



Young Audiences
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Forrest Collins
Director of New School Development
Orleans Parish School Board
3520 General DeGaulle Drive
New Orleans, Louisiana 70114
OPSB Rebuttal

November 14, 2017

Dear Mr. Collins,

As a responsible charter school organization successfully operating a steadily progressing charter school in Jefferson Parish, we have serious concerns regarding the independent review panel's recommendation to deny our Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB) charter school application. To summarize, the panel found that the Young Audiences Charter Association (YACA) met no standard. We would reiterate specific points that support our capacity to operate a charter school in Orleans Parish. The Young Audiences Charter School in Jefferson Parish (YACS-Jefferson) has outperformed a majority of open enrollment schools in OPSB. The main areas of deficiency as reflected in the panel's review are related to structure, finance, and demonstrated impact on academic performance.

YACS 3rd graders, students who entered YACS-Jefferson as Kindergarteners the year the school opened, out-performed the state and 46 of 50 OPSB/RSD schools with non-selective admissions standards. This supports that YACA's model arts integration is more effective than many "no excuses" models. Following is a comparison of third grade rates of scoring Mastery and above and Basic and above showing YACA's impact.

Third Grade Scores

School Name	Total % of scores attaining Mastery and above	Total % of scores attaining Basic and above	% Mastery and above compared to YACS	% Basic and above compared to YACS	Notes
LUSHER CHARTER SCHOOL	85%	98%	46%	27%	Selective Admissions
LAKE FOREST ELEMENTARY CHARTER SCHOOL	82%	97%	43%	26%	Selective Admissions
EDWARD HYNES CHARTER SCHOOL	52%	79%	13%	8%	Selective Admissions
BRICOLAGE ACADEMY	52%	79%	13%	8%	

President
Saundra Levy

Board of Directors
Arnold Baker
James Benedict
Jennifer Benjamin
Martin Drell
Charles Gaspard
Christine Guillory
Ron Loesel
Edna Moore
Mary Nass
Erica Seemann

School Leader
Brandon House

School Founder
Rickie Nutik

AUDUBON CHARTER SCHOOL	44%	79%	5%	8%
Alice M. Harte Elementary Charter School	31%	76%	-8%	5%
Mary Bethune Elementary Literature/Techn	35%	72%	-5%	1%
YOUNG AUDIENCES CHARTER SCHOOL (Jefferson)	39%	71%	0%	0%
BENJAMIN FRANKLIN ELEM. MATH AND SCIENCE	33%	70%	-6%	-1%
LAFAYETTE ACADEMY	34%	66%	-5%	-5%
LOUISIANA STATEWIDE	34%	65%	-5%	-6%
MORRIS JEFF COMMUNITY SCHOOL	36%	64%	-3%	-7%
JEFFERSON PARISH	33%	63%	-6%	-8%
KIPP CENTRAL CITY PRIMARY	24%	63%	-15%	-8%
PIERRE A. CAPDAU LEARNING ACADEMY	36%	61%	-3%	-10%
ENCORE ACADEMY	29%	60%	-10%	-12%
ARTHUR ASHE CHARTER SCHOOL	27%	59%	-12%	-12%
ROBERT RUSSA MOTON CHARTER SCHOOL	26%	59%	-13%	-12%
MARTIN BEHRMAN CHARTER ACAD OF CREATIVE	29%	57%	-10%	-14%
EINSTEIN CHARTER SCHOOL AT VILLAGE DE L'	22%	55%	-17%	-16%
WILSON CHARTER SCHOOL	24%	55%	-15%	-16%
SAMUEL J. GREEN CHARTER SCHOOL	17%	53%	-23%	-18%
KIPP BELIEVE COLLEGE PREP	20%	52%	-19%	-19%
ORLEANS ALL (ORLEANS PARISH + RSD NO SCHOOLS)	24%	52%	-16%	-19%
JOSEPH A. CRAIG CHARTER SCHOOL	28%	52%	-12%	-20%
KIPP MCDONOGH 15 SCHOOL FOR THE CREATIVE	19%	50%	-20%	-21%
ESPERANZA CHARTER SCHOOL	17%	48%	-22%	-23%
DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING CHARTER SCHOOL FO	16%	48%	-24%	-24%
PHILLIS WHEATLEY COMMUNITY SCHOOL	19%	48%	-20%	-24%
RENEW DOLORES T. AARON ELEMENTARY	16%	46%	-23%	-25%
EINSTEIN CHARTER SCHOOL AT SHERWOOD FORE	14%	45%	-25%	-26%
LAWRENCE D. CROCKER COLLEGE PREP	14%	44%	-25%	-27%
FANNIE C. WILLIAMS CHARTER SCHOOL	16%	44%	-23%	-27%
HARRIET TUBMAN CHARTER SCHOOL	15%	44%	-24%	-27%
GENTILLY TERRACE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	9%	43%	-30%	-28%
LANGSTON HUGHES CHARTER ACADEMY	18%	43%	-21%	-28%
NELSON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	13%	42%	-27%	-29%
SUCCESS PREPARATORY ACADEMY	16%	41%	-23%	-30%
RENEW MCDONOGH CITY PARK ACADEMY	15%	40%	-25%	-32%
MILDRED OSBORNE CHARTER SCHOOL	15%	39%	-24%	-32%
MAHALIA JACKSON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	19%	39%	-20%	-32%
JAMES M. SINGLETON CHARTER SCHOOL	12%	39%	-27%	-33%
RENEW SCITECH ACADEMY AT LAUREL	12%	38%	-27%	-33%
MARY D. COGHILL CHARTER SCHOOL	13%	38%	-26%	-33%
DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER ACADEMY OF GLOBAL S	12%	36%	-27%	-35%
ARISE ACADEMY	9%	36%	-30%	-35%
AKILI ACADEMY OF NEW ORLEANS	11%	36%	-28%	-35%
HOMER A. PLESSY COMMUNITY SCHOOL	18%	36%	-22%	-35%
MCDONOGH #32 LITERACY CHARTER SCHOOL	8%	35%	-31%	-36%
EDGAR P. HARNEY SPIRIT OF EXCELLENCE ACA	6%	35%	-33%	-36%
MCDONOGH 42 CHARTER SCHOOL	12%	34%	-27%	-37%
SYLVANIE WILLIAMS COLLEGE PREP	10%	34%	-29%	-37%
KIPP NEW ORLEANS LEADERSHIP ACADEMY	10%	33%	-29%	-38%
PAUL HABANS CHARTER SCHOOL	11%	32%	-28%	-40%

