

MINUTES OF THE
MISSISSIPPI CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORIZER BOARD
Regular Meeting
Monday, June 1, 2015

The monthly meeting of the Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board was held at 10:00 a.m. on Monday, June 1, 2015, at the Baioni Conference Center in Broom Hall at Delta State University. In attendance were:

Tommie Cardin, Chairman
Krystal Cormack, Vice-Chair
Dr. Bonita Coleman-Potter
Dr. Karen Elam
Johnny Franklin
Chris Wilson

Dr. Carey Wright participated by telephone.

Board Chairman Tommie Cardin called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

ITEM I. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

A. Adoption of Agenda

The Agenda was previously circulated to all Board members for review.

Chairman Cardin requested a motion to adopt the agenda as presented.

MOTION: Mr. Franklin

SECOND: Mr. Wilson

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

ITEM II. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

A. Approval of Minutes

The Minutes of the April 6, 2015 meeting were previously distributed to the Board members for review.

Chairman Cardin requested a motion for approval of the Minutes of the April 6, 2015 meeting.

MOTION: Dr. Wright

SECOND: Mr. Franklin

Dr. Coleman-Potter pointed out that on page 3 of 7 of the April Minutes where it states that she raised a question concerning the FY16 MAEP allocations received by the school districts, she

wanted to clarify that she did receive that information from Ms. Schutte. This is simply a point of discussion and clarification but does not require amendment to the April Minutes.
There being no further discussion and following a vote in favor by all members present and participating, the motion carried.

ITEM III. CHAIR REPORT

A. Chairman Cardin welcomed everyone to the meeting and stated that he was glad to be able to meet at Delta State. He stated that he, with the assistance from Executive Director Marian Schutte, has drafted an evaluation tool for the executive director evaluation and copies have been provided in the binders that were presented to the Board members prior to the meeting. He asked that they take the time to review that document and it will be made an agenda item for possible approval at the next Board meeting. He stated that his goal in drafting the document was to create a tool that was meaningful, measurable and concise.

Chairman Cardin further reported on the progress he has seen the Board make since the arrival of the executive director in terms of shifting rolls. He stated that the members had all talked about the Board becoming one that deals with policies and “big picture” decisions and not one that gets into the minutia. Though it was necessary in the beginning when there was no staff, he feels the Board is now effectively transiting toward a more policy-oriented roll and is delegating to the executive director the day to day activities and operational aspects of what the Board is charged with doing. He stated that that is his continuing goal and commended each of the members serving on the standing committees and expressed his appreciation for their efforts in working toward the common goal of a policy-oriented board.

ITEM IV. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S REPORT

Ms. Schutte welcomed everyone to the meeting in the Delta and stated that it would be the beginning of several meetings “on the road” where the Board hoped to connect with the public and introduce them to charter schools.

She introduced the following guests in the audience:

Dr. Darlene Chambers, her coach in the NACSA Leaders Program. Dr. Chambers is the President and CEO of the Ohio Alliance for Public Charter Schools, was previously the Executive Director of the Ohio Counsel of Community Schools, President of the Ohio Charter School Authorizers, and served as a founding board member of an Ohio-based community school and worked as a consultant with a variety of organizations.

Evan Emenegger, the Teach for America intern working with the Board for the summer. Evan previously taught English II at Yazoo City High School.

Ms. Schutte reported that it has been determined that the state portion of the 3% authorizer fee that the Board will receive from the MAEP will be \$38,373.00. That will be discussed later in the meeting when the 2016 FY budget is discussed. The local estimate should be available in October.

She reported further that the schools slated to open in the Fall are still on track with their pre-opening processes. She has toured all facilities and stated that Reimagine Prep will be located in the old St. Therese building off McDowell Road. They are currently painting and doing some refinishing work. Midtown is working on their existing facility.

Next, Ms. Schutte reported that the National Charter Schools Conference will be held on June 21-24 and stated that anyone interested in attending should contact her. Currently, she, Chairman Cardin and Mr. Wilson are registered to attend.

