



Review of Application for Imani Academy Charter School

Expect great things.



Charter School Law Review Criteria:

- i. The demonstrated, sustainable support for the charter school plan by teachers, parents, other community members and students including comments received at the public hearing held under subsection (d).
- ii. The capability of the charter school applicant, in terms of support and planning, to provide comprehensive learning experiences to students pursuant to the adopted charter.
- iii. The extent to which the application considers the information requested in section 1719-A and conforms to the legislative intent outlined in section 1702-A.
- iv. The extent to which the charter school may serve as a model for other public schools.

Legislative Intent of the Charter School Law

1. Improve pupil learning.
2. Increase learning opportunities for all pupils.
3. Encourage the use of different and innovative teaching methods.
4. Create new professional opportunities for teachers, including the opportunity to be responsible for the learning program at the school site.
5. Provide parents and pupils with expanded choices in the types of educational opportunities that are available within the school system.
- 6.
7. Hold the schools established under this act accountable for meeting measurable standards and provide the school with a method to establish accountability systems.

Final Scoring Criteria Checklist

- 1a. Does the charter school have current petitions and letters of support from teachers, parents, students and the community?
- 1b. Did the charter school have support from the community at the public hearing?
2. Does the charter school provide the School District of Pittsburgh with expanded choices in the types of educational opportunities currently being offered?
3. Is the governance structure of the charter school in compliance with all federal, state and local regulations and the PA school code?
4. Does the application consider all the information requested in section 1719-A and conform to the legislative intent outlined in section 1702-A?
5. Is the curriculum complete and comprehensive; aligned to state standards?
6. Does the charter school provide a continuum of services to meet the needs of all students, including students with disabilities, English language learners and at-risk students?
7. Is the proposed charter school financially viable?
8. Is a location identified that can comply with all federal, state and local health and safety regulations?
9. Can the charter school serve as a model for other schools in the District?

Application Review Components

1. Mission, Purpose and Needs, Marketing Data
2. Strategic Planning
3. Management Plan
4. Education Plan
5. Operations
6. Personnel/Leaders

Review Team

Lisa Augustin	Director of Charter Schools
Scott Breeden	9-12 Math Coordinator
Dr. Shemeca Crenshaw	Principal, Pittsburgh Online Academy
Steven Connell (Cherie Moshier)	Facilities Plan and Code Reviewer/Designer
Dr. Kym Cruz	Arts Education Supervisor
Amber Dean	Program Officer, PSE
Dr. Ann Fillmore	9-12 ELA Coordinator
Rhonda Graham	Science Curriculum Supervisor
Jamie Griffin	Executive Director, Math
Patty Lee	K-5 Math Coordinator
Jerome McCray	Budget Analyst
Marsha Plotkin	World Languages Supervisor
Jamilla Rice	Social Studies Curriculum Supervisor
Kendra Wester	Executive Director, ELA
Naomi York	K-5 ELA Coordinator
Dr. Robert Isherwood	Associate Prof. of Special Edu., Keystone Educational Consulting Group, LLC.

Application Review Process

- Application submitted on October 16, 2018,
- Revisions submitted November 15, 2018,
- Capacity interview and site visit conducted December 18, 2018,
- Review Team recommendation meeting held on January 15, 2019,
- Findings presented to the Board on February 5, 2019,
- Board votes on February 27, 2019.

Imani Academy Charter School

- Existing School: Imani Christian Academy, recently completed 22nd year of operation
- Proposed grade levels: K-12
- Proposed Location: Former East Hills Elementary School (current location)

Projected Enrollment	
Year 1	230
Year 2	230
Year 3	230
Year 4	230
Year 5	230

Findings:

A charter school shall be nonsectarian in all operations.

A charter school shall not provide any religious instruction, nor shall it display religious objects and symbols on the premises of the charter school.

Over 22 years of spiritual formation in its foundation and mission (from website):

- “Without the rigorous academic curriculum, **spiritual formation**, and support services offered at Imani, these youth may have ended up in very different circumstances.”
- **Mission Statement:** “Our mission is to embrace ALL children in society, particularly the underserved and transform them **spiritually**, academically, physically and socially...”
- “We share **Christ** with our children daily and seek to help them grow into mature Christians.”
- “We encourage and support our graduates as they pursue the unique purpose **God** has for each one of them.”

 Expect great things.

A charter school shall be nonsectarian in all operations.

A charter school shall not provide any religious instruction, nor shall it display religious objects and symbols on the premises of the charter school

MESSAGE FROM OUR BOARD CHAIR

[Tweet](#) [Share](#)

On behalf of the Board of Directors and Advisory Board, we would like to welcome you to Imani Christian Academy!

