Prep Bronx students noted in the table:

**NEW YORK STATE ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE ACHIEVEMENT TEST (2023-24)**

New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Tests (NYSESLAT) are administered in grades K through 12 to all English Language Learners (ELLs). ELLs are students who, by reason of foreign birth or ancestry, speak or understand a language other than English and speak or understand little or no English, and require support to become proficient in English and are identified pursuant to Section 154.3 of Commissioner's Regulations.

| Grade    | Total |      | Not Tested |    | Tested |      | Entering |   | Emerging |   | Transitioning |   | Expanding |   | Commanding (Proficient) |   |
|----------|-------|------|------------|----|--------|------|----------|---|----------|---|---------------|---|-----------|---|-------------------------|---|
|          | #     | %    | #          | %  | #      | %    | #        | % | #        | % | #             | % | #         | % | #                       | % |
| Grade 6  | 1     | 100% | 0          | 0% | 1      | 100% | –        | – | –        | – | –             | – | –         | – | –                       | – |
| Grade 8  | 1     | 100% | 0          | 0% | 1      | 100% | –        | – | –        | – | –             | – | –         | – | –                       | – |
| Grade 9  | 1     | 100% | 0          | 0% | 1      | 100% | –        | – | –        | – | –             | – | –         | – | –                       | – |
| Grade 10 | 1     | 100% | 0          | 0% | 1      | 100% | –        | – | –        | – | –             | – | –         | – | –                       | – |

Given the qualifiers (the matters of the “base” on which these test scores are based and opt out circumstances), it is difficult to interpret these results with any degree of certainty. Nevertheless, given the promises made by Capital Prep and its claims of great success, these scores reveal promises that go unfulfilled and claims that are unproven.

What is clear, however, is the record of performance by students in Capital Preparatory Schools, Inc.’s schools is underwhelming.

The record of performance by students in Capital Preparatory Schools, Inc. is particularly disturbing considering that in New York State, charter schools are supposed to be “held to a higher accountability standard [than the public schools] for producing the academic outcomes outlined in their charter.”<sup>29</sup>

### **U.S. News and World Report Rankings**

Consistent with NYSED data are data provided by the *U.S. News and World Report* in their rankings of high schools in the United States.<sup>30</sup> *U.S. News and World Report* rankings for Capital Prep schools are as follows:

- Capital Prep Harlem: Overall Score **42.61**/100. This means that 57% of schools are ranked higher than Capital Prep, a relatively poor showing. It ranks 262 out of 533 public schools in NY, a mediocre showing at best.
- Capital Prep Bronx (Note: *US News and World Report* provides a ranking only for Capital Prep Bronx Middle School): Overall Score **71.4**/100.
- Capital Preparatory Harbor School Upper School, Bridgeport, CT: Overall Score **54.91**/100. This showing is particularly telling considering the applicants highlight Capital Prep Harbor with special praise (pp. 19-20 of the application).

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<sup>29</sup> Charter School Office, p. 22: “Charter schools in New York are more autonomous than traditional public schools, and, in exchange for that freedom, they are held to a higher accountability standard for producing the academic outcomes outlined in their charter.” <https://www.nysed.gov/sites/default/files/programs/charter-schools/parents-guide-to-charter-schools-in-nys-10-2021.pdf>

<sup>30</sup> “2024 Best U.S. High Schools” <https://www.usnews.com/education/best-high-schools/national-rankings>; see also “How U.S. News Calculates the Best High School Rankings: <https://www.usnews.com/education/best-high-schools/articles/how-us-news-calculated-the-rankings>

Capital Prep’s performance across all three of its schools compares unfavorably to New Rochelle High School, which received a **74.4%** ranking by *US News and World Report*.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, New Rochelle High School is designated as “Award Winning” due to its “educational excellence”



## New Rochelle High School

265 Clove Rd, New Rochelle, New York | (914) 576-4502 | 🏆 Award Winning ⓘ

New Rochelle High School's high ranking earned it eligibility to display a U.S. News Best High School Award Badge. Badge eligibility recognizes educational excellence, as described [here](#). Officials at badge-eligible schools can learn how to promote their awards [here](#).

§§§

By every indicator, Capital Prep fails to make the grade.

### Graduation Rates

The New York State Education Department (NYSED) reports the following four-year graduation rate for the Capital Prep Harlem charter school (2022-2023 data). Capital Prep Bronx has not had a graduating class:

Capital Prep Harlem 4-year graduation rate: 57%<sup>32</sup>

Capital Prep Bronx has not had a graduating class.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.usnews.com/education/best-high-schools/new-york/districts/new-rochelle-city-school-district/new-rochelle-high-school-13907>. Note that *US News and World Report* does not rank the school district of New Rochelle.

<sup>32</sup> <https://data.nysed.gov/profile.php?instid=80000084243>

<sup>33</sup> As noted previously, this is according to the National Center for Education Statistics, the Capital Prep Bronx School has students in grades 6-10. [https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/school\\_list.asp?Search=1&DistrictID=3601223](https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/school_list.asp?Search=1&DistrictID=3601223)

The *U.S. News and World Report* data on Capital Prep’s Harbor School in Connecticut shows a 97% graduation rate. In the case of the Capital Prep Harbor School, enrollment by grade was as follows:<sup>34</sup>

| <b>Grade</b> | <b>Number of Students</b> |
|--------------|---------------------------|
| Grade 11     | 56                        |
| Grade 12     | 43                        |

Recall Dr. Cotto’s scrutiny of the numbers across time: “...looking further into the numbers, it turns out that in 2021-22 there were 56 students in the 11th grade at Capital Prep Harbor Charter School. But this year (2022-23) there are only 43 students in the 12th grade. That’s almost a quarter of the class – 13 students – that did not go from grade 11 to 12? Where did these students go? Did they not fulfill some requirement to get to senior year? Were they pushed out of the school? Did they make another “choice”? In part, this cohort attrition is an issue with how graduation rates are now calculated. But it also shows the limits of simple numerical claims of success.” If these thirteen “drop out” students are included in the base for calculating graduation rates, the graduation rate for Capital prep Harbor Charter School falls to 74%.

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The New York State Education Department (NYSED) reports the following four-year graduation rate for the New Rochelle Public High School (2022-2023 data):

New Rochelle Public School 4-year graduation rate: 83%<sup>35</sup>

In 2022, the District of New Rochelle formed a 28-person task force comprised of including parents, students, community members, plus school and central office staff to assess the “African American/Latino Opportunity Gap” and offer specific recommendations to address the


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<sup>34</sup> <https://www.usnews.com/education/best-high-schools/connecticut/districts/capital-preparatory-harbor-sc/capital-preparatory-harbor-school-153311>

<sup>35</sup> <https://data.nysed.gov/profile.php?instid=80000035159>

identified gaps.<sup>36</sup> Combining 4-year, 5-year and 6-year graduation rates for three cohorts of New Rochelle High School students, the task force discovered relatively impressive rates for Black/African American (90% graduation rate over the three cohorts) and white students (95%), while Hispanic/Latinx students graduated at lower rates (80% over the three cohorts).

## Detailed Graduation Data



|                                  | Cohort 1   |            |               | Cohort 2   |            |               | Cohort 3   |            |               |
|----------------------------------|------------|------------|---------------|------------|------------|---------------|------------|------------|---------------|
|                                  | Total      | #          | %             | Total      | #          | %             | Total      | #          | %             |
| <b>Black or African American</b> | <b>200</b> | <b>181</b> | <b>90.50%</b> | <b>203</b> | <b>177</b> | <b>87.19%</b> | <b>199</b> | <b>184</b> | <b>92.46%</b> |
| FRL: YES                         | 108        | 97         | 89.81%        | 97         | 82         | 84.54%        | 95         | 85         | 89.47%        |
| Unknown                          | 92         | 84         | 91.30%        | 106        | 95         | 89.62%        | 104        | 99         | 95.19%        |
| <b>Hispanic or Latinx</b>        | <b>355</b> | <b>288</b> | <b>81.13%</b> | <b>349</b> | <b>272</b> | <b>77.94%</b> | <b>363</b> | <b>292</b> | <b>80.44%</b> |
| FRL: YES                         | 230        | 191        | 83.04%        | 265        | 211        | 79.62%        | 264        | 219        | 82.95%        |
| Unknown                          | 125        | 97         | 77.60%        | 84         | 61         | 72.62%        | 99         | 73         | 73.74%        |
| <b>White</b>                     | <b>202</b> | <b>191</b> | <b>94.55%</b> | <b>225</b> | <b>216</b> | <b>96.00%</b> | <b>186</b> | <b>176</b> | <b>94.62%</b> |
| FRL: YES                         | 25         | 22         | 88.00%        | 40         | 33         | 82.50%        | 29         | 24         | 82.76%        |
| Unknown                          | 177        | 169        | 95.48%        | 185        | 183        | 98.92%        | 157        | 152        | 96.82%        |
| <b>Totals</b>                    | <b>757</b> | <b>660</b> | <b>87.19%</b> | <b>777</b> | <b>665</b> | <b>85.59%</b> | <b>748</b> | <b>652</b> | <b>87.17%</b> |

www.nred.org | @NewRochelleED | #NewRoSchools

<sup>36</sup> The task force examined a series of data, including graduation rates, Advanced Placement access, special education, attendance, suspensions, and student achievement. See “Task Force Exploring How to Increase Achievement”: <https://www.nred.org/article/714781>

## PROMISES VERSUS REALITIES



**500 Main Street, New Rochelle,  
under construction as a residential building.  
Capital Prep proposes to house its charter school in this building**

### Housing a Charter School

In their application to the Institute, Capital Prep promises to open “initially” in a residential building in downtown New Rochelle, which suggests an impermanent location, which in turn means students would experience disruption with any move to another location.<sup>37</sup>

They write:

“Initially, Capital Prep New Rochelle intends to locate in space at 500 Main St. New Rochelle, NY 10801. Please note that a commitment letter has been provided by the building owner and additional information with site specifics are

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<sup>37</sup> See these links for descriptions of the 500 Main Street residential apartments: <https://homes.westchestergov.com/500-main-street-apartments-new-rochelle/>; <https://newyorkyimby.com/2022/11/construction-breaks-ground-at-500-main-street-in-downtown-new-rochelle.html>

provided in Response 16d. The incubation space, which is equipped with what is necessary at start-up, including ADA compliance, will be located at 500 Main Street. This facility will only be able to accommodate year one enrollment, therefore a team is being led by CPS to identify and secure a more permanent location. The support being provided by CPS will include any necessary site preparation work” (p. 998).

