

ORLEANS PARISH SCHOOL BOARD

CHARTER SCHOOL APPLICATION RECOMMENDATION REPORT 2018

National Association of Charter School Authorizers

May 11, 2018

New Charter School Application for

The Delores Taylor Arthur School for Young Men

Submitted by

Lyceum Schools, Inc.

Evaluation Team

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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:

Lyceum Schools, Inc.

Proposed School Name:

The Delores Taylor Arthur School for Young Men

Mission:

Our mission is unapologetically the holistic education of urban males.

Proposed Location:

Potentially 3774 and 3800 Gentilly Road

Enrollment Projections:

<i>Academic Year</i>	<i>Planned # Students</i>	<i>Maximum # Students</i>	<i>Grades Served</i>
2019-20	150	200	9
2020-21	300	400	9-10
2021-22	450	600	9-11
2022-23	600	800	9-12
At Capacity	600	800	9-12

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Recommendation:

The Delores Taylor Arthur School for Young Men

DENY

Summary Analysis:

The evaluation team recommends denial of the proposal for The Delores Taylor Arthur School for Young Men.

The School section does not meet the standard. The evaluation team's primary concerns include a lack of detail and consistency. For example, the academic model names numerous elements and key strategies but a comprehensive and cohesive plan is not explained. Another major concern is that the applicant has not provided evidence of a solid understanding of federal requirements related to identifying and serving special student populations. For example, the applicant did not clearly describe the processes for IEP reviews or re-evaluations. Additionally, it appears that the applicant is proposing a separate curriculum for students with disabilities and the rationale for this is not provided.

The People section approaches the standard. Primary concerns include a lack of detail and consistency. The organizational chart, staffing plan, and budget are not aligned and the number of existing and planned board members is unclear. The overall capacity of the board is not evident and it is not clear that the board has a solid understanding of its role and responsibilities. Additionally, it is not clear that the school leader, Byron Arthur, has the capacity to lead the proposed school successfully. No information was provided about his prior school leadership experience; track record of improving student achievement; past leadership positions with a high level of responsibility; or track record of leading operationally and/or financially viable organizations. The applicant identified and discussed a number of partners throughout the application but these partnerships were not clear and consistent throughout the application and attachments.

The Operations section does not meet the standard. The applicant provided a description of two potential facility options but did not provide a sound plan and timeline for securing a facility. A detailed start-up plan is not provided and the budget does not include evidence of start-up resources, specifically letters confirming funding sources. The applicant has not clearly described appropriate segregation of financial duties or control systems. Budget projections are not based on accurate, conservative, and legally compliant assumptions or are inconsistent within the application.

It is evident that this founding group is fully committed to serving the target population of urban males and is encouraged to make changes to the school plan in order to present a comprehensive school design appropriate to the school mission and target population.

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)

N/A

PEOPLE

Approaches the Standard

TRANSFORMATION ADDENDUM (IF APPLICABLE)

N/A

OPERATIONS

Does Not Meet the Standard

SCHOOL

The Delores Taylor Arthur School for Young Men

RATING:

Does Not Meet the Standard

Plan Summary:

The Delores Taylor Arthur School for Young Men has proposed an open enrollment high school designed to serve urban males. The school plans to open in 2019 with 150 students in Grade 9 and grow to 600 students in Grades 9-12 at full capacity. The educational program design focuses on the following elements: collaboration and competition; literacy integration; space and movement; debate, deliberation, and dialogue; blended learning; and project-based learning.

The school will use personal learning plans to establish learning goals and portfolios to track progress. Student success will be supported with a high-dosage tutoring program. The school will evaluate student progress using a combination of standardized and staff-developed assessments. The proposed school will follow a traditional schedule three days each week and will utilize longer blocks of time two days each week. The school culture will be established and maintained through a house model along with a school shield, creed, and chants.

Analysis:

The School section 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.