Lastly, Ms. Schutte stated that she and the Board members would hold an information session following the Board meeting at 2:00 p.m., and she invited all community leaders interested in attending to come back.

ITEM V. COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Applications Committee

Mrs. Cormack reported that the committee has met weekly via teleconference to move forward with the 2015 application cycle. Fifteen individuals originally registered to create fluid review accounts indicating their interest in writing letters of intent. Mississippi First offered to provide technical support to those groups. The committee ultimately received three letters of intent for four separate school facilities – (1) Republic Schools, Inc. – proposed 2 schools in the Jackson Public School District; (2) Phoenix Project Community Development Foundation, Inc. proposed one school in the Natchez-Adams School District; and (3) Peter’s Rock Temple Church of God in Christ proposed one school in the Starkville School District, soon to be the consolidated Starkville/Oktibbeha County School District. They were each found to be provisionally eligible to continue. Ultimately, Peter’s Rock Temple COGIC did not apply, partly because the Starkville school district is currently a “C” school district and the authority to authorize rests first with that school district. As of the end of the remedy period, two proposals for three schools have been received. One from Republic Schools for a K-8 school and also a 5-8 school, both in the Jackson Public School District, and one from Phoenix Project for a grade 9-12 high school in the Natchez-Adams School District. These will be considered for advancement to Stage 2 under New Business.

She stated that the committee is continuing to discuss and look into a variety of opportunities for community outreach to increase the interest in charter schools in an effort to increase the number of quality proposals received in the future. They have also continued to partner with Mississippi First to assist with applicant development.

B. Performance and Accountability Committee

Dr. Coleman-Potter reported that the committee has met weekly via teleconference. They are working to complete the contract negotiation process with the approved charter schools and hope to have those contracts ready for approval on June 5th, as well as the performance framework. An overview of that performance framework will be presented later in this meeting. She is confident that the framework being developed will yield for the board the results it needs to ensure it is approving quality applications and will also lay out the documentation needed should a license have to be revoked.

ITEM VI. NEW BUSINESS

A. 2015 Request for Proposals: Eligibility and Completeness Confirmation

Based on the information outlined in her committee report, Vice Chair Cormack made a motion that the Board approve Republic Schools, Inc. and Phoenix Project Community Development Foundation, Inc. as complete and eligible to move forward to Stage 2 of the 2015 Request for Proposals cycle.

MOTION: Mrs. Cormack

SECOND: Dr. Coleman-Potter

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

B. NACSA Third Party Evaluation Contract

A copy of the NACSA Third Party Evaluation contract had been previously provided to the Board members for review.

Chairman Cardin requested a motion to approve the NACSA Third Party Evaluation Contract and authorize the Executive Director to execute same.

MOTION: Dr. Elam

SECOND: Mr. Wilson

Dr. Coleman-Potter requested an overview of the contract that was being approved. Ms. Schutte discussed the scope of services under the contract and answered questions pertaining to the negotiation of the contract amount in light of the lower number of applications than anticipated that are moving forward and requiring review.

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

C. Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board Performance Framework

A copy of the draft Performance Framework was previously provided to each Board members for review, and Ms. Schutte offered a power point presentation explaining in more detail each aspect of the document.

Chairman Cardin requested a motion to approve the Performance Framework, as presented.

MOTION: Mr. Franklin

SECOND: Dr. Elam

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

D. Approval of Invoices

Ms. Schutte discussed the invoices that were previously provided for review, as well as a few that had been added. She stated that the payment of the invoices will result in a shortage of funds in categories in the FY 15 Budget and the need to modify same in order to cover close out activities for the fiscal year.

Chairman Cardin requested a motion to approve payment of the invoices, as presented.

MOTION: Dr. Coleman-Potter

SECOND: Mrs. Cormack

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

E. FY 15 Budget Revisions

Ms. Schutte stated that she has worked with Cornerstone Consulting to rework the end of the year budget to expend as much of the funds as possible that were allocated during the 2014 Legislative session. She discussed the adjustments that are being presented for consideration.

