



June 13, 2014

Ms. Angela Campion
Educare Network
33 West Monroe Street, Suite 2400
Chicago, IL 60603

Dear Ms. Campion,

Thank you for submitting an application to establish a public charter school in the District of Columbia. The District of Columbia Public Charter School Board (“PCSB”) has completed the 2014 Application Review process. I regret to inform you that at its public meeting held on May 19, 2014, PCSB did not approve your application to establish Educare DC as a conversion public charter school in the District of Columbia.

The Board’s decision was based on a thorough evaluation of the written application and information gathered from the capacity interview and the public hearing. The following findings were the basis for denial:

1. The applicant is undertaking a difficult task of converting grades prekindergarten-3 and prekindergarten-4 of its existing infant and early childhood program to a public charter school without having identified permanent local leadership to oversee both the conversation and the new school. Specifically, there is no permanent executive director on staff and the role of the site director is only mentioned in the Operations Plan and not in the Education Plan.
2. The applicant was unable to convey how the new school would use the additional public funds that would come from its designation as a charter school to improve the program for its students.
3. The applicant planned to transfer all of the charter school’s public funds to the parent organization of the Education Management Organization, Educare DC (“EMO”), Educare, which would both operate the charter school and continue to operate the infant and toddler Head Start program. While the applicant agreed to allow PCSB full access to the financials of the parent organization and to seek PCSB approval over the cost-sharing agreements between the charter school and the Head Start program, the application should have included this level of transparency at the time of submission along with a detailed budget to show how the funds would be used.
4. Educare DC is currently under-enrolled and its 3 and 4 year-olds are leaving the school to attend public charter and DCPS schools before kindergarten. The applicant group believes that by converting to a charter school, they will be able stop the attrition. But the group gave no evidence to support this belief and left staff and the Board unconvinced that the attrition would end. Likewise, the applicant group articulated neither a recruitment plan nor an enrollment plan that addresses its unique situation of being attached to an infant-to-toddler program that is not a public charter school, requiring all students to apply through an open lottery for a spot in the prekindergarten program. Educare’s educational program is designed for students who attend from birth to five, and, at this charter school, many students may arrive as three-year-olds.
5. The applicant group did not demonstrate that Educare DC has and can provide instruction to students with disabilities (“SWD”) that complies with state and federal laws in many ways. There were inconsistencies in the provision of special education resources in the application. The application did not describe how the school plans to provide a continuum of services for SWD and, at the capacity interview, a member of the

founding group stated the school would not be able to serve children with intensive needs. Further, the applicant stated that SWD will go to a DCPS school if they need more intensive services than Educare DC can handle. Moreover, the application lacked detailed about the staffing needed to serve these students: there are vague statements, such as: “The Special Education Coordinator provides or works with other specialists and staff to provide a continuum of instruction options for all struggling students.” The application does not discuss who these individuals are and how they will work with staff and students to serve SWD. Finally, the Special Education Coordinator, along with other key personnel to support all students, including the school psychologist and Occupational Therapist/Physical Therapy specialist, were not in the budget or staffing plans.

6. When discussing students who may be struggling academically, the applicant repeatedly deferred to talking about SWD, without describing how they would work with students who did not qualify for special education but who may require additional supports.
7. The charter petition did not fully explain the methods of instruction that will be used at the school. It was only at the public hearing that the applicant group shared that the school’s instructional methods were differentiation and small group instruction, which did not provide reviewers with the opportunity to fully analyze how these methods would support the school’s mission and academic goals.
8. The application also sets some of their academic goals lower than the charter sector average; the attendance goal was set at 85% and the PK graduation rate at 80%.
9. While Educare DC has an extensive list of current community partnerships, the application did not address the terms and scope of services of many of the partnerships, or describe which are fee-based or in-kind commitments from community organizations.
10. The proposed governance structure of the school raised concerns. In the application, it appeared that two separate governing bodies would oversee the school’s Executive Director, who would be responsible for both the charter school and the infant and toddler program: a board overseeing the EMO and another overseeing the public charter school. The relationship between these two bodies and their oversight of the Executive Director was not sufficiently defined. For example, according to the application, Educare DC would hire and officially evaluate the school’s Executive Director but the public charter school’s board has the right to fire him or her as long as it is in writing to Educare DC board. The founding board stated that the organizational chart, as presented in the application, was not accurate; instead, both boards should be placed side by side with the Executive Director reporting to both. Based on the draft management agreement provided in the application, the charter school board has the ability to change management companies, but the EMO would retain the facility, the staff, and all resources from the charter school in the event that it was no longer the school’s management company.
11. The EMO operates 20 education facilities across the nation and is nationally known as a successful early childhood model. But in response to the “Performance History of Charter Management Organization or Education Management Organization” question of the application guidelines, the applicant did not provide information on the operations, success, or performance of the EMO’s other schools.
12. The application did not address teacher professional development or retention. During the capacity interview, the founding group stated that teachers would have increased opportunity to receive professional development out of the classroom in addition to more individualized coaching.

Should you choose to file a petition again, that petition must meet the requirements of the School Reform Act. See D.C. Code § 38-1802.02. Specifically, it should appropriately resolve the deficiencies cited above in the

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revised petition and demonstrate: (a) that the petition's Education Plan is well-developed and explains which methods and resources will be used and how they will be implemented to suitably serve all students; (b) that there is a compelling reason and need for the existing school to convert to a public charter school community; (c) with at least three years of student performance data from both the national and local level that demonstrates the success of the Educate model; and (d) that the proposed budget reveals transparent financial reporting and will support all aspects of the proposed program.

Should you want to appeal the denial of your application, you may seek judicial review in an appropriate court of the District of Columbia or review by the Office of the State Superintendent of Education, pursuant to the procedures found in Chapter 5-A54 of the D.C. Municipal Regulations.

We recognize the hard work and effort that went into the development of your application and there were many positive parts of the application that are not mentioned in this letter. Thank you for your interest in public charter schools and your commitment to improving public education in Washington, DC.

Sincerely,

A black rectangular redaction box covers the signature area. A small, faint mark is visible to the left of the box.

Naomi Rubin DeVaux
Deputy Director
DC Public Charter School Board