

Sandy Emery is the Community Representative selected to serve on the Charter School Review Committee by the Clay County School Board. She is an accomplished musician and vocalist who is passionate about the Performing Arts in our schools. She provides the following summary of her conclusions after reviewing the OPPAA Charter School application:

As a member of the review committee for the charter school application of the Orange Park Performing Arts Academy (OPPAA) within the School District of Clay County, I have reviewed the application in its entirety and have summarized my main concerns. As a strong proponent of the parent choice in the education of children, a financially solvent charter school that offers innovative learning methods to increase academic achievement, especially in low performing students, would be a welcome addition to the educational community. The application was presented with this intent but lacks specific content to recommend approval at this time.

One major area of concern is the school's mission statement as it relates to the educational program design and curriculum. The stated mission is a focus on the performing arts, in accordance with the research stated in the application, to promote student achievement. The educational program design and curriculum does not address who, when, and to what degree instruction in the performing arts will be delivered to the students. Although partnerships with outside entities in the performing arts are commendable, the plan as written, gives no evidence (classroom schedules, after school activities, choral, instrumental, dance, drama groups) to parents that students will be provided instruction in the performing arts in order to increase student achievement.

Some additional observations:

The application indicates the teaching staff will be ESE certified, pursuing ESOL and reading certifications, have a proven record of student achievement (especially in reading) and a commitment to the performing arts. However, the application does not address how such highly qualified professionals will be recruited and retained.

The application identifies the Town of Orange Park as the sponsor of the tax-exempt bonds for obtaining the facilities. However, the institution that will underwrite the bond issue was not identified. Therefore, no indication of the credit worthiness of this institution or lender was provided. Furthermore, the ultimate credit rating of the bonds, or the intended owners of the bonds were not identified.

A letter of intent signed by the current owner of the proposed facilities should have been provided in the application, especially since there is no mention of a backup facility as required.

No monthly cash flow projections for the school start up period were provided.

The Review Committee used the evaluation instrument provided by the DOE to rate the indicators as Meets the Standard, Partially Meets the Standard, or Does Not Meet the Standard. The definitions used to guide the ratings are as follows:

Meets the Standard – The response reflects a thorough understanding of key issues and demonstrates capacity to open and operate a quality charter school. It addresses the topic with specific and accurate information that shows thorough preparation and presents a clear, realistic picture of how the school expects to operate.

Partially Meets the Standard – The response addresses most of the criteria, but the responses lack meaningful detail and require important additional information.

Does Not Meet the Standard – The response lacks meaningful detail; demonstrates lack of preparation; or otherwise raises substantial concerns about the applicant’s understanding of the issue in concept and/or ability to meet the requirement in practice.

The comments from members of the Review Committee are as follows:

Educational Plan

1. Mission, guiding Principles and Purpose FS. 1002.33(2)(a),(b), and (c); s.1002.33(6)(a)(1); s.1002.33(7)(a)(1)

D-Concerns-Mission statement sites research about high levels of music training and the impact on improving academic achievement. No mention in application of how or when students will receive this music training and intense focus on the arts including drama and dance as mentioned in mission statement. Page 10 references lofty academic goals but application includes no goals. What are the goals and how will they be measured? Strengths-Mission defines purpose and values p.6. Concerns and Additional Questions-Priorities are not measurable and no student outcomes are identified. No description as to how school will meet its purpose; just a bibliography of articles that supports the importance of the arts. Partially Meets the Standard.

S-Concerns-Mission Statement: be specific about preparing students for “future challenges” p.5 State what is actually the expectations for students (to enter the workforce, be college ready?). Partially Meets the Standard.

L-Strengths-Emphasis on performing arts. P.5. Concerns-Too much dependence on outside organizations p.7. The example of innovative learning method was storytelling? P.8. Partially Meets the Standard.

