

ORLEANS PARISH SCHOOL BOARD

CHARTER SCHOOL APPLICATION RECOMMENDATION REPORT 2017

National Association of Charter School Authorizers

November 10, 2017

New Charter School Application for

THE DELORES TAYLOR ARTHUR SCHOOL FOR YOUNG MEN

Submitted by

THE LYCEUM SCHOOL

Evaluation Team

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EVALUATORS: GAIL LAZARD

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INTRODUCTION

Across New Orleans, more than 90 percent of public school students currently attend charter schools. These schools have led to a dramatic increase in the number of students meeting academic proficiency standards and the performance gap between students in Orleans Parish and Louisiana as a whole has dramatically decreased over the last 12 years.

Despite these gains, additional progress is needed. Students deserve high quality schools where their interests will come first, where they and their families will have choice, and where educators will have the tools and support they need to be successful.

The Fall 2017 charter school application process seeks proposals from highly qualified applicants to open new Type 1 charter schools and transform existing district-run schools into Type 3 charter schools.

Focus on Quality

The 2017 Request for Proposals and the resulting evaluation process are rigorous and demanding. The process is meant to ensure that approved charter school operators possess the capacity to implement a school model that is likely to dramatically increase student outcomes. Successful applicants will demonstrate high levels of expertise and capacity in the areas of curriculum and instruction, school finance, educational and operational leadership, and non-profit governance, as well as high expectations for excellence in student achievement and professional standards. An application that merits a recommendation for approval will present a clear, realistic picture of how the school expects to operate; be detailed in how this school will raise student achievement; and inspire confidence in the applicant's capacity to successfully implement the proposed academic and operational plans.

Evaluation Process

For the 2017 RFP cycle, OPSB partnered with the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) to manage the application process and to provide independent, merit-based recommendations regarding whether to approve or deny each proposal. NACSA assembled an independent evaluation team that included both national and local expertise related to charter school start-up and operation. This report from the evaluation team is a culmination of three stages of review:

PROPOSAL EVALUATION

The evaluation team conducted individual and group assessment of the merits of the proposal based on the complete written submission. In the case of experienced school operators, OPSB and NACSA supplemented this written evaluation with due diligence to verify claims made in the proposal related to past performance.

CAPACITY INTERVIEW

After reviewing the application and discussing the findings of their individual reviews, the evaluation team conducted an in-person interview to assess the team's overall capacity to implement the proposal as written in the application.

CONSENSUS JUDGMENT

Following the capacity interview, the evaluation team came to consensus regarding whether to recommend the proposal for approval or denial. The duty of the evaluation team is to recommend approval or denial of each application based on its merits against OPSB-approved evaluation criteria. The authority and responsibility to decide whether to approve or deny each application rests with the members of OPSB.

Report Contents

This evaluation report includes the following:

PROPOSAL OVERVIEW

Basic information about the proposed school as presented in the application.

RECOMMENDATION

An overall judgment regarding whether the proposal meets the criteria for approval.

EVALUATION

Analysis of the proposal based on four primary areas of plan development and the capacity of the applicant team to execute the plan as presented:

School: academic model and schedule, LEA status, special student populations, goals and metrics, enrollment plans, school culture, and family and community engagement.

People: founder's submission, governing board, staff, mission critical partners, and education service providers.

Operations: start-up plan, facility, and financial readiness.

Finance: budget.

EVALUATION: ADDENDA

For applicants on the existing or experienced operator tracks, applicants that are or will form a corporate partnership, schools whose primary instructional environment is computer-based or virtual, applicants seeking or potentially willing to seek a match to operate an existing Orleans public charter school or school facility, or applicants seeking to start, transform or convert a school serving Grades 9-12, an analysis of:

Experienced Operator Addendum (if applicable): past school performance, growth plan, scale strategy, and risks and associated contingency plans.

Corporate Partnership Addendum (if applicable): corporate partnership formation, corporate partner track record, legal relationships, and organizational structure.

Virtual School Addendum (if applicable): location, educational program, instructional staff, state and federally mandated services, evaluation and assessment, school operations, and parent and community involvement.

Transformation Addendum (if applicable): transformation overview, operator track record, educational program, school operations, metrics and goals, and community engagement.

High School Addendum (if applicable): state and district graduation standards, supporting success for all students – truancy prevention, remediation and intervention, ensuring college and career readiness, and strong start – 9th grade transition plan.

RATINGS CHARACTERISTICS

Evaluation teams assess each application against the published evaluation criteria. In general, the following definitions guide evaluator ratings:

Meets the Standard

The response reflects a thorough understanding of key issues. It addresses the topic with specific and accurate information that shows thorough preparation; presents a clear, realistic picture of how the school expects to operate; and inspires confidence in the applicant's capacity to carry out the plan effectively.