It will be impossible for Capital Prep to open a charter school in the location 500 Main Street, New Rochelle, as described in their application because: *500 Main Street New Rochelle is not zoned for an elementary, middle, or high school.*

According to Paul Vacca, New Rochelle’s Building Commissioner who oversees the Zoning Board, the building is “approved for a Sunday school accessory to the church, not a K-12 school.”<sup>38</sup>

The church referenced by Mr. Vacca is the New York Covenant Church, founded by Senior Pastor David R. Holder, co-applicant (p. 1004) member of the Capital Prep New Rochelle Board of Trustees (p. 948; 949; 994), member of the Capital Prep Charter Schools NY (CPCSNY) education corporation’s Board of Trustees (p. 31; 948). New York Covenant Church owns the building at 500 Main Street, according to the application:

“Co-lead applicant Reverend Dr. David Holder is Founder and Senior Pastor of New York Covenant Church, which has purchased the old REI building at 500 Main Street in downtown New Rochelle as their new location. The church is working to develop a 26 floor apartment building that will offer more than four hundred apartment units, and a new church. The building at 500 Main St. has a planned 2024 opening” (p. 11).

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<sup>38</sup> Information provided via email correspondence 13 November 2024.

The building is still under construction; as of this writing, it is not completed.

Moreover, 500 Main Street is being developed as a *residential* building, housing tenants comprised of 477 households (minimum of 477 individuals; likely to be many more: if all units, households of 2=954 individuals; households of 3=1,431 individuals; households of 4=1,908 individuals). Seventy-five percent (75%) of these apartments will be market rate; 25% will be “affordable” at 50-80% of the area median income.”<sup>39</sup>

As stated in the application, the base rent to be charged by New York Covenant Church to Capital Prep New Rochelle is \$100,000.00 per year (p. 1007). The applicants state that the terms of the lease, including the dollar amount of rent, is nonbinding; that is, it is subject to change. In other words, Reverend Holder’s New York Covenant Church is free to raise the base rent should they choose to do so.

On this matter, it is worthwhile to consider the revelations offered by the authors of an article titled “The Conversation: Charter Schools Exploit Lucrative Loophole That Would Be Easy to Close,” published by the National Education Policy Center and written by education experts Professor of Law Derek Black, Professor Bruce Baker, and Professor Preston Green. They write:

Charter schools regularly sign contracts with little oversight, shuffle money between subsidiaries and cut corners that would never fly in the real world of business or traditional public schools – at least not if the business wanted to stay out of bankruptcy and school officials out of jail.

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<sup>39</sup> “Ideally New Rochelle”: <https://www.ideallynewrochelle.com/grow-here/development-map/500-main-street/>

The authors point to the practice of “self-dealing,” pervasive among charter school operators whether they are for-profit or nonprofit organizations.<sup>40</sup> The practice of “self-dealing” involves “facility leases.” It is a way to make money. To make money, the charter school enters into contracts with a separate entities (that which owns the facility). It is a way, the authors contend, “to make money off of students...a way for ‘nonprofit’ charter schools to take public money and pay their owners...Charter schools run on public money. And right now, that money can be spent almost any way the industry sees fit.”<sup>41</sup>

Below is the page from the application that lists the terms of the lease and includes the nonbinding statement (p. 1007):

This letter summarizes recent discussions with respect to a proposed lease for the premises described below, and is not intended to be binding, but only expresses the basis upon which we would be interested in negotiating the lease. The parties acknowledge that this letter is intended to outline initial terms for consideration only and that no party shall be obligated contractually hereunder.

|                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| Property                | 500 Main Street, New Rochelle, NY 10801  |
| Premises                | First and second floors of the building (approximately 15,000 sq. feet)  |
| Landlord                | New York Covenant Church, Inc.   |
| Charter Contingency     | The Lease shall be contingent upon the Ed Corp obtaining issuance of a new charter from SUNY.  |
| Tenant                  | Capital Prep Charter Schools NY (“Ed Corp”) – to be subleased to Capital Prep New Rochelle (“Designated Subtenant”)  |
| Access                  | Tenant and Designated Subtenant to have access to the Premises 24 hours/day; 7 days/week.  |
| Permitted Use           | The operation of a charter school and related educational use (to be further set forth in the lease).  |
| Term                    | July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026, with option to extend  |
| Base Rent               | \$100,000.00 per year  |
| Real Estate Taxes       | N/A  |
| Utilities               | Tenant is responsible for the payment of Tenant’s share of utilities.  |
| Security Deposit        | TBD  |
| Maintenance and Repairs | Landlord is responsible for structural repairs to the building only, unless need for same is caused by an act or omission of the Tenant. Tenant is responsible for the maintenance and repair of the Premises as defined further in the Lease. |
| Cleaning:               | Tenant shall be responsible for cleaning of its Premises and removal of its garbage from the building.   |
| Insurance Requirements  | Consistent with typical insurance carried by a New York State charter school, subject to commercially reasonable/standard increases (to be further set forth in the Lease).  |

<sup>40</sup> Recall that Dr. Cotto also made reference to “self-dealing” in his analysis of Capital Prep’s operations in Connecticut.

<sup>41</sup> Black, Derek W., Bruce D. Baker and Preston. “The Conversation: Charter Schools Exploit Lucrative Loophole That Would Be Easy to Close.” National Education Policy Center. February 19, 2019. Accessed 11 December 2024.

<https://nepc.colorado.edu/blog/charter-schools-exploit>

Despite the potentially problematic interwoven connections between the parties involved in the proposed Capital Prep New Rochelle, the applicants promise there is no “facility-related conflicts of interest” as indicated in the following statement (p. 1004):

“The incubation space located at 500 Main Street is owned by New York Covenant Inc., a 501c3 organization. Dr. Holder, co-lead applicant and CPCSNY Board Trustee, is the founder and senior pastor of the church. There is no compensation for Dr. Holder associated with the proposed lease and he is not personally an owner of the space. Dr. Holder is prepared to publicly recuse himself from facilities related discussions and votes to ensure transparency and avoid the appearance of there being a conflict. Capital Prep has been, and will continue to be, advised by legal counsel regarding this arrangement and will continue to operate in accordance with applicable legal and best practices.”

On the matter of facilities alone—the lack of a proper site (i.e., that a school would be located in a residential building) and a properly zoned building to house the proposed publicly funded yet deeply privatized school in New Rochelle—this application should have been rejected on grounds that Capital Prep cannot fulfill the general requirements to “meet the same health and safety requirements applicable to the public schools.”<sup>42</sup>

Beyond the problems with the proposed facility, the intricate and intimate ties between Reverend Holder, New York Covenant Church, and the proposed site for the charter school in a building owned by said church, it is impossible to trust in the promise of “no conflict of interest.”

In contrast, the City School District of New Rochelle, an entity that is not the possession of an individual, a private, nonprofit or for-profit

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<sup>42</sup> New York State Charter Schools Act of 1998 (p. 21).

corporation, or a private religious organization, owns the buildings that house ten schools: the New Rochelle High School, two middle schools (Isaac Young and Albert Leonard), and 7 elementary schools (Barnard, Columbus, Webster, Davis, Jefferson, Trinity, and Ward). The District rents the space from Monroe College that houses The Huguenot Academy, serving those New Rochelle high school students who need a small, supportive, tailored educational program (in the range of 60-75 students).

In these school spaces, the City School District of New Rochelle serves nearly 10,000 students (K-12).

### **On Accountability: The “Board of Trustees”**

Capital Prep New Rochelle would be managed by Capital Preparatory Schools, Inc., a charter management corporation. The corporation has a board: the Capital Prep Charter Schools New York Board of Trustees “the CPCSNY Board”).

