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HANNA SKANDERA
SECRETARY-DESIGNATE OF EDUCATION

SUSANA MARTINEZ
Governor

September 5, 2012

Dear Public Education Commissioners:

Enclosed is the Final 2012 Charter School Application Final Recommendation and Evaluation for Columbus Community School applying for a state charter in the Village of Columbus to serve grades 7-12 and represented by founders, Jack Long and Philip Skinner. Please know that the staff at the Charter Schools Division and four teams of independent reviewers gave full consideration to the information gathered in this process.

The review teams and the Charter Schools Division (CSD) have provided evidence and rationale gathered in the team analyses and in this evaluation to fully understand the recommendation.

Thank you all for your hard work and dedication to ensure that New Mexico's Charter Schools represent the best of alternative and innovative options for parents and students.

Sincerely,

Kelly Callahan
Interim Director
Options for Parents: Charter Schools Division

I. Recommendation

Approve:

Overall the application is complete and adequate; and during their Capacity Interview, the applicant(s) demonstrated the capacity to implement the education and governance/management plans as described in the application. Nothing was identified that would indicate the applicant(s) do not have the experience, knowledge, and competence to successfully open and operate a charter school.

Approve with Conditions:

Overall the application is complete and adequate; and during their Capacity Interview, the applicant(s) demonstrated the capacity to implement the education and governance/management plans as described in the application. Nothing was identified that would indicate the applicant(s) do not have the experience, knowledge, and competence to successfully open and operate a charter school; however, the conditions listed below are required by law and must be addressed. If the PEC determines that there are any other conditions that need to be addressed, then those should be negotiated in a preliminary contract.

PROPOSED CONDITIONS

The Applicant will negotiate a preliminary contract with the Public Education Commission pursuant to 22-8B-9.1:

1. Obtain standing as an approved Board of Finance
2. Secure a facility that meets PSFA Approval
3. Complete the planning-year checklist

Deny: **X**

Overall the application is either incomplete or inadequate; or during their Capacity Interview, the applicant(s) did not sufficiently demonstrate the experience, knowledge, and competence to successfully open and operate a charter school.

The Charter Schools Act, in paragraph 1 of Subsection L of Section 22-8B-6 NMSA 1978, states that a chartering authority may approve, approve with conditions or deny an application. A chartering authority may deny an application if:

- (1) the application is incomplete or inadequate;
- (2) the application does not propose to offer an educational program consistent with the requirements and purposes of the Charter Schools Act;
- (3) the proposed head administrator or other administrative or fiscal staff was involved with another charter school whose charter was denied or revoked for fiscal management or the proposed head administrator or other administrative or fiscal staff was discharged from a public school for fiscal mismanagement;

- (4) for a proposed state-chartered charter school, it does not request to have the governing body of the charter school designated as a board of finance or the governing body does not qualify as a board of finance; or
- (5) the application is otherwise contrary to the best interests of the charter school's projected students, the local community or the school district in whose geographic boundaries the charter school applies to operate.

OPTIONS FOR PARENTS – CHARTER SCHOOLS DIVISION



By: _____

Interim Director of Options for Parents, or Designee

Overall Score Sheet

Section	Points Received	Applicant School's Possible Points
Application		
• Executive Summary	4	4
• Education Plan/Academic Framework	69.5	112
• Organizational Plan and Governance/Organizational Framework	51.5	76
• Business Plan/ Financial Framework	11	18
• Evidence of Support	10	10
• Required Appendices	2	2
Capacity Interview	26	30
Overall Score	174	252

I. Explanation Regarding Score Sheet

In the final recommendation and analysis the review team and the CSD considers the overall score as well as the score in each individual section. For example, while the total possible points in the Business Plan only equals 18 points, it is essential that an applicant school score high in this section and have a sound financial plan. If an applicant school receives a low score in this section then the review team carefully considers that in their final analysis. Also please note that while the review team did not score the community input hearing, the review team and the CSD may reference it in the final recommendation and evaluation if pertinent information was offered that contradicts or affirms what was found in the application or the capacity interview. Second, if the applicant school's proposal did not answer any prompt as a result of applicability (e.g., the applicant school will be an elementary school and so did not provide responses to graduation-related prompts) then the review team and CSD will adjust the total possible points in the application section where the non-applicable item(s) is found as well as in the final score.