Meets the Standard with Reservations

The response meets the criteria in many respects, but lacks detail and/or requires additional information in one or more areas.

Approaches the Standard

The response meets the criteria in some respects but has substantial gaps in a number of areas.

Does Not Meet the Standard

The response is wholly undeveloped or significantly incomplete; demonstrates lack of preparation; or otherwise raises substantial concerns about the viability of the plan or the applicant's ability to carry it out.

PROPOSAL OVERVIEW

Applicant Name:

THE LYCEUM SCHOOL

Proposed School Name:

THE DELORES TAYLOR ARTHUR SCHOOL FOR YOUNG MEN

Mission:

The mission of the Delores Taylor Arthur School for Young Men is unapologetically the holistic education of urban males.

Proposed Location:

Orleans Parish

Enrollment Projections:

<i>Academic Year</i>	<i>Planned # Students</i>	<i>Maximum # Students</i>	<i>Grades Served</i>
2018-19	350	410	K-6
2019-20	400	490	K-7
2020-21	450	570	K-8
2021-22	500	670	K-9
2022-23	550	770	K-10
At Capacity	650	970	K-12

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Recommendation:

THE DELORES TAYLOR ARTHUR SCHOOL FOR YOUNG MEN

DENY

Summary Analysis:

The evaluation team recommends denial of the application for The Delores Taylor Arthur School for Young Men. The application contains gaps and deficiencies across multiple sections, and the evaluation team does not have the confidence that the applicant team has the capacity to open and operate a successful charter school in Orleans Parish.

While the mission to serve African-American boys with a high-quality education is compelling, there are several components of the educational program - particularly, the school schedule, tutoring program, and assessment system - that lack a compelling rationale or sufficient detail. The applicant's plan to collect and analyze student performance data was vague and did not include details about the types of assessments that will be administered and the process by which data will be collected and analyzed. Also, while the application provides a robust set of classroom teaching strategies and expectations and presents a strong argument that identifies how the chosen strategies and curriculum are appropriate for the target student population, there was a lack of information about research-based strategies that would be utilized to increase student learning and engagement in an all-boys school.

The applicant does not clearly demonstrate the capacity to open and operate a successful charter school. While the applicant team includes some individuals with expertise in key areas to operate a charter school, responses provided by the applicant lacked detail or coherence. The governing board has a wide range of professional expertise and experience to support the crucial aspects of the school, including educational programming, finances, and legal compliance. However, during the governing board interview, there was a lack of detail in the responses provided. The applicant's plan to open seven grades in the first year is also extremely challenging for a first-time operator and the start-up plan was not sufficiently detailed.

There are concerns about the applicant's capacity to ensure a financially viable school. The start-up budget contains \$325,000 of revenue acquired from start-up grants and development efforts but it is unlikely that the applicant team will be able to secure these funds. While the applicant presents a viable plan to preserve mission-critical expenses, if the organization is faced with budget cuts, revenue projections presented in the application are not conservative.

Summary of Section Ratings:

Opening and maintaining a successful, high-performing charter school depends on having a complete, coherent plan and identifying highly capable individuals to execute that plan. It is not an endeavor for which strengths in some areas can compensate for material weaknesses in others. *Therefore, in order to receive a recommendation for approval, the application must Meet the Standard in all areas.*

SCHOOL

Approaches the Standard

HIGH SCHOOL ADDENDUM

Approaches the Standard

PEOPLE

Approaches the Standard

OPERATIONS

Approaches the Standard

FINANCE

Approaches the Standard

SCHOOL

RATING:

THE DELORES TAYLOR ARTHUR SCHOOL FOR YOUNG MEN

Approaches the Standard

Plan Summary:

The Delores Taylor Arthur School for Young Men seeks to serve African-American boys in Orleans Parish in grades K-6 in the first year of operation. The proposal highlighted in detail the challenges of African-American males with respect to schooling and employment.

Key components of the educational program include the effective use of data, a focus on literacy, high-dosage tutoring, and joy factor. Additionally, all students at the school will play a musical instrument and learn Mandarin. The school's instructional practices include aims, do nows, gradual release of responsibility, peer teaching, accountable talk, and exit tickets.

For English language arts (ELA), the applicant proposes a balanced literacy curriculum. Students will have 120 minutes of ELA instruction daily. For mathematics, the applicant plans to adopt the Eureka math curriculum as well as Math in Focus with 90 minutes of instruction for all students.

