

**NOTICE OF MEETING OF THE
MISSISSIPPI CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORIZER BOARD**

NOTICE is hereby given of a meeting of the Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board to be held on Monday, September 11th, 2017 beginning at 10:00 a.m. at the Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board offices located at 239 N. Lamar Street, Suite 207, Jackson, MS 39201. Participation at this meeting may be by teleconference at locations different from the above location pursuant to Miss. Code Ann. §25-41-5(2013) with participation being available to the public at the location set forth above. The purpose of the meeting is to conduct the regular business of the board as set forth in the attached draft agenda.

This the 1st day of September 2017.

BY: Marian Schutte
Executive Director

DRAFT AGENDA
MISSISSIPPI CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORIZER BOARD
September 11, 2017

- I. Call to order
- II. Adoption of the Agenda
- III. Approval of Minutes of the July 10th meeting
- IV. Chair Report
- V. Executive Director's Report
- VI. Committee Reports
 - a. Applications Committee
 - b. Performance and Accountability Committee
- VII. New Business
 - a. 2017 Annual Report: Initial Version
 - b. Approval of Invoices
 - c. 2017 Request for Proposals: Stage 3 Results
 - i. Application of Clarksdale Collegiate for One School
 - 1. Clarksdale Collegiate
 - ii. Application of Shades of Elegance for One School
 - 1. Truth Academy STEAM Charter School
 - iii. Application of SR1 for One School
 - 1. SR1 College Preparatory and STEM Academy
 - d. Election of Officers
- VIII. Public Comment
- IX. Next Meeting
- X. Adjourn

MINUTES OF THE
MISSISSIPPI CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORIZER BOARD
Regular Monthly Meeting
Monday, July 10th, 2017

The regular monthly meeting of the Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board was held at 10:00 a.m. on Monday, July 10th, 2017, at the Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board Office located at 239 N. Lamar Street Suite 207, Jackson, MS 39201. In attendance were:

Leland Speed
Chris Wilson

Participating via teleconference were:

Dr. Karen Elam
Dr. Jean Young

Executive Director Marian Schutte also participated in the meeting. Tommie Cardin, Krystal Cormack, and Dr. Carey Wright were unable to participate.

The meeting was called to order at 10:06 am.

ITEM I. ELECTION OF A CHAIR PRO TEM.

A. Election of a Chair Pro Tem.

Mr. Wilson noted due to the absence of the chair and a vice-chair that the board should elect a chair pro tem. to serve as the chair of today's meeting only.

Dr. Karen Elam nominated Mr. Chris Wilson serve as chair pro tem. to preside over the meeting.

MOTION: Dr. Elam

SECOND: Mr. Speed

There being no additional discussion and following a roll call vote in favor by all participating members, the motion carried.

ITEM II. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

A. Adoption of Agenda

The Agenda was previously circulated to all Board members for review. Executive Director Marian Schutte noted one revision to the agenda. She recommended that the budget revision be considered after the Cornerstone Consulting contract.

Mr. Wilson requested a motion to modify the agenda as recommended.

MOTION: Dr. Elam

SECOND: Dr. Young

There being no discussion and following a roll call vote in favor by all participating members, the motion carried.

ITEM III. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

A. Approval of Minutes of the June 5th Board Meeting

The minutes of the June 5th, 2017 board meeting were previously distributed to the Board members for review.

Dr. Elam noted a revision on page six changing the word fundraiser to fundraise and recommended inserting the word enrollment before the word table on page six as well.

Mr. Wilson requested a motion to approve the minutes of the June 5th, 2017 board meeting as amended.

MOTION: Dr. Elam

SECOND: Mr. Speed

There being no additional discussion and following a roll call vote in favor by all participating members, the motion carried.

B. Approval of Minutes of the June 28th Special Board Meeting

The minutes of the June 28th, 2017 special board meeting were previously distributed to the Board members for review.

Mr. Wilson requested a motion to approve the minutes of the June 28th, 2017 special board meeting as presented.

MOTION: Dr. Elam

SECOND: Dr. Young

There being no additional discussion and following a roll call vote in favor by all participating members, the motion carried.

ITEM IV. CHAIR REPORT

In the absence of the board chair, Mr. Wilson stated that there was no report from the Board Chair.

ITEM V. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Ms. Schutte welcomed board members to today's Authorizer Board meeting.

Ms. Schutte presented that she and Chair Cormack attended the National Charter Schools Conference in Washington D.C. from June 11 – 14th. She shared that they attended sessions on charter school policy and authorizing, met with charter school operators, and also met with advocacy organizations. Searcy Morgan from Mississippi First also represented Mississippi on the trip. Ms. Schutte noted that they connected with two individuals who are interested in coming to Mississippi to open charter schools. One individual currently works at a charter school in Washington D.C. but is originally from Mississippi and is interested in coming back to open a school. Another individual currently operates a charter school in the Louisiana delta region and is interested in opening a school in the southwestern corner of Mississippi.

Ms. Schutte also shared that she connected with several organizations that work to help education organizations and authorizers find staffing solutions. She noted that currently there is one strong candidate in the pipeline for the Deputy Director position. She has had a phone interview and will have an in-person interview tomorrow. She will share any updates with board members and Chair Cormack as the process progresses.

She also noted that the purchase orders for the office space technology and furniture were all placed by the deadline and hopefully will be installed by the September board meeting.

Ms. Schutte also introduced the board's newest member Mr. Leland Speed. Mr. Speed replaces Mr. Johnny Franklin as a Governor's appointee. She noted that she met with Mr. Speed this morning and will be working with him on his ideas to bring charter operators to Mississippi.

ITEM VI. COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Applications Committee

Dr. Elam presented the results of the 2017 Request for Proposals process through the Stage 2: Threshold Quality Review. The Authorizer Board received nine Letters of Intent for nine schools and six proposals for seven schools. All applicants are new operators. Four proposals were deemed complete and eligible to move forward to Stage 2 of the Request for Proposals Process: Clarksdale Collegiate, KC Schools Inc., Shades of Elegance, and SR1. The independent evaluation team evaluated each proposal against five to seven quality thresholds. If a proposal receives no substantially inadequate ratings, it is eligible to move forward to the Stage 3: Independent Evaluation Team Review. Three of the four complete proposals evaluated were deemed substantially adequate in all evaluated areas and are recommended by the Applications Committee to move forward to Stage 3 of the Request for Proposals process. Clarksdale Collegiate, Shades of Elegance, and SR1 were found to be minimally adequate in all areas while KC Schools Inc. was rated substantially inadequate in all five evaluated areas.

The Board's business today is to confirm the results of the Stage 2: Threshold Quality Review and move eligible proposals to the Stage 3: Independent Evaluation Team Review.

B. Performance and Accountability Committee

Mr. Wilson noted that the Performance and Accountability Committee has no report at this time.

ITEM VII. NEW BUSINESS

A. 2017 Request for Proposals: Stage 2 Evaluation Results

Dr. Elam noted that board members have information on the proposals and the Stage 2 evaluation results in their meeting documents today. Clarksdale Collegiate, Shades of Elegance, and SR1 received no substantially inadequate ratings.

Dr. Elam motioned to move Clarksdale Collegiate, Shades of Elegance, and SR1 to Stage 3 of the 2017 Request for Proposals process based on their 2017 Request for Proposals process Stage 2 evaluation results.

MOTION: Dr. Elam
SECOND: Dr. Young

There being no additional discussion and following a roll call vote in favor by participating members, the motion carried.

Dr. Elam noted that KC Schools Inc. received substantially inadequate ratings for thresholds one through five. The Applications Committee recommends that KC Schools be deemed ineligible to move forward to Stage 3 of the Request for Proposals process and that the board adopt a resolution to deny KC Schools Inc.'s proposal.

Dr. Elam motioned to deem KC Schools Inc. as ineligible to move forward to Stage 3 of the 2017 Request for Proposals process based on their 2017 Request for Proposals process Stage 2 evaluation results and to adopt a resolution to deny KC Schools Inc.'s proposal.

MOTION: Dr. Elam
SECOND: Mr. Speed

Mr. Wilson asked if KC Schools Inc. took advantage of any technical assistance provided by Mississippi First during the 2017 Request for Proposals process. Ms. Schutte noted that Mississippi First had worked with KC Schools Inc. on several parts of their proposal.

There being no additional discussion and following a roll call vote in favor by all participating members, the motion carried.

Dr. Elam then shared the next steps in the 2017 Request for Proposals process. There are now three proposals for three schools remaining in the process. The independent evaluation team will now evaluate each complete proposal and assess the educational plan and capacity, financial plan and capacity, and operations plan and capacity. They will then conduct an in-person capacity interview and determine

their recommendation. The recommendations will be shared with the Applications Committee and the applicant groups. Applicants have the opportunity to provide a written response to the evaluation team's recommendations and the board will make its decision on the proposals at its September 11th board meeting.

B. FY18 Epicenter Proposal

Ms. Schutte presented a proposal to continue services with Epicenter. Epicenter is an online submission portal that allows charter school authorizers to track and hold schools accountable for submissions. It also gives MCSAB the ability to view each school's student information system and track attendance. It will also replace Fluid Review as the online application portal and also has the ability to host MCSAB's meeting documents as well. The proposal is for the FY18 school year for \$5,000.

