



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 7c3
October 7, 2013

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TO: Rhode Island Board of Education

FROM: Deborah A. Gist, Commissioner 

RE: Preliminary Approval of The Hope Academy

I present for your consideration a recommendation to preliminarily approve The Hope Academy.

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 The Hope Academy 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 The Hope Academy 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: **The Hope Academy**

Catchment Area: Providence, North Providence

Grade Level: K-8

Location of School: Providence

Charter Type: Mayoral Academy

Establishing Persons:

Mayor Taveras, Providence

Mayor Lombardi, North Providence

Mission

The Hope Academy is committed to an educational model focusing on the academic and social success of each individual, preparing students to meet the challenges of secondary education, and to become lifelong learners. Working with parents and community partners, The Hope Academy will serve as a local and national replicable model of inclusive education.

Enrollment Plan

| | | |
|---------------------|---------|--------------|
| Year 1 | 2014-15 | 72 students |
| Year 2 | 2015-16 | 108 students |
| Year 3 | 2016-17 | 144 students |
| Year 4 | 2017-18 | 180 students |
| Year 5 | 2018-19 | 216 students |
| Eventual Enrollment | | 324 students |

Program Overview

The Hope Academy proposal describes a unique partnership between a charter school and Meeting Street, the Providence-based provider of child development services, whereby each Hope Academy classroom of 18 students, enrolled via a random process, would also house two students who have disabilities and are enrolled in Meeting Street, to form a fully inclusive model of education. As the proposal states, "Hope Academy would be a model of educating children with and without special needs in a charter setting that intentionally includes a population of students who needs are deemed severe and profound."

The applicants believe that Hope Academy will provide a highly personalized educational model that promotes differentiated instruction and achieves excellent academic results. In addition, it hopes to generate in students increased acceptance and appreciation of diversity, better communication and social skills, greater development of ethical and moral principles, and increased self-esteem. Hope Academy intends to serve as a replicable model for other schools and districts to provide an inclusive educational program.

The Hope Academy proposal was submitted by education professionals and community leaders with considerable experience in public service and child development, including: Mayor Angel Taveras of Providence; Mayor Charles Lombardi of North Providence; John Kelly, President and CEO of Meeting Street.

- ⇒ The Hope Academy plans to open with 72 students in grades K & 1 in its first year, and then grow a grade per year until it serves K-5 within its first charter term. The school proposes to eventually grow to a K-8 school of 324 students. (This count is exclusive of Meeting Street students placed here.)
- ⇒ Two teachers will manage each classroom: a Hope Academy-employed and certified teacher of record, and a Meeting Street-employed and dually certified teacher of record. The inclusion of Meeting Street students and teachers in Hope Academy classrooms will occur at no cost to Hope Academy.
- ⇒ The Hope Academy may contract with Meeting Street for some administrative services, including human resources, health services, and some services for students with special needs including OT, PT and speech services. A draft contract has been provided and reviewed by RIDE.

Public Comment *(amended 10-04-2013)*

The 60-day public comment period for Hope Academy began on January 9, 2012 and closed on March 13, 2012. Two public hearings were held: on February 7, 2012 at Fogarty Elementary School in Providence; and on February 29 at Fogarty Elementary School in Providence.

RIDE received comments from 16 individuals during that period. 14 individuals were in support; 1 undecided; and 1 opposed. Supporters described the Hope Academy educational philosophy as unique and one committed to an inclusive learning environment that stresses equity, access and high expectations for all students.

Variance/ Waiver Requests

No variances or waivers are necessary at this time.

Preliminary Approval

By the authority granted to the Commissioner in RIGL § 16-77.3-3(c), the Commissioner offers a recommendation of approval of The Hope 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.