- 2.Target Population and Student Body FS1002.33(10)(e); s.1002.33(6)(b)(2); s.1002.33(7)(a)(1); s.1003.03

D-Strengths-Projections are listed by grade level and comply with class size. P. 11-12. Meets the Standard

S-Concerns-Think about how you will determine students with a need for “an engaging learning environment and those with personal and social difficulties” apart from the academic failure criteria. Meets the Standard

L-Concerns-Inconsistent enrollment numbers throughout the application. First year enrollment figures 425 p.11, 276 p.12. 1130 p.75. Partially Meets the Standard

3. Educational Program Design FS1002.33(7)(a)(2)

D-Strengths-Has a clear philosophy but no defined approach to improving performance

p.19. Concerns-No direct relationship between program elements and student achievement. Explanation of RTI plan is unclear. There is evidence that the applicant does not have a clear understanding of the purpose of this problem solving model.

S-Concerns-Program design is not completely aligned with mission statement. Focus on instruction in the performing arts to promote student achievement needs more attention as this is being advertised to parents as a Performing Arts Academy. Partially Meets the Standard

L-Concerns-Complete lack of understanding of how the RTI process is to work. P.16-18. Does Not Meet the Standard

4. Curriculum Plan FS1002.33(6)(a)(2); s.1002.33(6)(a)(4); s.1002.33(7)(a)(2); s.1002.33(7)(a)(4)

D-Concerns-Singapore Math lacks the inquiry based learning necessary to support Common Core p.26. Partially Meets the Standard

S-Concerns-Curriculum does not address how, when, or to what degree students will be instructed in the performing arts to increase student achievement in accordance with the schools research and mission statement. P.39. Partially Meets Standard.

L-Concerns-No time in class schedule for students who need remediation in reading to receive additional instructional time. No class period identified to include instruction in Performing Arts. P.39 Does Not Meet Standard

SH-Strengths-Multiple opportunities for professional development. P. 24-25. Concerns-Core curriculum and intervention materials not clearly defined. FLDOE requirement of infusion of complex text/content area not addressed. Intervention program for reading is inadequate. Does Not Meet the Standard

5. Student Performance, Assessment and Evaluation FS1002.33(6)(a)(3); s.1002.33(7)(a)(3); s.1002.33(7)(a)(4); s.1002.33(7)(a)(5)

D-Concerns-No Progression Plan. Does not align to state's educational goals and objectives regarding how much academic improvement students are expected to show; lowest 25%-40% learning gains, 35% reading at level 3 or above p.41. Students will make measurable gains in math p.45. 90% of students in grade 10 will participate in FCAT Writing p. 46. At-risk 9th graders will fulfill credit requirements. Grade 10 rubrics and scoring criteria. Promotion standards state that students will maintain a GPA of 2.0 or higher. Dropping below a 2.5 GPA can jeopardize enrollment; not consistent with mission. No mention of plan to meet the state's on-line assessment requirements. Does Not Meet the Standard.

S-Concerns-Be specific about the frequency of monitoring student progress, what method or instruments will be used and the expected student outcomes. Give examples of what strategies might be used to modify instruction based on the assessments. Partially Meets the Standards.

SH-Strengths-Importance of data was stressed in the application. P.47 Concerns-Assessment listed for comparing student data to district and state not appropriate (can't be compared)p. 52 Required

assessments for kindergarten are not addressed. Growth goals for below grade level students not adequate to close the gap. Partially Meets the Standard

SK-Lack evidence of a sound Assessment Plan to determine needs of students and progress towards the mastery of the standards in all core content areas. Assessment tools are mentioned, but there is no detailed plan to determine what grade levels will be assessed, what type of assessment will be administered, the purpose of the assessment (what will it measure?) and the frequency of the identified assessments. Also, there is no follow up plan for students who continue to demonstrate a need for additional remediation. There is no evidence of a means to progress monitor all core content areas and an intervention/enrichment plan based on the assessment results. There is mention of intensive Professional Development prior to the start and just after the start of the school year. However, a comprehensive plan would include: a needs assessment in which to determine staff needs to improve student achievement, a comprehensive plan of focus which is aligned to student data and staff needs, a calendar of events, facilitators, intended outcomes and a tool in which to monitor the impact the PD had on raising student achievement.

