

**ORLEANS PARISH SCHOOL BOARD**

# CHARTER SCHOOL APPLICATION RECOMMENDATION REPORT 2018

*National Association of Charter School Authorizers*

**November 5, 2018**

*New Charter School Application for*

**The Next Generation Academy**

*Submitted by*

**The Next Generation Academy**

*Evaluation Team*

**TEAM LEAD: Waynica Staples**

**EVALUATORS: Dr. Lisa Green-Derry**

**Carol Swann**

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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.

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 Next Generation Academy**

*Proposed School Name:*

**The Next Generation Academy**

*Mission:*

The mission of The Next Generation Academy is to inspire students to excel academically and develop critical-thinking skills through rigorous instruction and civic and community engagement.

*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	300	375	7-9
2020-21	400	500	7-10
2021-22	500	625	7-11
2022-23	600	750	7-12
2023-24	600	750	7-12
At Capacity	600	750	7-12

## SECTION RATINGS

**The Next Generation Academy**

*Recommendation:*

**Denial**

### *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

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

N/A

#### **PEOPLE**

Approaches the Standard

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

N/A

#### **OPERATIONS**

Approaches the Standard

## SCHOOL

**The Next Generation Academy**

## RATING:

**Approaches the Standard**

### *Plan Summary:*

The Next Generation Academy plans to serve 600 students in Grades 7-12 with a long-term vision to graduate students who are scholastically prepared to become leaders and trailblazers at the local, state, national, and global levels. Major elements of the school's design will be activated in three phases: (1) gradual release of responsibility and personalized learning; (2) civic academies; (3) project-based/service learning. The school will initially serve Grades 7-9 and add one grade level per year until reaching full capacity. The proposed school day runs from 8:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. on Monday and ends at 2:50 p.m. Tuesday through Friday.

### *Analysis:*

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

The academic model met the criteria in some respects. For example, the applicant group cited several research studies that support the use of gradual release of responsibility, personalized learning, civic academies, and project-based/service learning to raise student achievement. Through the Request for Clarification (RFC) and capacity interview, the applicant group clarified how the phases of implementation were developed, how student projects will be developed, and how the programmatic elements will work together. However, when asked during the interview how students enrolling after the start of the year will be integrated into the program and provided with reasonable opportunities to complete the service learning projects, limited details were provided, raising concerns about how new students will be positioned for success.

Some of the proposed practices to serve special student populations raised additional concerns. For example, in the RFC, the applicant indicated that they will "have translators for written and oral translations in the school office and on the school website. Links will be provided on the school website to access information from the Louisiana Believes website for alternative language resources." The Louisiana Believes website is an inadequate substitute for offering translation and interpretation services directly at the school for families with limited English proficiency. The applicant did not indicate how families without Internet access will access resources nor whether hard copies of documents in multiple languages would be available in the school office. Additionally, the applicant did not address plans to include English Language Learner (ELL) students in extracurricular and culture-building activities. Lastly, while The Next Generation Academy provides adequate details for progress monitoring at each RTI level, the process for monitoring IEP goals was not described.

Elements of the restorative disciplinary process remain unclear. For example, the timeline for how a student progresses through the system from infraction to resolution is not clear. Limited details were provided about how teacher-teacher and parent-teacher conflicts will be resolved. The applicant failed to indicate how students will be supported if they are suspended and out of school for an extended period of time.

## PEOPLE

### The Next Generation Academy

## RATING:

### Approaches the Standard

#### *Plan Summary:*

The Next Generation Academy will be governed by a board of directors. There are currently seven board members with diverse professional backgrounds, including education, law, community organizing, real estate, and finance. The board will provide strategic oversight of the school's academic outcomes, operational viability, and financial sustainability through the use of committees. The board will form finance, academic, and operations committees.

The Next Generation Academy will use teacher preparation programs and job fairs to develop a teacher pipeline to meet its staffing needs. The applicant group identifies some mission-critical partnerships, including Tulane University's Center for Public Service, the New Orleans League of Women Voters, and Goodwill Industries.

#### *Analysis:*

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

Based on the RFC response, the governing board has had three board chairs since submitting the application, raising concerns about the board's stability and ability to effectively recruit and retain individuals in leadership positions. Additionally, the applicant plans to maintain a maximum board size of seven members. If they experience additional turnover, they run the risk of falling below the state-mandated seven (7) members. One of the two board members present for the capacity interview was new to the board and during the capacity interview, it became clear that the new board member was not adequately prepared. For example, he'd not seen the budget prior to the interview and couldn't adequately describe board member onboarding or accountability. During the performance task, the applicant team relied heavily on 4th Sector Solutions and their educational consultant to guide the discussions, raising additional concerns about the board's capacity to provide effective oversight.

The staffing plans are only partially developed. The applicant clearly describes the process for staff recruitment, which includes online job boards, job fairs, and local universities. However, the process to coach and support teachers not meeting expectations is not included in the narrative, which states only that expectations will be communicated through the handbook and individuals not meeting those expectations will receive a verbal reminder and/or written warning. When asked to provide more detail during the capacity interview, the applicant team was unable to describe a cohesive plan to promote teacher success.

