

**ORLEANS PARISH SCHOOL BOARD**

# CHARTER SCHOOL APPLICATION RECOMMENDATION REPORT 2018

*National Association of Charter School Authorizers*

**May 11, 2018**

*New Charter School Application for*

**KIPP New Orleans, Inc.**

*Submitted by*

**KIPP New Orleans, Inc.**

*Evaluation Team*

**TEAM LEAD: Dr. Iris Palazesi**

**EVALUATORS: Wanda Guillaume**

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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. Every student deserves 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 Spring 2018 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 2018 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 2018 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, budget, and financial readiness.

## 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.

## 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:*

**KIPP New Orleans, Inc.**

*Proposed School Name:*

**KIPP New Orleans, Inc.**

*Mission:*

The mission of the proposed KIPP PK-8 transformation school is to empower all students with the knowledge and skills they need to be successful to and through college and the world beyond.

*Proposed Location:*

To be determined

*Enrollment Projections:*

| <i>Academic Year</i> | <i>Planned # Students</i> | <i>Maximum # Students</i> | <i>Grades Served</i> |
|----------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|
| 2019-20              | 976                       | 1012                      | PreK-8               |
| 2020-21              | 976                       | 1012                      | PreK-8               |
| 2021-22              | 976                       | 1012                      | PreK-8               |
| 2022-23              | 976                       | 1012                      | PreK-8               |
| At Capacity          | 976                       | 1012                      | PreK-8               |

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*Recommendation:*

**KIPP New Orleans, Inc.**

**DENY**

### *Summary Analysis:*

The evaluation team recommends denial of the proposal for KIPP New Orleans transformation school.

Student discipline and culture must be addressed when planning for a successful school—regardless of model. The proposed school culture as described by KIPP leadership cannot support student social emotional learning, nor ensure positive student achievement. As indicated in the capacity interview, the school would employ a punitive approach that does not comply with standards or best practice.

During KIPP's capacity interview, leadership made repeated references to a culture and behavioral system characterized as an “electric fence.” The use of this language in relation to student behaviors is misaligned to the commitment to a positive and inclusive academic model and school environment for all students.

The School section does not meet the standard. Although the applicant presented a clear understanding of, and plan for, a sound academic model, the capacity interview revealed comments that do not align with standards for a positive school culture and for maintaining positive student norms.

The People section meets the standard. Staffing is well planned to support an effective transformation and to successfully implement the proposed academic plan, and staff support and development are targeted and frequent.

The Operations section meets the standard. The applicant provided a detailed description of how the characteristics of the facility will serve the academic model. The applicant has a detailed start-up plan; clear and realistic budgets; appropriate roles and responsibilities for financial management; comprehensive financial policies and procedures; and specific procedures for developing school budgets.

The Experienced Operator section meets the standard. The applicant clearly described effective plans for network growth and provided realistic contingency plans.

The Transformation addenda does not meet the standard. In describing the culture being the “air” for all KIPP students and staff, school climate and culture for the proposed transformation were portrayed in an inappropriate and insensitive manner.

### *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**

Does Not Meet the Standard

#### **EXPERIENCED OPERATOR ADDENDUM (IF APPLICABLE)**

Meets the Standard

#### **PEOPLE**

Meets the Standard

#### **TRANSFORMATION ADDENDUM (IF APPLICABLE)**

Does Not Meet the Standard

#### **OPERATIONS**

Meets the Standard

## SCHOOL

KIPP New Orleans, Inc.

## RATING:

**Does Not Meet the Standard**

### *Plan Summary:*

KIPP New Orleans has proposed a PreK-8 transformation school with a long-term vision of college-readiness, matriculation, and persistence for all of its 976 students. The Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP) focuses on teachers, students, and families united around the same goal: college and a choice-filled life achieved through high expectations; strength of character; highly effective teachers and leaders; safe, structured, and nurturing environments; and KIPP through college.