As detailed in the SUNY Charter Schools Institute’s “Summary of Reverend Holder is one of seven members of the Board of Trustees of Capital Prep Charter Schools New York. The Summary also lists the other members of the proposed board and their professional titles and affiliations:<sup>43</sup>

The other members of the proposed board are:

- Baye Adofo-Wilson, Esq. Real Estate Developer and co-applicant.
- Steve Perry, EdD., Founder and Head of Schools of Capital Preparatory Schools, Inc.
- Danique Day, BA, Chief Schools Officer, Ascend Charter Schools.

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<sup>43</sup> <https://www.suny.edu/about/leadership/board-of-trustees/meetings/webcastdocs/CapPrepNewRochelleSOF.pdf>

- Derek Ferguson, MBA, Chief Administrative Officer, Teachers Insurance and Annuity Association of America (TIAA).
- Tarik A. Brooks, MBA, President, Combs Global.
- Rochelle Brown, BA, co-founder, Executive Producer, and Co-CEO of Powerhouse Productions.

Note that Mr. Brooks holds the key executive position of Combs Global, “a portfolio of businesses and investments built and cultivated by Sean ‘Diddy’ Combs.” Mr. Ferguson was, at an earlier point in his career, “the Chief Growth Officer and CFO of Combs Enterprises, where he managed various business ventures and brands on behalf of Sean ‘Diddy’ Combs.”<sup>44</sup> The ties between Mr. Combs and Capital Prep’s Harlem Charter School and Capital Prep’s Bronx Charter School are previously noted in this report.

The seven members of the proposed Capital Prep New Rochelle Board of Trustees are also members of the Board of Trustees that oversee Capital Prep Harlem Charter School and Capital Prep Bronx Charter School.

Other than Reverend Holder, it seems that none of the other six members of the Board of Trustees of the proposed Capital Prep New Rochelle live in New Rochelle (Internet searches suggest that Baye Adofo-Wilson lives in New Jersey; Tarik Brooks in Miami, Danique Day in Manhattan; Derek Ferguson in Stamford, Connecticut; Rochelle Brown in New Jersey; Steve Perry, unknown).

Most disturbing is that Capital Prep’s Board of Trustees is private and privately selected, and they hold private meetings. They are not chosen by vote of New Rochelle residents and are not accountable to the local community. This stands in contrast to the

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<sup>44</sup> “TIAA Names Derek Ferguson Chief Administrative Officer.” *Diversity Global Magazine*. <https://diversityglobal.com/web/Article?id=TIAA-Names-Derek-Ferguson-Chief-Administrative-Officer-4211>

Board of Education of the New Rochelle School District, each member of which *is elected* by New Rochelle citizen-voters. The Board of Education is accountable to New Rochelle residents and is required to hold public meetings.

## **About the Teachers**

The requirement in New York State to teach in a public school is as follows:

All teachers employed in the public schools in New York State must hold a valid certificate issued in accordance with Sections 3001 and 3009 of Education Law and Part 80 of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education. Section 3001 establishes that no one is authorized to teach in a public school without a teaching certificate, and Section 3009 clearly states that unqualified teachers cannot be paid with district funds. Part 80 contains certification requirements for classroom teaching, administrative/ supervisory and pupil personnel (school) service titles. The Office of Teaching Initiatives at the State Education Department is responsible for certifying teachers in New York State.<sup>45</sup>

There are two types of certification:

1. Initial certificates (provisional or entry level). These are valid for five years with the possibility of two certificate reissuances.
2. Professional certificates (permanent). The requirements of the professional teaching certificate, teachers must: have three years of teaching experience, with one year as a mentored experience;

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<sup>45</sup> Source: "Fact Sheet 24-3 Teacher Certification in New York." NYSEG. February 24, 2024. Accessed 7 December 2024. <https://www.nysut.org/resources/all-listing/research/fact-sheets/fact-sheet-teacher-certification-in-new-york-state#:~:text=All%20teachers%20employed%20in%20the,of%20the%20Commissioner%20of%20Education>.

successful completion of a Master's degree; and completed of a 6-hour training program.<sup>46</sup>

The certification requirements for charter schools in New York State are looser. With significant exceptions, charter schools have the same certification requirements as traditional public schools (teachers must be certified by New York State in a particular subject area).<sup>47</sup> However,

"...exceptions in the law allow a charter school to employ up to 15 uncertified teachers who fit within the following three categories: 1) five teachers (or 30% of the teachers in a charter school, whichever is less); 2) five uncertified teachers of mathematics, science, computer science, technology, or career and technical education; and 3) five additional teachers."<sup>48</sup>

In its application, Capital Prep refers to teachers as "illuminators." They also makes references to teacher shortages, as noted in this paragraph:

"Capital Prep places an emphasis on having two instructors in the classroom whenever possible, with inclusion illuminators alongside the general classroom illuminator. In the current environment of severe shortages of certified teachers, co-teaching in the classroom is often accomplished through the deployment of high-quality teaching assistants, especially at the elementary level. When appropriate, certified inclusion illuminators or ENL illuminators will be pushing-in regularly. As schools continue to grapple with staffing shortages the network will continue to adjust its approach in this area, demonstrating problem-solving and empathy, in order to find

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Charter School Office. "Charter School Parent Guide." New York State Board of Regents, State Education Department. November 2021. Accessed 7 December 2024. <https://www.nysed.gov/sites/default/files/programs/charter-schools/parents-guide-to-charter-schools-in-nys-10-2021.pdf>

<sup>48</sup> Ibid: 20.

ways to make co-teaching work despite human resource challenges” (p. 769).

The matter of teacher shortages in New York State was discussed at the New York State School Boards Association’s summer 2024 conference in a research-based presentation.<sup>49</sup> Authors Dr. Justin Gardner and Dr. Matthew Slattery note the importance of salary and benefits to teacher recruitment and retention. They reference Employee Value Proposition (EVP), the benefits offered by an educational institution to attract and keep the best teachers.<sup>50</sup>

According to Capital Prep’s application, proposed teacher wages are \$70K (regular teachers) and \$75K (special ed teachers).

According to Glass Door, a job search and career resource, the total salary range for “Capital Preparatory Schools Illuminator” is \$42K-\$67K, with a median teacher salary of \$53K.<sup>51</sup>

Public school teachers in New Rochelle are represented by the New Rochelle Federation of United School Employees (FUSE), Local 280, AFT/NYSUT.

According to contracts between FUSE and the City School District of New Rochelle, teacher salaries are determined by level of education and longevity in a set of 20 salary steps. According to “SeeThroughNY,” the median teacher salary in New Rochelle is \$128K.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Gardner, Justin and Matthew Slattery. Turning the Tables on the Teacher Shortage. July 11, 2024. Accessed 7 December 2024.

[https://www.nyssba.org/clientuploads/nyssba\\_pdf/Events/lee-2024/teacher-shortage-07112024.pdf](https://www.nyssba.org/clientuploads/nyssba_pdf/Events/lee-2024/teacher-shortage-07112024.pdf)

<sup>50</sup> On EVPs for higher education, see “Data Brief: The Employee Value Proposition in Higher Education.” TIAA Institute. 2023. Accessed 7 December 2024.

[https://www.tiaa.org/content/dam/tiaa/institute/pdf/data-brief/2023-11/2023\\_tiaa\\_institute\\_evp\\_infographic.pdf](https://www.tiaa.org/content/dam/tiaa/institute/pdf/data-brief/2023-11/2023_tiaa_institute_evp_infographic.pdf)

<sup>51</sup> [https://www.glassdoor.com/Salary/Capital-Preparatory-Schools-Illuminator-Salaries-E1561959\\_D\\_KO28,39.htm](https://www.glassdoor.com/Salary/Capital-Preparatory-Schools-Illuminator-Salaries-E1561959_D_KO28,39.htm)

<sup>52</sup> [https://www.seethroughny.net/teacher\\_pay](https://www.seethroughny.net/teacher_pay); “SeeThroughNY” is a service of The Empire Center, a nonprofit that provides data on government entities in New York.

# TEACHER PAY

**− SCHOOL DISTRICT**

New Rochelle City SD X

| District               | County      | 5th ↓ <sup>8</sup> | Median    | 95th      |
|------------------------|-------------|--------------------|-----------|-----------|
| − New Rochelle City SD | Westchester | \$71,270           | \$128,475 | \$150,786 |
|                        | 25th        | \$102,298          |           |           |
|                        | 75th        | \$142,305          |           |           |

In context of teacher shortages in New York, it is highly likely that Capital Prep New Rochelle will be hard-pressed to attract and retain qualified and experienced teachers.