Overall, the academic model names numerous elements and key strategies, including collaboration and competition; literacy integration; space and movement; debate, deliberation, and dialogue; blended learning; and project-based learning but a comprehensive and cohesive plan illustrating how all the elements will be integrated is not explained. The applicant's student, school, and mission-specific goals are not clear, specific, and measurable; and the applicant's knowledge of goal-setting is not evident as much of the discussion about school goals was led by the school's financial service provider at the interview. Also, the professional development (PD) plan topics, schedule, and providers are not detailed or aligned throughout the narrative, leading to further confusion regarding how the complex school model will be implemented and supported on a day-to-day basis by school staff. The school's plan and vision for school culture and student experience lack detail regarding essential elements, leaving the evaluation team uncertain as to how social emotional learning will be delivered and supported. Plans for high school-specific elements, such as the variety of coursework necessary to meet diploma requirements, are not provided. Therefore, it is not evident how students will meet graduation requirements.

Another major concern is that the applicant has not provided evidence of a solid understanding of federal requirements related to identifying and serving special student populations. For example, the applicant did not clearly describe the processes for IEP reviews or re-evaluations. Additionally, it appears that the applicant is proposing a separate curriculum for students with disabilities and the rationale for this is not provided.

The applicant's plan to engage the community and parents is partially developed. For example, the applicant has formed a community advisory board and has specific plans to inform and engage parents and other stakeholders after the school is open but did not include the plan to share information with the community about the school's development. Also, the school plans to have a parent organization but the applicant did not explain the purpose, why it is "critical to the success of the school," or how it will be sustainable based on research or other successful school experiences.

PEOPLE

The Delores Taylor Arthur School for Young Men

RATING:

Approaches the Standard

Plan Summary:

The Delores Taylor Arthur School for Young Men has proposed a governing board with members of diverse backgrounds and is seeking a member with expertise in architecture, construction, or facilities management. Standing committees of the board will include academic excellence, development, finance, governance, and chief executive officer (CEO) support/evaluation. The board is planning to contract with Board On Track to provide board training and support.

The leadership team included in the organizational chart includes a president/CEO, academic director, director of finance and operations (DFO), and special education coordinator. The staffing chart also includes a chief of staff (beginning in Year 3) and an activities leadership position (beginning in Year 4). The applicant has reached out to a number of community organizations to support the school, including The National Speech & Debate Association, the Barkley Forum at Emory University, and the Global Debate Symposium.

Analysis:

The People section approaches the standard because there are substantial gaps in a number of areas that raise concerns about the applicant's plan.

The applicant's staff plans are partially developed. The applicant did describe teacher qualifications that meet minimum state requirements, identified a clear process and timeline for the recruitment and hiring of staff, and presented data that show that the pool of teachers and administrators from which the applicant group intends to recruit exists. While, the applicant is mindful of the need to have a diverse teaching staff and will accomplish this by assembling a diverse pool of applicants, it does not appear that the applicant has a clear and thoughtful plan for recruiting and hiring teachers with the knowledge and skills necessary to be effective with the target student population. Additionally, the applicant has not described professional development plans that align with the school mission, academic plan, and teacher needs. Further, the organizational chart, staffing plan, and budget are not aligned. For example, the staffing chart includes a dean/chief of staff and two support staff that are not included on the organizational chart.

The governing board plans lack detail and consistency. For example, the number of existing and planned board members is unclear. The information provided in the Request for Clarification did not align with the application and added to the evaluation team's confusion. The capacity of the board is not evident and it is not clear that the board has a solid understanding of its role and responsibilities. Two board members were present during the interview, one of whom is the board chair and one of whom is the chair of the board's academic committee. The board chair had minimal participation in the performance task and did not seem confident about board roles and responsibilities and relied on guidance from the school leader in answering questions. Further, the chair of the academic committee seemed overly confident about the board's roles and responsibilities, and his role in particular, which, at times, were inaccurate and inappropriate. This led to concern among evaluation team members regarding the true leadership of the proposed school.