The identified school leader has extensive leadership experiences in a variety of public school settings that should prepare her for this role. However, based on the capacity interview, it is unclear if she will be successful without the support of a stable board.

Many mission-critical partner Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) were not provided with the application, and the evaluation team was unable to assess the validity of these partnerships and the impact they might have on student achievement.

## OPERATIONS

### The Next Generation Academy

## RATING:

### Approaches the Standard

#### *Plan Summary:*

The Next Generation Academy will contract with 4th Sector Solutions to provide back-office financial services. According to the MOU, specific services to be provided by 4th Sector Solutions include financial management, human resources, school operations, and compliance support services. The annual budget will be collaboratively developed by the school leader and 4th Sector Solutions before final approval by the board of directors.

The finance committee, school leader, and 4th Sector Solutions will meet monthly to review financial reports, including the variance report of actual versus budgeted revenue and expenditures, balance sheet, statement of cash flow, income summary, and financial forecasts.

The Next Generation Academy will work with OPSB to find a facility or will locate in a commercial space.

#### *Analysis:*

The Operations section approaches the standard for approval.

The facility section is partially developed. In the application narrative, the applicant group states that they are exploring the possibility of using an existing unoccupied Orleans Parish facility, co-locating with an existing school, or identifying and leasing suitable commercial space. At the same time, school and board leadership are working with a commercial real estate agent to identify space at local universities and elsewhere. However, no specific details were provided about potential renovation needs, build-out costs, ideal location, status of discussions, number of spaces being considered, or a decision-making timeline. This lack of detail raised concerns about the applicant's ability to identify a viable location if an OPSB facility is not available in time for the school's opening. Additionally, the applicant team identifies Joshua Washington as the director of finance and operations (DFO). However, his resume was not provided and the evaluation team was unable to assess his qualifications to effectively ensure student safety, proper facility maintenance, and regulatory compliance.

The applicant's financial readiness plans are clear in some respects but require additional details in other areas. The RFC describes how the finance team will work with the school leader to ensure alignment between budgetary projections and academic priorities. However, the narrative does not state which school personnel are on the finance team nor does it detail the role of the DFO in the budget-alignment process nor whether the DFO is a school employee or an employee of 4th Sector Solutions. Additionally, the evaluation team is still unclear about service fees charged by mission-critical partners. The RFC states that there are no fees associated with mission-critical partnerships. However, some of the partner MOUs outline fees for services. The applicant was unable to clarify this discrepancy when asked during the capacity interview. Ultimately, the evaluation team is concerned about the applicant's plan for effective financial oversight and whether they have the capability to hold their financial service provider accountable.

## EVALUATOR BIOGRAPHIES

### *Evaluator's Name*

#### **Waynica Staples**

Waynica is a passionate reformer with nearly 20 years of educational experience and believes that all students can achieve at high levels if given the right tools and opportunities. Waynica is the founder and CEO of Inspire Success, LLC, a consulting firm that provides direct support to charter school leaders and boards by helping them navigate the school development or charter renewal process. Specific services include petition writing and/or review, project management, governance training, and strategy development. Prior to launching her consulting firm, Waynica worked for the Georgia Charter Schools Association (GCSA). Waynica's role at the association was to provide training and technical support to governing boards and school-level leadership related to academic success, operational compliance, and financial viability. During her tenure at GCSA, Waynica trained more than 20 governing boards. Waynica also held roles as a charter school developer, admissions and financial aid advisor, and college access coordinator.

### *Evaluator's Name*

#### **Carol Swann**

Currently CEO and president of Swann Educational Solutions, Carol Swann has more than 30 years in education with extensive experience working with districts and states regarding the charter school authorization process, strategic planning, training, monitoring and oversight, and policy development for charter schools. Carol has been responsible for charter policy and procedures, writing and updating the charter application and scoring rubric in conjunction with state laws, and working with external partners such as the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) to ensure a quality authorizing process utilizing best practices from across the country. As a direct result of this work, Carol has developed training modules to assist authorizers, providing training for review teams, school boards, university charter offices, and state charter offices. Carol also organized the Tennessee Association of Charter School Authorizers (TACSA) and wrote the TACSA Principles and Standards and by-laws. She served as president for 2017-18. This organization is developing model authorizing policies and practices for authorizers in Tennessee as well as looking at model charter laws around the nation in order to inform and educate legislative work.

### *Evaluator's Name*

#### **Dr. Lisa Green-Derry**

Dr. Lisa Green-Derry is an education strategist who knows that all children have assets and believes that expanding the definition of assets can influence ways in which professionals interact with children and ultimately produce positive outcomes. For more than 20 years, Dr. Green-Derry's expertise in student-centered instruction and assessment; implementation and evaluation of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) curricula; and designing and facilitating culturally responsive modules for pre-service teachers and educators in K-12 systems, and graduate students, as well as faculty of social work programs has influenced educational outcomes for students in urban and rural educational settings. Dr. Green-Derry's integrative approach to education connects assets of families and children to various systems in ways that provide opportunities that support equitable education for all children.