These data are consistent with patterns documented by “OnLabor,” a blog devoted to workers. In a 2023 article titled, “The Promise and Peril of Organizing at Charter Schools,” author Jennifer Berger makes the following relevant observations:

“Charter schools are a relatively more hostile landscape for teachers unions because they may rely on a younger workforce with high turnover rates.... And, according to some reports, aggressive union busting occurs when teachers at charter schools try to organize.”<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Berger, Jennifer. “The Promise and Peril of Organizing at Charter School.” OnLabor. November 29, 2024. Accessed 7 December 2024. <https://onlabor.org/the-promise-and-peril-of-organizing-at-charter-schools/#:~:text=Charter%20schools%20are%20also%20a,charter%20schools%20try%20to%20organize> On “union busting, see Winston, Hella. “How Charter Schools Bust Unions.” Slate. September 19, 2016. Accessed 7 December 2024. <https://slate.com/business/2016/09/the-lengths-that-charter-schools-go-to-when-their-teachers-try-to-form-unions.html>

## Student-Teacher Ratios

Student Teacher Ratios at Capital Prep schools and the New Rochelle School district and New Rochelle’s individual schools show that New Rochelle outperforms Capital Prep. The data are as follows:

### Student Teacher Ratios<sup>54</sup>

| <b>School</b>                        | <b>Student Teacher Ratio</b> |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Capital Prep Harlem                  | <a href="#"><u>11.63</u></a> |
| Capital Prep Bronx                   | <a href="#"><u>15.50</u></a> |
| Capital Prep Harbor                  | <a href="#"><u>19.77</u></a> |
| Henry Barnard Elementary School      | <a href="#"><u>14.70</u></a> |
| Columbus Elementary School           | <a href="#"><u>10.99</u></a> |
| Daniel Webster Elementary School     | <a href="#"><u>13.51</u></a> |
| George M. Davis Elementary School    | <a href="#"><u>11.96</u></a> |
| Jefferson Elementary School          | <a href="#"><u>11.82</u></a> |
| Trinity Elementary School            | <a href="#"><u>14.65</u></a> |
| William B. Ward Elementary School    | <a href="#"><u>14.30</u></a> |
| Isaac E. Young Middle School         | <a href="#"><u>11.23</u></a> |
| Albert Leonard Middle School         | <a href="#"><u>10.56</u></a> |
| New Rochelle High School             | <a href="#"><u>14.11</u></a> |
| <b>Capital Prep Average</b>          | <b>15.63</b>                 |
| <b>New Rochelle District Average</b> | <b>12.78</b>                 |

On this score—as with the other scores already discussed—the question must be asked: What could Capital Prep New Rochelle possibly deliver that is any improvement over what is provided by the New Rochelle public schools?

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<sup>54</sup> Source: National Center for Educational Statistics. For each school listed on the table, the ratio is hyperlinked to the source for that school.

## **Costs: The Drain, the Duplication of Effort, the Waste**

### **What the Research Says**

Scholars Christian Buerger and Robert Bifulco have conducted meta-analyses of data for New York State that examine: “the impact of charter schools on the amount of per pupil expenditures districts spend to achieve a given level of student outcomes; on student composition and enrollment in traditional public schools; and on the effect of changes in student composition and enrollment caused by charter schools on district costs.”<sup>55</sup> Recognizing that, “Since the beginning of the charter school movement, concerns have been raised that charter schools would drain resources from traditional public schools and increase per pupil costs by attracting students that are the least costly to educate,” the authors conducted their study in an effort to assess these concerns (2019:16). They offer the following findings of their review of the literature and from their primary research:

- Most researchers agree that charter schools serve fewer special education students and English language learners than nearby traditional public schools (2019:62).
- Charter schools in New York State have increased the cost of providing education in traditional school districts mainly by increasing the share in district schools of students with disabilities and receiving free lunch (2019:62).
- The findings are consistent with research showing that charter schools in New York State increase the proportion of students in traditional public schools who come from low-income families and who have disabilities, and admit greater shares of high performing students from public schools (2019:16; 2016:5).

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<sup>55</sup> Buerger, Christian and Robert Bifulco. "The Effect of Charter Schools on District Costs and Efficiency: The Case of New York state." Education Research Alliance for New Orleans, New Orleans, 2016: 1-33; Buerger, Christian, and Robert Bifulco. "The Effect of Charter Schools on Districts' Student Composition, Costs, and Efficiency: The Case of New York State." *Economics of Education Review* 69, 2019: 61-72.

Education Economist Dr. Helen Ladd summarizes the fiscal impacts on the public schools as follows:

Charter schools impose fiscal burdens on local districts primarily because the districts cannot easily reduce their spending in proportion to the revenue losses associated with the outflow of students to charters. Many district expenditures are devoted to relatively fixed costs such as school buildings and central services.

Hence, in the absence of new funding, a district would need to cut back its spending on variable inputs such as teachers by a greater percentage than its loss of revenue to the charter schools—thus leading to a reduction in the quality of education for the remaining district students.

Fiscal burdens also arise because charters have little incentive or, in some cases, limited capacity, to serve expensive-to-educate students, such as those with special needs. Charter schools are often able to dissuade the parents of students with the most severe disabilities from enrolling, leaving them to be served by the traditional public schools.

In addition, for similar reasons, limited English proficient students are also often underrepresented in charter schools. In such cases, the underrepresentation means that the district faces a disproportionate share of the burden of educating such students and that such students end up increasingly concentrated in district schools.<sup>56</sup>

Dr. Ladd also points to an additional cost burden; that is, the administrative expenses of running two separate systems exceeds those of running a single unified system.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Ladd, Helen F. "How Charter Schools Threaten the Public Interest." *Journal of Policy Analysis & Management* 38.4, 2019: 1063-1071.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*: 1066.

## **Assessing the Costs to New Rochelle’s Public Schools**

In NYSED’s Financial Transparency Report for the New Rochelle public school (2022-2023), there were 9,909 students, with a per pupil expenditure of \$27,695 (at an approximate nine percent (%) increase in 2024-2025, the per pupil expenditure was approximately \$30K+/-; these data are not yet reported on the NYSED platform).<sup>58</sup> According to NYSED, the per pupil calculations are exclusive of expenditures for: transportation, tuition, debt service, and “other exclusions” such as tuition for students attending BOCES full-time, services provided to nonpublic or charter schools, prekindergarten payments to community-based organizations, and community services.

In its application, Capital Prep proposes to draw 150 students away from the public schools in its first year (2025-2026). By year five (2029-2030) they propose to draw 600 students from the public schools.

***A key question is: what is the amount of public money the charter school would receive from the New Rochelle School District?***

From the Charter School Parent Guide:<sup>59</sup>

The amount of public money a charter school receives depends on the number of students the charter school enrolls. This is called “per pupil funding” (PPF). PPF is determined by the approved operating expense of each student’s district of residence and is set by a formula in state law. If a charter school opts to provide special education services directly, it will receive any state or local aid in proportion to the level of services provided.

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<sup>58</sup> <https://data.nysed.gov/expenditures.php?year=2021&instid=800000035159#mainContent>

<sup>59</sup> Charter School Office, op.cit.: 18-19.

<https://www.nysed.gov/sites/default/files/programs/charter-schools/parents-guide-to-charter-schools-in-nys-10-2021.pdf>

From NYSED’s “Charter School Regulations 119.1”:<sup>60</sup>

(3) The school district financial obligation per resident student enrolled in a charter school shall equal the sum of:  
 (i) the product of the school district's adjusted expense per pupil and the current year enrollment of the pupil in the charter school as defined in paragraph (b)(3) of this section; and (ii) the amounts of State and Federal aid, if any, that may be attributable to such pupil as defined in paragraphs (b)(8) and (9) of this section, or the amount established pursuant to an agreement between the charter school and the charter entity as set forth in the charter.

In its summary document of the Capital Prep Charter Schools NY application, the SUNY Charter Schools Institute identifies the costs to the New Rochelle school district as follows:<sup>61</sup>

| <b>Year</b> | <b>Charter Enrollment (proposed)<sup>62</sup></b> | <b>Basic Charter School Per Pupil Revenue from District</b> | <b>Other District Revenue (SPED, Food Service, Grants, etc.)</b> | <b>Total Amount siphoned from the New Rochelle Public School District</b> |
|-------------|---|---|--|---|
| 2025-2026   | 150   | \$19,153.00   | \$344,525  | <b>\$3.2+ Million</b>   |
| 2029-2030   | 600   | \$19,153.00   | 1,348,142  | <b>\$12.8+ Million</b>  |

<sup>60</sup> NYSED. “Charter School Regulations 119.1.” New York State Education Department. Accessed 8 December 2024. [https://www.nysed.gov/charter-schools/charter-school-regulations-1191#:~:text=\(1\)%20No%20later%20than%20the%20first%20business,pursuant%20to%20subparagraph%20\(i\)%20of%20this%20paragraph](https://www.nysed.gov/charter-schools/charter-school-regulations-1191#:~:text=(1)%20No%20later%20than%20the%20first%20business,pursuant%20to%20subparagraph%20(i)%20of%20this%20paragraph)

<sup>61</sup> “Summary of Findings and Recommendations,” op.cit., p. 10. <https://www.suny.edu/about/leadership/board-of-trustees/meetings/webcastdocs/CapPrepNewRochelleSOF.pdf#:~:text=Notably%2C%20Capital%20Prep%20Harlem%20saw%20a%20significant,by%20the%20end%20of%20the%20charter%20term>

<sup>62</sup> Capital Prep New Rochelle application to the SUNY Charter Schools Institute, p. 1042

It is unknown how the Institute calculates these figures. There is a formula but the formula itself is a mystery, a clear lack of transparency by the SUNY Charter Schools Institute. We do know that for the New Rochelle School District, the per pupil expenditure overall in 2022-2023 was \$27,695.00.<sup>63</sup> If this figure is not the “the school district's adjusted expense per pupil” per the Charter School Regulations 119.1, then how is the district’s adjusted expense per pupil calculated? What specific assumptions are applied to the calculation that brought the Institute to the per pupil figure of \$19,153.00 for the proposed charter school?<sup>64</sup>