The school day begins at 9:00 a.m. and ends at 4:26 p.m. with 220 days of annual instruction, including tutoring sessions occurring before and after school.

Analysis:

The School section approaches the standard. While the mission to serve African-American boys with a high-quality education is compelling, there are several components of the educational program that lack a compelling rationale and sufficient detail.

While the application provides a robust set of classroom teaching strategies and expectations and presents a strong argument that identifies how the chosen strategies and curriculum are appropriate for the target student population, there was a lack of information about research-based strategies that would be utilized to increase student learning and engagement in an all-boys school (e.g., more hands-on learning, innovative use of space, student movement, etc.) The applicant selected curriculum for Math, Science, and Social Studies that is aligned with the Louisiana State Standards. For its English and Language Arts curriculum, the school has chosen to implement Teacher's College Reading and Writing Project which has been well-researched and aligns with state standards. However, the applicant's decision to offer Mandarin did not include any evidence that students in New Orleans would be interested in learning Mandarin in grades K-8.

While the applicant included research that demonstrates the benefits of high-dosage tutoring for economically disadvantaged students, the applicant's tutoring program lacked coherence and specific details. The application mentioned AmeriCorps tutors as an integral part of the program but a partnership had yet to be developed. While the written application states that highly qualified tutors are needed between 7:45 a.m. to 8:40 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m., the CAO noted that tutors will be needed for two-hour blocks. It was unclear to the evaluation team how many tutors would be required and how tutors would be effectively trained.

While the application provides evidence that the applicant team is aware of the federal, state, and local laws for servicing special population students, there are still questions about the group's ability to implement the plan. The school's staffing plan for special education does not appear to be adequate. Considering the number of students with disabilities the school will likely enroll, it will be challenging to serve the proposed population of students with disabilities with just two special education teachers. One of the teachers will also serve as the school's special education coordinator.

The applicant's plan to collect and analyze student performance data was vague and did not include details about the types of assessments that will be administered and the process by which data will be collected and analyzed, including individuals responsible. When given the opportunity to provide clarification during the interview, the applicant team did not articulate how the school would use data to address the needs of students on a grade, classroom, or individual basis. The applicant's goals regarding LEAP performance are ambitious but not realistic. Ten percentage point increases each year at every grade level for five consecutive years will be extremely challenging.

PEOPLE

RATING:

Approaches the Standard

THE DELORES TAYLOR ARTHUR SCHOOL FOR YOUNG MEN

Plan Summary:

Byron Arthur is an attorney and the proposed CEO of The Delores Taylor Arthur School for Young Men. Edward Williams is an educator and will be the chief academic officer (CAO). Cynthia Bridges is a tax consultant and will be the vice president of finance. Anthony Williams is an attorney and the proposed board chair of the school.

There are 12 identified governing board members for the school with expertise in law, operations, non-profit administration, finance, education, human resources, and charter school board governance. The board will have a structure that includes academic excellence, development, finance, and governance, and CEO support/evaluation committees.

The applicant plans to employ 38 full-time staff including 16 general education teachers, three specials teachers, three student support positions, and one special education coordinator.

The school's mission critical partners include The National Speech and Debate Association, Dr. Tommie J. Curry (scholar at Texas A&M), and Education Unlimited Inc.

Analysis:

The People section approaches the standard. The applicant does not clearly demonstrate the capacity to open and operate a successful charter school. While the applicant team includes some individuals with the expertise in key areas to operate a charter school, responses provided by the applicant lacked detail or coherence. The governing board has a wide range of professional expertise and the experience to support the crucial aspects of the school, including educational programming, finances, and legal compliance. The application includes a comprehensive conflict of interest policy that ensures that the governing board acts in the best interest of the school. It also contains a plan to use Board On Track's Support and Evaluation process to evaluate the CEO.

However, during the governing board interview, when asked about the criteria or metrics the governing board would use to evaluate the CEO, there was a lack of detail on specific metrics that would be used as part of the evaluation. When asked about how the governing board would know if it is successful after the first year of operation, the response also lacked substance, calling into question the board's understanding of its roles and responsibilities.

While the applicant outlined a fundraising plan, it is unlikely to be successful. The governing board development committee is targeting individual donors to provide \$60,000 to \$70,000 in funds for the school in the first year of operation. Part of the plan is to develop relationships with donors by giving school tours. However, the applicant did not provide a compelling plan to raise \$75,000 in the start-up year since the school will not be in operation and school tours are not feasible. It was also unclear how special events such as sending people to New York City would generate revenue.