Mr. Wilson requested a motion to approve the FY18 Epicenter proposal as presented.

MOTION: Mr. Speed

SECOND: Dr. Elam

There being no additional discussion and following a roll call vote in favor by all participating members, the motion carried.

C. Communications Strategy Proposal

Ms. Schutte noted that earlier in the year MCSAB had set aside funds for a communications proposal with Mississippi First. After discussing the components of the proposal with Mississippi First, they requested to come back to the board with a larger scope of a proposal for the FY18 year. Rachel Canter, Executive Director of Mississippi First, presented the proposal to board members. Ms. Canter noted that based on survey results there is still a substantial knowledge gap surrounding members of the public and charter schools. She noted that this gap also existed with low-income Mississippians as well as Mississippians of color which is problematic as these are the families who are most likely to enroll their children in charter schools.

After further follow-up conversations with Ms. Schutte and the board, Mississippi First believes the best approach is to execute a communications strategy first before beginning a public information campaign. They noted that there were different ideas amongst board members in terms of audience, goals, and the best way to reach the specific target audience. Mississippi First presented a strategy that first determines the goal of the communications strategy and then determines the scope of any communications campaign. The goals of the campaign will dictate the scope of the campaign.

Ms. Canter presented the four phases of the proposal. Phase 1 is an initial meetings and assessments phase which features interviews with board members and other stakeholders. The outcome is a draft of the needs and goals of the strategy. Phase 2 is the development of the communications strategy based on the goals and needs identified in Phase 1. Phase 3 is the testing of any materials and items that are part of the strategy. Phase 4 is the final strategy with tested messages and sample designs. The goal is to have the proposal completed by December in time for messages to go out during the legislative session and

during most charter school enrollment windows if so desired. She noted that it was difficult to determine cost without currently knowing the vision and goals of the strategy. The total for the proposal is \$50,000. The proposal does not include the purchasing of ads. She noted that the total proposal will depend on the vision of the strategy and campaign.

Mr. Speed requested information about the amount of funds needed and the funds from the budget that would be needed to fund the proposal. There was discussion amongst board members regarding the total scope of the project and the goals of the campaign. Ms. Canter noted that the board could split the proposal into Phase 1 and 2 and begin the work and could come back to the board after these first two phases are complete. Ms. Schutte also noted that the proposal does directly align with the board's strategic plan that was set in January to partner with a nonprofit organization to design a communications strategy and plan.

Mr. Wilson requested a motion to approve the Mississippi First Communications Strategy Proposal for Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the presented proposal not to exceed an amount of \$25,000.

MOTION: Mr. Speed

SECOND: Dr. Elam

There being no discussion and following a roll call vote in favor by all participating members, the motion carried.

Ms. Schutte noted that she will work with Chair Cormack and Ms. Canter to begin the work of the proposal and will be in contact with board members via email shortly.

D. Cornerstone Consulting Contract

Ms. Schutte presented the annual contract from Cornerstone Consulting to operate the MCSAB's payroll and financial back office services. The FY18 contract is at the same rate as the FY17 contract of \$85 per hour not to exceed a total amount of \$12,500.00 for the year.

Mr. Wilson requested a motion to approve the FY18 Cornerstone Consulting contract as presented.

MOTION: Mr. Speed

SECOND: Dr. Elam

There being no discussion and following a roll call vote in favor by all participating members, the motion carried.

E. FY18 Budget Revision

Ms. Schutte presented a revision to the FY18 budget approved on June 5th. She recommended moving \$20,000 from Other Fees to Professional Services – PR for the Mississippi First Communications Strategy proposal approved today and to adjust the amount in the budget for Epicenter from \$6,000 to \$5,000 based on the proposal approved today by the board.

Mr. Wilson requested a motion to approve the FY18 budget as presented.

MOTION: Mr. Speed

SECOND: Dr. Young

There being no discussion and following a roll call vote in favor by all participating members, the motion carried.

F. Approval of Invoices

Ms. Schutte presented invoices for approval: 1) FY2017 Epicenter invoice; 2) board member travel to today's meeting; 3) two intern stipends; 4) June Cornerstone Consulting invoice; and 5) Office Depot invoice.

Mr. Wilson requested a motion to approve the invoices as presented.

MOTION: Mr. Speed

SECOND: Dr. Elam

There being no discussion and following a roll call vote in favor by all participating members, the motion carried.

ITEM VIII. PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

ITEM IX. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board will be held on September 11, 2017 in Jackson, MS.

ITEM X. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Wilson requested a motion to adjourn.

MOTION: Mr. Speed

SECOND: Dr. Elam

There being no discussion and following a roll call vote in favor by all participating members, the motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 11:04 am.

ADOPTED, this the _____ day of September 2017.

Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board
Regular Monthly Meeting
July 10th, 2017
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Krystal Cormack, Chair



2017 Charter School Annual Report

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Introduction

Each fall, the Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board produces an annual report on charter schools operating in the state during the preceding school year. In compliance with Mississippi Code Annotated §37-28-31(2) and §37-28-37(1), the report provides information on charter school characteristics, charter school applications and approvals, and charter school outcomes and performance.

Additional information regarding Mississippi's public charter schools is available on the Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board's website, including currently operating public charter schools, application and authorization materials, and answers to frequently asked questions.

Mississippi Charter School Quick Facts

- Currently, three charter schools operate in Mississippi. They are all located in Jackson, MS.
- One additional school has been approved to open in Fall 2018.
- Charter schools are free to students and receive the same per pupil funds that fund traditional public schools.
- Mississippi's law prohibits private schools from converting to charter schools.
- Mississippi's charter school law prohibits for-profit companies from opening and operating charter schools
- Charters schools are open to all students who live in the school district where the charter school is located or who reside in 'C', 'D', or 'F' rated districts.
- In Mississippi, charter schools must reflect the population of the traditional school district where they are located including the percentage of students with disabilities.
- Charter schools may not use admissions tests or criteria of any kind.
- If more students apply than there are seats, a lottery is conducted.
- Charter schools are granted an initial five-year contract.
- Charter schools are evaluated annually using the Mississippi Charter School Performance Framework.

The Charter School Landscape in Mississippi

Legislative History

In 2013, Governor Bryant signed the *Mississippi Charter Schools Act of 2013*. This legislation overhauled Mississippi's public charter school laws, which previously only permitted charter school conversions. It also created the Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board, an independent state agency, to authorize charter schools across Mississippi.

The Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board consists of seven members (three Governor appointees, three Lt. Governor appointees, and one State Superintendent of Education appointee). The Authorizer Board is charged with the mission to increase access to excellent public schools by authorizing high-quality charter schools, particularly schools designed to expand opportunities for underserved students. The Authorizer Board may approve up to 15 charter schools per year and may approve charter schools in school districts rated 'D' or 'F' without local school board approval.

A charter school is a public school that is established and operates under the terms of a charter agreement and in accordance with the Mississippi Charter Schools Act of 2013 (Miss. Code Ann. 37-28-1 et. seq.). Charter schools operate as local education agencies and function as independent school districts. Governed by independent non-profit organizations, charter schools have greater autonomy over their budgets, personnel, curricula, and operations in exchange for heightened accountability. Charter schools are publically funded and are subject to the same standards, assessments, and accountability letter grades as traditional public schools. Charter schools may be closed if they demonstrate poor academic performance, violate their charter agreement, or engage in practices of fiscal mismanagement.

In 2016, the charter school law was revised to expand opportunities for Mississippi students. Students who reside in the school district where the charter school is located and students who reside in any school district that was rated 'C', 'D', or 'F' are eligible to attend a charter school. It also simplified the teacher certification requirements for charter schools and allowed charter schools, if interested, to participate in the Public Employees' Retirement System.

Charter Schools by the Numbers

Charter schools currently operate within the boundaries of one school district: the Jackson Public School District. In 2016-2017, a total of three charter schools operated in Jackson serving 523 students. At capacity, these three schools will serve 844 students. Charter school enrollment currently accounts for less than one percent of the total public school enrollment in the state and less than two percent of the local school district enrollment where charter schools have been authorized.

Table 1. Charter School Enrollment by District, 2016-2017

	Number of Charter Schools	Charter Enrollment	District Enrollment	Percent Charter Enrollment
Jackson, MS	3	523	26,948	<2%
Mississippi	3	523	482,446	<1%

Each year, the Mississippi Charter School Authorizer board releases a Request for Proposals for new charter schools. The Authorizer Board has set a rigorous bar for charter school approval and contracts with the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) to conduct independent evaluations of each charter school proposal. Table 2 documents the ratios of submitted versus approved applications by each Request for Proposals cycle since the Authorizer Board’s creation in 2013. To date, the Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board has approved only thirteen percent of charter school applications.

Table 2. Charter School Applications and Approvals

RFP Process	Letters of Intent	Applications Submitted	Applications Approved
2014 – Cycle 1	31	12	1
2014 – Cycle 2*	10	6	1
2015 Cycle	3	2	1 (2 Schools)
2016 Cycle	9	4	0
Totals	53	24	3

*Starting with the 2014 – Cycle 2 process, applicants were able to submit one letter of intent and application for multiple schools.

