

The charter school application process can take several years.



# STARTING A NEW SCHOOL

## Rosalyn Yalow one of city's latest charters

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**E**ach year, on average, 11 new charter schools open in New York City — with more on their way.

According to the New York State Education Department, 12 new charter schools are opening in New York City for the 2015-16 school year.

Among them is Rosalyn Yalow Charter School, which is slated to open this fall in Community School District 10 in the Bronx — 3½ years since its inception.

"There was a need in the Bronx — a number of community leaders had spoken to me about the poor quality of education here," said Yalow's founder and executive director Alec Diacou, an economist who lives in

the school district who has worked as a financial adviser for state and local governments and as a nonprofit organizer.

Based on results of the spring 2014 Grades 3-8 Math and English Language Arts assessments, students in District 10 are underperforming compared with statewide figures, with 21.9% of students meeting or exceeding the math proficiency standard compared with 34.8% of students statewide, and 16.8% meeting or exceeding the ELA proficiency standard compared with 31.4% statewide.

"We did our research," Diacou said. "We could see that the outcomes were poor.

Diacou recruited a "diverse and qualified" group of board members, including Michael Rosen, the

school's treasurer, who comes from a financial and marketing background.

"I have a growing frustration with the educational options as a parent," said Rosen, who has two children, ages 2 and 5. "There's an enormous gap between good schools and bad schools."

The two University of Chicago graduates happened to sit next to each other at an alumni dinner, where Rosen learned of Diacou's plans for a Bronx charter school that would have longer school hours and incorporate extracurricular activities such as arts, music, fencing and chess into the school day.

"This seemed like what I would like to send my kids to," Rosen said.

This past June, the New York State Board of Re-

## NYC charter school process

In New York, teachers, parents, school administrators and community residents can submit a proposal for a charter school. What does it take to get a charter school off the ground? Here's a look at what's involved in the competitive process, based on the application guidelines from the state's charter school authorizers — the State Education Department and the State University of New York:

- The team must decide which authorizer to work with.
- Deadlines and application requirements vary slightly by authorizer, but in general, teams must submit a Request for Proposal, demonstrating their academic program, financial plan and organizational plan.
- If the proposal moves on,

the authorizer will hold interviews with the applicant's founding group.

- The authorizer may recommend amendments.
- The authorizer will recommend the strongest proposed charters to the New York State Board of Regents, which ultimately votes on whether to grant a five-year charter.
- Charters planning to co-locate in an NYC Department of Education facility will have to submit a request.
- Throughout the process, schools are also conducting outreach with the community.
- Charter schools must apply to renew their charter every five years.
- Schools that fail to live up to the promises in their charter may be closed.

(MEREDITH DELISO)

English Language learners.

"We're invested in being able to reach and teach kids individually at whatever ability they come to us with," Rosen said.

The school's curriculum will be based on the Core Knowledge Language Arts Program and Singapore Math (one of its board members, Bill Jackson, helped author Singapore Math textbooks). Every other week, the students will also go to the American Museum of Natural History.

"[The American Museum of Natural History] is a great resource for anyone in the city," Diacou said. "That's part of our educational program."

All of that adds up to an education that would "rival what most middle class families provide," Diacou said.

"We have a rigorous curriculum and high expectations for students," he said. "Our mission statement is to graduate every student at or above grade level."

Serving as inspiration to the future students will be the school's namesake. Rosalyn Sussman Yalow, a physicist who passed away in 2011, lived in the school district and was the second woman in history to be awarded the Nobel Prize in Medicine.

"We hope that she is an inspiration to the kids ... that with hard work, you too can achieve your dreams," Diacou said.

The biggest challenges facing the school right now are hiring staff and finding space. A principal search is in progress, and Diacou expects to hire a leader this month.

The school is also waiting to get a facility funded through the state Department of Education after failing to obtain a co-location space, said Diacou, who hopes to sign a lease by the end of March.

Once space is secured, the school, which is accepting applications in the coming weeks, will hold information sessions for families.

"Parent demand is overwhelming," Diacou said. "Parents want to know where we're opening."

For more information, visit [Yalowcharter.org](http://Yalowcharter.org).

**'We have a rigorous curriculum and high expectations for our students.'**

— **Rosalyn Yalow Charter School founder and executive director Alec Diacou**



**Alec Diacou**



**Michael Rosen**

gents approved the application for the Rosalyn Yalow Charter School, which will have capacity for 202 students from kindergarten through first grade, growing a grade a year over the next five years up to 536 students and grade 5.

To develop its school plan, the team looked to successful charter schools across the country for insights and got assistance from the New York City Charter School Center. Its plan comprises 11 key design elements that include a longer school day — 10 hours including lunch, compared with the minimum 5 hours of instructional time that's recommended by the state — and extracurricular activities, as well as family support counseling and

classrooms equipped with a teacher and a licensed social worker.

"It's one part of our response to an intervention program," Diacou said. "We want to catch any problem early."

The school has also allocated resources to serve special-needs students and



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