Moreover, it seems incorrect that the base per pupil figure for 2025-2026 (as well as “other district revenue”) would remain stagnant over the subsequent four years, as the SUNY Charter Schools Institute indicates. A look at the District’s per pupil expenditures over time show a 5.2% increase in expenditure per year or 21% over the four year period between 2019-2020 and 2022-2023.

| <b>Year</b> | <b>New Rochelle School District Per Pupil Expenditure</b> |
|-------------|---|
| 2022-2023   | \$27,695.00   |
| 2021-2022   | \$26,720.00   |
| 2020-2021   | \$24,640.22   |
| 2019-2020   | \$22,932.93   |

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<sup>63</sup> 2022-2023 is the most recent NYSED “Financial Transparency Report.” The Financial Transparency Report for the New Rochelle District is here: <https://data.nysed.gov/expenditures.php?year=2023&instid=800000035159>

<sup>64</sup> Buerger and Bifulco, op.cit.: 63. The authors write, “A charter school's primary source of funding in New York State is per pupil payments from the districts in which their students reside. The amount a district pays per student is equal to the approved operating expenses per pupil in the district. Also, charter schools receive additional funding for students with disabilities from the district. The additional weight students with disabilities receive in the funding formula varies between 1.65 for students with severe disabilities and 0.9 for students with less severe disabilities. Further, the districts provide textbooks, software, transportation, health and special education evaluation services to charter schools (NYS Charter School Law Subsection 2853).”

Moreover, a look at the payments to charter schools by the public school districts of Mt. Vernon and Yonkers over time show that since 2014-15 to 2023-24, the payments doubled, collectively going from over \$15 million to nearly \$29 million in ten years.<sup>65</sup>

**Payments to Charter Schools-Mt. Vernon & Yonkers Districts**

| Code   | District     | 2023-24           | 2022-23           | 2021-22           | 2020-21           | 2019-20           | 2018-19           | 2017-18           | 2016-17           | 2015-16           | 2014-15           |
|--------|--------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| 660900 | MOUNT VERNON | 12,120,000        | 10,615,234        | 9,401,841         | 8,687,007         | 9,089,008         | 7,909,274         | 7,165,630         | 6,658,253         | 6,975,904         | 6,660,406         |
| 662300 | YONKERS      | 16,700,000        | 15,744,411        | 14,833,877        | 13,866,020        | 13,188,126        | 11,669,084        | 9,713,809         | 9,393,354         | 9,301,574         | 8,502,247         |
|        | <b>Total</b> | <b>28,820,000</b> | <b>26,359,645</b> | <b>24,235,718</b> | <b>22,553,027</b> | <b>22,277,134</b> | <b>19,578,358</b> | <b>16,879,439</b> | <b>16,051,607</b> | <b>16,277,478</b> | <b>15,162,653</b> |

***Given the costs of a charter school at the expense of the public schools, the next key question is: And for what?***

This report has already documented the deeply problematic claims put forth by Capital Prep in its application to the SUNY Charter Schools Institute.

It is incomprehensible that even one penny of public taxpayer money would be funneled to Capital Preparatory Schools, Incorporated.

In terms of its proposed curriculum plans for a school in New Rochelle, Capital Prep also makes promises it is unlikely to fulfill, and in the process disrupting children’s lives and disappointing parents. In 30 pages of the application, Capital Prep describes its curriculum plans (pp. 748-781). Borrowing templates from Capital Prep’s other charter schools, the plan is nothing more than a wish list. The educational goals and added-value social supports are what anyone would want for all our children.

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<sup>65</sup> Source: New York State United Teachers (NYSUT) Research Department, provided by New Rochelle FUSE. The Research Department also clarified the relationship between district payments and charter school enrollment: “The charter school payments are made every two months based on enrollment so if the student is there during that two month period, the charter school gets that money. [If and therefore] after they leave, they will not be counted toward the enrollment for a payment to be made. So the school district would not owe the money if the student were no longer enrolled [in the charter school].”

On the basis of Capital Prep's history and poor performance, it is clear that Capital Prep New Rochelle does not have the expertise, capacity, skills, resources, equipment, space, and qualified personnel to provide the wonderful education it promises to deliver.

In contrast, the New Rochelle Public School District has the infrastructure, the expertise, the capacity, the skills, resources, equipment, space, and qualified personnel to serve New Rochelle students, even as there is always room for improvement.

The claim that the proposed charter school will serve the underserved, increase graduation rates, offer better curricular and extra-curricular offerings than are already provided in New Rochelle are simply untrue.

A look at the proposed "Action Plan" the corporation intends to undertake in order to open a charter school in New Rochelle reveals the absurd redundancy of starting a school from scratch in this city (pp. 1538-1539). An instance of wasteful duplication of effort, the proposed Capital Prep New Rochelle charter school would be worthy of the Golden Fleece Award, bestowed upon those individuals and entities that squander public money.

Indeed, in its application, even Capital Prep acknowledges that "...the City School District of New Rochelle often is recognized as having effective programs and results" (p. 10).

### **Admissions: Illogics, Contradictions, False Promises**

Capital Prep bases its main rationale on a claim that the charter school will serve the families currently underserved by the City School District of New Rochelle, who they define as students who are economically disadvantaged, nonwhite, and speak heritage languages other than English" (p. 10).

In the same breath, Capital Prep promises a nondiscriminatory and nonsectarian policy: "Admission will not be limited on the basis of intellectual ability, measures of achievement or aptitude, athletic

ability, disability, race, creed, gender, national origin, religion or ancestry” (p. 10) (the Charter Schools Institute required Capital Prep to add the word “ethnicity” to this list).<sup>66</sup>

And in another same breath, Capital Prep intends to admit students via a lottery:

New students admitted will be limited to pupils entering into grades to the CPCSNY School to which they apply, subject to the availability of open seats within each grade and the School. Students will gain access through a blind, open lottery system with preference given to returning students and those with siblings; however, the admission criteria, outlined above, will still have to be met. All students residing in New York State are eligible to apply. In addition, consistent with the Charter Schools Act, each School will offer (a) a preference to students who live in the community school district (“CSD”) in which the School is located, and (b) a preference provided to children of the employees of the School or charter management organization, provided that students admitted under this preference will be limited to 15% of a School's total enrollment.”

Unless Capital Prep knows in advance who they would intend to accept into the New Rochelle charter school, it is impossible for them to hold a lottery and serve those they label the “underserved” in New Rochelle, and be nondiscriminatory in their acceptance policy.

***The question is: which is it?***

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<sup>66</sup> “RFP Requests. R-05d – Admissions Policy. Please revise the non-discrimination statement to include ‘ethnicity’.” In a SUNY Charter Schools Institute document titled “Request for Amendments to the Proposal...” September 4, 2024. Obtained on 11 December 2024 via FOIL request.

Will they serve New Rochelle’s economically disadvantaged, nonwhite students, and those who speak heritage languages other than English who are underserved or will they hold a lottery?

Will they serve New Rochelle’s economically disadvantaged, nonwhite students, and those who speak heritage languages other than English or will they be nondiscriminatory by race/ethnicity, heritage, national origin/heritage?

In New Rochelle, they can’t have it all three ways.

§§§

Unlike the demographics of the census districts and the school districts within which are located Capital Prep’s Harlem and Bronx schools, the demographic profile of the City of New Rochelle is significantly different. The proportion of nonwhites in New Rochelle is much smaller than in the catchment areas of the Harlem and Bronx charter schools as the following data show:

Capital Preparatory Harlem Charter School is located in the Manhattan School District 5.<sup>67</sup> The demographic profile of Manhattan’s School District 5 is as follows:

**School District 5 by race/ethnicity**<sup>68</sup>

| <b>Race/Ethnicity</b>  | <b>Percentage</b> |
|------------------------|-------------------|
| Black/African American | 43%               |
| Hispanic/Latino        | 40%               |
| White                  | 9%                |
| Multiracial            | 2%                |

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<sup>67</sup> Source: <https://schoolsearch.schools.nyc/>

<sup>68</sup> Source: <https://data.nysed.gov/enrollment.php?year=2024&instid=800000047161>

Further, the demographics of the census tract in which Capital Prep Harlem is located shows that 83% of the population is designated “minority” with 25% living below the poverty line.<sup>69</sup>

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Capital Preparatory Bronx Charter School is located in School District 11.<sup>70</sup> The demographic profile of School District 11 is as follows:

**School District 11 by race/ethnicity**<sup>71</sup>

| <b>Race/Ethnicity</b>  | <b>Percentage</b> |
|------------------------|-------------------|
| Black/African American | 33%               |
| Hispanic/Latino        | 46%               |
| White                  | 10%               |
| Asian                  | 9%                |
| Multiracial            | 1%                |

Further, the demographics of the census tract in which Capital Prep Bronx is located shows that 94% of the population is designated “minority” with 8% living below the poverty line.<sup>72</sup>

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According to the US census, the demographics of the City of New Rochelle show the following: 42% White, not Hispanic; 48% White; 19% Black/African American; 31% Hispanic/Latino; and 13% Two or more races, with 11% living below the poverty line (see next page).<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Source: <https://geomap.ffiec.gov/ffiecgeomap/>

<sup>70</sup> Source: <https://schoolsearch.schools.nyc/>

<sup>71</sup> Source:

<https://data.nysed.gov/enrollment.php?year=2024&instid=800000046011>

<sup>72</sup> Source: <https://geomap.ffiec.gov/ffiecgeomap/>

<sup>73</sup> Source: <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/newrochellecitynewyork>

## **New Rochelle School district by race/ethnicity<sup>74</sup>**

| <b>Race/Ethnicity</b>  | <b>Percentage</b> |
|------------------------|-------------------|
| Black/African American | 19%               |
| Hispanic/Latino        | 53%               |
| White                  | 22%               |
| Asian                  | 4%                |
| Multiracial            | 2%                |

The question is: How can the charter school possibly address New Rochelle “disparity gaps” when any child, regardless of economic status, race/ethnicity, and background (as required by law), can submit to the lottery?