Charter School Outcomes

The Mississippi Charter School Authorizer board utilizes the Academic, Financial, and Organizational Performance Frameworks within the Mississippi Charter School Performance Framework to annually evaluate and assess charter school performance. At this time, the Authorizer Board is waiting on complete data in order to complete its evaluations. Full academic data from the Mississippi Department of Education is expected to be released by mid-October 2017. The Authorizer Board will amend this annual report in order to include the full evaluation of charter schools in operation during the 2016-2017 school year. The Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board anticipates releasing the amended report no later than January 2018 after approving the report at its December or January board meeting.

**Charter School Authorizer Board
Items Presented for Payment
September 11, 2017**

Travel	Board Member Travel to Meeting	TBD
	Deputy Director Travel August - September	TBD
	Staff and Board Member Travel to NACSA Conference	TBD
Contractual		
	Cornerstone Consulting - July Invoice	\$ 1,296.25
	Cornerstone Consulting - August Invoice	\$ 1,487.50
	NACSA Membership - FY18	\$ 1,250.00
Commodities		
	Interior Elements	\$ 3,265.96
Equipment		
TOTAL		<u><u>\$ 7,299.71</u></u>

MISSISSIPPI CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORIZER BOARD

CHARTER SCHOOL APPLICATION RECOMMENDATION REPORT 2017

National Association of Charter School Authorizers

AUGUST 15, 2017

New Charter School Application for

CLARKSDALE COLLEGIATE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL

Submitted by

CLARKSDALE COLLEGIATE

Evaluation Team

TEAM LEAD: RACHEL KSENYAK

EVALUATORS: DR. KIMBERLY DORSEY

DR. TOMMYE HENDERSON

ANTHONY OLIVER

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INTRODUCTION

Following the passage of the Mississippi Charter Schools Act of 2013 (HB 369) in April 2013, Governor Bryant created the Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board (MCSAB), a statewide charter school authorizer with exclusive charter jurisdiction in the state of Mississippi. The mission of the seven-member MCSAB is to authorize high-quality charter schools, particularly schools designed to expand opportunities for underserved students. To that end, the MCSAB executed a rigorous, high-quality process during 2017 to solicit and evaluate charter school proposals.

Focus on Quality

The 2017 Request for Proposals and the resulting evaluation process are rigorous and demanding. The process is meant to ensure that approved charter school operators possess the capacity to implement a school model that is likely to dramatically increase student outcomes. Successful applicants will demonstrate high levels of expertise and capacity in the areas of curriculum and instruction, school finance, educational and operational leadership, and non-profit governance, as well as high expectations for excellence in student achievement and professional standards. An application that merits a recommendation for approval will present a clear, realistic picture of how the school expects to operate; be detailed in how the school will raise student achievement; and inspire confidence in the applicant's capacity to successfully implement the proposed academic, operational, and financial plans.

Evaluation Process

For the 2017 RFP cycle, MCSAB partnered with the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) to manage the application process and to provide independent, merit-based recommendations regarding whether to approve or deny each proposal. NACSA assembled an independent evaluation team that included both national and local expertise related to charter school start-up and operation. This report from the evaluation team is a culmination of three stages of review:

PROPOSAL EVALUATION

The evaluation team conducted individual and group assessments of the merits of the proposal based on the complete written submission. In the case of experienced school operators, the MCSAB and NACSA supplemented this written evaluation with due diligence (as applicable) to verify claims made in the proposal related to past performance.

CAPACITY INTERVIEW

After reviewing the application and discussing the findings of their individual reviews, the evaluation team conducted an in-person interview to assess the applicant team's overall capacity to implement the proposal as written in the application.

CONSENSUS JUDGMENT

Following the capacity interview, the evaluation team came to consensus regarding whether to recommend the proposal for approval or denial. The duty of the evaluation team is to recommend approval or denial of each application based on its merits against MCSAB-approved evaluation criteria. The authority and responsibility to decide whether to approve or deny each application rests with the members of the MCSAB.

Report Contents

This evaluation report includes the following:

PROPOSAL OVERVIEW

Basic information about the proposed school as presented in the application.

RECOMMENDATION

An overall judgment regarding whether the proposal meets the criteria for approval.

EVALUATION

Analysis of the proposal based on three primary areas of plan development and the capacity of the applicant team to execute the plan as presented:

Educational Program Design and Capacity: curriculum and instructional design; pupil performance standards; high school graduation requirements; school calendar and schedule; school culture; supplemental programming; special populations and at-risk students; student recruitment and enrollment; student discipline; parent and community involvement; and educational program capacity.

Operations Plan and Capacity: organization charts; legal status and governing documents; governing board; advisory bodies; staff structure; staffing plans, hiring, management and evaluation; professional development; performance management; facilities; start-up and ongoing operations; and operations capacity.

Financial Plan and Capacity: start-up and five year budgets; cash flow projections; revenue and expenditure assumptions; financial policies and controls; and financial management capacity.

For applicants seeking waivers, conversion from an existing school to a public charter school, or for experienced operators or operators proposing to engage an education service provider, an analysis of: Request for Waivers (if applicable), Conversion Charter Schools (if applicable), and Existing Operators (if applicable).

RATINGS CHARACTERISTICS

Evaluation teams assess each application against the published evaluation criteria. In general, the following definitions guide evaluator ratings:

Meets the Standard

The response reflects a thorough understanding of key issues. It addresses the topic with specific and accurate information that shows thorough preparation; presents a clear, realistic picture of how the school expects to operate; and inspires confidence in the applicant's capacity to carry out the plan effectively.

Partially Meets the Standard

The response meets the criteria in many respects, but lacks detail and/or requires additional information in one or more areas.

Does Not Meet the Standard

The response meets the criteria in some respects but has substantial gaps in a number of areas.

Falls Far Below the Standard

The response is wholly undeveloped or significantly incomplete; demonstrates lack of preparation; or otherwise raises substantial concerns about the viability of the plan or the applicant's ability to carry it out.

PROPOSAL OVERVIEW

Applicant Name:

CLARKSDALE COLLEGIATE

Proposed School Name:

CLARKSDALE COLLEGIATE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL

Mission:

Clarksdale Collegiate Public Charter School prepares kindergarten through 8th grade students in the Mississippi Delta to excel in high school and college by providing rigorous instruction within a structured, ambitious, and jubilant school community.

Proposed Location:

Clarksdale Municipal School District

Enrollment Projections:

<i>Academic Year</i>	<i>Planned # Students</i>	<i>Maximum # Students</i>	<i>Grades Served</i>
2018-19	150	168	K-2
2019-20	200	224	K-3
2020-21	275	308	K-4
2021-22	350	392	K-5
2022-23	425	510	K-6
2028-2029 (At Capacity)	675	756	K-8

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Recommendation:

CLARKSDALE COLLEGIATE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL

APPROVE

Summary Analysis:

The evaluation team recommends approval of the application for Clarksdale Collegiate Public Charter School (Clarksdale Collegiate). The application, in combination with information provided in the interview, demonstrates that the proposal is compelling, comprehensive, research- and evidence-based, and the applicant exhibits exceptional capacity to open and operate the proposed school.

The educational program is “unapologetically college prep” which is evidenced throughout all aspects of the school design and culture. The applicant provides a clear and comprehensive scope and sequence, curriculum map, assessment plan, and learning standards that are aligned to the Core Knowledge Sequence and Mississippi state standards. The vision for school culture is incredibly detailed, vivid, and aligned with the educational plan. The financial plan is sound and well-aligned to the educational and operations plans. Both the operating and start-up budgets are balanced with clear and reasonable assumptions for revenues and expenses. The applicant also presents an appropriate plan for financial management and oversight.

The applicant demonstrates strong capacity to execute all aspects of the proposal. The proposed executive director (ED), Amanda Johnson, is exceptionally qualified with a strong track record and experience as a teacher, school founder, coach, and school leader. The proposed governing board is already established and reflective of the capacity, expertise, and local support needed to run a high-quality charter school.

While the operations plan meets the standard overall, transportation is an outstanding concern. Specifically, assumptions may be too low and budget allocations may not be sufficient. While providing transportation is not required, the plan should ensure the school is properly anticipating the needs of the proposed student population.

Summary of Section Ratings:

Opening and maintaining a successful, high-performing charter school depends on having a complete, coherent plan and identifying highly capable individuals to execute that plan. It is not an endeavor for which strengths in some areas can compensate for material weaknesses in others. *Therefore, in order to receive a recommendation for approval, the application must Meet the Standard in all areas.*

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM DESIGN & CAPACITY

Meets the Standard

OPERATIONS PLAN & CAPACITY

Meets the Standard

FINANCIAL PLAN & CAPACITY

Meets the Standard

Plan Summary:

Clarksdale Collegiate proposes to open an elementary school, serving kindergarten through Grade 8, that is “unapologetically college prep.” The educational program is designed around nine core beliefs, which prioritize a college preparatory curriculum, rigorous assessments, data-driven instruction, an emphasis on literacy, and character education.

The curriculum is backwards-mapped from the academic goals and assessments, including MS MAP, NWEA MAP, and Fountas and Pinnell. Core curriculum materials include Core Knowledge (Grades K-2) and Expeditionary Learning and Engage New York (Grades 3-8) for ELA and Eureka Math. Students receive 3.5 hours of instructional time above the minimum state requirements on a weekly basis, and 140 additional hours, or 19 extra instructional days, on an annual basis. The proposed core values include curiosity, optimism, gratitude, grit, self-control, social intelligence, and zest. Students will also have access to summer school remediation and elective courses, including coding and foreign languages.

