



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 7c2
October 7, 2013

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TO: Rhode Island Board of Education
FROM: Deborah A. Gist, Commissioner 
RE: Preliminary Approval of Southside Elementary Charter School

I present for your consideration a recommendation to preliminarily approve Southside Elementary Charter School.

A complete charter proposal was submitted on April 18, 2013 and has been reviewed by RIDE in accordance with our charter proposal review process.

Having been thoroughly reviewed by RIDE, we have concluded that Southside Elementary Charter School is likely to provide a quality educational choice for parents and students.

Preliminary approval is an endorsement of the conceptual design of the school and does not imply a readiness to begin operation. The school must meet mandatory milestones in order to demonstrate readiness and receive final approval by the Board of Education to open in the 2014-2015 school year.

RECOMMENDATION: THAT, the Rhode Island Board of Education grants preliminary approval, for further planning and development, to Southside Elementary School towards a 2014-2015 school year opening, contingent upon final approval to operate by the Board of Education, as presented.

Rhode Island Charter School Proposal: Engineering Early College Academy

Catchment Area: Providence

Grade Level: 9-12

Location of School: Providence

Charter Type: Independent
Establishing Entity:
West Elmwood Housing

Mission

The mission of the Engineering Early College Academy (EECA) is to prepare urban learners of all backgrounds and abilities to excel in all subjects, especially in engineering, math, science and technology, empowering them to go on and succeed in college.

Enrollment Plan

Year 1	2014-15	100 students
Year 2	2015-16	200 students
Year 3	2016-17	300 students
Year 4	2017-18	400 students
Year 5	2018-19	400 students
Eventual Enrollment		400 students

Program Overview

According to the proposal, Engineering Early College Academy (EECA) will be an “early college” that works in partnership with the URI College of Engineering to prepare students for college and offer college coursework and experiences during high school. The applicants believe that EECA will help students that are typically underrepresented in college gain access to rigorous and credit-bearing coursework, which will eventually lead to a greater likelihood of college entrance and successful degree completion.

Engineering Early College Academy was submitted by a group of community leaders and K-12/higher education professionals including: Rudolph Moseley, Jr., K-12 supervisor of science for PPSD; Charles Watson, Coordinator of Recruitment and Retention of Minorities for URI’s College of Engineering, Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation; Sharon Conard- Wells, Executive Director of West Elmwood Housing; and Shontay Delalue King, M.Ed., Director of the Intercultural Center at Bryant University.

- ⇒ EECA plans to open with 100 ninth graders, growing a grade per year until it reaches a maximum enrollment of 400 students in grades 9-12.
- ⇒ EECA intends to provide a highly rigorous and supportive program with a focus on math and engineering pathways. EECA will ensure that all students are prepared for and enrolled in college-level credit-bearing courses in grades 11 and 12.

- ⇒ Included in the application is a letter of support from Raymond Wright, Dean of the URI College of Engineering. The letter states, “This charter school, with its focus on recruiting motivated high school students and providing them with applied understanding of engineering concepts and curriculum, has great potential to provide students with not only a deeper understanding of the material, but also exposure to higher education and career opportunities in engineering.”
- ⇒ If offered preliminary approval, EECA and URI will develop a Memorandum of Understanding, which will further define the opportunities that will be provided to students of EECA through URI.

Public Comment

The 60-day public comment period for EECA began on May 28, 2013 and closed on July 26, 2013. Two public hearings were held: on June 10 at PCTA, 41 Fricker St. in Providence; and on June 12 at PCTA, 41 Fricker St. in Providence.

RIDE received comments from 50 individuals during that period. 49 individuals were in support; one opposed. Supporters cited how EECA is an innovative and unique collaboration between a charter high school and a state university; that it would provide an opportunity to have a head start in higher education; and that it is fully aligned with our nation’s push to expand opportunities in STEM fields, especially for children from disadvantaged neighborhoods.

Capacity Interview

The capacity interview was held on September 10, 2013. Founding group in attendance: Dr. Rudy Moseley (proposed school superintendent); Charles Watson (proposed university partner); Chris Unger (doctoral advisor to Mr. Moseley, Northeastern University); Shante Delalue King (proposed board member); and Amy O’Donnell (proposed curriculum developer and science teacher).

Variance/ Waiver Requests

No variances or waivers are needed at this time. However, the applicants propose a program where college faculty may teach secondary students (in the current design, this would not occur before the school’s third year of operation). If offered preliminary approval, it is anticipated that EECA will require further guidance from RIDE’s Office of Certification in determining how college faculty may qualify to teach secondary students. This situation may, in turn, require Board consideration at a later date.

Preliminary Approval

By the authority granted to the Commissioner in RIGL § 16-77.3-3(c), the Commissioner offers a recommendation of approval of Engineering Early College Academy to the Board of Education. This decision is based on a comprehensive review of evidence gathered during the public comment period, the application review, and the capacity interview. Preliminary approval is a formal endorsement of the conceptual design of the charter school, and the likelihood of success of the proposal. However, it does not grant the authority to operate as a public charter school. C-1-4 of the Charter Regulations outlines the criteria that applicants must meet in order to obtain final approval from the Board of Education. Upon meeting these criteria, the Board of Education will vote to approve the school’s final charter. An affirmative vote and award of the final charter to the charter school board will confer upon it the authority to operate as a charter school district.