

Sarasota County Public Schools
2014 – 2015 Charter School Application Process
Charter Review Committee (CRC) Analysis of Application and Initial Findings – September 11, 2014

Plato Academy Charter School Application

Dear Charter Applicant:

This document provides the Charter Review Committee’s (CRC) initial findings based on their review and analysis of the application submitted to the district on August 1, 2014. The CRC feedback is divided into three categories: 1) Strengths, 2) Concerns/Weaknesses and 3) Areas in Need of Additional Information and/or Clarification. The CRC is offering each applicant an opportunity to respond to the “Areas in Need of Additional Information/Clarification.” This clarification process may not be used to submit new information (not requested) or make substantive changes to the submitted application.

Please use this document to submit your responses to the items under “Areas in Need of Additional Information and/or Clarification” and adhere to the following guidelines:

- Use the column labeled “Charter Applicant’s Response” to address the questions and requests for clarification listed.
- Please respond briefly and succinctly to the specific information requested in each section of the application.
- Do not submit information that is not requested.

Do **not** respond to the remarks under “Concerns/Weaknesses.” Based on the CRC’s evaluation, the weaknesses, deficiencies or missing information identified in the application are considered sufficiently significant that corrections and revisions would constitute a material or substantial amendment to the original application. Therefore, please do not enter information in this box.

The completed document must be submitted electronically to the Office of School Choice and Charter Schools no later than 12:00 noon on Thursday, September 18, 2014. Also provide 6 hard copies of the document. Please follow the directions provided on the cover letter regarding format, number of copies, etc. when you submit your revisions. If you have questions, call (941) 927-9000, ext. 32262.

Florida Charter School Application Evaluation Instrument

The following definitions guided the CRC’s ratings:

| | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Meets the Standard | The response reflects a thorough understanding of key issues and demonstrates capacity to open and operate a quality charter school. It addresses the topic with specific and accurate information that shows thorough preparation and presents a clear, realistic picture of how the school expects to operate. |
| Partially Meets the Standard | The response addresses most of the criteria, but the responses lack meaningful detail and require important additional information. |
| Does Not Meet the Standard | The response lacks meaningful detail; demonstrates lack of preparation; or otherwise raises substantial concerns about the applicant’s understanding of the issue in concept and/or ability to meet the requirement in practice. |

I. Educational Plan

The education plan should define what students will achieve, how they will achieve it, and how the school will evaluate performance. It should provide a clear picture of what a student who attends the school will experience in terms of educational climate, structure, assessment and outcomes.

1. Mission, Guiding Principles and Purpose

The Mission, Guiding Principles and Purpose section should indicate what the school intends to do, for whom and to what degree.

Statutory References:

s. 1002.33(2)(a); s. 1002.33(2)(b); s. 1002.33(2)(c); s. 1002.33(6)(a)(1); s. 1002.33(7)(a)(1)

Evaluation Criteria:

A response that meets the standard will present:

- A compelling mission statement that defines the purpose and values of the school.
- A set of priorities that are meaningful, manageable and measurable, and focused on improving student outcomes.

| CRC Rating | Meets the Standard | Partially Meets the Standard | Does Not Meet the Standard |
|-------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Preliminary | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Final | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Strengths

The Plato Academy proposed to serve students in grades K-8. The school will use the Socratic Principles of Thinking and Aristotle's Modes of Persuasion and offer Greek as a second language.

Concerns/Weaknesses:

Comment Only: The application states that the Plato Academy of Schools believes in the team approach - employees, parents, and community members dedicated to working together to attain high achievement, which is commendable. However, as presented in the application, the existing Plato Academy governing board will not include any Sarasota community members. (Pages 23-24)

The application provides a list of programs, strategies, materials, etc., which are appropriate, but not a thorough or sound explanation of the "how" the materials will be used with low performing students or how strategies will be differentiated for students at different levels. (Pages 31, 32)

| Areas in Need of Additional Information and/or Clarification | Charter Applicant's Response |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| Please differentiate between the various individualized student plans referenced throughout the application: the "Student Learning Plan," the "Student Instructional and Intervention Plan" and the "Academic Improvement Plan." | |
| Briefly explain what is meant by "Exemplary Computer-Enhanced Support." (Page 32) | |
| Regarding efforts to improve attendance: what is the process and is there a different expectation for low performing students? | |

2. Target Population and Student Body

The Target Population and Student Body section should describe the anticipated target population of the school and explain how the school will be organized by grade structure, class size and total student enrollment over the term of the school’s charter.