Clarksdale Collegiate will offer frequent events including family orientation, coffee with the ED, and calls home to share student progress and achievements. The school anticipates partnering with local organizations to further meet the health, social-emotional, and physical needs of students. The school will primarily recruit students from Coahoma County and surrounding areas, but will be open to serving all students.

Analysis:

The Educational Program Design and Capacity section meets the standard because the educational plan is compelling, comprehensive, research- and evidence-based, and the applicant demonstrates sufficient capacity to execute the plan.

The academic program boasts a clear college prep focus, which is evidenced throughout all aspects of the school design and culture. The core beliefs, such as extended day, a highly structured environment, and publicly tracking goals and progress, are research-based and have proven successful in other high-performing, high-poverty schools across the country.

The entire educational program is grounded in literacy and focused on achieving mastery. The applicant provides a clear and comprehensive scope and sequence, a detailed curriculum map, and comprehensive learning standards that are aligned to both Core Knowledge standards and Mississippi state standards. In addition, the applicant provides a persuasive rationale for why this type of school is needed—citing low proficiency rates in area elementary schools and low ACT scores in area high schools—and why the academic program is appropriate for the target population—citing research and achievement data from similar schools, many of which the ED visited during her Building Excellent Schools (BES) school leader fellowship.

The applicant provides a clear and concise vision and description of school culture, including the structures, routines, and artifacts that will drive implementation. The "day in the life" descriptions for both students and teachers are very vivid, detailed, and aligned with the educational plan.

The applicant demonstrates strong capacity to execute the educational plan. The proposed ED, Amanda Johnson, is exceptionally qualified with a strong track record and experience as a teacher, school founder, coach, and school leader—all within the type of model she proposes to operate at Clarksdale Collegiate. During the interview, Johnson displayed in-depth knowledge of the plan as written and was able to articulate, with detail, answers to questions regarding the curriculum, performance standards, academic goals, differentiated instruction, and special education. Johnson also brings robust and committed support from BES, the Charter School Growth Fund, which provides start-up capital and support to emerging CMOs, and several other local organizations. Finally, Johnson and some board members have deep ties to the Clarksdale community and the broader Delta region.

Plan Summary:

The ED, Amanda Johnson, will be directly responsible for the academic, organizational, and financial health of the school. In year one, Johnson will lead the establishment of the academic program, the school's culture, and its financial and operations plans. Other year one staff include a finance and operations manager (FOM), office manager, and general and special education teachers. As Clarksdale Collegiate grows to serve more grades, the school will distribute leadership across an assistant director (AD) for primary, intermediate, and eventually middle grades, an AD of student support services, and a development director.

The ED will report directly to the board of directors. The board includes seven members with various expertise including education, finance, and community engagement. The board will have four officers—chair, vice chair, secretary, and treasurer—and four standing committees that include governance, finance, academic achievement, and development.

The school plans to identify a temporary facility for years one and two, and a permanent facility beginning in year three. Basic facilities requirements for year two include eight classrooms, one multi-purpose space, one teacher work area, and two administrative offices. Clarksdale Collegiate plans to provide transportation internally, operating one bus and serving roughly 35 percent of students in years one and two. In year three, the school plans to operate a second bus, serving roughly 50 percent of the student body.

Analysis:

The Operations Plan and Capacity section meets the standard because the plans for governance, staffing, professional development (PD), performance management, and start-up are well-articulated, and the applicant demonstrates significant capacity to open and operate the school.

The proposed governing board is already established and reflective of the capacity, expertise, and local support needed to run a high-quality charter school. The seven board members bring highly relevant professional experience in the areas of education, charter schools, leadership, fundraising, finance, community engagement, governance, operations, and non-profit management. The proposed board structure and plans for oversight and evaluation are also well-developed and reflective of best practices.

The staffing structure is clear and aligned with the educational program. The applicant presents a plan for recruitment and selection that is rigorous and commonly used by other high-performing schools. Teachers receive weekly, informal observations and coaching—another best practice in high-performing charter schools—and significant PD before and during the school year.

Academic goals are rigorous and incorporate absolute, comparative, and growth measures. The applicant presents a robust plan for assessing students and using data on a regular basis. Non-academic goals are equally robust and include ambitious goals for student discipline, high school graduation (beyond Clarksdale Collegiate), and board oversight.

The school start-up plan is incredibly detailed, comprehensive, and realistic, and includes clear tasks, deliverables, deadlines, roles, and responsibilities. The board and ED have significant capacity to manage the plan. While the applicant has not yet identified a facility, they plan to identify a temporary facility at first, and a permanent facility for year three. The board includes members with significant real estate and fundraising experience, skills which will help facilitate an often challenging start-up task.

While the applicant meets the overall standard, there are some outstanding questions regarding transportation. Specifically, Coahoma County is a rural, low income community; likely more than 35 percent of students will require transportation and one bus may not be sufficient. During the interview, the applicant provided thoughtful contingency plans, including fundraising, to purchase additional buses. While providing transportation is not required, the plan should ensure the school is anticipating the needs of the target student population.

FINANCIAL PLAN & CAPACITY

CLARKSDALE COLLEGIATE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL

RATING:

Meets the Standard

Plan Summary:

The application details the five-year financial projections as follows:

Year 1: \$1,462,280 in revenues and \$1,413,863 in expenses, with an ending fund balance of \$48,417.

Year 5: \$3,540,529 in revenues and \$3,356,066 in expenses, with an ending fund balance of \$184,462.

Clarksdale Collegiate plans to retain RePublic Schools (RePublic) as a financial back office provider. As such, RePublic will provide and coordinate standard back-office transactional services and support around reporting compliance, budgeting and forecasting, cash flow planning, scenario building, and growth planning. The proposed ED has four years of experience as a school founder and director and has managed a range of budgets, from a start-up budget of \$250K to a \$3M school budget.

The school will also hire a finance and operations manager during the start-up year who will manage the school operations, including vendor and contractor relationships, transportation, facilities, and eventually, the full operations team. The ED and finance and operations manager will be responsible for working with RePublic across all transactional areas.

Analysis:

The Financial Plan and Capacity section meets the standard because the operating and start-up budgets are balanced and aligned to the educational and operations plans, the systems for financial oversight and management are sound, and the applicant brings significant financial expertise and experience.

The budget includes clear and reasonable assumptions for revenues and expenses. The budget is balanced and the cash position is positive every month. Fundraising and philanthropy costs are reasonable, including a \$100K commitment from the Charter School Growth Fund and a \$30K commitment from the board, which gives the review team confidence that the applicant can raise the designated amount as planned. The start-up budget is also balanced, reasonable, and reflects only committed donations. Expenses include 80 percent of the ED's salary, two months of the finance and operations manager's salary, and allocations for staff and student recruitment.

The applicant presents a sound plan for financial planning, accounting, purchasing, and payroll. The school plans to contract with RePublic—a reputable organization that operates five charter schools in Nashville and Jackson—as a back office financial provider. The staffing and governance structures reflect that the applicant has an appropriate understanding of the delineation of financial roles and responsibilities. For example, the finance and operations manager will manage accounts payable, the ED will approve invoices, and RePublic will provide a monthly profits and losses statement and handle all tax reporting.

The applicant has appropriate internal controls in place. In the application and during the interview, board members described how the ED would present financial information at each regular meeting and the finance committee and treasurer would review information such as bank statements and reconciliations, budget versus actual, budget versus forecast, the balance sheet, and cash flow projections.

Finally, the applicant brings significant financial management capacity. The ED has four years of experience as a school founder and leader where she directly managed her own school-based budget, the board treasurer has over 25 years of experience in the sector, and RePublic manages budgets over \$12M in revenues. Board members also bring robust experience in financial management, real estate, and fundraising.

EVALUATOR BIOGRAPHIES

Evaluator's Name

RACHEL KSENYAK

Rachel Ksenyak is a Denver-based education consultant with a decade of experience in charter school authorizing, program development, strategy, and human capital. Rachel served as the Senior Director of Talent for STRIVE Preparatory Schools, where she was responsible for recruiting and hiring excellent teachers, leaders, and staff to serve more than 3,500 students. Rachel was the Senior Director of Recruitment and Selection for the Office of New Schools at Chicago Public Schools, where she managed the recruitment, selection, and authorization of new charter, turnaround, and other autonomous schools. Rachel also served as the Director of Authorizer Development at NACSA, providing strategic counsel to public school districts, nonprofits, and state education agencies across the country. Rachel is a founding board member of 5280 High School in Denver. Rachel earned an M.Ed. in educational leadership from the Broad Residency in Urban Education, an M.A. in the social sciences from the University of Chicago, and a B.F.A. in dance from Ohio University.

