



State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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Enclosure 2c3
September 22, 2014

Deborah A. Gist
Commissioner

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TO: Members of the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education
FROM: Deborah A. Gist, Commissioner
RE: **Kingston Hill Academy - Charter Amendment**

Kingston Hill Academy (KHA) is an independent charter public school located in Kingston. KHA opened in 2001 and currently serves 180 students in kindergarten through grade five. The school is authorized to enroll 260 students from kindergarten through grade eight, but to date, the school has not enrolled beyond grade five. KHA was identified as a leading school through Rhode Island's school classification system.

KHA is authorized to enroll students statewide. Most students come from neighboring communities, with a majority coming from Charlestown, North Kingstown, and South Kingstown. Twenty-one percent (21%) of students are eligible for free or reduced price lunch and 14% are students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). KHA does not have a measurable population of English language learners (ELLs).

Amendment Request

Kingston Hill Academy (KHA) requested an amendment to its charter to utilize its authorized enrollment in kindergarten through grade five beginning in August 2015.

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.

Kingston Hill Academy has demonstrated that it has achieved sustained high academic performance, that there is sufficient demand for the enrollment increase at the elementary level, and that the school has a viable operational plan.

RECOMMENDATION: THAT, the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education moves to approve the Kingston Hill Academy charter amendment permitting the school to enroll a maximum of 260 students within its current K-5 program.

RI Charter Public School Amendment Request: Kingston Hill Academy

Enrolling Communities: Statewide

Grade Level:
currently K-5; authorized K-8

Location of School: Kingston, RI

Charter Type: Independent

Mission

Kingston Hill Academy (KHA) is dedicated to providing students with the opportunity for an inclusive, individualized, and challenging curriculum that supports them to reach their full potential.

School Overview

Kingston Hill Academy (KHA) is an independent charter public school. KHA opened in 2001 and currently serves 180 students in kindergarten through grade five. The school is authorized to enroll students from kindergarten through grade eight, but to date, the school has not enrolled beyond grade five.

KHA is authorized to enroll students statewide. Most students come from communities near the campus, with a majority coming from Charlestown, North Kingstown, and South Kingstown. Twenty-one percent (21%) of students are eligible for free or reduced price lunch, 14% are students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). KHA does not have a measurable population of English language learners (ELLs).

Amendment Request

In 2006, KHA was authorized to increase its maximum student enrollment from 180 to 260 students. To date, KHA has not enrolled beyond 180. KHA is requesting an amendment to act upon its 2006 authorization. The organization proposes to enroll an additional 20-40 students beginning in Fall 2015, eventually reaching its maximum number of 260 over several years.

The 2006 amendment, in part, reads as follows:

“The Regents authorize an amendment to the KHA charter to expand the maximum enrollment from 180 students to 260 students. The additional students shall solely accommodate the growth of the middle school program.” (emphasis added)

Because the sentence underlined above appears to limit any enrollment beyond 180 to students in a “middle school program,” **KHA’s proposed amendment is to strike the sentence emphasized above from its current approval.**

This amendment would permit KHA to add several additional classrooms in grades K-5, and ensure that each elementary grade level has two homerooms and at least two core classroom teachers per grade level (currently, some grade levels have only one homeroom). The proposed goal of the amendment is to increase access for students and families, and to enable a more efficient staffing structure.

According to KHA personnel, the school has no immediate plans to enroll grades six through eight.

Evaluation Procedures

Kingston Hill Academy is seeking flexibility in utilizing its 2006 approved expansion. 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 whether the school is positioned to carry out its expansion plan.

Commissioner Recommendation

The Commissioner recommends approval of Kingston Hill Academy's amendment request to the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education. The decision is based on evidence of sustained high academic performance, demand for the school, and a viable operational plan.

Sustained high academic performance. KHA has demonstrated sustained academic success. KHA's 2012 charter renewal report found that "KHA's educational program has been successful" using metrics of achievement and growth from the charter school Performance Review Framework. The school was renewed for a five-year term in 2012. Over the last three years, the school has been classified as *leading* (2013/14), *commended* (2012/13) and *commended* (2011/12) using RIDE's school classification system.

The school was awarded a five-year renewal in 2012.

Demand: Kingston Hill Academy (KHA) is routinely oversubscribed. In March 2014, the school received approximately 200 applications for just 20 available seats, or 10 to 1. This evidence indicates that KHA could successfully meet its enrollment targets within a K-5 grade span.

Operations: The KHA amendment request enables access to approved enrollment in grades K-5. The governance structure, educational program, and operational procedures at KHA would remain the same. KHA anticipates that the enrollment increase can be supported in its existing facility, with some renovations or additions required at a later date.