### **Retention**

An important indicator that a charter school is meeting its promises and serving its students is *retention*. Based on the data provided in Capital Prep’s application, it appears they have difficulty retaining students, as the following shows (p. 8):

In school year 2020-2021, CP Harlem had 501 students eligible to return. By 2022-2023, the number of students eligible to return fell to 232, *a drop of 269 students (56%) over a three year period.*

In school year 2021-2022, CP Bronx had 198 students eligible to return. By 2022-2023, the number of students eligible to return fell to 174, *a drop of 24 students (12%) over a three year period.*

In school year 2020-2021, CP Harbor had 760 students eligible to return. By 2022-2023, the number of students eligible to return fell to 574, *a drop of 186 students (24%) over a three year period.*

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<sup>74</sup> Source:

<https://data.nysed.gov/enrollment.php?year=2024&instid=80000035159>

For the vast majority, students who leave or who dropped from a charter school go back to their district public school. Professor Helen Ladd explains, "Charter students may return to the district schools for a variety of reasons including a mismatch between the needs of the student and the approach of the charter school, high rates of school suspension, or the closure of the school. In contrast to the charter schools, the district is responsible for assuring adequate capacity for *all* students."<sup>75</sup>

### **Welcoming All: A Core Mandate of Public Schools**

According to NYSED data, New Rochelle High School enrollment by grade in 2022-2023 was as follows: Grade 11: 712 students; Grade 12: 752 students.<sup>76</sup>

What do these public school enrollment numbers mean? What is the deepest meaning of the public school? We might adapt from the famous poem by Robert Frost on "home":<sup>77</sup>

Yes, what else but the public school?

The public school is the place where, when you have to go there,  
They have to take you in.


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<sup>75</sup> Helen Ladd, op.cit., p. 1066.

<sup>76</sup> <https://data.nysed.gov/enrollment.php?year=2023&instid=800000035130>

<sup>77</sup> "The Death of the Hired Man" by Robert Frost. The Poetry Foundation:  
<https://www.studocu.com/en-us/document/mercer-university/writing-the-long-story/the-death-of-the-hired-man-by-robert-frost-poetry-foundation/88260158>

# Conduct Unbecoming: The SUNY Charter Schools Committee



**SUNY** Charter Schools Institute  
The State University of New York

## Charter Schools Committee

The Board of Trustees is the governing body of the State University of New York. The Charter Schools Committee is a subcommittee of the Board of Trustees that oversees SUNY authorized charter schools. The Committee approves or denies charter applications, revisions and renewals, administers a statewide charter school grant program, and sets SUNY charter school policies and standards. [Committee description](#).

- **Committee Chair:** Joseph W. Belluck
- **Member:** Eric Corngold
- **Member:** Marcos Crespo
- **Member:** Eunice Lewin
- **Member:** Edward Spiro
- **Member (ex officio):** Dr. Merryl H. Tisch, Chair, SUNY Board of Trustees

The weak evidence Capital Prep presented throughout their application is complemented by an insidious, false, divisive, negative narrative about New Rochelle public schools and by unsubstantiated assertions—some are full out fabrications—made by Capital Prep representatives in the taped, in-person meeting with the Charter Schools Committee members held on 9 October 2024 at the SUNY Charter Schools Institute offices. The taped meeting can be seen and heard here (the relevant portion begins at 52:20 and runs through 86:00): <https://sunysystem.video.yuja.com/V/Video?v=11383416&node=50546960&a=160798885>

We are left to wonder: Why did the Charter Schools Committee approve the application without questioning the dubious claims put forth by the applicants?

Considering that three of the six members of the Charter Schools Committee are attorneys (Mr. Belluck, Mr. Corngold and Mr. Spiro), it is deeply concerning that not a one asked the most basic question, "By what evidence?"

Considering what is at stake, "by what evidence," a phrase we invoke repeatedly, ought to have been a core concern of the Charter Schools Committee as they evaluated a charter school proposal and as they interviewed proposal applicants and their advocates.

In what follows are a sample of direct quotes by Capital Prep representatives at the October 9<sup>th</sup> meeting with the Charter Schools Committee. These quotes are followed by our examination of the assertions, presenting actual facts, showing the ease with which false assertions are left uncontested, and revealing the danger to our children and our community of the divisive, demonizing narrative crafted in the name of "choice."

Speaker: Steve Perry<sup>78</sup>

The disparity between the performance of African American children in the New Rochelle school, and the white children is pretty stark. See? Troubling, to say the least. You can see quite frankly, as ***African American children stay in New Rochelle's public schools, the longer they stay, the less of them are proficient specifically in math. By the time you see them in the 8th grade*** they go from about 35% in the 7th and 6th grade ***to about 10%***. So ***90% of the children were African American are now, by the time they hit high school, not proficient***. Meanwhile, during that same time, ***African American children specifically in our schools, both catch and exceed the performance of the children of New Rochelle.***

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<sup>78</sup> Time point: 00:05:42.540 --> 00:06:31.769

### **The Facts: 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Proficiency in Math**

According to NYSED data, 71% of the Black/African American students in Albert Leonard Middle School did not take the proficiency test in math in 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Among those who did, the proficiency level was **18%** (2023-2024 data).<sup>79</sup>

According to NYSED data, 57% of the Black/African American students in Isaac Young Middle School did not take the proficiency test in math in 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Among those who did, the proficiency level was **21%** (2023-2024 data).<sup>80</sup>

Combining the two middle schools, the proficiency score in math for Black/African American students in the New Rochelle Public Schools is: **19.5%**

According to NYSED data, 53% of the Black/African American students in the Capital Prep Bronx Charter School did not take the proficiency test in math in 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Among those who did, the proficiency level was **22%** (2023-2024 data).<sup>81</sup>

According to NYSED data, the Capital Prep Harlem Charter School 8<sup>th</sup> grade proficiency level in math overall was: **8%** (2023-2024 data). In 8<sup>th</sup> grade at the Capital Prep Harlem Charter School, there were 19 students altogether: 12 Black/African American students (63% or nearly two out of three students; 6 students are Hispanic/Latino). Three of the 12 Black/African American students were not tested (25%).<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Source:

<https://data.nysed.gov/essa.php?instid=800000035128&year=2024&createreport=1&38MATH=1>

<sup>80</sup> Source:

<https://data.nysed.gov/essa.php?instid=800000035129&year=2024&createreport=1&38MATH=1>

<sup>81</sup> Source:

<https://data.nysed.gov/essa.php?instid=800000090780&year=2024&createreport=1&38MATH=1>

<sup>82</sup> Source:

<https://data.nysed.gov/essa.php?instid=800000084243&year=2024&createreport=1&38MATH=1>

Combining the two schools, the proficiency score in math for Black/African American students in Capital Prep Charter Schools is **14%**.

It is ironic that in the course of the meeting, Dr. Perry offered double talk about truth and the "outright lies" he says are told by those in New Rochelle who object to the charter school.<sup>83</sup> Without blinking an eye, he asserts that "...the root of a lot of the opposition is not based in fact."<sup>84</sup>

The facts reveal that Dr. Perry's assertions are simply not true. His charter schools do not "catch and exceed" the performance of New Rochelle public school students. Indeed, it is deeply troubling that he can sit in a meeting and assert falsehoods about the performance of his charter schools at the same time creating a false and demonizing narrative about the New Rochelle public schools. It is deeply troubling that none of the Charter Schools Committee members probed Dr. Perry's assertions with the basic question: "By what evidence?"

Also disturbing was a statement made following Dr. Perry's false assertions by who appears to be Charter Schools Committee's ex-officio member Merryl H. Tisch. She made the unsubstantiated, unfair, and prejudicial comment that "...the new Rochelle school district [has] been in decline for 20 years." Our question to her: "By what evidence?"

Further, Dr. Tisch insinuated that the New Rochelle public school is engaging in negligent, improper, and/or illegal activity. Her exact words: "We call it malpractice of a school district," a charge that is insulting and unfair given the great accomplishments of the New Rochelle public schools. It is also an unethical comment from a member of a committee charged with giving serious and thoughtful attention to evaluating a proposed project that has potentially grave

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<sup>83</sup> Time point: 00:20:13.610 --> 00:20:32.670

<sup>84</sup> Time point: 00:22:00.860 -00:22:25.779

impacts on the public school and on the entire New Rochelle community.<sup>85</sup>

Given Capital Prep's failure to live up to its promises, why hasn't the SUNY Charter Schools Institute, which is responsible for monitoring and approving charter schools, lived up to its own responsibility in holding the charter school accountable?