Evaluator's Name

DR. TOMMYE HENDERSON

Dr. Henderson is currently an assistant professor in the School of Education and Leadership at Mississippi College. With over 30 years of experience in the education field, she has served in many capacities, including as superintendent of Clinton Public School District and as director of personnel for Columbus Municipal School District. She has also served as a principal and teacher and is active in many community organizations in Clinton. Dr. Henderson graduated with a B.S. in elementary education from the University of Southern Mississippi, an M.Ed. and an Ed.S. from Mississippi State University, and a Ph.D. in educational leadership, also from Mississippi State University.

Evaluator's Name

DR. KIMBERLY DORSEY

Dr. Dorsey is a native of Holmes County, Mississippi. She received her B.B.A in banking and finance from Mississippi State University, and her M.B.A. and Ph.D. in business from Jackson State University. She is currently an associate professor of management at the Mississippi University for Women.

Evaluator's Name

ANTHONY OLIVER

Anthony Oliver is currently an assistant principal in the Jefferson County School System in Birmingham, Alabama. Most recently, Anthony served as Executive Director at Breakthrough Birmingham, an education non-profit dedicated to providing high-quality academic programming to underserved students and preparing the next generation of teachers. Anthony has also served as a high-school mathematics teacher and coach, and has worked as a principal intern at Newton North High School where he worked to create access to challenging academic curriculum for African American students and students from low socioeconomic classes. Anthony holds a B.A. in mathematics from the Virginia Military Institute, an M.A.E. in secondary education - mathematics curriculum and instruction from the University of Alabama at Birmingham, and an Ed.M in school leadership from the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

MISSISSIPPI CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORIZER BOARD

CHARTER SCHOOL APPLICATION RECOMMENDATION REPORT 2017

National Association of Charter School Authorizers

REVISED AUGUST 30, 2017

New Charter School Application for

TRUTH ACADEMY STEAM CHARTER SCHOOL

Submitted by

SHADES OF ELEGANCE CORPORATION

Evaluation Team

TEAM LEAD: RACHEL KSENYAK

EVALUATORS: DR. KIMBERLY DORSEY

DR. TOMMYE HENDERSON

ANTHONY OLIVER

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INTRODUCTION

Following the passage of the Mississippi Charter Schools Act of 2013 (HB 369) in April 2013, Governor Bryant created the Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board (MCSAB), a statewide charter school authorizer with exclusive charter jurisdiction in the state of Mississippi. The mission of the seven-member MCSAB is to authorize high-quality charter schools, particularly schools designed to expand opportunities for underserved students. To that end, the MCSAB executed a rigorous, high-quality process during 2017 to solicit and evaluate charter school proposals.

Focus on Quality

The 2017 Request for Proposals and the resulting evaluation process are rigorous and demanding. The process is meant to ensure that approved charter school operators possess the capacity to implement a school model that is likely to dramatically increase student outcomes. Successful applicants will demonstrate high levels of expertise and capacity in the areas of curriculum and instruction, school finance, educational and operational leadership, and non-profit governance, as well as high expectations for excellence in student achievement and professional standards. An application that merits a recommendation for approval will present a clear, realistic picture of how the school expects to operate; be detailed in how the school will raise student achievement; and inspire confidence in the applicant's capacity to successfully implement the proposed academic, operational, and financial plans.

Evaluation Process

For the 2017 RFP cycle, MCSAB partnered with the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) to manage the application process and to provide independent, merit-based recommendations regarding whether to approve or deny each proposal. NACSA assembled an independent evaluation team that included both national and local expertise related to charter school start-up and operation. This report from the evaluation team is a culmination of three stages of review:

PROPOSAL EVALUATION

The evaluation team conducted individual and group assessments of the merits of the proposal based on the complete written submission. In the case of experienced school operators, the MCSAB and NACSA supplemented this written evaluation with due diligence (as applicable) to verify claims made in the proposal related to past performance.

CAPACITY INTERVIEW

After reviewing the application and discussing the findings of their individual reviews, the evaluation team conducted an in-person interview to assess the applicant team's overall capacity to implement the proposal as written in the application.

CONSENSUS JUDGMENT

Following the capacity interview, the evaluation team came to consensus regarding whether to recommend the proposal for approval or denial. The duty of the evaluation team is to recommend approval or denial of each application based on its merits against MCSAB-approved evaluation criteria. The authority and responsibility to decide whether to approve or deny each application rests with the members of the MCSAB.

Report Contents

This evaluation report includes the following:

PROPOSAL OVERVIEW

Basic information about the proposed school as presented in the application.

RECOMMENDATION

An overall judgment regarding whether the proposal meets the criteria for approval.

EVALUATION

Analysis of the proposal based on three primary areas of plan development and the capacity of the applicant team to execute the plan as presented:

Educational Program Design and Capacity: curriculum and instructional design; pupil performance standards; high school graduation requirements; school calendar and schedule; school culture; supplemental programming; special populations and at-risk students; student recruitment and enrollment; student discipline; parent and community involvement; and educational program capacity.

Operations Plan and Capacity: organization charts; legal status and governing documents; governing board; advisory bodies; staff structure; staffing plans, hiring, management and evaluation; professional development; performance management; facilities; start-up and ongoing operations; and operations capacity.

Financial Plan and Capacity: start-up and five year budgets; cash flow projections; revenue and expenditure assumptions; financial policies and controls; and financial management capacity.

For applicants seeking waivers, conversion from an existing school to a public charter school, or for experienced operators or operators proposing to engage an education service provider, an analysis of: Request for Waivers (if applicable), Conversion Charter Schools (if applicable), and Existing Operators (if applicable).

RATINGS CHARACTERISTICS

Evaluation teams assess each application against the published evaluation criteria. In general, the following definitions guide evaluator ratings:

Meets the Standard

The response reflects a thorough understanding of key issues. It addresses the topic with specific and accurate information that shows thorough preparation; presents a clear, realistic picture of how the school expects to operate; and inspires confidence in the applicant's capacity to carry out the plan effectively.

Partially Meets the Standard

The response meets the criteria in many respects, but lacks detail and/or requires additional information in one or more areas.

Does Not Meet the Standard

The response meets the criteria in some respects but has substantial gaps in a number of areas.

Falls Far Below the Standard

The response is wholly undeveloped or significantly incomplete; demonstrates lack of preparation; or otherwise raises substantial concerns about the viability of the plan or the applicant's ability to carry it out.

PROPOSAL OVERVIEW

Applicant Name:

SHADES OF ELEGANCE CORPORATION

Proposed School Name:

TRUTH ACADEMY STEAM CHARTER SCHOOL

Mission:

The mission of Truth Academy STEAM Charter School (TASCS) is to engage and prepare future-ready students through a rigorous standards-based education that uses an arts integrated STEM framework and to provide the underpinnings for every child to be successful in college, work, and life.

Proposed Location:

Sunflower County Consolidated School District

Enrollment Projections:

<i>Academic Year</i>	<i>Planned # Students</i>	<i>Maximum # Students</i>	<i>Grades Served</i>
2018-19	140	140	K-6
2019-20	200	200	K-7
2020-21	260	260	K-8
2021-22	320	320	K-8
2022-23	360	360	K-8
(At Capacity)	360	360	K-8

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Recommendation:

TRUTH ACADEMY STEAM CHARTER SCHOOL

DENY

Summary Analysis:

The evaluation team recommends denial of the application for Truth Academy STEAM Charter School (TASCS). The application contains significant gaps and deficiencies and the applicant does not have the capacity to execute the plan as proposed, particularly the financial plan.

The educational plan partially meets the standard because, while the application provides a compelling rationale for implementing the STEAM pedagogy, there are gaps in the plan related to pupil performance standards, school culture, special populations, and supplemental programming. Specifically, the student promotion and exit policies are unclear, the vision for school culture is undeveloped, and plans for supplemental programming—while identified as critical to the model—are not feasible. Plans for meeting the needs of all students are particularly concerning. The application reveals a lack of understanding of the processes for identification, referral, and testing of students with disabilities and 504 plans, which the applicant was unable to remedy during the interview.

Both the operations and financial plans do not meet the standard. The applicant failed to provide a sound plan for performance management, staffing, and facilities. The proposed financial plan is not viable or sound. The operating budget is incomplete, with significant revenue streams unaccounted for and assumptions left blank. The start-up budget relies on revenue streams that are not available until year one. During the interview, the team was unable to provide any contingency plans for school start-up.

The applicant was not able to provide information about the financial plan during the interview because the individual who created the budget did not attend. The lack of financial representation, coupled with budget concerns, raises significant concerns about financial capacity for the evaluation team.

Summary of Section Ratings:

Opening and maintaining a successful, high-performing charter school depends on having a complete, coherent plan and identifying highly capable individuals to execute that plan. It is not an endeavor for which strengths in some areas can compensate for material weaknesses in others. *Therefore, in order to receive a recommendation for approval, the application must Meet the Standard in all areas.*

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM DESIGN & CAPACITY

Partially Meets the Standard

OPERATIONS PLAN & CAPACITY

Does Not Meet the Standard

FINANCIAL PLAN & CAPACITY

Does Not Meet the Standard

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM DESIGN & CAPACITY

TRUTH ACADEMY STEAM CHARTER SCHOOL

RATING:

Partially Meets the Standard

Plan Summary:

TASCS will have an instructional focus centered on a STEAM pedagogy, which includes the typical STEM framework of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, with the addition of the arts. The educational plan is centered around five key design components, which include (1) STEAM, (2) rigorous curriculum design, (3) integrated instruction, (4) problem-based learning, and (5) partnerships. TASCS will use a balanced literacy approach, utilizing the Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, Journeys' Common Core materials, and providing students with 120 minutes of focused literacy instruction each day. TASCS will use Singapore Math (Math in Focus) to supplement the mathematics curriculum and provide students with a 90-minute daily math block. Students will also receive instruction in music, motion, and visual arts.