The academic program includes a system of aligned curriculum and assessments, instructional coaching and teamwork, academic and behavior data analysis, professional development, and targeted interventions. In addition, student support services ensure that schools meet all students' needs. The PD plan includes content and curricular workshops prior to school opening to internalize the academic model, as well as local and regional development throughout the year. Schoolwide systems, including the use of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), and rituals, such as assemblies and celebrations, help set and maintain student norms. The proposed school schedule includes an extended day from 7:15 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

### *Analysis:*

The School section does not meet the standard. Although the applicant presented a clear understanding of, and plan for, a sound academic model, the capacity interview revealed applicant comments that are misaligned with a positive behavioral environment for students.

A key criterion related to the student experience is a school culture that promotes a positive, rigorous, and inclusive academic environment. Policies and procedures for creating student norms and expectations should be aligned to research, best practice, and values. Further, a disciplinary system should be reflective of high quality practices that support student social emotional learning- all to impact student achievement and success. While the applicant proposed a plan that, on paper, could yield these results, comments were made in the applicant's capacity interview related to a culture of forceful boundaries and repercussions for student misbehavior. A staff member of KIPP New Orleans referred to an "electric fence" and the possibility of "electrocution" when discussing student expectations. The comments were repeated, were not corrected, and implied an implicit use of this behavioral approach.

The applicant described an academic model that is research-based and has evidence of success based on student achievement data in current KIPP schools. Elements leading to success include a shared philosophy; a curriculum aligned to state standards and assessments with an integrated data management system to track and analyze data; a strong professional development program; and links to the KIPP network. The applicant described comprehensive strategies to recruit and retain students that include family meetings and home visits, high expectations, and support for students with special needs.

The applicant described a comprehensive (PD) plan that indicates that staff will be prepared to implement the academic program and support it throughout the year. Prior to the start of the school year, all school leaders and coaches participate in intensive content and curricular workshops to fully internalize modules, text, assessments, and standards. New KIPPP teachers participate in a week of PD to on-board them to the KIPP goals, vision, and mission, and receive baseline training in content, curriculum, and assessments. Finally, all teachers participate in four weeks of summer PD planning sessions. Once the school year begins, teachers participate in shared regional PD days and skill-building aligned to instructional priorities. Additionally, professional learning communities (PLCs) meet to improve instruction in a content area of focus. Data dives are completed in PLCs in schools with regional academic team support.

## PEOPLE

**KIPP New Orleans, Inc.**

## RATING:

**Meets the Standard**

### *Plan Summary:*

KIPP New Orleans has a governing board of 12 people with diverse backgrounds, including a KIPP parent and a KIPP alumnus. Standing committees of the board include governance, strategic planning and leadership, academic excellence, financial oversight, and development. The board nominating and governance committee is tasked with identifying, vetting, and presenting board candidates to the board. Board members are selected by a vote of the board.

The school leadership team includes a school leader for PreK-4 and a school leader for Grades 5-8, both of whom report to the managing director of schools. The PreK-4 school leader will have two instructional assistant principals (APs), a dean of culture, and a student support staff member. The school leader for Grades 5-8 will have two instructional APs, an instructional coach, and a student support staff member. School leaders will be identified based on their ability to lead school culture and develop leaders/teachers in a transformation environment. No mission-critical partners are required to effectively deliver the academic model.

### *Analysis:*

The People section 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.

The governing board is experienced and it is evident that they have a clear understanding of the board's roles and responsibilities, effective processes for board operations, and evidence of continuous review, analysis, and reflection to support continued improvement. The board provides oversight of the organization as a whole, as well as individual school finances and academics, by establishing a set of goals and scorecard, and reviewing a data set that is reported annually and that all roll up to CEO goals and objectives. The board finance committee ensures that resources are allocated equitably across all the schools by looking at financial forecasts, needs, and opportunities. During the interview, the applicant provided robust information regarding board member recruitment and vetting, as well as board development and growth since inception. This has included a focus on sustainability and development that includes pipelines for leadership; more formal board processes for CEO evaluations and succession planning; and more attention to community engagement. Further, there has been the thoughtful addition of a parent, teacher, and alumnus to the board.