These quotes, less than ten minutes into the meeting, reveal the performative objective of the meeting in producing and reproducing a distorted narrative to justify the Institute's terrible decision to endorse Capital Prep New Rochelle.

Speaker: Sharon Footes<sup>86</sup>

What is happening in the Rochelle is the Hispanic population is rising amongst a bunch of other people. Right? Because we're a sanctuary city. **We are now 28% Latino to our 26% New Rochelle, I mean to our 26% indigenous Black folks right?** And who is failing now is, I'm just capturing this moment, who is failing now, and it's intentional because a Black student can go to any school in New Rochelle and still fail. That is either extremely rare, or it is intentional. And I'm talking about five of the better schools. **Black students are failing. This is not that of Latino students, because Latino students are actually graduating from high school. Black students are not.**

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<sup>85</sup> Time point: 00:09:05.500 --> 00:09:14.609.

<sup>86</sup> Time Point: 00:10:04.390 --> 00:11:05.660. Ms. Foote states that she is president of the PTA in New Rochelle, which is untrue. She is the PTA Vice President for the Huguenot Academy, which serves approximately 60-75 New Rochelle high school students.

## The Facts

According to the U.S. Census, New Rochelle is comprised of 19.4% Black/African Americans and 30.6% Hispanic/Latino.

### New Rochelle Population: Black/African Americans and Hispanics/Latinos

| Source                            | Information/Claim  |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| United State Census <sup>87</sup> | 19.4% Black/African Americans<br>30.6% Hispanics/Latinos |
| Sharon Footes                     | 26% indigenous Black folks<br>28% Latino                 |

### New Rochelle High School Graduation Rates (as of August 2023)<sup>88</sup>

| Race/Ethnic Group               | Information/Claim |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|
| Black/African American students | 88%               |
| Hispanic/Latino students        | 79%               |

NYSED data is consistent with data gathered by the 2022 District of New Rochelle task force noted previously in this report. Combining four-year, five-year and six-year graduation rates for three cohorts of New Rochelle High School students, these are the graduation rates for Black/African American students: 90%; Hispanic/Latinx students: 80%.

As these data show, Ms. Footes makes false statements that went uncontested by the Charter Schools Committee. No one from the Committee asked: "By what evidence?"

Beyond these falsities, Ms. Footes articulates an ethnically, racialized divisive narrative—it's them (the Latino "invasion" into New Rochelle) versus us (New Rochelle's indigenous Black/African Americans). This narrative reveals an underlying intent and highly likely consequence of the proposed charter school to increase racial segregation in New Rochelle, not lessen it.

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<sup>87</sup> <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/newrochellecitynewyork>

<sup>88</sup> <https://data.nysed.gov/gradrate.php?year=2023&instid=80000035130>

Education sociologist Amy Stuart Wells and colleagues have documented this pattern in the article, "The More Things Change, the More They Stay the Same: The Resegregation of Public Schools Via Charter School Reform." The authors write, "We conclude that the current school choice and market-based school reform education policies lead to more, and not less racial, ethnic and cultural segregation as the segmented market does its job. The losers are the children and our democracy within a diverse and increasingly divided nation."<sup>89</sup>

In this portion of the meeting, Ms. Footes, who lost an election by New Rochelle voters to serve on the District of New Rochelle Board of Education, is given the floor for approximately eight minutes, 25% of the whole meeting's time (she also speaks again at a later point). In this portion alone, Ms. Footes makes unsubstantiated, false, and derogatory statements that attack our teachers and the public schools, which she then ties to the "need" for the charter school. She falsely attributes the objection to the charter school expressed by parents, community members teachers, school administrators, the Board of Education members, and political leaders to financial interests ("follow the money"), which is illogical, divisive, and untrue. Her false, insulting, distorted and outrageous statements include but are not limited to:

"...**our community is failing**. And when kids don't graduate they stand out on the street and they become our problem. So Capital Prep. **The need for Capital Prep to be in New Rochelle** in this way to me as a New Rochelle resident is major.

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<sup>89</sup> Wells, Amy Stuart, Abbey Keener, Leana Cabral, Deana Cordova-Cobo. "The More Things Change, the More They Stay the Same: The Resegregation of Public Schools Via Charter School Reform.": *Peabody Journal of Education*, 94 (5), 2019: 471–492.

"I drove by New Rochelle high school this morning before I came here, and I'm just going to say that y'all are going to say yes, but I went by and I said, Oh, my gosh! **I looked at these 9th graders, and** I kid you not. I said, you guys don't know the fight that had to happen in order for you guys to see a better future, **because when those students walk into their school in New Rochelle** like you said, you're familiar with beautiful campus, all of our schools. We have amazing looking schools...that **these kids are not happy going to school.**"

"**Follow the money.** New Rochelle is the New Rochelle school district is the largest paying entity in New Rochelle. Your average teacher makes a hundred plus thousand a year, right? And then there's like a 27% gap from the school district, the police department than that of the fire department than that of the DPW. Right? And if you work for DPW. You can barely afford to work to live in the city of New Rochelle. If you work as a police officer for 4 or 5 years, you can barely afford to work on a single income in New Rochelle as a teacher in New Rochelle in your first 5 years."

"**We're talking about money.** We're not. We're not talking about doing what's right. So the pushback is exactly that, because if I made \$128,000 just being hired as an administrator in our school district, and 9 of them just have."

"And what you also find in New Rochelle is **a lot of the teachers and the pushback from the city officials. These are like second chance teachers. These are second chance administrators like they come from the city right.** They're not established in New Rochelle. Most of these people, 70% of our student population, I mean, our faculty does not live in New Rochelle. **So you have people from the Bronx, Manhattan, etc., etc. retired then**

***coming to the district, working in a district, and that's a very cushy job to have, you know, with your city retirement, and this is where a lot of and I can almost name the names that are on there."***

***"...we have a huge influx of Latinos coming to the city. We have a huge influx of everybody else in the world that is coming to our district, and over 100,000 people with the new development coming into our district."***<sup>90</sup>

Again, it is deeply troubling that none of the Charter Schools Committee members probed any of Ms. Footes's assertions. Not one asked her to support these claims with evidence. Worse, one Charter Schools Committee member, who appears to be either Mr. Corngold or Mr. Spiro, offered her praise, saying "...you speak beautifully and passionately about the need for your school."<sup>91</sup> That he and the other members of the Committee entertain an argument that is based on attacking public schools and public school teachers, gives lie to the entire enterprise.

There is more. The next speaker, identity unknown, who seems to be from Capital Prep's Connecticut school went on to further the false narrative. About the nearly 2,000 writers of letters to the SUNY Charter Schools Institute objecting to the charter school, this speaker said, "...many of them don't actually live in the district, and some of what they're writing about is not based on truth..."<sup>92</sup>

Shouldn't someone have asked, "Based on what evidence?"

As this report documents with a deep dive into Capital Prep's application, its claims, and data produced by New York State and by scholarly research, it is clear that the source of disinformation is

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<sup>90</sup> Exaggeration, distortion, and divisiveness are part and parcel of the narrative put forth by the proponents of the charter school.

<sup>91</sup> Time point: 00:13:31.020 --> 00:13:38.230

<sup>92</sup> Time point: 00:17:34.830 --> 00:17:52.485

Capital Preparatory Schools, Inc. Capital Prep’s advocates and its affiliates have not based *their* assertions on fact.

We are left to wonder: Why did the Charter Schools Committee approve the application without questioning the dubious claims put forth by the applicants? Why didn’t any Committee member ask, “By what evidence”?

It is important to note that the announcement of the Capital Prep New Rochelle meeting with the Charter Schools Committee held on 9 October 2024 was buried on the Institute’s website, placed on a page different from its usual location. This means that the Institute in effect failed to give notice to interested public stakeholders, including but not limited to New Rochelle District Superintendent of Schools Dr. Corey W. Reynolds, who had been checking the website for the announcement of the meeting with the intention of attending it.

The Charter Schools Committee did extend a personal invitation to Capital Prep as evidenced by an email from “Tonya” to Jill Cutler Hodgman, Chief of Staff, Capital Prep Schools, acquired via our FOIL application.<sup>93</sup>

The email from the SUNY Charter Schools Institute reads as follows:

As we continue the process of reviewing the Capital Preparatory New Rochelle proposal, we would like to schedule time to meet with the founding team and proposed board members. This meeting is an opportunity for applicant groups to provide additional information and clarification regarding their proposal. Please note that this discussion is a critical step in the Institute’s ongoing review and analysis process. The information presented in the meeting plays an important role in informing the Institute’s final

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<sup>93</sup> Because the sender’s name is redacted, we speculate that “Tonya” (referenced by Ms. Cutler Hodgman) is Tanya Lewis-Jones, Director of New Charters at the SUNY Charter Schools Institute. <https://www.newyorkcharters.org/what-we-do/staff-directory/>

recommendation as to an application's status. With that being said, we would like to schedule your meeting for the following date/time: We request that the entire founding team and proposed board are in attendance...