In the Founder's Submission, Mr. Arthur and board chair, Anthony Williams, were both able to articulate how they developed a mission and vision and led their teams to meet goals and expectations. However, it was unclear why Mr. Arthur chose to share his experience as the Press Secretary for the Louisiana Department of Revenue - which ended in 2007 - as this is not his most recent leadership post. While this experience adequately prepares Mr. Arthur to engage stakeholders as they launch a school, it does not specifically speak to his preparation to implement the educational program of a school.

The application includes a staff recruitment plan and a competitive salary structure that is likely to lead to strong teacher candidates. The applicant has collected over 100 resumes of individuals who are interested in these positions. The time line provides ample time for the applicant to recruit leaders, screen applicants, and make final hiring decisions.

OPERATIONS

RATING:

Approaches the Standard

THE DELORES TAYLOR ARTHUR SCHOOL FOR YOUNG MEN

Plan Summary:

The Delores Taylor Arthur School for Young Men proposes to open as a K-6 school serving 350 students in year one. The start-up plan will be managed by 4th Sector Solutions with the school's vice president of finance, Cynthia Bridges, ensuring that all tasks are completed. Ms. Bridges is a Certified Public Accountant with extensive experience in state tax policies and programs. The start-up plan includes due dates in June and July for a majority of areas such as student recruitment, facility planning, and general operations.

The application states that the school has agreed to terms with the Archdiocese of New Orleans to lease the facilities at 3774 and 3800 Gentilly Road, pending charter approval. 3775 Gentilly would serve as the main school building. The facility has 37 classrooms. The 3800 location has additional space for offices. There are 64,549 square feet of space in the two combined buildings.

4th Sector Solutions will be hired to provide back office services including financial management, human resource support, and compliance.

Analysis:

The Operations section approaches the standard. While there are individuals with extensive experience and backgrounds in finance and operations, there are concerns that the applicant does not have the capacity to open the school successfully.

Opening seven grades in the first year is extremely challenging for a first-time operator. The applicant's rationale for such a large opening was mostly for financial reasons and the applicant did not provide any compelling evidence that it would be able to successfully open seven grades in the first year given anticipated recruitment and hiring challenges. Additionally, the applicant's start-up plan does not indicate individuals who will be responsible for the specific tasks that are presented. The applicant seeks to outsource nearly all start-up activities to 4th Sector. 4th Sector Solutions has extensive experience in start-up activities and has a large portfolio of schools it services in New Orleans. However, the dates within the start-up plan do not align to the current application cycle. For example, the start-up plan includes student recruitment activities with a due date of July 31.

The identified facility appears to meet the needs of the school. The proposal also contains an assurance that the facility will meet all ADA requirements. John Gerrets, a governing board member, has expertise in facilities from his previous experience as the chief financial officer (CFO) of Holy Cross School. Ms. Bridges has extensive experience managing executive staff and large budgets. The school's financial plan includes appropriate control systems and separation of duties as well as a memorandum of understanding to partner with 4th Sector Solutions to provide financial support.

FINANCE

RATING:

Approaches the Standard

THE DELORES TAYLOR ARTHUR SCHOOL FOR YOUNG MEN

Plan Summary:

The application details the five year financial projections as follows:

Year 1: \$4,157,479 in revenues and \$4,066,988 in expenses, with an ending fund balance of \$90,491.

Year 5: \$6,762,244 in revenues and \$6,464,435 in expenses, with an ending fund balance of \$875,539.

The school expects to enroll 350, K-6 students in the first year of operation and receive \$11,878 in per pupil revenue based on all funding sources. The school's goal is to build up a reserve using the Financial Performance Framework indicators.

The budget assumes a start-up grant of \$250,000 and raising an additional \$75,000 in revenue during the start-up year. Anticipated start-up costs include hiring three school administrators for six months, marketing and student recruitment costs, facility improvements, and general supplies.

Analysis:

The Finance section approaches the standard. There are concerns as to the applicant's capacity to ensure a financially viable school.

The start-up budget is not viable. It contains \$325,000 of revenue acquired from start-up grants and development efforts. While the applicant team mentioned potential funders such as the Walton Family Foundation and New Schools for New Orleans, there was limited evidence that discussions with these organizations would lead to funding opportunities. The applicant's plan to cultivate individual donors is not likely to succeed.

While the applicant presents a viable plan to preserve mission-critical expenses if the organization is faced with budget cuts, revenue projections presented in the application are not conservative. For instance, the food service revenues are based on the school having 98 percent attendance. In the applicant's Request for Clarification, there was additional funding allocated for after school tutoring, substitute teachers, and professional development expenses to remedy the evaluation team's concerns. Additionally, gifted and talented costs and special education supplies were separated out to provide clarity. Although the application included \$12,000 for tutoring for the year, this is insufficient given the need for tutoring on a regular basis before and after school. Additionally, the applicant's plan to budget \$100 per teacher for professional development is an inadequate amount.