Chairman Cardin stated that the first consideration is the need to amend the Cornerstone Consulting contract cap of \$10,000 and increase it to \$11,000 in order to allow for completion of the fiscal year.

Chairman Cardin requested a motion to approve the increase of the contract cap with Cornerstone Consulting from \$10,000 to \$11,000.

MOTION: Mr. Wilson

SECOND: Dr. Wright

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

Second, Chairman Cardin recommended amending the existing budget to reallocated monies not yet spent to provide two start-up grants to the schools set to open in 2015.

Chairman Cardin requested a motion to approve the budget amendment and the reallocation of funds to provide two start-up grants to the schools set to open in the Fall of 2015.

MOTION: Dr. Coleman-Potter

SECOND: Mrs. Cormack

Dr. Coleman-Potter asked that it be emphasized that this is a one-time grant program and that understanding is included in the Statement of Assurances signed by two charter operators receiving the funds. Chairman Cardin reemphasized the point that this is a one-time grant program and reiterated that it is not the Board's intent to offer this in the future. It is being offered at this time only because the funds are available. Ms. Schutte stated that the schools will be required to provide documentation of all grant expenditures no later than December of this fiscal year.

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

F. FY16 Budget Approval

Ms. Schutte explained the two proposed budgets presented to the Board for review. Chairman Cardin further discussed the salary line item and the consideration of hiring additional staff in the future.

Chairman Cardin requested a motion to approve the FY16 Budget, as presented.

MOTION: Dr. Wright

SECOND: Dr. Coleman-Potter

Following further discussion and a vote in favor by all members present and participating, the motion carried.

ITEM VIII. PUBLIC COMMENT

Chairman Cardin asked that individuals in the room introduce themselves and state their business affiliations. Afterward, the following public comments were offered:

Brenda Hyde, Assistant Director of Southern Echo, asked if they would be able to get a copy of the Performance Framework that had been approved today. Ms. Schutte explained that it would be posted on the Board's website after 2:00 p.m. tomorrow. Next, Ms. Hyde asked for clarification on how much of a proposal had been presented by Peter's Rock Temple COGIC. Vice Chair Cormack explained that they Peter's Rock had only submitted a letter of intent during this cycle but she believes it is their intent to continue to work with their community to continue to build a proposal for a school for submission at a later time.

Marilyn Young, Community Organizer, Southern Echo, asked if the FY16 Budget will be posted on the website. Ms. Schutte stated that it was already posted as an attachment to the June 1st meeting notice and agenda and that she would also be posting it as an "adopted" budget. Ms. Young further asked for the location of the Midtown Charter School. Ms. Schutte stated that it will be located at 301 Adele Street in the midtown area of Jackson off of West Street. The zip code is 39202.

Ashley McKay with Tunica Teens in Action commended the Board on the Performance Framework developed by the committee and stated that it had exceed all of her expectations.

Babak Mostaghimi questioned if the 3% allocation of funds that will be provided to the board will ever be flexible for change as the number of charter schools increases in the state, suggesting that it be lowered or a possible cap be set on the amount of funds that can be allocated from those public funds. Dr. Coleman-Potter explained that as the number of charter schools in the state increases, so will the need for additional staffing on the Board so the allocation rate will need to remain at 3% in order to fund those needs. Ms. Schutte also explained that state law is very specific on this subject and states that the local board “shall collect 3%” of state and local funds, so any modification to that rate would have to be done by the legislature.

Marilyn Young addressed the Board once more asking about the statement made by the Executive Director during her report regarding the local ad valorem taxes being based on the prior year and asked if the actual numbers are coming out in January, what will be used from the prior year data. Ms. Schutte stated that the law had been revised during this past legislative session and now directs that one particular number from the prior year be used to calculate those funds so that the schools will be able to determine for their budgets the amount of funding they can expect to receive and when they will receive it. MDE will work to notify the charter schools and their districts of the amount by formal letter in October, and the law requires that the school districts pay the charter schools that amount by January 15th.