Why wasn't Dr. Corey W. Reynolds, Superintendent of the School District of New Rochelle, extended the same courtesy or, at least, informed that the meeting notice location on the Institute's website was not posted where he had previously been told that it would be?

One week before the October 9<sup>th</sup> meeting, the Institute issued a document (referred to earlier), "Summary of Findings and Recommendations; Proposal To Grant Capital Prep Charter Schools NY The Authority To Operate Capital Preparatory Charter School New Rochelle" dated 2 October 2024.<sup>94</sup>

The Charter Schools Committee declares:

After a thorough review process consistent with the New York Charter Schools Act of 1998 (the "Act"), the Institute finds that the proposal to grant Capital Prep Schools NY the authority to operate Capital Prep New Rochelle rigorously demonstrates the criteria detailed in the Institute's 2024 RFP, which align with the Act.

Given the results of our examination of Capital Prep's claims and assertions on the matters of outreach, interest, and demand, claims, track record, rationales and promises, it is clear that a thorough review process was *not* conducted by the Charter Schools Committee.

The Committee neglected to thoroughly examine the whole application. Had they done so, it would have been impossible for them to conclude that Capital Prep "rigorously demonstrates" fulfillment of

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<sup>94</sup> <https://www.suny.edu/about/leadership/board-of-trustees/meetings/webcastdocs/CapPrepNewRochelleSOF.pdf>

the criteria required before they were given the green light to operate a charter school in New Rochelle.

The Committee also claims to have carefully reviewed and considered all district and public comments received prior to finalizing its recommendation. Here, too, it is clear that the Committee and therefore the SUNY Charter Schools Institute failed to fulfill its responsibility. The enormous number of objections from New Rochelle's stakeholders—parents, taxpayers, elected leaders, educators—outweighed by large degree Capital Prep's weak proclamations of support.

Why were the voices of objection excluded by the SUNY Charter Schools Institute from the in-person meeting held on October 9<sup>th</sup>? Why did the Committee give no consideration to New Rochelle's voices of objection?

How could the Charter Schools Committee come to the unanimous decision to vote in favor of Capital Prep New Rochelle?

Why did they fail to come to the correct and incontrovertible conclusion that New Rochelle does not need or want the charter school?

# Addressing Gaps: Support New Rochelle Public Schools



Free, universal, high-quality education provided within a robust public education system is the fundamental right of all children and adolescents in the United States. This is a core principle built into the public school system and to which it is imperative we continue to aspire.

Yet, this fundamental right and this core principle have eroded since the 1980s. Over the past 45 years, education legislation, policies, and practices have chipped away at public education. The charter school “movement,” the establishment of charter schools, and the legislation that supports them are significant forces leading to the erosion of the fundamental right to education and the core principle at the root of the public education system.

This pattern has been observed and extensively documented by scholarly research, a sampling of which is cited throughout this report. Early on, educational psychologist David Berliner and social psychologist Bruce Biddle exposed the interests behind attacks on public education that they predicted would worsen in the coming decades (1996).<sup>95</sup> More recently, Professor Berliner and statistician Gene Glass (2014) debunked what they call “myths, hoaxes, and outright lies” that constitute a threat to public schools in the United States.<sup>96</sup>

There are core distinctions, Berliner and Glass offer, between believers of myth, perpetrators of hoaxes, and those who issue outright lies, worthwhile to quote in full:

Myths are beliefs in things that may or may not be true but that fill the void left by ignorance...Myths are greatly influenced by the believer’s self-interest.

“Hoax” is belief that the believer knows to be dubious [that] still might be pushed because it stands to greatly benefit the believer...Perpetrators of hoaxes evidence a willful blindness to contradictory evidence and choose to remain ignorant of more reliable standards for evaluating empirical claims.

Liars are different...they don’t ever believe what they are saying, but they say it to advance their own self-interest.<sup>97</sup>

The authors address the matter of Charter Schools in “Myth #3: Charter schools are better than traditional public schools” (pp. 22-26). Here, we learn that “the father” of the charter school movement was none other than Milton Friedman, the influential economist who advocated private interests over public ones, individual interests over

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<sup>95</sup> Berliner, David C. and Bruce J. Biddle. *The Manufactured Crisis: Myths, Fraud, And The Attack On America’s Public Schools*. Basic Books, 1996.

<sup>96</sup> Berliner, David C. and Gene V. Glass, eds. *50 Myths and Lies that Threaten America’s Public Schools: The Real Crisis in Education*. Teachers College Press, 2014.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*: pp. 1-3

the common good, and whose policies have led to the current crisis of neoliberalism: the rich have gotten richer and the rest can eat crumbs. Friedman's mantra was "individual choice," which, when applied to schooling, has led to a false belief that charter schools offer choice. As Berliner and Glass explain:

The growth and expansion of charter schools over the past 2 decades have given them a mythical status in the education arena, without much data to support the hyperbole. The rhetoric of success fuels the myth, but the reality is much more sobering. Myth spreaders conflate parental agency and school choice, concealing research that traditional public schools typically outperform charter schools; play down the impact of charter school failures; and promote the diversion of resources from traditional public schools that educate most of the kids in this country (p. 22).

The authors also note a common practice: "the subtle exclusion from charter schools of students with special needs," those who require the most focused and costly support.<sup>98</sup>

The data show, as Berliner and Glass put it, that "the promise of fervently heralded charters" is consistently "confronted by reality": charter schools are not improvement over the public schools (p. 23). Nevertheless, as the authors also note, "separating hype from reality in the world of charter schools is nearly a full-time job."<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid.: 24.

<sup>99</sup> The author of this report can attest to the extensive time and level of research expertise it has taken to deep dive into Capital Prep's application, to conduct the secondary research for the report, to secure reliable data and literature sources, to read and to study articles, books, and data sources, and to write up the findings.

As this report documents, we observe the pattern whereby Capital Prep advocates: conceal comparative data on the New Rochelle public school versus Capital Prep performance; explicitly deprecate New Rochelle public schools, vilifying them and the public school system; play down Capital Prep's failures; and endorse promoting the diversion of resources from New Rochelle public schools to the charter school.

### §§§

As noted in the first section of this report, New Rochelleans came out in droves to express their objection to a charter school in New Rochelle, their objection to Capital Prep's application to open a charter school in New Rochelle, and to implore that the Charter Schools Committee reject that application.

Parents, students (past and current), residents, teachers, every member of the Board of Education, school administrators, and political leaders, including the New York State Senator Chair of the State Education Committee collectively see beauty in the New Rochelle public schools.

The beauty in New Rochelle's public schools lies in the extensive set of programs and services that include and go beyond curriculum and instruction, offering students a rich array of possible learning experiences. There are well-equipped sports programs for boys and girls, outstanding performing and visual arts programs, a superb Science Research Program, magnet programs, services for English language learners/multilingual learners; special and alternative education programs and services; pre-Kindergarten programs; community service opportunities; and an array of co-curricular, extracurricular and student clubs from debate teams and the Model UN to the Human Rights Club and *The Huguenot Herald*, the student-run newspaper at New Rochelle High School. The district provides key services from student supports and counseling to health, transportation, safety and security, technology, and more. The district is well integrated into the community, with ongoing programs and

projects with the Boys and Girls Club, My Brother's Keeper, and the New Rochelle Public Library, among many other community organizations and institutions.

This is an incomplete list of the enormous number of the district's programs, services, projects, and community ties, reflecting an established, cohesive infrastructure that is in place to serve students, parents, and the community.

In contrast to the portrait of New Rochelle's public schools as dysfunctional and failing, these programs point to the District's multifaceted strengths, accomplishments, and contributions.

These accomplishments must be understood, acknowledged, and appreciated in context of larger political and economic forces that shape the lives of New Rochelleans just as they do all Americans. It is these forces that create conditions of poverty in America, conditions to which New Rochelle's most vulnerable are subject.

Achievement gaps are rooted in these conditions, and it is these conditions that have not been addressed though they must be if we want an equitable society in which all individuals can meet their full potential.

In this context, New Rochelle public schools have overcome enormous obstacles on behalf of students, a large proportion of whom have gone on to successful achievement of their goals.

At the same time, as advocates of the public school consistently point out, there are areas in need of improvement particularly on behalf of underperforming students.

The way forward is to support the public schools, not work against them.

The way forward in New Rochelle, is to join with public school students, their parents, their teachers, the administrators and community members to support the District of New Rochelle and its array of schools, programs, and services to better ensure that all students may fulfill their individual potential.

Let us heed the call of Carla Woolbright, EdD, LCSW, educator, past president of the New Rochelle NAACP, New Rochelle resident, and parent, grandmother and great grandmother of children who are in and/or have graduated from the New Rochelle public schools:

Let's come together to strengthen our current public educational system, not decimate it by diverting funds away from it. We all know that it takes a village. We should combine our efforts and focus on making educational opportunities better for all our children and address the root causes of disparities. There is no one-size-fits-all quick fix, but if we approach remedies from a holistic and mindful approach, no doubt we will be successful.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Woolbright, Carla H. "Charter School Observations" New ROAR News. June 10, 2024. Accessed 17 December 2024. <https://newroarnews.org/charter-school-observations/>