HIGH SCHOOL ADDENDUM

THE DELORES TAYLOR ARTHUR SCHOOL FOR YOUNG MEN

RATING:

Approaches the Standard

Plan Summary:

The Delores Taylor Arthur School for Young Men's Senior School (high school) will include students from 8th to 12th grade. Opening in year one as a K-6 school, the high school will begin in year three of operation.

The high school's academic program consists of 41 courses and the school's graduation requirements for the proposed school will include three years of a foreign language rather than two. The school plans to offer career and technical education pathways and dual enrollment courses to its students. The applicant is considering pathways in maritime and hospitality.

In Grades 8-12, the classes are 80 minutes long from Monday through Thursday. On Friday, core classes (Mathematics, English, Science, and Social Studies) and the foreign language class will be 60 minutes long due to the school's professional development program.

Analysis:

The High School Addendum approaches the standard. There is a lack of detail in certain sections and concerns remain about the applicant's capacity to offer a strong high school program.

While the application clearly articulates course offerings, credit requirements, and GPA calculation standards, the high school program was not sufficiently developed. The applicant provides ambitious plans to offer the TOPS University Diploma and the Career and Technical Diploma for students but further planning is needed to ensure that the proposed course offerings would enable students to achieve the two diploma types.

The school's truancy plan is consistent with Louisiana State Law. It offers an incentive program for houses that have weekly perfect attendance, but it does not clearly articulate how the school plans to combat truancy.

While the applicant group will use Apex Learning for credit recovery for high school students, the proposal does not present a diverse set of options to ensure that students complete high school. By providing this service after school and during the summer, the school ensures accessibility for students to regain credits that they have missed. While Apex Learning will likely allow the school to keep students on track, it is the only credit recovery option presented.

The college and career readiness section of the application lacks detail, which is understandable given that the school will start as a K-6 school. The school has the next two years to develop these plans. The school plans to offer a number of Advanced Placement Courses that will allow students to earn college credit while in high school. These programs will be offered in addition to the ACT test prep that students will receive through the school. However, the applicant did not provide evidence that it had made progress on partnerships with colleges and universities to offer dual enrollment.

Although the applicant's transition plan for 8th and 9th grade students allows for four weeks of summer learning, the proposal does not present a coherent plan that demonstrates how these students will earn credit and remain on the path to graduation.

EVALUATOR BIOGRAPHIES

Evaluator's Name

HAROLD LEE

Harold (Harry) Lee is an independent education consultant specializing in charter school authorization, new school development, school oversight/evaluation, renewal services, and board training/capacity building. Most recently, Harry worked as the Chief Strategy Officer at iLearn Schools, a non-profit charter management organization based in New Jersey. From 2011-16, he worked at the New Jersey Department of Education, Office of Charter Schools serving as the School Performance and Accountability Manager for 3 years and the Director for 2 years. In 2014, Harry completed the NACSA Leaders Program, the nation's only professional development opportunity for current and upcoming leaders in charter school authorizing offices. He holds a B.A. from Yale University and an M.P.A. from Rutgers University-Newark.

Evaluator's Name

GAIL LAZARD

Gail Lazard is a retired educator with over 30 years of experience in the education of public school students in the state of Louisiana. Gail has worked as a teacher, principal, and central office administrator in New Orleans and at the Louisiana Department of Education. She has also worked as a consultant for the Louisiana Department of Education - Charter School Office and the National Association of Charter School Authorizers. In addition, Gail holds a B.A. and a M.Ed. +30 from the University of New Orleans. Gail is certified by the state of Louisiana as a teacher, principal, supervisor of student teaching, parish/city school supervisor of instruction, and superintendent of schools.

Evaluator's Name

ANTHONY OLIVER

Anthony Oliver is currently an assistant principal in the Jefferson County School System in Birmingham, Alabama. Most recently, Anthony served as executive director at Breakthrough Birmingham, an education non-profit dedicated to providing high-quality academic programming to underserved students and preparing the next generation of teachers. Anthony has also served as a high-school mathematics teacher and coach, and has worked as a principal intern at Newton North High School where he worked to create access to challenging academic curriculum for African American students and students from low socioeconomic classes. Anthony holds a B.A. in mathematics from the Virginia Military Institute, an M.A.E. in secondary education - mathematics curriculum and instruction from the University of Alabama at Birmingham, and an Ed.M in school leadership from the Harvard Graduate School of Education.