

Sarasota County Schools
2017- 2018 Charter School Application Process
Preliminary Review Summary – April 12, 2018

Pinecrest Academy Gulf Coast Charter School Application

On February 1, 2018 the district received the application for the Pinecrest Academy Gulf Coast K–8 charter school. The application is submitted by the Pinecrest Academy, Inc. governing board as a “Replication of an Existing School Model” application. The Pinecrest Academy, Inc. governing board currently oversees 11 Pinecrest Academy schools in Florida.

- The Pinecrest Academy Gulf Coast charter school will open in 2019-2020 with an enrollment of 424 students in K-6 and grow to 800 K-8 students by its fifth year of operation.
- The application proposes to replicate two “A” rated schools operating in Miami-Dade County, Florida, the Pinecrest Cove Academy and the Pinecrest Academy – North Campus.
- The Pinecrest Academy school model provides a standards-based, research-based curriculum and instruction program incorporating a STEM theme. Students learn in a safe and nurturing environment in which all students are able to master state and national standards.
- A school site has not yet been identified. The applicant is considering the Palmer Ranch area as a possible location for the school.
- The Pinecrest Academy governing board contracts with Academica, an Educational Service Provider (ESP), to provide comprehensive education services and business management services for the Pinecrest Academy network of schools. Founded in 1991, Academica has extensive years of experience managing over 120 charter schools.

The Sarasota County Charter Review Committee (CRC) preliminary evaluation findings are based on the extent to which the charter school application addressed the evaluation criteria required to meet each of the standards, as specified in the state *Florida Charter School Application Evaluation Instrument*.

This document presents a summary of key findings and excerpts from the initial evaluation report entitled *Charter Review Committee Analysis and Initial Findings – April 10, 2018*, which is a separate report and not included with this document. This document provides the following information:

- Page 2: Table 1. Preliminary ratings summarized by program area
- Pages 2 - 4: Summary of key and significant findings from initial CRC evaluation
- Page 5: Chart of ratings for each of the 22 standards
- Page 6: Brief description of Sarasota’s charter review process and next steps

Table 1. Preliminary Ratings Summary for Pinecrest Academy Gulf Coast Application

I. Educational Plan Standards 1 – 9	II. Organizational Plan Standards 10 – 15	III. Business Plan Standards 16 – 22	Addenda Addendum A: Replication Addendum B: ESP	Preliminary Ratings Total
44% Meets 56% Partially Meets 0% Does Not Meet	67% Meets 33% Partially Meets 0% Does Not Meet	43% Meets 57% Partially Meets 0% Does Not Meet	0% Meets 100% Partially Meets 0% Does Not Meet	46% Meets 54% Partially Meets 0% Does Not Meet

Note: Due to rounding, percentages may not add to 100%.

Pinecrest Academy Gulf Coast Charter Application: Initial Evaluation Findings

Please note that the information presented here does not cover all 22 standards of the application; rather, the focus of this summary is on those standards that most directly pertain to teaching and learning, services for special populations, and the school’s financial viability. In addition, because the application is a proposal to replicate an existing Pinecrest Academy school model and the school will contract with an ESP, Academica, these additional standards will be addressed.

Educational Plan

The majority of the standards in the educational plan are partially met due in part to:

Curriculum: The school’s structure for providing reading and math interventions does not align with Sarasota’s Student Progression Plan (SPP) process, which the applicant proposes to follow. Courses listed for middle school math, science and social studies as well as the sequence do not align with those in the district’s SPP.

Performance Goals: The applicant does not provide sufficient evidence that the school will hold high expectations for the student academic performance of all students. The measurable goals for student academic growth and improvements are not clearly stated in all cases. The English/Language Arts and mathematics FSA achievement goals in the application appear to be significantly lower than the achievement of the Miami schools to be replicated, lower than Ashton Elementary and Sarasota Middle, and lower than the average achievement levels for all schools within the 5-mile radius of the proposed school location.

Services for English-Language Learners (ELL): Although the applicant states it will follow the Sarasota District ELL Plan, certain procedures, the function of an ELL committee, intervention models and assessments described in the application do not align to those in the District’s ELL Plan.

