



Deborah A. Gist
Commissioner

State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Shepard Building
255 Westminister Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903-3400

Enclosure 7f5
January 12, 2015

January 12, 2015

TO: Members of the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education

FROM: Deborah A. Gist, Commissioner 

RE: **Times 2 STEM Academy - Charter Amendment**

Times 2 STEM Academy is a district charter public school in Providence. The school opened in 1998 and currently enrolls 647 students in kindergarten through grade twelve. Approximately seventy-five (75) percent of students are eligible for free or reduced price lunch, seven (7) percent are students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), and eight (8) percent are English language learners (ELLs). In 2014, Times 2 STEM Academy was identified as a typical school through Rhode Island's school classification system.

Amendment Request

Times 2 STEM Academy has requested an amendment to its charter to increase the school's enrollment beginning in the 2015-16 school year. Times 2 STEM Academy currently enrolls 647 students in kindergarten through grade twelve, and desires to increase maximum enrollment by 80 additional students, for a total of 727 students.

In accordance with C-2-1 (a) of the Board of Regents Regulations Governing Rhode Island Public Charter Schools, such major changes in the school's operations require the action of the Board of Education.

Times 2 STEM Academy has achieved sustained high academic performance, demonstrated additional demand for the school, and provided a viable operational plan.

RECOMMENDATION: THAT, the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education moves to approve the Times 2 STEM Academy amendment permitting the school to enroll an additional 80 students in kindergarten through grade twelve.

RI Charter Public School Amendment Request: **Times 2 STEM Academy**

Enrolling Communities: Providence

Grade Level: K to 12

Location of School: Providence

Charter Type: District Charter

Current Approval: 647 students **Proposed Increase:** 80 students **Maximum if amended:** 727 students

Mission

Our mission is to develop intellectually curious and capable young people who are selfless contributors to both local and global communities and who aspire to be intellectual leaders. Through rigorous and innovative academic program in math, science and technology, in combination with the liberal arts, Times2 STEM Academy affords its diverse student population those experiences, skills, and values that will prepare them for purposeful contribution in higher education and STEM related fields.

School Overview

Times 2 STEM Academy (Times 2) is a K-12 district charter public school in Providence. The school opened in 1998 and was most recently renewed in Spring 2013.

Times 2 STEM Academy enrolls students from Providence. Approximately 75% of students are eligible for free or reduced price lunch, 89% are Latino or African American, 7% are students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), and 8% are English language learners (ELLs).

Times 2 STEM Academy is developing new Science, Technology and Engineering Field Studies (STEFS) programs that will “address the national need for equitable representation of African Americans, Hispanics, and other minorities in careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.” The program will include a robust field studies component, which according to the proposal will “expose [students] to challenging, real-world applications of technology, engineering, mathematics, and science.”

Amendment Request

Pursuant to Regulation C-2-1(a) of the *RI Board of Regents Regulations Governing Charter Schools*, Times 2 STEM Academy requests permission from the Board of Education to amend its charter to allow an increase in maximum enrollment.

In Fall 2015, Times 2 STEM Academy proposes to increase enrollment by approximately twenty (20) students in ninth grade, and twenty (20) more students across grades K-6. Over a three-year period, the school will continue to increase enrollment in the high school grades, eventually serving two hundred ten (210) students in those grades, up from approximately one hundred fifty (150). Enrollment in grades K-8 will not change after the one-time increase of twenty (20) students in 2015.

The maximum proposed enrollment is seven hundred twenty-seven (727) students, or a maximum enrollment increase of eighty (80) students beyond current approval.

Evaluation Procedures

For charter schools seeking amendments that increase maximum enrollment, RIDE's Office of Charter Schools looks to answer three key questions:

- Does the charter public school have a track record of sustained high performance?
- Is there sufficient demand for the school?
- Has the school developed an operational plan that will enable it to expand with fidelity?

To evaluate academic performance, RIDE conducts a comprehensive review of available evidence, including RIDE school classifications, NECAP proficiency, growth rates, graduation rates (for high schools), and results from recent charter renewal decisions.

To evaluate demand, RIDE examines lottery data over multiple years to assess whether the school has sufficient demand to meet proposed enrollment targets.

To evaluate a school's operational plan, RIDE reviews board meeting minutes, school materials (including staffing plans and budgets), and other strategic planning documents. The purpose of the review is to understand how the school will be able to carry out its expansion plan.

Commissioner's Recommendation

The Commissioner recommends approval of Times 2 STEM Academy's amendment request. The decision is based on evidence of sustained high academic performance, demand for the school, and a sound operational plan for managing the enrollment increase.

Sustained high academic performance:

School classification: In 2012, Times 2 STEM Academy was classified as a Leading school. In 2013, it was again classified as Leading. In 2014, Times 2 STEM Academy was classified as Typical.

Proficiency: Most recent NECAP data indicates that 76% of Times 2 STEM Academy students are proficient in reading and 53% are proficient in math. Across all Providence schools, 50% of students are proficient in reading and 32% are proficient in math. Over the past three years, Times 2 STEM Academy has routinely been one of the highest performing open-enrollment schools serving Providence students.

Growth: The Rhode Island Growth Model enables a measure of how well students perform compared against other students who performed similarly in prior years. A school with a median Student Growth Percentile (SGP) between 40 and 60 is achieving a typical or expected amount of growth. Times 2 STEM Academy has a median Student Growth Percentile (SGP) of 48 in reading and a median SGP of 59 in math. These growth scores are within the bounds of typical growth for Rhode Island schools.

Renewal: The school's charter was renewed in 2013, and has no outstanding conditions.

Demand: Times 2 STEM Academy is substantially oversubscribed. In the March 2014 enrollment lottery, Times 2 STEM Academy had received one thousand four hundred sixty-one (1461) applications for forty-nine (49) available seats, or roughly thirty (30) applicants for each available seat.

Operational Plan: The Times 2 STEM Academy's amendment request is for increased enrollment in an authorized school, and does not amend its authorized grade span. The governance structure and operational procedures at Times 2 STEM Academy would remain the same, with increased staffing capacity and budget commitments to support the Science, Technology, Engineering Field Studies (STEFs) initiative. Times 2 STEM Academy anticipates that the school's existing facilities can sustain the additional enrollment.