YACS-Jefferson
attained higher
rates of
Mastery
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RENEW CULTURAL ARTS ACADEMY AT LIVE OAK	7%	31%	-32%	-40%
RENEW SCHAUMBURG ELEMENTARY	7%	22%	-32%	-49%
WILLIAM J. FISCHER ACCELERATED ACADEMY	6%	22%	-33%	-49%

YACS–Jefferson’s School Performance Score increased each year as based on English Language Arts and Math scores.

	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
YACS - Jefferson Performance Scores	57.1	58.2	66.4	69.7

YACS-Jefferson earned a higher grade and School Performance Score than the following twenty-one schools in Orleans Parish who have failed to show significant improvement.

Dwight D. Eisenhower Academy for Global Studies
 William J. Fischer Accelerated Academy
 McDonogh #32 Literacy Charter School
 ReNew McDonogh City Park Academy
 ReNEW Schaumburg Elementary
 ReNEW SciTech Academy at Laurel
 ReNEW Cultural Arts Academy at Live Oak Elementary
 ReNEW Dolores T. Aaron Elementary
 Sylvanie Williams College Prep
 Nelson Elementary School
 Arise Academy
 Mildred Osborne Charter School
 Mahalia Jackson Elementary School
 Lawrence D. Crocker College Prep
 Homer A. Plessy Community School
 Einstein Charter School at Village De L'Est
 Pierre A. Capdau Learning Academy
 Paul Habans Charter School
 Kenilworth Science and Technology Charter School
 Success Preparatory Academy
 Mary D. Coghill Charter School

In regards to questions concerning arts integration as an effective strategy for school transformation, YACA recognizes that Transformation Schools predominantly serve students from under-resourced, high-poverty neighborhoods. Developmental and learning science illuminate the effectiveness of high-quality, engaging curriculum in improving academic performance for all children, particularly those who struggle with poverty, those who attend under-resourced schools, or those working through learning differences. Arts integration and participation in the arts are proven approaches to improving student conduct and encouraging

school attendance. We provided five evaluation reports in Attachment A (one from Institute for Quality and Equity in Education, Loyola University, one from Chicago Arts Partnerships in Education, one from Center for Music and the Arts Research Center, and two from WestEd) which support that arts integration is a proven strategy to engage every type of learner. In the YACA expects to witness rapid improvements in student conduct and school culture under our model.

Given the positive outcomes in academics and social development that can be unequivocally linked to arts-in-education, the lack of equity in access to the arts between high-poverty students and their more affluent peers should be of critical concern to the OPSB. The YACA model provides integrated arts learning experiences, access to professional art performances, and participation in hands-on art experiences that are critical to fostering the academic and cultural development deserved by our most vulnerable students.

