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HANNA SKANDERA
SECRETARY-DESIGNATE OF EDUCATION

SUSANA MARTINEZ
Governor

August 31, 2012

Dear Public Education Commissioners:

Enclosed is the Final 2012 Charter School Application Final Recommendation and Evaluation for StarShine Academy Lisa Law Peace School applying for a state charter in Santa Fe to serve grades K - 12 and represented by founders, Patricia McCarty and Byron Davies. 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:

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

I. Overall Score Sheet

Section	Points Received	Applicant School's Possible Points
Application		
• Executive Summary	3.33	4
• Education Plan/Academic Framework	85.21	112
• Organizational Plan and Governance/Organizational Framework	39.26	68
• Business Plan/ Financial Framework	10.5	18
• Evidence of Support	9.32	10
• Required Appendices	1	2
Capacity Interview	19	30
Overall Score	167.62	244

II. 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	85.21	112
<p>Evidence/Statements Supporting Score in this Section:</p> <p>The vision statement provides a broad, general picture of what the school hopes to achieve for itself and its students. The mission statement appears to mix together the aspirations of the corporate entity (StarShine Academy, Inc.) as well as those of the applicant school (StarShine Academy Lisa Law Peace School). Both statements lack sufficient focus to realize a clear and coherent picture of the proposed school's educational model and how that model supports the proposed vision and mission.</p> <p>The <u>student performance goals</u> lack the clarity and precision necessary for the proposed school to measure, monitor, and report student performance adequately. In one instance, a required performance goal was not provided. Similarly, several of the <u>organizational goals</u> also lack the clarity and precision necessary for the school to manage them. Some of these goals appear to be replaced later in the application by a different set of organizational goals.</p> <p>The applicants relied heavily on the work of another charter school in providing the required curriculum research without demonstrating their own understanding of how and under what circumstances the curriculum may work. In addition, the research provided was limited to only two elements of the proposed school's educational model (Core Knowledge and Paideia) and ignores other important elements, such as STEM, school gardening, service learning, etc. Identified instructional strategies that are included appear to be drawn from a standard repertoire, though minimal explanation is given to demonstrate how these particular strategies effectively support different student needs.</p> <p>The applicants provide assurances that the school will comply with relevant federal and state statutes and rules with regards to special education and 504 Plans, but fail to provide adequate details or descriptions of how it will resource and implement the full array of required services and monitor student progress. The proposed school budget supports only one (1) ESL teacher, likely insufficient given the targeted student population.</p> <p>The application identifies an adequate range of assessments to be used (Core Knowledge, Galileo and Stanford 10, and Robert Marzano Institute-developed assessments, progress monitoring and screening tools), but no schedule for assessments is provided. The application provides a generalized narrative on the importance of using assessment results, but does not provide a school-based plan for their use. The application begins to describe how it will implement the required Student Assistance Team and Response to Intervention model, but this is incomplete, because the text inexplicably shifts to a description of the school's plans for obtaining accreditation. The application does not appear to include a plan to monitor and adjust school-wide practices as necessary.</p>		

Application Section	Points Received	Applicant School's Possible Points
Organizational Plan and Governance/Organizational Framework	39.26	68

Evidence/Statements Supporting Score in this Section:

The applicants demonstrate understanding of the importance of the governing body and have plans in place to ensure a qualified and experienced membership. The descriptions of the governing body's roles and responsibilities, however, are inconsistently described in different parts of the application, and in places blur the line between governance and management (e.g., hiring all certified and administrative positions) and omit key responsibilities of ensuring both high student performance and compliance with the provisions of the charter and contract. The application establishes high training expectations of its governing body, although the application neither appears to budget sufficient funds to ensure that members can meet that expectation, nor does it include a plan for a governing body evaluation. The application provides descriptors of an effective head administrator, but does not provide a plan for how that administrator will be evaluated.

The organizational structure of the school is deemed inadequate, as the text only describes shared qualities of high performing district schools, but not the proposed school's organizational structure. In addition, the application provides no organizational chart.

While there is a rubric for evaluating staff, there is no described plan for staff evaluation. The application calls for a student:teacher ratio of 12:1, which would require a staff of some 33 teachers. The proposed staffing plan of 13.5 teachers would result in a student:teacher ratio of 30:1. The teacher professional development plan is varied and ambitious, but does not appear to be sufficiently supported by the budget.

