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*From the Los Angeles Times*

## **Green Dot plans a school in New York**

**The teachers union is to run the campus with the charter group, a setup rejected by United Teachers Los Angeles.**

By Joel Rubin  
Times Staff Writer

June 28, 2007

Green Dot Public Schools, the upstart charter operation that has aggravated Los Angeles school administrators and union officials alike with its early successes and expansionist plans, has entered into what it hopes will be a less strident relationship in New York City.

Green Dot founder Steve Barr and Randi Weingarten, president of the powerful New York City teachers union, have reached an unusual agreement to open a jointly run charter high school.

The two are scheduled to announce the collaboration in a news conference at the union's Manhattan offices today.

The United Federation of Teachers' willingness to enter into an alliance with Green Dot seems certain to put pressure on United Teachers Los Angeles, which represents the roughly 35,000 teachers in the Los Angeles Unified School District. Although in recent months UTLA President A. J. Duffy has softened his caustic and dismissive attacks on Green Dot — and charters in general — he has repeatedly rejected the idea of a partnership with Green Dot.

Weingarten, in a telephone interview Wednesday, said she hoped the deal between the nation's largest teacher union and Green Dot would encourage Duffy to move in a similar direction.

"If you really actually believe in kids and believe in their success, those of us in education, we really shouldn't be in the sandbox fighting with each other. We should be ... trying to figure out how to work together," Weingarten said.

Barr and Weingarten said the unusual collaboration should set an example, not only in Los Angeles, but elsewhere as well. Throughout the United States, charter schools are largely nonunion and, as such, have drawn the sharp ire of union leaders. Green Dot teachers, however, offer an exception, because they belong to a union, though not one representing educators in Los Angeles or New York.

Several weeks ago, Weingarten visited Green Dot schools in Los Angeles and met with Barr. The trip helped her decide to push ahead with the partnership, she said. Weingarten praised Green Dot's model, so far implemented only in the Los Angeles area, as one that has posted promising results while also giving teachers a considerable voice in making decisions on instruction and resources.

"When you go and see Green Dot schools, you see schools that really work for kids ... in places where kids have not always been given the best chances in life," she said. "Teachers are treated as the professionals they ought to be, and they step up to act as those professionals as well."

Under the terms of the proposal, which requires approval by New York state education officials, Barr, Weingarten and several New York education and civic figures would sit on a board of directors that oversees the school. The South Bronx campus is expected to open in fall 2008 and will primarily serve Latino students from low-income families.

Weingarten and Barr said they expected the school to operate much like the 10 high schools Green Dot runs in the Los Angeles area.

Those schools are rooted in a set of basic tenets, including enrollment no greater than 500 students and a college-preparatory curriculum.

Although New York state regulations require that they wait until the charter is approved to work out details, Weingarten and Barr said they expect that the New York teachers will work under a labor agreement similar to the one Green Dot has with its teachers in Los Angeles.

Unlike the lengthy, proscriptive contract UTLA has negotiated with L.A. Unified that spells out a teacher's workday down to the minute and offers extensive job protections, Green Dot's contract is more straightforward. While giving teachers considerable authority and higher starting salaries, it calls for a "professional workday" and allows teachers to be fired for "just cause."

Conflict between UTLA and Green Dot has long been a barrier to serious discussions of partnership. Earlier in his first term as union president, faced with an explosion of charters in Los Angeles that ultimately drew hundreds of teachers away from district schools, Duffy hammered on the independent schools, questioning whether they produced better results and criticizing their labor practices.

As the largest — and most aggressive — charter group, Green Dot was a frequent target. Earlier this year, Duffy charged that the group "takes bright-eyed, bushy-tailed, idealistic people and works them to death."

On Wednesday, he dismissed the notion that an agreement between the New York teachers union and Green Dot had relevance to Los Angeles, saying that "the landscapes are very different." He emphasized that his criticism of charters has been driven, in part, by the frantic growth of charter schools here. New York City has considerably fewer of them.

Weingarten "is doing what she thinks is best for public education in New York City," Duffy said.

But the partnership announcement comes at a particularly delicate time for him. As he prepares to mount a reelection bid, Duffy is under pressure to assuage rising discontent among teachers chafing at the slow pace of district improvements at middle and high schools.

Last month, that frustration spilled over when a core of tenured teachers at Locke High School voiced support for Green Dot's plan to take over the South Los Angeles campus and convert it into several small charters. Since then, teachers from more than a dozen other L.A. Unified schools have contacted Green Dot to discuss similar actions, Barr has said.

Duffy readily concedes that, against this backdrop, he has struck a decidedly less confrontational tone on charters, now saying he would be willing to negotiate with Green Dot if two-thirds of the teachers at a school called on him to do so.

"I am listening and responding to the needs of my members," he said.

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**June 28, 2007**

## **Union to Help Charter Firm Start School in the Bronx**

By **JENNIFER MEDINA**

Green Dot Public Schools, a charter school operator from Los Angeles, is seeking to expand into New York with the cooperation of the teachers' union.

Under the proposal, Green Dot, which is heavily financed by the billionaire philanthropist Eli Broad, would open a high school in the South Bronx. The school, which must be approved by the state, would become one of only a handful of charter schools in the city to use a union contract.

The cooperation of the union, the [United Federation of Teachers](#), is unusual. It has been lukewarm toward charter schools, many of which actively oppose unions. The schools are publicly financed but are largely free from the control of local school districts.

[Randi Weingarten](#), the president of the teachers' union, said yesterday that she approached Steve Barr, the founder of Green Dot, to open the school because he favors working with unions.

"We have never been against increasing charters, but we were against the anti-union animus in some charter schools," Ms. Weingarten said. The union already runs two charter schools in Brooklyn.

The plan calls for all teachers to be part of the union, but their contract would be simpler than the citywide contract. The union and Green Dot have already reached agreement on the general terms and structure of their contract.

Rather than dictating the number of hours and minutes teachers must spend at the schools, it would just call for a "professional workday," they said. The contract could also eliminate tenure, but would set guidelines for when a teacher can be dismissed. Many charter schools can dismiss teachers at will.

Mr. Barr, who has sparred in recent months with school officials in Los Angeles over his aggressive plans for expansion of schools, said that he had turned down offers before to expand beyond California and that he had responded only because it was the union that had approached him.

"If it were the mayor or the chancellor, I probably would have said no," he said in an interview yesterday. "But to say that we are doing reform with the largest union is something very different. We can prove the unions and reformers work together."

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