ITEM IX. NEXT MEETING

As approved at the April meeting, the July meeting will be held Tuesday, July 7, 2015. The anticipated location is in Laurel though no exact location has been confirmed at this time.

ITEM X. ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Cardin reminded everyone that there would be a public forum held at 2:00 following today's meeting.

Chairman Cardin requested a motion to adjourn.

MOTION: Dr. Elam

SECOND: Mr. Franklin

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

The meeting adjourned at 11:35 a.m.

ADOPTED, this the ____ day of _____, 2015.

TOMMIE S. CARDIN, Chairman

**MCSAB Fall 2015 Stage 2 Evaluation
NACSA Stage 2 Findings and Recommendations**

Application	Threshold 1: Public School Obligations	Threshold 2: Student Populations	Threshold 3: Startup Plan	Threshold 4: Personnel	Threshold 5: Financial Plan	Threshold 6: Performance History	Threshold 7: ESP Relationship
Phoenix Early College Charter School		Substantially Inadequate	Substantially Inadequate				
Joel E. Smilow Prep/Joel E. Smilow Collegiate (RePublic Schools)							

NACSA Findings

Phoenix Early College Charter School

Threshold 2: Student Populations	<p>The plan for serving special student populations raises significant concerns about the applicant’s understanding of, preparation and/or commitment to meeting the needs of all special populations, including students with disabilities, ELLs, students requiring remediation or gifted and talented students.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The application demonstrates a lack of understanding and commitment to meeting statutory requirements for providing accommodations to students with disabilities. • The application lacks any reference to or plan to serve English language learners and gifted and talented students.
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Threshold 3: Startup Plan	The startup plan fails to identify critical work streams, specific completions dates for many milestones, and the identity of the person who is individually responsible for completing each task.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The startup plan does not provide a timeline for raising \$100,000 in the first year of operations, and does not describe how the funds will be raised.• The startup plan does not provide a timeline for student recruitment or identify who is responsible for recruitment tasks.• The startup plan does not provide critical details on completion dates or identify who is responsible for preparing the physical school site for opening.
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TO: Members of the Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board

FROM: Applications Committee

DATE: June 26, 2015

RE: Phoenix Early College Charter School Stage 2 Recommendation

OVERVIEW

The Stage 2 Evaluation is the process used by the Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board (MCSAB) to determine whether complete and eligible proposals submitted in response to its 2015 Request for Proposals meet the minimum quality threshold required to merit a comprehensive application evaluation. Between June 3 and June 22, internal and external evaluators assessed each proposal against MCSAB's published Stage 2 evaluation criteria. The findings from those evaluations were provided to the Applications Committee for consideration. This report constitutes the Application Committee's recommendation based on those findings.

Stage 2 Evaluation Process

Independent evaluators assess critical elements of each proposal against the published Stage 2 evaluation criteria in five to seven (as applicable) Quality Thresholds: Public Charter School Obligations, Student Populations, Startup Plan, Personnel, Financial Plan, Performance History (for existing operators), and ESP Relationship (for applicants proposing to contract with an education service provider). Evaluators assign a Substantially Inadequate rating to any response that plainly fails to address the RFP requirements or criteria for approval, or that wholly lacks merit.

Report Structure

The introduction to this report includes an executive summary of the recommendation and a table showing the elements of the application that were rated Substantially Inadequate. Following the executive summary, an analysis is provided for each Substantially Inadequate element.

STAGE 2 RECOMMENDATION AND ANALYSIS: PHOENIX EARLY COLLEGE CHARTER SCHOOL

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Applications Committee recommends that the application for Phoenix Early College Charter School be denied at Stage 2. Stage 2 evaluators found that the application does not meet the minimum quality threshold in two critical areas of the application: 1) in its plan to serve the needs of special student populations; and 2) in its startup plan. In these areas, the application failed to address the RFP and/or statutory requirements, and thus does not qualify for a comprehensive Stage 3 evaluation.