Target Population: The applicant references capacity at Ashton Elementary and Sarasota Middle School and growth in the Palmer Ranch geographical area as the rationale for the enrollment projections. The anticipated student population in this area will not be similar to the Miami-Dade Pinecrest Academy schools to be replicated in Sarasota. The explanation as to why the target population aligns with the mission and vision of the school is weak.

Organizational Plan

The application meets the majority of the standards in this section, including governance, management, human resources and professional development. Questions remain regarding the following:

Governance: Pinecrest Academy Gulf Coast governing board members will not be Sarasota County or local community residents, which is permissible under state statute. The CRC strongly believes that it is in the best interest of the parents/students served that governance and oversight of the proposed “Community School” be under the direction of local board members who understand the needs of its stakeholders and meet in the community.

Student Recruitment/Enrollment: The application does not provide a clear description of the lottery process to be used should the number of applications exceed the number of available seats. The responses lack essential detail, therefore it cannot be determined if the school will have an enrollment and admissions process that is open, fair, and in accordance with applicable law.

Parent and Community Involvement: The applicant provides no evidence of demand for the school or support from intended community partners or families. The applicant submits the demographic and site-planning maps and Building Hope data used for enrollment projections as evidence of demand for the proposed school.

Business Plan

The application partially meets most of the standards, including facilities, transportation, food service and budget, because of questions raised by the committee that require additional information and clarification from the applicant.

School Replication Application: Replication of Pinecrest Academy School Model

Pursuant to s. 1002.331, F.S., the applicant, the Pinecrest Academy, Inc. governing board must provide evidence that the proposed school meets the statutory requirements of being a substantially similar replication of the school.

The application partially meets this standard for several reasons, including:

- The school model to be replicated has not consistently demonstrated academic success for all students. Not all Pinecrest Academy schools are A-rated schools. The schools in Orange County - the Pinecrest Prep Charter is a C school and the Pinecrest Creek school received Fs in its first two years, then C and finally received a B-rating in 2017.
- The demographics of the target population in Sarasota, whether based on district-wide data or for the Palmer Ranch area, are considerably different from those of the replication schools in terms of the percent of Students with Disabilities, ELL and race/ethnic composition. The applicant does not provide a convincing rationale for how the school or model to be replicated will successfully serve the proposed target student population in Sarasota.
- The applicant states that the school will follow the district Student Progression Plan, the district’s LEP plan, the district’s reading plan, the district’s assessment program with little explanation as to how the Pinecrest model will align with district program and plans without compromising the fidelity of the school model. Therefore, it is likely that the proposed school will be substantially different from the Miami-Dade schools to be replicated.
- The applicant does provide ample evidence that the Pinecrest Academy governing board and Academica will be deeply involved in the establishment and operation of the Sarasota school as they are with all the Pinecrest Academy schools, including those being replicated.

Education Service Provider (ESP): Academica Management, LLC.

The application partially meets this standard for several reasons, including:

- Academica provides educational program services, curriculum development, intervention programs, and professional development for over 120 schools in Florida. Granted, the majority of schools are achieving at high levels, however, it is of concern that 5 Florida schools are rated D/F and 20 received a grade of C.
- The independent financial audit resulted in findings for the Pinecrest Academy (North Campus) school, the school to be replicated. Twenty-one (21) other Academica managed charter schools in Florida had audit findings in 2017.

