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Public Schools



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DIVISION OF COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING 341 S. Bellefield Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15213

**For Immediate Release**

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## **District's Charter School Review Teams Recommend Denial of Three Charter Applications**

PITTSBURGH, February 3, 2014 – The lack of curriculum, a plan for meeting the needs of all students, as well as the inability to provide expanded educational options beyond those available in the Pittsburgh Public Schools prompted the District's Charter School Review Teams to recommend the Board withhold charters for the Homewood Children's Village Collegiate Charter School, Provident Charter School for Children with Dyslexia, and the Robert L. Vann Charter School. The Charter Review Teams presented their recommendations at this evening's Education Committee Meeting. The Board will vote on all three charter applications at its February 26, 2014 Legislative Meeting.

### **Homewood Children's Village Collegiate Charter School**

Although the Charter Review Team acknowledged that Homewood Children's Village Collegiate Charter School garnered sufficient support for the school plan, the team noted that no curriculum was submitted for the proposed charter. While the applicant expressed intent to use an already established curriculum from other organizations, including PPS, no letter of support, contracts or MOU's existed from any of the organizations.

Due to the absence of information related to monthly cash flow, expected property acquisitions and renovations, food service expense, as well as inconsistent or incorrect calculations, the Charter School Review Team was unable to determine the financial viability of the applicant.

Other findings revealed that the governance structure is not in compliance. The applicant did not submit bylaws with the State. The team also raised concerns that conflicts of interest exist with the Homewood Children's Village Collegiate Charter School board, comprised primarily of the Homewood Children's Village board and Homewood Children's Village employees.

The team also notes that since the proposed education plan is not unique and uses curriculum from existing schools the proposed charter does not serve as a model for other schools in the District.

### **Provident Charter School for Children with Dyslexia (PCSCD)**

A discriminatory and subjective admissions policy, absence of a complete, comprehensive curriculum and comprehensive professional development plan, prompted the Charter School Review Team to recommend the Board not approve PCSCD charter application.

The application additionally did not include a school calendar that accounted for the required 180 days of instruction, a code of conduct, and specific assessments and assessment calendar. The team also raised concerns with the financial viability with the charter since the charter would not have a positive net income until Year 4. As a result by Year 6 the charter school would still have a negative ending fund balance.

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Concerns were also raised regarding the full-time special education placement created by the charter. Students at the school will not have an opportunity to interact with non-disabled peers. The team also noted that the proposed programming is currently provided in the District, and that PCSCD would only offer one environment that was not based on individual student needs.

Concerns regarding the legitimacy of the letters of support and signatures for the charter were also raised by the Charter Review Team.

### **Robert L. Vann Charter School**

A shortage of community support, including insufficient letters of support or support at the public hearing were among many reasons the Charter Review Team recommended the Board not approve a charter for the Robert L. Vann Charter School.

In addition to the lack of a curriculum or curriculum materials, the application failed to provide a clear plan of how it will meet the needs of all students, including students with disabilities, English language learners, and at-risk students. The governance structure of the application was found out of compliance as no bylaws have been filed with the State. Terms with the proposed management company Athena are still being negotiated so the applicant included only a sample agreement.

The team did find the proposed charter financial viable with exceptions. The team pointed out that the application included a one-year plan projecting revenues and expenditures without a comprehensive list of school assets.

### **About the Review Teams**

Review teams for each charter included: school principals, experts in curriculum and instruction, special education, assessment and accountability as well as budget analysts and architects. The review teams summarize their findings and make recommendations to the Superintendent and Board of Directors based on the use of a consistent format, including predefined criteria and compliance checklist.

### **The Public Can Obtain More Information**

The findings and recommendations of the District's Charter School Review Teams are available by visiting the Pittsburgh Public Schools website at [www.pps.k12.pa.us](http://www.pps.k12.pa.us). A copy also can be obtained by calling the **Parent Hotline at 412-622-7920** or visiting the Office of Public Information, Room 203, Pittsburgh Board of Education, 341 South Bellefield Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15213.

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