Summary of Phoenix Early College Charter School’s Substantially Inadequate Ratings

Stage 2 Threshold	Rating
Student Populations	<i>Substantially Inadequate</i>
Startup Plan	<i>Substantially Inadequate</i>

ANALYSIS

STUDENT POPULATIONS

The evaluation team finds the application to be Substantially Inadequate in **Threshold 2: Student Populations**. Specifically, it raises significant concerns about the applicant’s understanding of, preparation and/or commitment to meeting the needs of all special populations, including students with disabilities, English language learners (ELLs), and gifted and talented students.

The RFP, per Mississippi statute, requires applicants to describe a plan for successfully serving students with disabilities, students who are ELLs, students who are academically behind, and gifted students, including, but not limited to, compliance with applicable laws and regulations. The Phoenix Early College Charter School includes a plan for serving students who are performing below grade level and are identified with disabilities, but omits any reference to, or any plan for, ELLs and intellectually gifted students, although the cover sheet indicates that the applicant expects that seven percent of its students will be ELLs.

The applicant’s plan for serving students with disabilities demonstrates a lack of understanding of statutory requirements, though the applicant anticipates students with disabilities being 10 percent of its school population. The applicant states on page 25 of the proposal narrative, “If PECCS cannot provide the accommodation, the student is advised that a particular accommodation is not available. Self-contained classroom settings or life skills programs are examples of services PECCS would not have the capacity to supply.” This statement contradicts Federal IDEA law, which requires public schools to provide accommodations for a wide range of disabilities. Furthermore, according to Mississippi charter school law, charter schools are categorized as LEAs (Local Education Agencies) and as such they have the same comprehensive responsibilities for providing accommodations as a school district. Additionally, the application does not address how students with disabilities who do not already have Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) will be identified and how IEPs will be developed for those students.

The staffing plan for serving students with disabilities is not adequate for serving this population. Under the staffing plan presented in the application, one or more of the four initial teachers would need to be certified in both special education and another subject area. Finding a dually certified teacher may be difficult to accomplish in a district and state that have a critical shortage of special education teachers. It was also not explained how the designated teacher would be able to handle the responsibilities of ensuring that special education students receive appropriate services in all subject areas while also serving as one of the four regular classroom teachers. Additionally, on page 22 of the proposal narrative, the applicant states that a “Student Assistant Personnel” (SAP) staff member “will be responsible for monitoring biweekly progress of each PECCS student, including those with Special Education needs.” The SAPs are low-paid staff - budgeted at \$15,000 a year in the financial plan -

presumably without teaching certificates or any qualifications for working with special education students.

The application thus fails to address statutory requirements and lacks an understanding and commitment to meeting the needs of students with special needs, ELLs, and gifted and talented students, and therefore does not meet the minimum threshold in this area.

Sources of Evidence:

- Proposal Coversheet
- Proposal Narrative
 - Section 1. Educational Program Design & Capacity: Special Student Populations and At-Risk Students
- Attachment 20: Financial Plan

ANALYSIS

STARTUP PLAN

The evaluation team finds the application to be Substantially Inadequate in **Threshold 3: Startup Plan**. Specifically, the startup plan included in Attachment 19 fails to identify critical work streams required before the school opening and fails to identify a specific and reasonable completion date for each milestone.

The startup plan provided in Attachment 19 provides a general description of some major milestones but it omits a number of critical work streams, specific completion dates for any milestone, and the identity of the person who is individually responsible for completing each task.

For example, the first goal stated is to raise \$100,000 for the first year of operation, but no timeline or method of fund raising is provided. The second goal is to recruit students. Beyond a general statement that “PECSS will be getting information to parents through churches, local radio and television media, local schools, mass mailings, billboards, and community forums,” a specific timeline and individual responsible for this process are not stated. The third task presented is hiring the school leader, but this task does not align with the proposal narrative, which clearly identifies the individual already selected as the school leader. The process of staff recruitment also lacks important details, such as specific dates for recruitment activities and the person responsible.