Imani's commitment to provide an enriching and scholastically challenging education coupled with a strong spiritual foundation for all children, regardless of their social and economic status, sets it apart from other schools. Our unique educational model unveils, develops, and nurtures each student in a safe, caring environment. We value each child. We mentor and guide each one to achieve his or her highest potential. In addition, Imani is dedicated to making sure our youth are college or career-ready upon graduation.

We have experienced firsthand the life-changing difference that a strong spiritual foundation and a rigorous education in a devoted and loving environment can make in the lives of these extraordinary children. We are struck by their personal courage and strength. They ask nothing other than a chance to work hard and change their lives through education.

I encourage you to visit the school, and see why Imani Christian Academy is a uniquely special place!



Cliff G. Benson
Acting Chair, Board of Directors



 Expect great things.

Findings:

A charter school shall be nonsectarian in all operations.

A charter school shall not provide any religious instruction, nor shall it display religious objects and symbols on the premises of the charter school.

- Academics include Theological Studies
- Term “Christian nuance” used repeatedly throughout science curriculum
- Religious studies teacher listed in staff
- Current name, Imani Christian Academy, embedded throughout school, on school uniforms, and other materials

Findings: Facility Issue

Section 3.9 of the fully executed Agreement of Sale dated November 4, 2008 states that. “The deed delivered by the Seller shall contain the following covenant: (a) That the premises and every part thereof shall not be used by the Buyer, its heirs, successors and assigns for any educational purposes that would compete with the curriculum taught in the School District of Pittsburgh system including charter schools with the sole exception that an approved private school for exceptional children may be established in such premises. Notwithstanding anything herein to the contrary, Seller has approved Buyer’s use of the property as a private Christian school and acknowledges that such use does not violate the foregoing covenant.”

Findings: Facility Issue

Correspondence dated August 26, 2008 between Counsel for Imani and Counsel for the District includes an Imani Board Resolution to amend Imani's Articles of Incorporation to include the above covenant.

“RESOLVED FURTHER, that Imani shall not now or at any time in the future apply for, establish, convert or operate the former East Hills Elementary School as a “charter school”, as such a school is currently defined by the Pennsylvania School Code and related state regulations or as an entity similar to the charter school, authorized by federal or state education law, which competes with the Pittsburgh Public Schools.”

Findings: Financial Instability

Upon review of Form 990:

- 2013 – Revenue less expenses = **-\$222,123**
- 2014 – Revenue less expenses = **-\$402,379**
- 2016 (most recent year available) – Revenue less expenses = **-\$526,292**

Findings

- i. **The demonstrated, sustainable support for the charter school plan by teachers, parents, other community members and students including comments received at the public hearing held under subsection (d).**

Review finds support to be [insufficient](#).

- Twenty of twenty-six speakers who signed up to speak at the public hearing actually spoke.
 - Fifteen were either a teacher, board member, existing school staff, or assisted with application
 - Identified only 4 that were a parent or community member
 - 2 of the 4 parent/community members were not City of Pittsburgh residents

161 signatures and 87 pre-enrollment forms submitted

- Of 161 signatures: 35% not City of Pittsburgh residents; 29% < 18 years old (current students?)
- Of 87 pre- enrollment forms: 72% not City of Pittsburgh residents

No letters of support or partnership agreements submitted with application

Findings

ii. The capability of the charter school applicant, in terms of support and planning, to provide comprehensive learning experiences to students pursuant to the adopted charter.

Application **did not** provide evidence that the proposed charter school can provide comprehensive learning experiences to students.

- A complete and comprehensive curriculum was not submitted with the application.
 - Submitted curriculum is disorganized.
 - No alignment between the proposed curriculum and the PA Core Standards
 - Outdated standards listed in application
 - Scope and sequence documents not included with all curricula
 - No evidence of the MTSS process
 - No clear connection between mission and curriculum
 - The selected K-5 ELA program reportedly does not meet expectations for building student knowledge

Submitted curriculum does not meet the needs of students with exceptionalities.



Expect great things.

Findings

iii. The extent to which the application considers the information requested in section 1719-A and conforms to the legislative intent outlined in section 1702-A.

Application **does not** consider all the information requested in section 1719-A or conform to the legislative intent outlined in 1702-A.

- Submitted curriculum is not complete and comprehensive or aligned to PA Core Standards.
- Methods for assessing whether students are meeting educational goals are insufficient.
- No student code of conduct was included with the application.
- The applicant failed to provide formative or summative assessments.
- Professional development model is limited.
- Applicant fails to provide detail regarding the engagement of or any agreement with community partners.
- Applicant shows a misunderstanding of employee clearance requirements.
- A number of upgrades or modifications are needed to comply with ADA guidelines.

Findings

iii. The extent to which the application considers the information requested in section 1719-A and conforms to the legislative intent outlined in section 1702-A.

