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## New Charter School Pays Teachers \$125,000 a Year

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\$125,000.00 a year is the starting pay for teachers at the new Equity Project Charter School in New York City. "That's the sexy story line," says the middle school's founder, Zeke Vanderhoek, "The high pay for teachers is what got people interested, but there's a lot more elements involved than money."

The school, located in the Washington Heights section of Manhattan, opened this fall with 125 fifth graders. Vanderhoek says he plans to eventually have 482 students attending fifth through ninth grade.

"Teaching is no different than any other industry, it might even be harder. And if you want to attract talent you have to pay for it," says the thirty-two year old principal, who flew around the country to interview perspective teachers in their classrooms.

"You can have a golden resume but it doesn't necessarily mean anything. I'm interested in how the teacher interacts and motivates the students and I want them to be experienced." Vanderhoek hired the Latin teacher from Rhode Island, the social studies teacher is from North Carolina, and the music teacher hails from Woodstock.

The Manhattan Equity Project Charter School teaches only local students from its Washington Heights neighborhood, which is primarily made up of low-income families. Vanderhoek, who previously ran his own successful test prep company, says, "I was able to get the funding from the city because it's interested in innovative teaching methods right now. Our school has an extended academic day. The students are taking seven different courses from 8:25 in the morning until 4pm."

"We're only a month in, so I'm not making any bold predictions," Vanderhoek laughs. "But we had our first Parent/Teacher breakfast, and many of the parents said their children were coming home super enthusiastic and starting their homework right away."

For the teacher who makes a difference there is also a \$25,000.00 bonus.