**Sarasota County Public Schools
2017-2018 Charter School Application Process
Charter Review Committee (CRC) Ratings**

Applicant: Pinecrest Academy Gulf Coast

Charter School Application Section	Preliminary CRC Rating
I. Educational Plan	44% Meets 56% Partially Meets 0% Does Not Meet
1. Mission, Guiding Principles and Purpose	Meets
2. Target Population and Student Body	Partially Meets
3. Educational Program Design	Partially Meets
4. Curriculum Plan	Partially Meets
5. Student Performance, Assessment and Evaluation	Partially Meets
6. Exceptional Students	Meets
7. English Language Learners	Partially Meets
8. School Culture and Discipline	Meets
9. Supplemental Programming	Meets
II. Organizational Plan	67% Meets 33% Partially Meets 0% Does Not Meet
10. Governance	Meets
11. Management and Staffing	Meets
12. Human Resources and Employment	Meets
13. Professional Development	Meets
14. Student Recruitment and Enrollment	Partially Meets
15. Parent and Community Involvement	Partially Meets
III. Business Plan	43% Meets 57% Partially Meets 0% Does Not Meet
16. Facilities	Partially Meets
17. Transportation	Partially Meets
18. Food Service	Partially Meets
19. School Safety and Security	Meets
20. Budget	Partially Meets
21. Financial Management and Oversight	Meets
22. Start-Up Plan	Meets
Addenda	0% Meets 100% Partially Meets 0% Does Not Meet
Addendum A: Replication	Partially Meets
Addendum B: Education Service Providers	Partially Meets
Initial Ratings Summary – All Standards (1-22) and Addenda	46% Meets 54% Partially Meets 0% Does Not Meet

Due to rounding, percentages may not add to 100%.

Note: These are not considered the final ratings. Preliminary ratings are based solely on CRC's review of the written charter application submitted on February 1, 2018. The "CRC Analysis and Initial Findings – Pinecrest Academy Gulf Coast Charter Application" report dated April 10, 2018 provides the CRC's analysis and findings.

Summary of the Sarasota County review and evaluation process conducted for the February 1, 2018 Charter School Applications

The district Charter Review Committee (CRC) followed the evaluation criteria specified in the *Florida Charter School Application Evaluation Instrument* to analyze and evaluate the degree to which the standards in the application were met, partially met, or not met. The CRC based their determination on the applicant's proposed educational, organizational, and business plans as described in the state-required *Model Florida Charter School Application*.

Preliminary findings and ratings based on the CRC's review and analysis of the original application are provided in a report entitled *Charter Review Committee Analysis and Initial Findings – April 10, 2018*. The results are divided into three categories: 1) Strengths, 2) Deficiencies/Concerns/Weaknesses, and 3) Areas in Need of Additional Information and/or Clarification. The applicant is provided an opportunity to review the report and respond to the CRC's questions and requests for clarification by April 18, 2018. However, the applicant is not permitted to amend the application or correct significant deficiencies identified in the original application.

At the April 17, 2018 School Board Work Session the proposed school's governing board will meet with the School Board of Sarasota County to discuss the application and the preliminary review findings. The majority of the school's founding or governing board members should be in attendance and participate in the discussion. If the school will hire a management company or ESP, representatives of the ESP may attend/participate, however, the expectation is that the school's governing board will address any concerns and answer questions that arise during the Board Work Session.

The applicant is offered the opportunity to participate in the CRC Clarification/Capacity Interview on April 24, 2018. The purpose of the interview is to provide the applicant with an opportunity to clarify any remaining or outstanding questions. In addition, the interview process is used to corroborate information provided in the application in order to confirm that the school's founding/governing board members have knowledge of the application and have the capacity to establish a charter school in Sarasota County.

Subsequently, the CRC will meet again to complete the evaluation and determine final evaluation ratings. Considering all information presented in the original application, in the written responses to the CRC's questions, and the oral responses provided by the applicant during the School Board Work Session and the Clarification/Capacity Interview Session, the CRC will arrive at the final ratings for each standard through a majority vote.

The final report, *Charter Review Committee Final Evaluation and Ratings* will reflect the CRC's comprehensive findings and final ratings following the state's evaluation tool format. The School Board will take action to approve or deny the application at the May 15, 2018 School Board meeting.

If the application is denied, the applicant has the right to appeal the Board's decision to the State Board of Education within 30 days of receipt of the district's official notice. If the Board approves the application, the district will begin the process of negotiating the contract, called the charter, for Board approval.

Questions regarding the charter application review process may be directed to the Office of School Choice and Charter Schools at 941-927-9000, extension 32262.