The staffing plan is well planned and deliberate, and staff support and development are targeted and frequent. The organization has a detailed leadership development plan and has identified four current employees who will be ready to assume leadership of a transformation school. The person selected will depend on the specific school to be transformed to ensure an appropriate match between the school's needs and the leader's skills and expertise. This provided evidence of thorough and realistic preparation for leadership of a transformation school.

## OPERATIONS

**KIPP New Orleans, Inc.**

## RATING:

**Meets the Standard**

### *Plan Summary:*

KIPP New Orleans will participate in the Orleans Parish school transformation process. The proposed school will transform an existing charter school that is expected to close; it is KIPP New Orleans School's expectation that the facility of the current charter school will become the facility of the proposed KIPP school.

KIPP New Orleans Schools utilizes an in-house finance team to conduct all aspects of financial planning, management, reporting, and compliance for schools in the KIPP New Orleans network. The finance team consists of eight members, with responsibilities deliberately shared among team members to ensure strong segregation of duties. The finance team reports to the chief operating officer/chief financial officer.

The charter management organization (CMO) assumes all start-up costs.

### *Analysis:*

The Operations section 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.

The applicant demonstrated individual and collective qualifications in facilities acquisition and management, including managing build-out and/or renovations. A director of facilities will ensure the campus is well maintained, safe, and meets all codes throughout the school year.

The applicant has thorough and detailed plans and processes for supporting school operations. The applicant has a detailed start-up plan; clear and realistic budgets; appropriate roles and responsibilities for financial responsibilities among school leadership, CMO staff, and the board; thoughtful and comprehensive financial policies and procedures; and specific procedures for developing school budgets. During the interview, the applicant clarified that each school is given a per-pupil expense model, which provides equity across the network. Many resources, including curriculum, are shared across the schools. The organization sets a clear vision for instructional materials and provides an abundance of support. If a school identifies unbudgeted needs, the organization considers a set of criteria: is it a real need, can it be worked into the existing budget, and how can it be funded?

## EXPERIENCED OPERATOR ADDENDUM (IF APPLICABLE)

**KIPP New Orleans, Inc.**

**RATING:**

**Meets the Standard**

### *Plan Summary:*

KIPP New Orleans expects that the student population will mirror the current student population of KIPP schools in New Orleans. Of the 4,700 K-12 students who attend KIPP in the current school year, approximately 94 percent are African American with 100 percent being eligible for free or reduced-price lunch and 13 percent receiving special education services.

Network growth will be supported by members of the School Support Center. KIPP New Orleans has developed a set of systems to manage through times of financial distress. The regional finance team has developed budgeting systems that help school leaders plan for contingencies. The organization has also built up a reserve to provide some cushion in times of financial shortfalls. The board has worked to define both an Emergency Succession Plan for the CEO as well as a long-term succession plan for the CEO and other leadership positions.

### *Analysis:*

The Experienced Operator section 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.

The applicant clearly described effective plans for network growth. The central office provides sufficient financial and human capital resources to support the successful launch of new schools. It also appears that the applicant's plan to scale beyond its current schools does not risk destabilizing nor negatively impacting performance at existing schools. Potential threats to success include failing to identify and hire excellent educators, unexpected shifts in funding, and a failure to effectively manage the transition from one school operator to the next. However, the applicant described appropriate contingency plans to mitigate those challenges.

The applicant also provided realistic contingency plans that include the use of existing fund balances in the event revenues are lower than estimated. The applicant's organizational chart and job descriptions clearly and realistically address the experience necessary to effectively implement the operator's scale strategy. The applicant also provided a clear description of effective succession planning for its CMO and other leadership.

## TRANSFORMATION ADDENDUM (IF APPLICABLE)

**KIPP New Orleans, Inc.**

**RATING:**

**Does Not Meet the Standard**

### *Plan Summary:*

KIPP New Orleans plans to undertake a full takeover transformation of an existing Orleans public charter school that is subject to nonrenewal, revocation, or voluntary relinquishment by the existing chartering organization. The current grade configuration and enrollment will be maintained and every student enrolled currently will have the opportunity to remain enrolled at the school with the exception of students who have been promoted to 9th grade. Once a school site is identified, the school will hold general meetings for all interested parents and schedule home visits with families to address individual concerns and explain the vision and characteristics of the new school in a one-on-one setting.

