

October 30, 2009

To: Douglas County Board of Education
RE: Executive Summary: STEM High and Academy Charter School Application
From: Kindra Whitmyre, Director of Charter School Partnerships and
Pat McGraw, Executive Director of Enterprise Solutions

Staff Recommendation

At the time of the first reading, the staff is unable to make a recommendation to the Board of Education, as the application is incomplete. The STEM applicant group has until Friday, November 6, 2009 to submit, in writing, their responses to the areas that are noted as incomplete. Given the incomplete nature of the application, the staff recommends No Action by the Board of Education on November 3, 2009.

While many areas are noted as incomplete, the Staff expects that the applicant group will amend these concerns. An asterisk in the summary section later in this document notes the areas of significant concern based upon the Staff review.

Timeline of Events

On **September 8, 2009**, the Douglas County School District received a completed charter school application from the STEM High and Academy group.

A preliminary meeting was held **September 10, 2009**, between District staff and the STEM Team to discuss the timeline and procedures involved with the Charter Application Review Team process.

The STEM Team was invited to, and attended, training on **Wednesday, October 14**, regarding the new Colorado Growth Model and its alignment into Douglas County's CSNAP application.

The STEM Team received initial staff feedback on all the components of their application, with the exception of Financial and Legal, on Thursday, **October 15, 2009**. Pat McGraw and Kindra Whitmyre met with some of the STEM Team to discuss their questions, go over the format of the staff feedback rubric and to discuss the Tuesday, November 3, 2009 presentation to the BOE.

The Board of Education (BOE) received an electronic copy of this application, the Charter School Review Team timeline, along with a summary at the Tuesday, **October 20**, BOE meeting.

The STEM Team received feedback on the financial areas on **Tuesday, October 27**, with further review from Legal pending. It was suggested to the STEM Team that a meeting with CFO, David Hart, would be set up to discuss the fiscal components as soon as possible.

On **Friday, October 30, 2009** Kindra Whitmyre met with two STEM members to review pieces of the application that they were asked to complete and to answer any other questions they may have at this point.

Summary Findings

Following is an executive summary of aligned to the application rubric with key findings by the staff review team:

Mission Statement-

The Mission statement did not align to our End Statement and the application did not provide a description of the process for developing the statement.

*Overall Goals and Objectives-

The application did not include the process used to identify their goals and objectives.

*Pupil Performance Standards-

The pupil performance standards, as written in the application, received several comments of improvement from staff.

Evaluating Pupil Performance Standards-

This component had several comments indicating that they are not consistent with Douglas County and/or the current state statutes.

Curriculum Program-

The applicant included a description of their STEM curriculum, and their program for at-risk students; however, did not detail a supporting program for low-achieving students.

*Academic Accountability Plan-

The application did include a School Accountability Committee; however, did not detail the other areas as required, for example DAC, SIP and the annual Monitoring Report of the End and Subends.

Evidence that Students, Parents and Staff Support the Formation of STEM-

The application did not show sufficient support in all areas referenced (students, parents and staff). The Letters of Support for a 9th grade startup for the 2009-2010 school year were insufficient.

*Financial Plan/Fiscal Accountability Plan-

The budget does not seem to align with the instructional approach. The proposed budget for technology and computers does not seem to be adequate to support a STEM school. The budget does not reflect start-up funds from CDE, and currently the grant funding is not substantiated to any degree. The current budget is not sustainable without the previously mentioned grant funding. Operating reserve is inadequate considering that roughly 10% of operating revenues come from non-PPR sources. The budget is incomplete, as revenues are overstated due to PPR being trended with inaccurate growth numbers. The 3% Tabor Reserve has no line item in the budget. The Line of Credit (LOC) is an unfounded assumption that would need to be vetted by the Board of Education (BoE) and DCSD Legal based on the financing plan. Currently this would require a draw on District operating funds to provide for the LOC. Audit procedures are not in compliance with District policy.

Insurance Plan-

The applicant description was sufficient in all areas; however, they do not meet all District, state and federal guidelines.

Governance Model-

A detailed governance model was described but they did not include all required areas.

Employment Terms-

The applicant did include most areas required, except for staff licensing, training requirements and dismissal procedures.

*Facility-

The application did not provide a description of their facility or a lease agreement.

*Transportation-

The application is complete in this component, except for the transportation plan for low-income students.

Enrollment Policies and Procedures-

This component did not detail the plan for increasing enrollment during the term of the charter.

Discipline and Attendance Policies-

This component is complete in all areas, but needs more detail in the area of attendance and expulsion services.

Waivers and Bylaws-

Legal review pending

Dispute Resolution Plan-

This component is complete.