

For Immediate Release

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District's Charter School Review Teams Recommend Denial of Re-submitted Charter Applications for Quest International Charter School and Community Service Leadership Development Charter School...an Imagine School

PITTSBURGH, December 9, 2009 –The lack of a curriculum and a plan for meeting the needs of special education students were among several concerns that prompted the District's Charter Review Teams to recommend the denial of charters for both Quest International Charter School and Community Service Leadership Development Charter School... an Imagine School. The Charter Review Teams presented their recommendations on the re-submitted applications at this evening's Agenda Review Meeting. The Board will vote on both charter applications at its December 15, 2009, Legislative Meeting.

Quest International Charter School Application

Noting that the applicant's social justice/social services focus as strength, the Charter Review Team raised concerns regarding the lack of a complete comprehensive curriculum for all grade levels and proposed subjects. In addition, the review team noted the charter application lacked comprehensive long-range goals for all students and a plan for meeting the individualized needs of students with disabilities.

The Charter Review Team advised the Board that the financial plan for the operation of the school is not viable. Based on a review of the budget information submitted, the total accumulated operating costs for Quest would result in a deficit through year four, as shown below:

Accumulated Operating Deficit

Year 1: (\$198,370)

Year 2: (\$406,078)

Year 3: (\$640,081)

Year 4: (\$867,050)

Year 5: (\$1,104,556)

Although the Charter Review Team acknowledged that Quest International Charter School garnered strong support from community stakeholders, the proposed site of Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church caused concern due to the significant work needed to meet the current standards for an acceptable elementary school environment. The review team also highlighted that the proposed site lacks adequately ventilated classrooms, proper door hardware and fire doors, and ADA (American Disability Act) accessibility.

Other findings revealed that the applicant did not submit a budget for salaries and benefits for key positions and the current board composition conflicts with Pennsylvania school code.

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Community Service Leadership Development Charter School...an Imagine School Application

The Charter Review Team was unable to find significant strengths in the re-submitted charter application for the Community Service Leadership Development Charter School...an Imagine School.

The review team expressed concern about the applicant's education plan and noted its lack of interventions for struggling students, grading and retention procedures, and a plan for the school's mandatory, daily after school program. The review team also emphasized that the community service leadership development theme is not integrated into the curriculum, and the school's gender-based instruction is not clearly articulated. The review team further noted that proposed staffing was inadequate to meet the program needs and projected enrollment.

The applicant's plan for meeting the needs of students with disabilities was not in compliance with IDEA. According to the Charter Review Team, the applicant identified no response to intervention plan for the initial evaluation or re-evaluation of students in grades K-8. Additionally, the application lacked a plan for providing protections to "thought-to-be" students as per IDEA and for differentiating student placement. The review team noted that in order to provide the required continuum of services the staffing plan is insufficient.

The Charter Review Team raised concerns with the costly 12% Executive Administration fee charged by Imagine Schools that is based on the charter school's revenue each fiscal year. Other findings revealed the school lacked support from stakeholders in the community of the proposed alternate location, along with measurable goals and outcomes for the school theme.

About the Review Teams

Review teams for both Quest International Charter School and Community Service Leadership Development Center School...an Imagine School included: experts in curriculum and instruction, special education, assessment and accountability as well as budget analysts and architects.

The Public Can Obtain More Information

The findings and recommendations of the District's Charter Review Team are available by visiting the Pittsburgh Public Schools website at www.pps.k12.pa.us. A copy also can be obtained by calling the **Parent Hotline at 412-622-7920** or visiting the Division of Communications, Room 204, Pittsburgh Board of Education, 341 South Bellefield Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15213.

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