TACSS will target students within the Sunflower County School District; however, the school will be open to all eligible students statewide. Recruitment strategies for student enrollment include neighborhood canvassing, community meetings, and developing targeted marketing materials.

TASCS will use a variety of parent and family engagement strategies, including conducting home visits with hard to reach families, offering adult education opportunities at the school, and inviting parents to serve on various decision-making bodies, such as the parent advisory council.

Analysis:

The Educational Program Design and Capacity section partially meets the standard. While the applicant provides a compelling vision and overview of the program, critical details are missing related to pupil performance standards, school culture, special populations, and supplemental programming.

The application provides a clear and compelling rationale for the STEAM pedagogy and articulates five key design principles which will serve as the backbone for the curriculum and instructional design. The curriculum overview is well-articulated, including a complete scope and sequence for all grades at capacity and a list of core instructional strategies. In addition, the school co-founders bring extensive experience in public K-12 education, including teaching, leadership, school design, and charter schools.

The promotion and exit policies outlined in the application are unclear and overly subjective, and the applicant was not able to sufficiently explain them during the interview. In the interview, the description of a "day in the life" was overly vague, and did not include specific time frames, transitions, or rationale for the flow of activities. Similarly, while the application identifies some programmatic aspects that would shape school culture—such as a clear dress code and strict code of conduct—the applicant did not present a clear vision for, or identify a coherent plan for establishing and maintaining, school culture.

The plans for meeting the needs of all learners—including students with disabilities (SWD) and at-risk students—concerned the evaluation team. The application lacks detail and understanding of the processes for identification, referral, and testing of SWD and those who have 504 plans, and the applicant was unable to provide necessary details during the interview. In addition, the applicant plans to hire only one special education teacher in year one, which is not adequate staffing for Grades K-6. The lack of a clear and cohesive plan raises concerns about the applicant's demonstrated understanding of—and capacity to fulfill—state and federal obligations and requirements pertaining to SWD and other at-risk populations.

The after-care enrichment program is a central component of the mission and model; however, plans and budget allocations for programming, staffing, space, and technology are inadequate. The school plans to leverage volunteers—including staff and retired teachers—to run the program, which raised concerns about long-term viability.

OPERATIONS PLAN & CAPACITY

TRUTH ACADEMY STEAM CHARTER SCHOOL

RATING:

Does Not Meet the Standard

Plan Summary:

The applicant team includes Dr. T.J. Graham, the proposed executive director (ED), who brings more than 25 years of experience in education as a teacher, principal, instructional supervisor, superintendent, and professor. TASCs would be managed by Dr. Graham, who would report to both the board and to the proposed principal, Shantal Johnson. Ms. Johnson also brings extensive experience as a teacher.

The board of directors includes five members and has plans to grow to seven members. Current board members have experience in finance, policy, the military, community engagement, and law enforcement. The board would have five officers, including a chair, vice chair, secretary, treasurer, and sergeant at arms and would also include standing executive, operations, human resources, and finance committees.

The proposal includes an employee handbook, which details all personnel policies relevant to staffing, hiring, evaluation, and management. Instructional staff will receive over 100 hours of professional development (PD) during the school year, which will be led and designed by the ED. PD will focus on three core components: STEAM instructional models, data-driven instructional culture, and school improvement planning.

Analysis:

The Operations Plan and Capacity section does not meet the standard because the applicant failed to provide a sound plan for performance management, staffing, professional development, and facility acquisition.

The applicant did not provide a plan for collecting and analyzing student academic achievement data, using data to refine and improve instruction, measuring and evaluating academic progress, nor reporting data to the school community. While the applicant named some potential student information systems and assessments during the interview, (e.g., Illuminate and NWEA MAP, respectively) they did not provide a concrete plan for assessment, including the type and frequency, or how data would be used to make instructional decisions. Academic goals were not provided, and plans for corrective action, in the case of goals not being met, were also not addressed.

The staffing structure is not consistent with the educational plan, and plans for teacher and staff recruitment, hiring, and coaching are not robust or sufficiently detailed. For example, the narrative describes separate teachers for music/movement and visual arts; however, these individuals are not included in the staffing plan. The ED stated during the interview that two classroom teachers possess the necessary skills and would teach these classes in addition to their academic duties, which raised concerns related to teacher capacity, compensation, and scheduling. While a hiring time line is provided in the employee handbook, it does not address the actual recruitment or selection process for new staff. In addition, the application lacks a clear plan to coach and develop teachers. During the interview, the ED stated that the school would aim to hire only experienced teachers who would not need much coaching; however, even the strongest teachers require coaching, especially in a new school with a unique model.

While the applicant identified a potential facility—the former Drew High School—they failed to submit a plan and time-line for securing, financing, and renovating the space. During the interview, the applicant noted that they had not done a walk-through of the building and were unsure of its current infrastructure and condition.

Despite these deficiencies, the applicant has assembled a governing board whose members have deep ties to the community and represent expertise in finance, policy, community engagement, and law. The board is also reserving two seats for Truth Academy parents. While there are some gaps in expertise, the depth and capacity of the board is a clear strength.

FINANCIAL PLAN & CAPACITY

TRUTH ACADEMY STEAM CHARTER SCHOOL

RATING:

Does Not Meet the Standard

Plan Summary:

The application details the five year financial projections as follows:

Year 1: \$1,377,642 in revenues and \$1,105,377 in expenses, with an ending fund balance of \$272,265.

Year 5: \$3,280,377 in revenues and \$2,161,564 in expenses, with an ending fund balance of \$1,118,813.

In years one through four, the school's day-to-day business and financial operations will be handled by the school's secretary, who will act as business manager and report to the principal and the ED. The school will hire a chief financial officer (CFO) in year five, at which point the school's secretary will report to the CFO.

The board will adopt financial controls and fiscal management policies to govern daily financial management in compliance with generally accepted accounting procedures. The board will approve policies to establish and maintain adequate accounting records and internal control procedures.

Analysis:

The Financial Plan and Capacity section does not meet the standard because the operating budget is incomplete, the start-up budget is inaccurate, and the applicant was not able to provide information about the financial plan during the interview, which raised significant concerns about financial capacity.

The operating budget is incomplete, with significant revenue streams unaccounted for and assumptions left blank. On the revenue side, the Average Daily Attendance (ADA) and Average Daily Membership (ADM) line items were left blank. The applicant projects a one to two percent annual increase in Mississippi Adequate Education Program (MAEP) funds in the application narrative, which is not aligned with the .02 percent increase included in the Financial Plan Workbook. The assumptions for Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL) are zero percent, and for English language learners (ELLs) are 80 percent, which are not realistic nor aligned with the enrollment summary. The assumptions also include \$50K in donations, \$30K in fundraising, and \$10K in private contributions. While the application notes that the board will be responsible for raising some of these funds, additional details such as potential grantors or fundraising efforts to-date are not provided, which raises concerns about the applicant's ability to secure critical start-up funds.

The start-up budget is not viable because it relies on revenue streams, including MAEP funds, which are not available until year one. Beyond stating that the school will minimize expenses during the initial years and fundraise to supplement gaps, the applicant was unable to provide any contingency plans for school start-up.

The applicant was not able to provide budget information during the interview because the individual responsible for creating the budget did not attend. However, the applicant's organizational structure calls for the ED to report to the board on all aspects of the school, including finances. As such, the ED should have been able to articulate the major revenue and expense assumptions. With the exception of a brief explanation about plans for a computer lab, the applicant was not able to resolve the evaluation team's concerns about the budget.

EVALUATOR BIOGRAPHIES

Evaluator's Name

RACHEL KSENYAK

Rachel Ksenyak is a Denver-based education consultant with a decade of experience in charter school authorizing, program development, strategy, and human capital. Rachel served as the Senior Director of Talent for STRIVE Preparatory Schools, where she was responsible for recruiting and hiring excellent teachers, leaders, and staff to serve more than 3,500 students. Rachel was the Senior Director of Recruitment and Selection for the Office of New Schools at Chicago Public Schools, where she managed the recruitment, selection, and authorization of new charter, turnaround, and other autonomous schools. Rachel also served as the Director of Authorizer Development at NACSA, providing strategic counsel to public school districts, nonprofits, and state education agencies across the country. Rachel is a founding board member of 5280 High School in Denver. Rachel earned an M.Ed. in educational leadership from the Broad Residency in Urban Education, an M.A. in the social sciences from the University of Chicago, and a B.F.A. in dance from Ohio University.

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DR. KIMBERLY DORSEY

Dr. Dorsey is a native of Holmes County, Mississippi. She received her B.B.A in banking and finance from Mississippi State University, and her M.B.A. and Ph.D. in business from Jackson State University. She is currently an associate professor of management at the Mississippi University for Women.