In regards to structure, while the reviewers may not like or understand the organizational structure of YACA, it was in fact thoroughly vetted and recommended by legal counsel Lee Reid at Adams and Reese. The structure has worked well in Jefferson Parish where there have been no issues. It is our intent to add a Charter Management Organization structure once a second school is chartered. It will operate solely under YACA's Board of Directors. Additionally, Mr. Reid provided the following statement:

"When undertaking the charter application process for its first school in Jefferson Parish, Young Audiences of Louisiana (YALA) consulted with Adams and Reese LLP to determine the appropriate organization structure to apply for and operate a charter school. Due to the long existing non-profit work and grant funds already in existence for YALA, it was determined that YALA was not the best organization to apply for a charter school. For this reason, a separate 501(c)(3) non-profit, Young Audiences Charter Association (YACA), was established for the purposes of applying for and operating the charter school. While the two organizations shared a similar mission, the two organizations were completely separate. No board members overlap. YACA contracted with YALA to provide back office support services, administrative leadership services and arts integration professional development for YACA staff. These two non-profits contracted in an arms-length manner, as evidenced by the clean audits received by both organizations over the last several years.

With the proposed opening of a second charter school, YACA will take an even further step away from YALA by hiring some of the key personnel from YALA to become direct employees of YACA. This would reduce the services YACA needs to purchase from YALA significantly. YALA would no longer provide administrative leadership services to YACA through contract. The CEO and other key personnel would become employees of YACA. Back office support services would be reduced as well, making the YACA's dependence on YALA less than it previously entailed. The interaction between the two organizations would be related to the loan and arts integration professional development only. Both of these interactions would be done by separate contracts in an arms-length transaction that would hold up to third-party audit, as the other transactions have.

The loan is being made because YALA's mission is to ensure the arts are made an integral part of the education system in the region. In YACA they have a partner that shares its mission and implements this mission on a daily basis. For this reason, YALA is willing to provide support through a loan. The original loan for the start-up of the Jefferson Parish campus has been repaid and it is anticipated that any funds used by YACA for the start-up of the Orleans campus would be repaid as well.

The concerns raised by the evaluators are without merit. Through the transition of the personnel, YACA is becoming less dependent on YALA. Other than the loan, YALA will only be providing professional development services. Both transactions will be documented in separate contractual arrangements. One will not be dependent on the other. This scenario shows an arms-length relationship between the two entities that can't be confused as an interdependence that would alter YACA's desire to take actions necessary for the betterment of the students it serves.

This organizational structure Meets Standards and should be recognized as such. The assistance of YALA should be viewed as a positive that in no way detracts from YACA's autonomy. This structure has been reviewed by Adams and Reese LLP and audited by Carr, Riggs, and Ingram to ensure compliance with all non-profit and ethics laws. The evaluators should not be confused by this structure and this Characteristic should be changed to Meets Standards." -- from Lee Reid's letter dated November 14, 2017.

YACA agrees that the panel's recognition that our team has the talent, skill, experience, and capacity to operate a second charter school. Concerns about the destabilization of YACS-Jefferson during the growth process are unfounded and will be mitigated by the strength of the team and "lessons learned" in launching YACS-Jefferson. The creation of the CMO will provide the stability across operations, cohesion in curriculum, strength of vision, accountability, and comprehensive financial oversight necessary to successfully manage both schools. The CMO will make all decisions regarding operations and curriculum in consultation with on-site school leadership. This perception by the panel may have been exacerbated by the erroneous interpretation that the current YACS-Jefferson Operations Manager would transition to YACS-Orleans. The current YACS-Jefferson is Brandy Alexander who will remain at YACS-Jefferson. The YACS-Orleans Operations Manager will be Jon Cosper who introduced himself at the interview on November 7, 2017.

All Mission Critical Partners including YALA will operate under contractual agreements with annual evaluations to assess the effectiveness of partners in delivering their contracted services. Should the YACA Board have clear evidence that arts integration is not an effective educational approach or that contracting YALA is no longer in the best interests of the school, the Board will vote to terminate the contract.

In regards to finance, YACA is fortunate to have supportive and invested community partners. It is unfortunate, however, that the panel misinterpreted the loan from Mission Critical Partner Young Audiences of Louisiana (YALA) as a questionable element of our start-up operations plan.

As the founder of YACS-Jefferson, YALA loaned YACA start-up funds for salaries and equipment. Although YALA's role has changed to become a Mission Critical Partner with expansion to Young Audiences Charter School in Orleans Parish (YACS-Orleans), YALA will offer the same start up funds if desired by the YACA Board in order to support an arts integrated school as an option for OPSB students. The loan is interest free for five years and will be repaid at the beginning of Year Six, thus payback is not included in the YACS-Orleans five-year budget.

Additionally, YACA is audited annually, and all audits have been clean. The Jefferson Parish School Board scored YACA a high 97 out of 100 in relation to financial health measures, and YACS-Jefferson currently has a healthy cash position of \$1.2 million in the bank.

In conclusion, we strongly disagree with the recommendation and would like reconsideration.

Sincerely,



Rickie Nutik



November 14, 2017

Mr. Forrest Collins
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Lee C. Reid
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Page 2 of 2

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Very truly yours,

ADAMS AND REESE LLP



Lee C. Reid

LCR/gc