



DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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January 27, 2015

Via Mail & E-Mail

Dr. Chandra Jackson
Board Chair, Vine's Preparatory School
126 North Kirkwood St.
Dover, DE 19904

Dear Dr. Jackson:

Thank you for submitting an application for a new charter school.

Pursuant to 14 Del. C. §511(d), the Delaware Department of Education ("DDOE") has completed an "an initial review of all new charter school applications it receive[d] in order to assess the completeness and quality of each such application based on the application submission criteria established in this title."

Based upon this review, the DDOE has determined that the charter application for Vine's Preparatory School ("VPS") does not meet the submission criteria for completeness and quality to merit a full review

The deficiencies determined through the initial review are as follows:

Section 1.3: Education Plan

- Student Recruitment and Enrollment: The application states that enrollment in year five will be 180 students with 12 classes and approximately 15 students per class. This enrollment projection is in conflict with 14 Del. C. § 512(8) which requires enrollment of no less than 200 students at full enrollment Special Populations and At-Risk Students:
 - The application references Public Law 94-142, which was passed in 1975. The law has undergone several amendments, the last in 2004, and is currently called the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) The applicant indicates that referrals to the Instruction Support Team (IST) will occur if a student is failing or falling behind. However, "failing or falling behind" are not the only indicators that child may be a student with a disability in need of special education services under the IDEA. The applicant seems to indicate that reaching Tier III of the RTI process is a predicate to being evaluated for special education services. RTI is a general education program. Schools have an independent obligation to identify students under IDEA, and this description does not evidence that understanding.
 - Page 11 states that "The Board may waive policies, procedures and administrative regulations that create barriers for enrollment, attendance, transportation, and success in Charter Schools of homeless students, based on the recommendation of the Board." The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act requires local education agencies (LEAs) to create processes for enrollment that eliminate

barriers and enroll homeless children and youth immediately even if they are unable to produce records that are normally required. Seeking Board approval will delay immediate enrollment.

- Student Performance Goals:
 - The application does not reference the Smarter Balanced system of assessments but only the Delaware Comprehensive Assessment System (DCAS). Smarter Balanced is used for English Language Arts and mathematics while science and social studies will continue using the Delaware Comprehensive Assessment System (DCAS).
 - The application (page 2) refers to grades 5-8 but the School Proposal Overview refers to grades 6-8. Additionally, the promotion policies refer to grades 1-8.
- Student Discipline: The bullying prevention policy does not include a cyberbully component in accordance with 14 DE Admin Code 624. There was no evidence in the application that cyberbullying would be addressed in VPS' bullying prevention programming.
- School Culture: The application does not provide a clear vision of the school's ethos that will promote a positive academic environment. Additionally, the application does not explain the systems, practices and traditions that establish the school's culture.

Section 1.5: Staffing

- Staff Structure:
 - The organizational chart for Year 2 was not included.
 - The application states, "For an outline of proposed salary ranges and employment benefits for Vines Preparatory staff, see attachment 14." Attachment 14 is the "Evidence of Support from Community Partners."

Section 1.6: Governance and Management

- Legal Status and Governing Documents: The Board by-laws were not included as part of Attachment 9.
- Governing Board: The application does not include a description of how it will evaluate itself.

Section 1.7: Parent and Community Support

- Parent Support: The application provides insufficient evidence of parent support with only five such letters.
- Community Support: The application does not include any letters of support from prospective community partners.

Section 1.8: Start-up and Operations

- Transportation: The applicant plans to provide extracurricular activities (e.g. sports and clubs). However, the budget does not appear to incorporate transportation costs for these expenses.

Section 1.10: Budget and Finance

- The budget shows increasing deficits in all years, climbing from a \$300,000 deficit in Year 0 to a nearly \$7M deficit in Year 4. The application has failed to demonstrate

economic viability.

- The revenue estimates only include local funds calculations from Woodbridge School District. The state funds calculations were omitted. Therefore, the application is incomplete.
- The budget narrative does not does not explain how estimates were determined.

Please contact me if you have any questions or require additional information. You can reach me at (302) 735-4020 or jennifer.nagourney@doe.k12.de.us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jennifer Nagourney". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being more prominent.

Jennifer M. Nagourney
Executive Director, Charter School Office
Delaware Department of Education

C: Mark Murphy, Secretary of Education
David Blowman, Deputy Secretary of Education
Mary Kate McLaughlin, Chief of Staff