Evaluator's Name

ANTHONY OLIVER

Anthony Oliver is currently an assistant principal in the Jefferson County School System in Birmingham, Alabama. Most recently, Anthony served as Executive Director at Breakthrough Birmingham, an education non-profit dedicated to providing high-quality academic programming to underserved students and preparing the next generation of teachers. Anthony has also served as a high-school mathematics teacher and coach, and has worked as a principal intern at Newton North High School where he worked to create access to challenging academic curriculum for African American students and students from low socioeconomic classes. Anthony holds a B.A. in mathematics from the Virginia Military Institute, an M.A.E. in secondary education - mathematics curriculum and instruction from the University of Alabama at Birmingham, and an Ed.M in school leadership from the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

MISSISSIPPI CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORIZER BOARD

CHARTER SCHOOL APPLICATION RECOMMENDATION REPORT 2017

National Association of Charter School Authorizers

REVISED AUGUST 30, 2017

New Charter School Application for

SRI COLLEGE PREPARATORY AND STEM ACADEMY

Submitted by

SRI (SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH)

Evaluation Team

TEAM LEAD: RACHEL KSENYAK

EVALUATORS: DR. KIMBERLY DORSEY

DR. TOMMYE HENDERSON

ANTHONY OLIVER

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INTRODUCTION

Following the passage of the Mississippi Charter Schools Act of 2013 (HB 369) in April 2013, Governor Bryant created the Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board (MCSAB), a statewide charter school authorizer with exclusive charter jurisdiction in the state of Mississippi. The mission of the seven-member MCSAB is to authorize high-quality charter schools, particularly schools designed to expand opportunities for underserved students. To that end, the MCSAB executed a rigorous, high-quality process during 2017 to solicit and evaluate charter school proposals.

Focus on Quality

The 2017 Request for Proposals and the resulting evaluation process are rigorous and demanding. The process is meant to ensure that approved charter school operators possess the capacity to implement a school model that is likely to dramatically increase student outcomes. Successful applicants will demonstrate high levels of expertise and capacity in the areas of curriculum and instruction, school finance, educational and operational leadership, and non-profit governance, as well as high expectations for excellence in student achievement and professional standards. An application that merits a recommendation for approval will present a clear, realistic picture of how the school expects to operate; be detailed in how the school will raise student achievement; and inspire confidence in the applicant's capacity to successfully implement the proposed academic, operational, and financial plans.

Evaluation Process

For the 2017 RFP cycle, MCSAB partnered with the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) to manage the application process and to provide independent, merit-based recommendations regarding whether to approve or deny each proposal. NACSA assembled an independent evaluation team that included both national and local expertise related to charter school start-up and operation. This report from the evaluation team is a culmination of three stages of review:

PROPOSAL EVALUATION

The evaluation team conducted individual and group assessments of the merits of the proposal based on the complete written submission. In the case of experienced school operators, the MCSAB and NACSA supplemented this written evaluation with due diligence (as applicable) to verify claims made in the proposal related to past performance.

CAPACITY INTERVIEW

After reviewing the application and discussing the findings of their individual reviews, the evaluation team conducted an in-person interview to assess the applicant team's overall capacity to implement the proposal as written in the application.

CONSENSUS JUDGMENT

Following the capacity interview, the evaluation team came to consensus regarding whether to recommend the proposal for approval or denial. The duty of the evaluation team is to recommend approval or denial of each application based on its merits against MCSAB-approved evaluation criteria. The authority and responsibility to decide whether to approve or deny each application rests with the members of the MCSAB.

Report Contents

This evaluation report includes the following:

PROPOSAL OVERVIEW

Basic information about the proposed school as presented in the application.

RECOMMENDATION

An overall judgment regarding whether the proposal meets the criteria for approval.

EVALUATION

Analysis of the proposal based on three primary areas of plan development and the capacity of the applicant team to execute the plan as presented:

Educational Program Design and Capacity: curriculum and instructional design; pupil performance standards; high school graduation requirements; school calendar and schedule; school culture; supplemental programming; special populations and at-risk students; student recruitment and enrollment; student discipline; parent and community involvement; and educational program capacity.

Operations Plan and Capacity: organization charts; legal status and governing documents; governing board; advisory bodies; staff structure; staffing plans, hiring, management and evaluation; professional development; performance management; facilities; start-up and ongoing operations; and operations capacity.

Financial Plan and Capacity: start-up and five year budgets; cash flow projections; revenue and expenditure assumptions; financial policies and controls; and financial management capacity.

For applicants seeking waivers, conversion from an existing school to a public charter school, or for experienced operators or operators proposing to engage an education service provider, an analysis of: Request for Waivers (if applicable), Conversion Charter Schools (if applicable), and Existing Operators (if applicable).

RATINGS CHARACTERISTICS

Evaluation teams assess each application against the published evaluation criteria. In general, the following definitions guide evaluator ratings:

Meets the Standard

The response reflects a thorough understanding of key issues. It addresses the topic with specific and accurate information that shows thorough preparation; presents a clear, realistic picture of how the school expects to operate; and inspires confidence in the applicant's capacity to carry out the plan effectively.

Partially Meets the Standard

The response meets the criteria in many respects, but lacks detail and/or requires additional information in one or more areas.

Does Not Meet the Standard

The response meets the criteria in some respects but has substantial gaps in a number of areas.

Falls Far Below the Standard

The response is wholly undeveloped or significantly incomplete; demonstrates lack of preparation; or otherwise raises substantial concerns about the viability of the plan or the applicant's ability to carry it out.

PROPOSAL OVERVIEW

Applicant Name:

SR1 (SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH)

Proposed School Name:

SR1 COLLEGE PREPARATORY AND STEM ACADEMY

Mission:

The mission of the SR1 College Preparatory and STEM Academy (SR1 CPSA) is to provide students with holistic student-centered academic and social skills with an emphasis on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM), which will help students achieve college access and success.

Proposed Location:

Canton Public School District

Enrollment Projections:

<i>Academic Year</i>	<i>Planned # Students</i>	<i>Maximum # Students</i>	<i>Grades Served</i>
2018-19	150	150	K-1
2019-20	225	225	K-2
2020-21	300	300	K-3
2021-22	375	375	K-4
2022-23	450	450	K-5
2029-2030 (At Capacity)	1150	1150	K-12

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Recommendation:

SR1 COLLEGE PREPARATORY AND STEM ACADEMY

DENY

Summary Analysis:

The evaluation team recommends denial of the application for SR1 College Preparatory and STEM Academy (SR1 CPSA). The application contains significant gaps and deficiencies and the applicant does not have the capacity to execute the plan as proposed, particularly the educational plan.

While the mission is clear and compelling, several components of the program—particularly, the curriculum and instructional design, performance standards, and school schedule—are insufficiently developed. In addition, the applicant does not have the capacity to open and operate a school. While the school founders have extensive experience in educational programming, no member of the applicant team has K-12 classroom or leadership experience. Although the applicant is knowledgeable about the foundation of a strong educational plan, they are not able to speak to the necessary details and logistics of implementing the plan effectively, in part because many of the implementation details would be the responsibility of the school's dean, who is not yet identified.

The operations plan generated significant concerns regarding the proposed plans for governance, staffing, and professional development (PD). While the board has identified three members who bring relevant expertise, the current board does not collectively have the skills and experience needed to run a charter school.

While the application describes sound plans for financial management, the start-up budget is not viable and the board does not have sufficient financial management expertise or capacity. Tamu Green and Dorlissa Hutton, proposed president and provost, respectively, bring expertise in this area and were able to describe appropriate systems and structures for financial oversight and management; however, the board lacks financial expertise and the board representative who attended the interview did not inspire confidence among evaluation team members.

Summary of Section Ratings:

Opening and maintaining a successful, high-performing charter school depends on having a complete, coherent plan and identifying highly capable individuals to execute that plan. It is not an endeavor for which strengths in some areas can compensate for material weaknesses in others. *Therefore, in order to receive a recommendation for approval, the application must Meet the Standard in all areas.*

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM DESIGN & CAPACITY

Partially Meets the Standard

OPERATIONS PLAN & CAPACITY

Partially Meets the Standard

FINANCIAL PLAN & CAPACITY

Partially Meets the Standard

Plan Summary:

SR1 CPSA's educational framework is based on a model developed by its parent organization, Scientific Research (SR1), which has a 10-year track record of providing programming focused on STEM, college access, and success, as well as family, social, and community-building programs for students. SR1's Community Oriented Opportunities for Learning (C.O.O.L.) model is based on evidence of best practices supported by the US Department of Education's What Works Clearinghouse. The school will provide low teacher-to-student ratios of 1:13 and a small school atmosphere, coupled with an extended school day and summer camp.

Teachers will use differentiated instruction, inquiry-based learning, theme and project-based learning, mentored study, technology-based learning, and anticipatory set. SR1 CPSA will utilize a mixture of external (i.e., state testing assessments) and internal (i.e., benchmarks, STAR testing) assessments.

The school will target students living in Canton; however, SR1 CPSA will be open to all eligible students statewide. All students will attend school from 7:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., and students in need of additional academic support will have access to tutoring and other programming from 2:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. Summer and after-school enrichment programming will also be available.

Analysis:

The Educational Program Design and Capacity section partially meets the standard. While the mission is clear and compelling, several components of the program—particularly, the curriculum and instructional design and school schedule—are insufficiently developed. In addition, the applicant does not have the capacity to open and operate a school.