The startup plan also does not provide completion dates or identify who will be responsible for the necessary tasks involved in preparing the physical site for school opening. These tasks require ordering supplies and furniture, negotiating vendor contracts, and most importantly, overseeing the facility work necessary to make the site usable as a school. The application summarizes all of these important tasks into a single sentence: “Final facility needs will be completed with Buttross Properties as the needs for furniture, books, computers, and software are handled as well as a fair rental agreement.” The brief treatment of these tasks raises significant concerns about the applicant’s understanding of the scope and depth of the tasks required for a successful school startup.

The application thus fails to identify critical work streams required before school opening and fails to identify a specific and reasonable completion date for each milestone; therefore it does not meet the minimum threshold in this area.

Sources of Evidence:

- Attachment 19: Start-up plan, pages 1 and 2
- Proposal narrative
 - Section 1: Educational Program Design & Capacity
- Attachment 9: School Leader



Executive Director Evaluation (First Year of Operation)

Authorizer Board Evaluation of Executive Director (December 2015)

The performance goals for the Executive Director are divided into two categories:

- Strategic goals as the highest priorities based on its strategic vision for the MCSAB; and
- Open-ended questions highlighting areas of achievement and growth

Please take a moment and reflect on the following statements in service of evaluating the Executive Director.

Strategic Goals

Priority I. Effectively leads the Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board (MCSAB) to expand high-quality charter options across the state especially in areas of high need.

A. Establishes the MCSAB as a national leader in charter school authorizing with a balanced mix of high-quality national and local operators by authorizing additional charter schools and increasing charter school awareness through targeted outreach activities

1	2	3	4	N/A
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	

Comments:

B. Streamlines the Request for Proposals process to increase accessibility and maximize transparency by creating two distinct applicant tracks, partnering with local non-profit and universities to establish technical support and applicant development pipelines.

1	2	3	4	N/A
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	

Comments:



Priority II. Effectively leads the Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board (MCSAB) to ensure the quality of authorized charter schools through outcomes-based accountability and oversight practices while respecting charter school autonomy.

A. Establishes the MCSAB as a national leader in charter school accountability and oversight practices by developing a standardized performance framework and charter contract, creating an intervention ladder to address and resolve contract violations, and establishing clear expectations through routing operator meetings and visits to board meetings.

1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Disagree	4 Strongly Disagree	N/A
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Comments:

B. Develops a partnership with the Mississippi Department of Education to ensure charter schools have access to all necessary information and training by establishing a streamlined pre-opening process and creating a communication protocol between the Authorizer Board, MDE, and schools.

1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Disagree	4 Strongly Disagree	N/A
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Comments:



Priority III. Effectively leads the Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board (MCSAB) to establish sound organizational practices and protocols to ensure effective and transparent operation of the MCSAB.

A. Establishes fiscally sound board practices with a focus on agency sustainability by establishing a standing committee structure and routine calendar of board meetings, attending professional development on national charter school best practices, and securing funding to develop authorizing practices and attract high-quality local and national operators.

1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Disagree	4 Strongly Disagree	N/A
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Comments:

B. Utilizing various forms of communication to promote transparency among the Authorizer Board, charter school operators, and the public by revising the MCSAB website, creating a user-friendly annual report, and an electronic pamphlet with detailed information on the laws and policies applicable to charter schools in Mississippi.

1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Disagree	4 Strongly Disagree	N/A
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Comments:



Open-Ended Questions

1. What have been the most significant achievements of the Executive Director over the past year?
2. What are the improvement or growth areas during this performance year?
3. Based on the performance review, what should be the professional development goal(s) for the Executive Director for the coming year?
4. What external factors have influenced the Executive Director's performance?
5. In the past year, what difficult issues have faced the Authorizer Board and how did the Executive Director bring them to resolution?