III. Final Analysis

Application Section	Points Received	Applicant School's Possible Points
Education Plan/Academic Framework	69.5	112
<p>Evidence/Statements Supporting Score in this Section</p> <p>The applicants express the ideal, long-term impact and focus of the school. The mission of the school, however is general and vague, and does not explain the purpose of the school that translates into all aspects of the school including measurable goals.</p> <p>The goals, as written, are specific, measurable and appear attainable, however, the alignment of the goals with the vision/mission statements is not clear. In addition, goals are not addressed in all of the areas mentioned in the application (STEM, project-based learning, parental involvement, becoming a bi-national center). Achieving and sustaining higher student achievement than what is demonstrated in the traditional public schools is not demonstrated.</p> <p>The philosophical approach and curriculum framework is clearly presented, and research is provided that support the philosophy with the targeted population. However, while a general description of the curriculum is provided, how the chosen curricular models will raise achievement for the targeted population is not evident. It is also not evident how the models (STEM, project-based learning, dual language, etc.) will be integrated to provide a cohesive curriculum and how these approaches will align with the required New Mexico Standards. The plan for aligning the curriculum with the Standards is very general and limited in scope in terms of a timeframe and staff designated to complete the work. This section is incomplete and lacks meaningful detail, and it is difficult for the reviewers to ascertain how realistic this plan is.</p> <p>The section on Instruction is incomplete as it does not fully address all of the prompts. The applicants were unable to fully provide quality methods and strategies that align with the vision and educational philosophy, and that have been demonstrated to be effective in meeting the needs of the targeted population with sufficient detail. An explanation of how the instructional methodologies chosen will be differentiated to meet the targeted student population is incomplete.</p> <p>The responses in the Special Populations section demonstrate a partial understanding of the requirements for each of the special populations identified. The reviewers are concerned that with only a partial understanding of these requirements, the applicant's ability to meet the requirements in identifying and providing appropriate and required services and support to students in this category are in question.</p> <p>The school does not appear to have a cohesive assessment plan in place to evaluate student needs, the effectiveness of the educational program, and progress toward school goals. In addition, how the school will use the assessment data to affect teaching and learning to improve student achievement or to impact school-wide performance goals is not evident. Overall, the responses would require more detail to demonstrate an understanding of the key issues raised in this section.</p>		

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Application Section	Points Received	Applicant School's Possible Points
Organizational Plan and Governance/Organizational Framework	51.5	76
<p>Evidence/Statements Supporting Score in this Section</p> <p>The plan for composing and sustaining a governing body that reflects a wide range of expertise, knowledge and experience, and that demonstrates the capacity to oversee all of the components of a successful school (i.e., academic, organizational and financial oversight) is incomplete and requires more detail to demonstrate an understanding of the key issues to be addressed. The applicants demonstrate an understanding of legal compliance with the Open Meetings Act, Conflict of Interest and Inspection of Public Records law, however, an explanation of how the school will handle the Inspection of Public Records will be handled. A plan for community/parent/employee involvement in governance is partially complete. An advisory council is identified, but the purpose of this council is not clear.</p> <p>The school's organizational chart is clear, however, the narrative is missing. Appropriate roles and responsibilities for the governing body and the administration is unclear. Descriptions delineating roles and responsibilities of staff is incomplete and does not provide descriptions for all key staff. The staffing plan does not fully support all aspects of the school. In addition, the staffing identified in the 5 -year plan is not supported by the budget.</p> <p>Employee and student policies are complete and adequate and comply with legal requirements. Outreach activities to increase awareness of the school to families in the targeted area are evident. Specific procedures and details regarding enrollment are lacking, and dis-enrollment was not addressed.</p> <p>The school is seeking waivers in several areas. The rationale for requesting these waivers is difficult to comprehend. There are no concerns with transportation services, food services, or facilities.</p>		

Application Section	Points Received	Applicant School's Possible Points
Business Plan/ Financial Framework	11	18
<p>Evidence/Statements Supporting Score in this Section</p> <p>The school budget is inadequate. The staffing does not appear adequate to serve the targeted population. Positions are identified in the charter application that are not shown in the budget. The school does provide a realistic plan for adjusting the budget based upon enrollment and other cash-flow challenges. The financial policies lack a strong internal control procedure, and the designation of the secretary and office manager to provide reports and financial information to the governing body may be unrealistic given the workload these other positions require and the qualifications necessary to provide financial reports.</p>		

Application Section	Points Received	Applicant School's Possible Points
Executive Summary, Evidence of Support, Required Appendices	16	16
<p>Evidence/Statements Supporting Score in this Section</p> <p>The Executive Summary presents a cohesive summary of the proposed school. The focus of the school is clearly stated.</p> <p>The school has engaged in a wide outreach effort and demonstrates community support through partnerships and business relationships. The application demonstrates a sufficient community interest in the school and a sufficient demand for the school's proposed model.</p> <p>The required appendices are included in the application.</p>		

Section	Points Received	Applicant School's Possible Points
Capacity Interview	26	30
<p>Evidence/Statements Supporting Score in this Section</p> <p>The founders were able to give a general picture of what students will experience in a school day in terms of a schedule of blocks of times for various activities. As there is only one demographic in the city, there is no plan to make adjustments to the educational plan based upon enrollment.</p> <p>The founders have an overall sense of the responsibilities and relationships between the founders and the governing body. Their perception of what the governing body should be monitoring was incomplete (budget and policy) and did not cover all the areas of oversight an effective governing body should have. The founders do have a thorough understanding of the policy process, however, needs for policies and the implications of policies in terms of effective school operations and oversight was not clearly presented.</p> <p>The facility issue was identified as the most challenging issue the school would face, if approved, however, the applicants have no alternative plan. They are also aware that the lack of federal start-up funds and/or a lack of the projected enrollment poses a significant challenge, however, they presented a plan to address both scenarios that is reasonable and realistic.</p> <p>Specific goals for the school based upon the mission statement were not clarified. The applicants were able to describe how the various curricular approaches would be integrated to form a cohesive curriculum, and stated the need for professional development to assist staff in accomplishing integrating the various models. The applicants were able to clarify the school's organizational structure and define the roles of two key positions identified.</p>		

<p>Other Pertinent Information</p>