Based on the success of the SR1 organization, the applicant has significant ties to the students and parents they would potentially serve. In addition, the applicant referred to numerous relationships with colleges, universities, and community organizations, such as the Mississippi Museum of Natural Science. SR1 has plans to build upon these preexisting relationships if granted a charter.

However, the curriculum and instructional design lacks sufficient detail. The curriculum is not yet developed and more clarity is needed around the process, time-line, and individuals responsible for completing the work. As required by the RFP, the sample course scope and sequence documents were not provided for each division the school would serve, therefore the evaluation team could not accurately assess the rigor of the curriculum for the target population. When asked to speak to the instructional strategies, the applicant described their current programs, which have won numerous awards; however, the applicant failed to articulate how these would translate to the proposed school setting.

The proposed schedule is overly vague and is not well-aligned to the mission or needs of the target student population. Core subjects, reading and math, are taught every other day for only 50 minutes per day, and the applicant did not provide a sound rationale for how this structure would be sufficient to achieve mastery. The "day in the life" descriptions are also overly vague. When asked to elaborate, the applicant primarily referred to SR1's summer programs without clearly articulating how they would translate into a whole-school design.

While the school founders have extensive experience in programming, research, and operational experience related to public health, awareness, adolescents, and STEM—all relevant components of the SR1 proposal—no member of the applicant team has K-12 classroom or leadership experience. Although the applicant is knowledgeable about the framework of a strong educational plan, they are not able to speak to the details and logistics of implementing the plan on a daily basis because many of those details would be the responsibility of the school's dean, who is not yet identified.

OPERATIONS PLAN & CAPACITY

SR1 COLLEGE PREPARATORY AND STEM ACADEMY

RATING:

Partially Meets the Standard

Plan Summary:

SR1 CPSA would be incorporated under the existing non-profit organization, Scientific Research (SR1), whose mission is to eliminate disparities in education, health, and technology through science, technology, and partnerships. CPSA will be its own entity under SR1 and will be governed by a separate board.

The SR1 CPSA leadership team consists of a president, provost, and a dean, who will serve in the capacity of the school leader. The proposed president, Mr. Tamu Green, is the founder and executive director of SR1, and the proposed provost, Ms. Dorlisa Hutton is SR1's chief operating officer. The dean role would be posted and filled if and when the school is approved.

Staff will receive 10 professional development (PD) days prior to the start of school, and at least two full days during the school year. SR1 CPSA will have goals that connect to its mission in terms of preparing students for college. One hundred percent of students will graduate college-ready, career-ready, and life-ready with the skills necessary to succeed in career and life endeavors.

Three members of the board of directors have already been identified. The proposed members bring professional expertise in the areas of STEM, STEM education, early education, and governance. The board would have an advisory board composed of parents/guardians of enrolled students, community leaders, educators, school personnel, representatives from institutions of higher learning, business leaders, and other key stakeholders.

Analysis:

The Operations Plan and Capacity section partially meets the standard. While some components of the plan are in place, there were significant concerns regarding the proposed plans for governance, staffing, professional development, and performance management.

While the board has identified three members who bring robust and relevant expertise, the current board does not collectively have the skills and experience needed to run a charter school. When asked during the interview what expertise gaps they would seek to fill upon approval, the applicant spoke about setting cultural expectations, but was unable to identify specific gaps. In addition, it is unclear which school leader is accountable to the board. The educational plan implies that the president and provost are the key decision-makers; however, the governance plan indicates that the dean will be hired and fired by the board.

Plans for leadership and staffing are insufficient. Both the president and provost will be part-time, with salaries covered by SR1 for the first three to four years of operations, which is concerning given that both individuals are at the top of the school organizational chart from year one. The dean will be responsible for developing and executing the educational program; however, the job description is not well-developed or aligned with the actual responsibilities of this critical role. The proposal boasts a 13:1 student to teacher ratio, but the plan is overly reliant on volunteers and in-kind staff. While SR1 appears to run a strong AmeriCorps program, the applicant did not clearly articulate how the program would sufficiently support the staffing structure.

The PD plan is overly vague and lacks critical details. While the proposal identifies the values that will be applied to PD, the applicant fails to describe the overall structure, content, schedule, and focus of the PD program and the summer induction program to take place prior to the start of school. The proposal does not address how PD will be tailored to address the unique aspects of the program.

The applicant does not provide an effective plan for evaluating academic progress, a comprehensive system for collecting and analyzing student achievement data, nor a plan to use the data to refine and improve instruction. The application identifies some reputable and appropriate tools for formal and informal assessments (e.g., STAR, benchmark tests, quizzes, homework), but the plans and systems for collecting, analyzing, and using data are high-level and vague. Further, some references to assessments are incorrect and/or outdated, such as a reference to No Child Left Behind.

FINANCIAL PLAN & CAPACITY

SR1 COLLEGE PREPARATORY AND STEM ACADEMY

RATING:

Partially Meets the Standard

Plan Summary:

The application details the five year financial projections as follows:

Year 1: \$1,641,807 in revenues and \$841,820 in expenses, with an ending fund balance of \$799,987.

Year 5: \$4,509,690 in revenues and \$2,866,244 in expenses, with an ending fund balance of \$2,866,244.

The board of trustees is the governing authority of SR1 CPSA, therefore it has ultimate responsibility for the school's financial stability. As president, Tamu Green is responsible for financial oversight and management at the school-level. He brings over 10 years of experience in financial management and oversight, planning, compliance, fundraising, and grants management.

Analysis:

The Financial Plan and Capacity section partially meets the standard. While the proposal describes proper plans for financial management, the start-up budget is not viable, and the board does not have sufficient financial management expertise or capacity.

Tamu Green and Dorlisa Hutton, the proposed president and provost, respectively, bring a significant amount of knowledge and expertise surrounding the financial management of a successful entity. During the interview, the applicant presented a clear understanding of the financial aspects of operating a high-quality charter school. The applicant understood and spoke about having the correct checks and balances and reporting systems, and discussed their prior financial management experience. However, only one board member was present during the interview, and she did not clearly show a strong understanding of how the board would take corrective actions, if necessary. She had a clear understanding of the board's role to oversee the finances of the school, but her brief answers did not give the evaluation team confidence that the board would be able to properly supervise the school's president and/or dean. When asked about their perceived blind-spots during the interview, the applicant did not identify the lack of financial expertise on the board as a concern.

The start-up budget is not accurate and therefore not viable. While the budget includes \$25,000 in escrow and a \$210,000 line of credit, it also includes state revenues, such as MAEP funds, as well as federal revenues, both of which are not available until year one of operations.

EVALUATOR BIOGRAPHIES

Evaluator's Name

RACHEL KSENYAK

Rachel Ksenyak is a Denver-based education consultant with a decade of experience in charter school authorizing, program development, strategy, and human capital. Rachel served as the Senior Director of Talent for STRIVE Preparatory Schools, where she was responsible for recruiting and hiring excellent teachers, leaders, and staff to serve more than 3,500 students. Rachel was the Senior Director of Recruitment and Selection for the Office of New Schools at Chicago Public Schools, where she managed the recruitment, selection, and authorization of new charter, turnaround, and other autonomous schools. Rachel also served as the Director of Authorizer Development at NACSA, providing strategic counsel to public school districts, nonprofits, and state education agencies across the country. Rachel is a founding board member of 5280 High School in Denver. Rachel earned an M.Ed. in educational leadership from the Broad Residency in Urban Education, an M.A. in the social sciences from the University of Chicago, and a B.F.A. in dance from Ohio University.

Evaluator's Name

DR. TOMMYE HENDERSON

Dr. Henderson is currently an assistant professor in the School of Education and Leadership at Mississippi College. With over 30 years of experience in the education field, she has served in many capacities, including as superintendent of Clinton Public School District and as director of personnel for Columbus Municipal School District. She has also served as a principal and teacher and is active in many community organizations in Clinton. Dr. Henderson graduated with a B.S. in elementary education from the University of Southern Mississippi, an M.Ed. and an Ed.S. from Mississippi State University, and a Ph.D. in educational leadership, also from Mississippi State University.

Evaluator's Name

DR. KIMBERLY DORSEY

Dr. Dorsey is a native of Holmes County, Mississippi. She received her B.B.A in banking and finance from Mississippi State University, and her M.B.A. and Ph.D. in business from Jackson State University. She is currently an associate professor of management at the Mississippi University for Women.

Evaluator's Name

ANTHONY OLIVER

Anthony Oliver is currently an assistant principal in the Jefferson County School System in Birmingham, Alabama. Most recently, Anthony served as Executive Director at Breakthrough Birmingham, an education non-profit dedicated to providing high-quality academic programming to underserved students and preparing the next generation of teachers. Anthony has also served as a high-school mathematics teacher and coach, and has worked as a principal intern at Newton North High School where he worked to create access to challenging academic curriculum for African American students and students from low socioeconomic classes. Anthony holds a B.A. in mathematics from the Virginia Military Institute, an M.A.E. in secondary education - mathematics curriculum and instruction from the University of Alabama at Birmingham, and an Ed.M in school leadership from the Harvard Graduate School of Education.