Application **does not** consider all the information requested in section 1719-A or conform to the legislative intent outlined in 1702-A.

- The applicant did not sufficiently or appropriately describe how it will meet the needs of students with disabilities, bilingual students, and at-risk students, including a description of potential alternative placements, alternative testing, etc.
 - There is no plan for meeting the needs of at-risk students.
 - There is not a description of how the applicant plans to increase learning opportunities for students with disabilities.
 - There is not a description of how the school will accommodate students with special needs or how the school will account for students by disability category in accordance with chapter 711. (Question 9 of Education Plan left blank.)

Findings

- iii. **The extent to which the application considers the information requested in section 1719-A and conforms to the legislative intent outlined in section 1702-A.**

Application **does not** consider all the information requested in section 1719-A or conform to the legislative intent outlined in 1702-A.

- The applicant did not sufficiently or appropriately describe how it will meet the needs of students with disabilities, bilingual students, and at-risk students, including a description of potential alternative placements, alternative testing, etc.
 - Model proposed is inappropriate for the anticipated special education population
 - No detailed plan for addressing the expected Emotionally Disturbed population
 - Lack of identified remediation curriculum for students struggling to master reading fluency
 - No special education teachers listed on teacher lists
 - No Director or similar level position for special education in the organizational chart
 - Proposed math curriculum found to be especially inadequate for students with disabilities

Findings

iii. The extent to which the application considers the information requested in section 1719-A and conforms to the legislative intent outlined in section 1702-A.

Application **does not** consider all the information requested in section 1719-A or conform to the legislative intent outlined in 1702-A.

- The applicant did not sufficiently or appropriately describe how it will meet the needs of students with disabilities, bilingual students, and at-risk students, including a description of potential alternative placements, alternative testing, etc.
 - The PASA is not included in assessment calendar.
 - There is a brief statement in the Education Plan about students who will take the PASA but no description or evidence of an understanding of criteria for administering the PASA.

Findings

- iii. **The extent to which the application considers the information requested in section 1719-A and conforms to the legislative intent outlined in section 1702-A.**

Application **does not** consider all the information requested in section 1719-A or conform to the legislative intent outlined in 1702-A.

- The original Agreement of Sale contains a covenant that the building would not be used for a charter school.
- No lease agreements were available for review.
- Multiple walls are painted with the current Christian name as well as religious figures, verses, and symbols throughout.
- One of the rooms is designated as a chapel, and an office is nearby for a Chaplain.

Findings – Legislative Intent

iii. The extent to which the application considers the information requested in section 1719-A and conforms to the legislative intent outlined in section 1702-A.

- The application **does not** provide sufficient evidence that it will improve pupil learning.
- The application **does not** provide evidence of increased learning opportunities for all pupils.
- The Application **does not** provide evidence that the use of different and innovative teaching methods are encouraged.
- The Application **does not** provide sufficient evidence that new professional opportunities will be created for teachers.
- The Application **does not** provide parents and pupils with expanded choices in the types of educational opportunities that are available within the public school system.
- The Application **does not** describe an understanding of meeting measureable academic standards or establishing accountability systems.

Findings

iv. The extent to which the charter school may serve as a model for other public schools.

Application **does not** provide evidence that the charter school can serve as a model for other public schools.

- Proposed education plan is not innovative.
- Proposed educational model , Six Privileged Skills Pedagogy, represents instructional best practices.
- Curriculum is not complete and comprehensive or aligned to PA Core standards.
- The capacity to implement a public school was not evident during the capacity interview.

Scoring Checklist

1. a. The application **DID NOT** include sufficient current petitions and letters of support from teachers, parents, students and the community.
b. The charter school **DID NOT** have support from the community at the public hearing.
2. The charter school **DOES NOT** provide the School District of Pittsburgh with expanded choices in the types of educational currently opportunities being offered.
3. The Governance structure of the charter school **IS** in compliance with all federal, state and local regulations and the PA school code.
4. The application **DOES NOT** consider all the information requested in section 1719-A and conform to the legislative intent outlined in section 1702-A.
5. The curriculum **IS NOT** complete and comprehensive.
6. The charter school **DOES NOT** provide a continuum of services to meet the needs of all students, including students with disabilities, English Language Learners and at-risk students.
7. The proposed charter school **IS** financially viable.
8. A location **IS NOT** identified that can comply with all federal, state and local health and safety regulations.
9. The charter school **CANNOT** serve as a model for other schools in the District.

Final Review:

Considering the deficiencies noted in this application by the review team, the Imani Academy Charter School's application **did not** include all the information required to be included under the Charter School Law and did not successfully meet the criteria reviewed by the review team.

Next Step:

PPS Board to vote at the February 27, 2019 Legislative Session