6. Exceptional Students FS1002.33(16)(a)(3)

S-Concerns-Concern that the school will not be able to serve the full range of needs of exceptional students. P.55. Partially Meets the Standard

TR-Strengths-Identifies needs of students with disabilities (SWD). Discusses the IEP as a tool for SWD. Identifies need of gifted students and approved curriculum materials to meet those needs. Concerns-During the question and answer session, OPPAA stated that every classroom teacher will be required to be certified in general education (elementary), exceptional student education, and gifted endorsed. How will services be provided to ESE students in such a model? The application p.60 notes, "When necessary, special education students will be pulled out of the regular class and given additional skill practice to enable the student to keep up with the regular class assignments, to build specific learning skills, and to help the child's understanding of the concepts being presented in the regular classroom." Who will provide such instruction? How will related services, including speech therapy, language therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, orientation and mobility and counseling be provided to eligible students? (not referenced in application).

7. English Language Learners FS1002.33(16)(a)(3)

D-Concerns-All teachers will be ESOL endorsed or Gifted endorsed.

S-Concerns-Need description of content of a student ELL Plan. P. 66-67

8. School Climate and Discipline FS1002.33(7)(a)(7); s.1002.33(7)(a)(11); s.1002.33(9)(n)

S-Concerns-Parent contract calls for families to provide 25 volunteer hours. How will this work for working parents? P. 68-69. Partially Meets the Standard

L-Concerns-Cannot simply state, "will adopt the Clay County Code of Conduct" p. 76. Remedies for drug use: "registering of a Sheriff's undercover narcotics agent as a student in the school..." The school has a K-5 grade configuration; seems implausible in this setting. P. 76 Does Not Meet the Standard

II. Organizational Plan

9. Governance FS1002.33(7)(a)(15); s.1002.33(16)(5)(b)

S-Concerns-Will need final Articles of Incorporation and By-Laws. How will new members of the Board be recruited? More specifics on community partnerships (frequency of participation, integration into the curriculum). Partially Meets the Standard

L-Strengths-Well rounded selection of Board members p. 85. Meets the Standards

10. Management FS1002.33(7)(a)(9); s.1002.33(7)(a)(14)

S-Concerns-Staffing plan needs specifics on how school will recruit and retain staff. Need plan for evaluating the school leader. Does Not Meet the Standard

L-The application states that the school will revolve around the strength of their performing arts program, yet there is no mention of these qualities in looking for trained teaching staff. Does Not Meet the Standard

11. Education Service Providers FS1002.33(7)(a)(9)

Does not apply to this application.

12. Employment FS1002.33(7)(a)(14); s.1002.33(12)

S-Concerns-Vague reference to compensation plan. No specifics on plans to attract staff. Vague reference to policies that mirror Clay County School District. Does Not Meet the Standard

L-No job descriptions for administrators, teachers, clerical, or custodial personnel. No salary schedule submitted. Professional Development Plan says "basically the same as Clay County Schools". P.92 Does Not Meet the Standard

13. Parent and Community Support and Partnerships

S-Concerns-Any parent training planned to help parents assist with learning in the home to increase student achievement? P. 92-93 Partially Meets the Standard

L-Concerns-A parent volunteer demonstrates their support of vision, mission, and goals? P. 93 Partially Meets Standard

14. Student Recruitment and Enrollment FS1002.33(7)(a)(7); s.1002.33(7)(a)(8); s.1002.33(10)

S-Concerns-Specifics to student recruitment plan needed; timeline frequencies, and who will be responsible for recruitment strategies mentioned in the plan? Who will receive the direct mailings? P. 93 Page 94 states no parent contract while other references in the plan speak to 3 days of volunteer service required or as much as 25 hours of volunteer service required p.72. Need clarification. Does Not Meet the Standard