The applicants relied heavily on the work of another charter school to describe the proposed school's relationship with its employees and in framing its personnel policies. Without carefully reviewing the borrowed text, however, the applicants do not appear to recognize that some of the policies may not be in accordance with NMPSIA, ERB, and 218A. In addition, the discipline process is missing from the employee handbook.

The applicants offer assurances that all community voices will be included in governance, leadership, and advisory bodies, but no specifics are given about the actual committees or working groups, their memberships, and roles and responsibilities.

The student discipline policy, as "Appendix F", is difficult to understand, and the description of alternative placements for eligible students is limited primarily to the homework of excluded students. Student recruitment and enrollment plans are adequate and comply with state laws and rules.

Legal compliance includes a conflict of interest policy, but no reference is made to complying with the Open Meetings Act and the Inspection of Public Records Act. The application's "Appendix B", however, does indicate that governing body members will be expected to familiarize themselves with several New Mexico rules, including the Open Meetings Act.

The applicants did not provide the required letter from the Public Schools Facilities Authority, and there was no description of the school's proposed capital outlay needs.

Application Section	Points Received	Applicant School's Possible Points
Business Plan/ Financial Framework	10.5	18
Evidence/Statements Supporting Score in this Section:		
<p>The application includes a 5-year budget, but contains some elements that appear inadequate. The Review Team expressed concerned that the average salary is \$37,500. Further, the budget accounts for 40 staff, though the staffing plan calls for a staff of 41. The budget narrative does not appear to acknowledge that Federal stimulus funds are not available. There is some concern that unidentified dollars will be used to recruit students, possibly SEG money, which would violate state law.</p> <p>This Review Team identified two major concerns: what appears to be inadequate staffing to provide appropriate separation of duties, and the lack of clarity (plan) on how the governing body will exercise its fiscal oversight. The lack of clear and compelling responses to the prompts in these two critical areas could set the stage for an inadequate fiscal accountability environment.</p>		

Application Section	Points Received	Applicant School's Possible Points
Executive Summary, Evidence of Support, Required Appendices	13.65	16
Evidence/Statements Supporting Score in this Section:		
<p>The Executive Summary was deemed partially adequate, as it provided an in-depth picture of the intended neighborhood of the proposed school and the needs of the targeted student population, but did not provide a comprehensive and concise description of the The StarShine Academy Lisa Law Peace School educational model. It left out important elements of the model and how those elements cohere, such as the STEM, student gardening, and service learning programs.</p> <p>The application's evidence of support was deemed adequate, though much of the evidence provided was anecdotal. The ties to the community appear to be limited to the amount of time school developers have spent in the community holding informal conversations and surveys about the proposed school. Founders of the proposed school do not include anyone who actually lives in the community. Since unfiltered community voices were not heard during the application process, the Review Team could not ascertain actual levels of interest in the proposed school.</p> <p>Neither the required PSFA letter nor the proposed capital outlay needs for the school was included in the application.</p>		

Section	Points Received	Applicant School's Possible Points
Capacity Interview	19	30

Evidence/Statements Supporting Score in this Section:

While the school developers were able to provide a picture of a typical day at the Lisa Law Peace School, they did not show how the various elements of their educational model fit together into an overall coherent program. Responses to governance-related questions did not significantly clarify concerns over the important distinctions between governance and management, although responses did indicate that it would be the administration – and not the governing body – that hires the school staff. The developers adequately explained how the governing body exercises its oversight and accountability. The school developers did not indicate how the proposed school's various stakeholders might be incorporated into governing, advisory, or management bodies.

The school developers do appear to have made significant strides in the identification and acquisition of a facility or a property on which to build a facility. They indicated that the PSFA had their master facilities plan and would be issuing its evaluation. Absent federal stimulus funds, the school developers indicated that they would be able to leverage the connections and resources of StarShine Academy, Inc., to help open the school. The school developers also provided assurance that it would take necessary and appropriate steps to ensure a solid financial footing for the school.

The school developers did not provide a clear understanding of the importance of policies to the smooth and effective administration of the school. That said, the developers did have a plan in place for developing and approving school policies, as well as ensuring that all policies are being equitably administered at the school. The top challenges of the proposed school's planning year had been identified with appropriate plans in place to address those challenges.

The school developers did not provide a clear picture of how its proposed STEM program would fit into its Core Knowledge/Paideia model, nor was there any discussion of this in the application. The school team's discussion of how they planned to cover all graduation requirements and ensure that the high school teachers are highly qualified within the projected budget was deemed inadequate.

Other Pertinent Information

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