The school's plan for mission-critical partners is not presented clearly. The applicant identified and discussed a number of partners throughout the application, such as The National Speech & Debate Association, the National Center for the Development of Boys, The Gurian Institute, and Emory University, but these partnerships were not clear and consistent throughout the application and attachments. In the Request for Clarification response, the applicant stated in one instance that there are no mission-specific partners and then, in another instance, identified partners. Overall, the evaluation team was unsure which partners would be critical, long-term partners for the sustainability of the school.

Finally, it is not clear that the school leader has the capacity to lead the proposed school successfully. The school leader section was completed about Cynthia Bridges, the proposed director of finance and operations, and evidence of a successful leadership track record was provided. However, the proposed school leader is Byron Arthur. No information was provided about his prior experience managing a school, a team of teachers, or an academic program; track record of improving student achievement or ability to develop a high-performing team of teachers across multiple years; past leadership positions with a high level of responsibility; or track record of leading operationally and/or financially viable organizations. During the interview, much of the discussion during the performance task related to school goals was led and reported by the school's contracted financial service provider.

OPERATIONS

The Delores Taylor Arthur School for Young Men

RATING:

Does Not Meet the Standard

Plan Summary:

The Delores Taylor Arthur School for Young Men has a potential facility through an agreement with the Archdiocese of New Orleans and the pastor of St. James Major Parish to possibly lease the facilities at 3774 and 3800 Gentilly Road.

The school plans to hire a director of finance and operations who is a qualified certified public accountant (CPA) to provide financial management services. In the first several years of the school's existence, the school will be supported by 4th Sector Solutions, a third-party provider that will support the school's back-office activities.

The school financial statements will be reviewed monthly by the board's finance committee, which will be chaired by the board treasurer. The board will approve the annual budget, all budgetary needs and actions, and any large, non-standard purchases, as well as fund and review the annual financial audit.

The start-up statement of activities includes \$110,000 from the CSP planning and implementation grant and \$240,000 from the NewSchools Venture Fund and Camelback Ventures.

Analysis:

The Operations section does not meet the standard. The response is wholly undeveloped or significantly incomplete; demonstrates lack of preparation; and otherwise raises substantial concerns about the viability of the plan and the applicant's ability to carry it out.

The start-up plan and the plan for securing a facility, specifically, are underdeveloped. A detailed start-up plan is not provided and the budget does not include evidence of start-up resources, specifically letters confirming funding sources or a contingency plan. This raises concerns that the school will not have sufficient access to resources to fund school start-up.

Also, the applicant provided a description of two potential facility options but did not provide a sound plan and timeline for securing a facility, and did not discuss how the characteristics of the facilities will serve the academic model, particularly mission-specific facility needs related to debate and deliberation, such as an auditorium, stage, etc. Regarding facility costs, the assumptions about facilities in all financial statements provided do not correspond to a conservative facility plan or account for possible contingencies, leading to overarching concerns about the viability of the plan overall.

Budget projections are not based on accurate, conservative, and legally compliant assumptions or are inconsistent within the application. For example, salaries for the chief academic officer and director of finance and operations are stated as \$75,000 – \$90,000 in the application. But, the operating statement of activities shows the chief academic officer salary as \$80,000 in Year 1, rising to \$173,189 in Year 5. The application also shows inconsistencies regarding positions and costs for contracted services. For example, the budget includes a chief of staff but this position is not discussed in the application or included on the organizational chart.

The financial readiness plan is unclear or has gaps in several areas. The applicant has not clearly described appropriate segregation of duties or control systems. The responsibilities of the administration, board, and financial service provider, and process for developing the annual budget are not clear. The differentiation of responsibilities for the director of finance and 4th Sector Solutions is not clear nor is a clear description of how these two entities will work together provided.

During the interview, the applicant completed a performance task that required the team to outline SMART Goals for Year One, as well as interim milestones. The team relied heavily on the consultant from 4th Sector Solutions, which demonstrated to the evaluation team that the school leadership, including the proposed school leader and board chair, does not have sufficient expertise or understand its role.

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 Guillame

Wanda Guillame 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.