L-Concerns-"Enrollment policy is basically the same as Clay County Schools". P. 93 No mention of student interest required in performing arts. P. 93 Does Not Meet the Standard

III. Business Plan

15. Facilities FS1002.33(7)(a)(13); s.1002.33(18)

S-Concerns-Need back up plan if facilities cannot be obtained. P. 84 Resources for facilities will need to be secured. Partially Meets the Standard

JC-Concerns-The funding method for acquisition of the facilities is not mentioned. Paragraph 4 of the budget section of the application briefly mentions that a tax exempt revenue bond will be used to finance the property. The paragraph is vague and confusing. Partially Meets the Standard

16. Transportation and Food Services FS1002.33(20)(a)(1)

S-Concerns-No transportation or food services plan was submitted. Does Not Meet the Standard

JC-Concerns-No information was included in the application regarding transportation of the students. During the interview on Aug. 27, 2012, the applicant mentioned that it was their intent to bus students from throughout the county to the school. The budget summary shows no transportation revenue or expenses for the first year. No information was provided for the Food Services plan. During the interview the applicant stated that they intended to contract the school's Food Service Operation. Does Not Meet the Standard

17. Budget FS1002.33(6)(a)(5); s.1002.33(6)(b)(2)

S-Concerns-Need start up budget and monthly cash flow projections (date of application approval) to beginning of first fiscal year of operation. Partially Meets the Standard

RC-Strengths-Revenue was estimated with the assistance of Charter School Services Corporation using the FEP Budget Calculator for Charter Schools. Concerns-Two years of interest payments appear on the Budget Summary, however, furniture and equipment needs, as well as the purchase of the property, and cost of issuance are not included on the Budget Summary. FS 1002.33 states a charter school shall not levy taxes or issue bonds secured by tax revenues. Mr. Bickner is researching this topic. The budget narrative did not provide sufficient information to fully understand how budgetary figures were determined. The application required monthly cash flow projections for the school's start up period from the date on which the application is approved to the beginning of the first fiscal year of operation and each year of the requested charter term. This was not provided. Does Not Meet the Standard

18. Financial Management and Oversight FS1002.33(6)(a)(5); s.1002.33(7)(a)(9); s.1002.33(7)(a)(11)

S-Concerns-Not enough information presented to evaluate the standard. Does Not Meet the Standard

RC-Concerns-The application required a description of who will manage the school's finances and how the school will ensure financial resources are properly managed. The applicant responded that "the Assistant Principal will act as Finance Director until a Financial Manager can be staffed." Finding an AP with this financial skill set will be difficult to find. There was not a clear description of how the school's finances will be managed. The description did not include the assurances that the governing board retains ultimate control over finances. There was no

description of strong internal controls. Numerous answers indicated that they would do what was required although little understanding or knowledge to this requirement was submitted. Does Not Meet the Standard

19.Action Plan FS1002.33(7)(a)(16)

S-Concerns-No Risk Management Plan submitted. Does Not Meet the Standard

L-Concerns-No Action Plan Submitted p. 101 Does Not Meet the Standard

The following individuals comprise the membership of the Charter School Review Committee:

D – Diane Kornegay-Assistant Superintendent for Instruction

S – Sandy Emery-Community Representative selected by the Clay County School Board

L – Lyle Bandy-Director of Student Services

SH – Dr. Suzanne Herndon-Supervisor of Reading and Language Arts

SK – Shannah Kosek-Supervisor of School Improvement/Professional Development and Assessment

TR – Terry Roth-Director of Exceptional Student Education

JC – Jim Connell-Assistant Superintendent for Support Services

RC – Roni Campbell-Coordinator of Internal Accounts/Purchasing/Accounts Payable

Recommendation: Based on the work of the Review Committee the Superintendent recommends that in its current state the Charter School Application of the Orange Park Performing Arts Academy be denied.