Statutory Reference(s):

s. 1002.33(10)(e); s. 1002.33(6)(b)(2); s. 1002.33(7)(a)(1); s. 1003.03

Evaluation Criteria:

A response that meets the standard will present:

- An understanding of the students the charter school intends to serve.
- If the applicant proposes to target certain populations, the projected student body should align with the overall mission of the school.

| CRC Rating | Meets the Standard | Partially Meets the Standard | Does Not Meet the Standard |
|-------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Preliminary | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Final | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Strengths

Concerns/Weaknesses:
The K – 8 target population is “all eligible students who reside in the county.” The application does not provide a clear description of how the population projections were developed. Reference is made to a “conservative growth model,” but no detail is provided. The applicant appears to support the projected enrollment (up to 728 by year 5) based on waiting lists for the Plato Academy schools in Clearwater, Tarpon Springs, Largo, etc. and not on Sarasota County demographics. (Page 40)

| Areas in Need of Additional Information and/or Clarification | Charter Applicant’s Response |
|---|------------------------------|
| Please provide additional information, preferably data, to support the school’s projected enrollment. | |

3. Educational Program Design

The Educational Program Design section should describe the educational foundation of the school and the teaching and learning strategies that will be employed.

Statutory Reference(s):

s. 1002.33(7)(a)(2)

Evaluation Criteria:

A response that meets the standard will present an educational program design that:

- Is clear and coherent;
- Is based on effective, research-based educational practices, teaching methods and high standards for student learning;
- Aligns with the school’s mission and responds to the needs of the school’s target population; and
- Presents evidence that the proposed approach will lead to improved student performance for the school’s target population.

| CRC Rating | Meets the Standard | Partially Meets the Standard | Does Not Meet the Standard |
|-------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Preliminary | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Final | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Strengths

Inquiry approach to learning through the Socratic Method using an inter-disciplinary methodology. The Socratic method as described prompts student collaborative inquiry. (Page 43)

The volunteer obligations for parents are positive. (Page 51)

In addition to academics, the school sets goals for parental involvement, student behavior and good conduct, and community/business partnerships. (Page 51)

Concerns/Weaknesses :

The daily instructional schedule is not clear. (Page 41) For example, it is not clear how Music and Art is included in the 360 minute schedule for Grades K-5 or how course recovery and intensive reading is addressed within the daily schedule. (Page 42)

Reference to “other electives” and detail about corresponding course codes is vague and lacking in information. (Page 43)

It is not fully evident that the proposed educational design will lead to improved student performance for all students. There is no apparent reference to learning outcomes for K-2. There is no reference to FLKRS or FAIR-FS as outcome measures. The performance expectations for reading achievement proficiency are low. (Pages 49-52)

The application does not present evidence that the existing design has been effective and successful in raising student achievement. (The response to Section 3.F. on page 59 is missing, however, support is provided in the Executive Summary.)

On page 59 the application states that the Plato Academy Board “will be made up of parents, educators, and local business leaders from the local community of where the school will be located.” This is in conflict with information presented under Governance which states that the existing Plato Academy Board will also serve as the governing board for the Sarasota school.

| Areas in Need of Additional Information and/or Clarification | Charter Applicant’s Response |
|---|------------------------------|
| Clarify how Music and Art is included in the 360 minute schedule for Grades K-5. (Pages 41-42) | |
| How is course recovery and intensive reading addressed within the daily schedule? | |
| Is the middle school schedule based on a 6 or 7 period day plus lunch? 4 core plus 3 electives? (Page 42) | |
| Is Greek Language mandated for students Grades 6-8? If so, what course codes are used? (Page 42) | |
| How does the Socratic method reconcile with the Depth of Knowledge? (Page 47) | |
| How does Study Island align to the expectations of the NEW FSA’s technology enhanced questions? (Pages 57-59) | |

4. Curriculum Plan

The Curriculum Plan section should explain not only *what* the school will teach but also *how* and *why*.