The school intends a successful transition period and first year of operation by building relationships with the current operator and school community in order to minimize the disruption to students, families, and the community. Key strategies for transformation will include replacing the school leader; providing job-embedded PD; implementing a rigorous teacher-evaluation and reward system; offering financial and career advancement incentives; implementing comprehensive instructional reform; extending learning and teacher-planning time; creating a community orientation; and providing operating flexibility and sustained support. The long-term goal is to ensure that all students are college and career ready. The three-year academic goal for a transformation school is to outperform the Louisiana averages on the LEAP assessment.

### *Analysis:*

The Transformation Addendum section does not meet the standard.

The applicant's transformation model, when discussed and probed in the capacity interview, fell short of supporting achievement for all students. In describing the culture being the "air" for all KIPP students and staff, school climate and practices were portrayed in an inappropriate and insensitive manner.

The applicant presented sound evidence of the ability to transform schools. The applicant provided a plan to ensure all students are served at the school and realistic evidence of how past experiences will inform its ability to transform a school, including the importance of leveraging the power and size of the network and using the shared curriculum, assessment strategy, and PDs as accelerants for school transformations.

The applicant provided effective educational program plans that include comprehensive strategies to recruit and retain students, and establish high expectations for students, teachers, and staff.

## EVALUATOR BIOGRAPHIES

### *Evaluator's Name*

#### **Dr. Iris Palazesi**

Dr. Palazesi is an independent education consultant specializing in the areas of charter school applications, grant applications, and educational research. She has worked with clients to secure more than \$21 million in grant awards and more than eighty approved charter school applications. Dr. Palazesi served on the board of directors of a high-performing charter school in Tallahassee, Florida, for nine years, including four years as board chair. Dr. Palazesi has also worked for the Florida Department of Education as Program Specialist for Gifted Students, Supervisor of Exceptional Student Education Services, and Interim Administrator for Title I. Prior to moving to Florida, Dr. Palazesi was a university professor at Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana, and Thomas College in Thomasville, Georgia. Dr. Palazesi earned her Bachelor degree in Elementary Education from the University of Illinois; her Master degree in Gifted Education from Northeastern Illinois University in Chicago; and her Doctorate degree from the University of Illinois.

### *Evaluator's Name*

#### **Wanda Guillaume**

Wanda Guillaume is an Educational Consultant providing supports to schools and districts in the areas of instructional and leadership coaching, professional development and school and district turnaround. In addition, she collaborates with state and local education agencies to offer charter school evaluation, and recommendation expertise for authorizers in need of internal capacity to assess the organizational, operational, and educational rigor of charter school applications. Wanda has served as a teacher, principal and Chief Academic Officer and is a leader in building capacity among school leadership teams and developing innovative strategies to “turnaround” failing schools. She holds a B.S. in Elementary Education from Loyola University, a M.Ed. in Curriculum and Instruction and Educational Administration from the University of New Orleans and holds an Ed Leader 3 certification for the state of Louisiana.

### *Evaluator's Name*

#### **Shenita Johnson**

Shenita Johnson has worked in the public and private sectors with diverse groups and various constituency levels for almost 15 years. She is currently the general counsel/managing director of the Illinois State Charter School Commission. Ms. Johnson previously practiced for four years as an Assistant State's Attorney with the Cook County State's Attorney's Office. Ms. Johnson worked with the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA), managing the high-profile charter authorization work in Detroit and in New Orleans, post-Katrina. She also worked for the Chicago Public Schools where she played a pivotal role in the launch and implementation of Renaissance 2010, Chicago's initiative to open 100 high-quality, high-performing public school options. Ms. Johnson holds a Bachelor of Arts in journalism from Howard University, a Master of Arts in public administration from Baruch College in New York, and a Juris Doctor from Chicago-Kent College of Law at the Illinois Institute of technology.