



May 26, 2016

Senate Alexander
370 E Diamond Ave.
Gaithersburg, MD 20877

Dear Mr. Alexander,

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 (DC PCSB) has completed the Spring 2016 Application Review process. As you know, at its public meeting held on May 16, 2016, DC PCSB did not approve your application to establish Interactive Academy. Please know that many of the existing public charter schools in DC applied a second time, with revisions to the application made in response to the reasons for the initial denial. We encourage you to consider reapplying in the future.

DC PCSB's decision was based on a thorough evaluation of the written application and information gathered from the capacity interview, and the public hearing. While there were some strong aspects of the application, the following findings were the basis for denial:

- Capacity of the founding group: In assessing the capacity of the founding group, DC PCSB focused on the core members of the group, specifically Senate Alexander (proposed Executive Director), H. Lloyd Yates (proposed Director of Finance and Operations), and Coleen Reyes (proposed Board Chair). While the proposed Executive Director has experience as director of operations of an after school program, he does not have the expertise to start and operate a public charter school. The applicant has not identified an academic leader or demonstrated the ability to identify a qualified academic leader: in the capacity interview, the applicant provided little detail into what experience and qualifications they would look for in a Head of School, mentioning only school leadership experience and, ideally, a special education background. Furthermore, the job description provided in the application referred to Montessori expertise, which did not match the program description. The founding group has also not identified a member with deep special education expertise, discussed further below.
- Insufficient development of the plan for supporting students with special needs: The applicant's plan for serving students with disabilities (SWD) is not sufficiently developed, and the effectiveness of the plan for SWD and English language learners is reliant on highly effective staff who have not yet been secured and may have very heavy workloads, based on the applicant's description of each staff member's duties. The applicant has planned for no enrollment of students with higher-level disabilities (i.e., Levels 3 and 4) and did not describe the school's plan for serving these students or providing a continuum of services.

- Insufficient evidence of the success of MicroSociety in driving academic achievement: DC PCSB staff questioned the validity and reliability of the MicroSociety research cited in the application: the articles cited were all provided directly by MicroSociety; the most academically rigorous article included significant caveats about the validity of the data; one article was based on data from the early 1990s; and the school the applicant deems a model MicroSociety school received an "F" on its most recent report card.¹

Should you choose to file a petition again, that petition must meet the requirements of the School Reform Act. D.C. Code § 38-1802.02. Specifically, it should appropriately resolve the deficiencies cited above and establish: (a) a demonstrated need for the school; (b) sufficient progress in developing the plan; (c) alignment of the entire school program with the school's mission and philosophy; (d) inclusion of and adequate support for special populations; and (e) the founding group's capability to ensure that the school can meet the educational objectives outlined in the application. If you would like, DC PCSB staff would be happy to discuss with you in more detail your application's strengths and weaknesses.

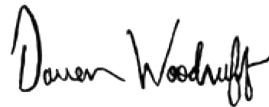
Should you want to appeal the denial of your application, you may seek review of this decision pursuant to D.C. Code §38-1802.03(j).

We recognize the hard work and effort that went into the development of your application. 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.

Best,



Scott Pearson
Executive Director
DC Public Charter School Board



Darren Woodruff, PhD
Chairman
DC Public Charter School Board

¹ The written application also mentioned Jersey Global Charter School as a strong MicroSociety school; DC PCSB did not include this school in its analysis because the applicant indicated that Jersey Global Charter School is very young, and that Oak Park MicroSociety Elementary School would be a better indicator of Interactive Academy's future performance.