Statutory Reference(s):

s. 1002.33(6)(a)(2); s. 1002.33(6)(a)(4); s. 1002.33(7)(a)(2); s.1002.33(7)(a)(4)

A response that meets the standard will present a curriculum plan that:

- Provides a clear and coherent framework for teaching and learning;
- Is research-based;
- Is consistent with the school’s mission, educational philosophy and instructional approach;
- Will enable students to attain Sunshine State-Common Core Standards and receive a year’s worth of learning for each year enrolled; and
- Will be appropriate for all students at all levels.

| CRC Rating | Meets the Standard | Partially Meets the Standard | Does Not Meet the Standard |
|-------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Preliminary | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Final | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Strengths
Using “book of the month” to reinforce Character Education.

Concerns/Weaknesses:
The school will use its own curriculum which was developed by the Plato Academy Schools. The Plato Academy Core Curriculum is described in general terms and lacks meaningful detail. Statements about standards and benchmarks being “similarly aligned” with state standards is of concern. (Pages 63 - 65)

On page 66 it states that offering Greek as a foreign language is contingent upon community interest as well as other factors such as availability of qualified instructors. To the CRC’s knowledge, the applicant has not assessed or determined Sarasota parents’ interest in the Plato School and the school’s program.

Some screening and progress monitoring tools referenced are outdated. (Pages 74-75)

It is not clear if the school will meet the state requirements of Academically Challenging Curriculum to Enhance Learning (ACCEL), mandated by s. 1002.3105, F.S.

There is a considerable amount of technology that is going to be used with the students and in the classroom, which is commendable. The concern is the funding implications for all students to have ipads, 5 computers in each classroom, smartboards in each classroom and technology software licenses, TV production digital cameras, scanners, etc. and the necessary professional development to support instructional technology. (Page 77)

The curriculum does not address all of the required standards. Science and Social Studies curricula are not addressed. (Page 77)
Therefore, the application requirement to “*Explain how the services the school will provide to the target population will help them attain the Next Generation Sunshine State-Common Core Standards, as required by section 1002.33, F.S.*” is not fully addressed.

| Areas in Need of Additional Information and/or Clarification | Charter Applicant’s Response |
|--|------------------------------|
| How will the school enhance the McGraw Hill reading materials (2007) to meet the rigor of the Language Arts Florida Standards (2014)? (Page 61, 68) | |
| Based on your potential opening in 2015, please clarify what instructional resources you will be using from McGraw Hill as well as e/learning tools. (Page 61) | |
| What foreign language do you plan to offer other than Greek if the contingencies are not available to address your focus on a multicultural curriculum? (Page 66) | |
| What is “electric teaching”? (Page 76) | |
| The application states that “all students will pass the assessment” before moving on...” Is this part of the RtI process? Please provide more specificity. (Page 67) | |

5. Student Performance, Assessment and Evaluation

The Student Performance, Assessment and Evaluation section should define what students attending the school should know and be able to do and reflect how the academic progress of individual students, cohorts over time, and the school as a whole will be measured.

Statutory Reference(s):

s. 1002.33(6)(a)(3); s.1002.33(7)(a)(3); s.1002.33(7)(a)(4); s.1002.33(7)(a)(5)

Evaluation Criteria:

A response that meets the standard will present:

- Measurable educational goals and objectives that set high standards for student performance.
- Promotion standards that are based on high expectations and provide clear criteria for promotion from one level to the next, and for graduation (if applicable).
- Evidence that a range of valid and reliable assessments will be used to measure student performance.
- Assessment activities that are sufficiently frequent and a detailed plan to determine whether students are making adequate progress.
- Evidence that data will inform decisions about adjustments to the educational program.
- Plans for sharing student performance information that will keep students and parents well informed of academic progress.

| CRC Rating | Meets the Standard | Partially Meets the Standard | Does Not Meet the Standard |
|-------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Preliminary | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Final | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Strengths

A wide variety of formative and summative assessments will be used to monitor student progress and annual learning outcomes. (Pages 87-88)

The school will use the Superior Schools Corp student data management system to provide parents with timely, online accessible information about their child’s academic progress. (Page 89)

Concerns/Weaknesses:

The applicant makes reference to “optimal student achievement expectations” however the measurable educational targets do not reflect high standards, especially in light of the high achievement results presented in the Executive Summary for the other Plato Academies in Florida. The percent proficient rates are low and remain low even in years 4 and 5 of the charter. The goal of a 2 % increase in percent

proficient from year to year is not a high expectation. An 85% promotion rate in year one is unacceptable. (Pages 83-84)

The application does not include goals and/or measurable objectives for other content areas, for science, EOCs or for K-2. (Pages 83-84)

The application does not fully address key elements of Pupil Progression requirements, such as ACCEL. The information provided lacks sufficient detail to determine if middle school progression requirements will be met. (Page 86)

The description of the methods used to identify the educational strengths and needs of students and how these baseline rates will be compared to the academic progress of the same students attending the charter school consists of a list of tests to be used and few details beyond using an AYP spreadsheet to track progress and identify deficiencies. (Page 87)

| Areas in Need of Additional Information and/or Clarification | Charter Applicant's Response |
|---|------------------------------|
| <p>Typically school-level measurable outcomes are based on standardized summative assessments, such as FCAT/FSA, EOCs. How will results from Study Island and portfolios be placed on a common scale and aggregated to provide summative outcome data? (Page 84)</p> | |
| <p>We understand this is the applicant's "standard charter application" and some terms are stated so they are applicable to various school districts. What does the applicant mean by "County Instructional Assessment Plan?" (Page 85, 86)</p> | |
| <p>What is the nature of the alternative placement that will be made for students who have been retained more than two years? (Page 86)</p> | |
| <p>Please explain the reference to "Superior shall....oversee the administration of all standard tests to the students of the Charter School which are required by law...." (Appendix F, Management Contract) What functions of test administration will the ESP provider carry out that will not violate the state protocol for test administration and test security?</p> | |

6. Exceptional Students

The Exceptional Students section should demonstrate an understanding of the requirements of the school to serve all students and provide a concrete plan for meeting the broad spectrum of educational needs and providing all students with a quality education.

Statutory Reference(s):

s. 1002.33(16)(a)(3)

Evaluation Criteria:

A response that meets the standard will present:

- Clear description of the levels of service the school will provide to students with disabilities.
- A clear description of how the school will ensure that students with disabilities (SWD) will have an equal opportunity of being selected for enrollment.
- An understanding and commitment to collaborating with the sponsor to ensure that placement decisions for students with disabilities will be made based on each student’s unique needs.
- An appropriate plan for evaluating the school’s effectiveness in serving exceptional students, including gifted.
- A realistic enrollment projection (SWD) and a staffing plan that aligns with the projection.

| CRC Rating | Meets the Standard | Partially Meets the Standard | Does Not Meet the Standard |
|--------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Preliminary | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Final | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Strengths

Plato Academy students with identified disabilities will be served in the regular classroom environment with 80% or more of their time with non-disabled peers. (Page 91)

The school makes a strong commitment to inclusionary practices and targeted intervention for students with identified needs, with pull-out resource services as needed.

Concerns/Weaknesses:

It is unclear how the school will work with the sponsor to ensure that the charter school is the appropriate placement for each student with a disability (SWD). (Page 91)

It appears that the applicant is not familiar with the level of support Sarasota County School District provides regarding evaluation services.

The plan for providing Speech, Language, Occupational or Physical therapies for eligible students is not stated.

During the first year, the application indicates that one (1) individual will cover ESE, Intervention, and Guidance. The concern is that this level of staffing will not be sufficient to meet the needs of the students. (Exhibit E)

| Areas in Need of Additional Information and/or Clarification | Charter Applicant's Response |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| <p>Comment: It appears that the applicant believes that once the problem solving process has been exhausted that the student will be referred to the Sponsor for ESE eligibility. The charter school will make an official request of the Sponsor for support. (Page 95) It is unclear what the level and extent of support the applicant expects to receive from the district.</p> | |
| <p>What is the percent of the ESE student enrollment, and the percentages by gifted (EPs) and non-gifted (IEPs) for each of the other 6 Plato Academy schools (Clearwater, Largo, Seminole, etc.)? What is the projected number for this proposed school?</p> | |

7. English Language Learners

The English Language Learners section should demonstrate an understanding of the requirements of the school to serve English Language Learner students and provide a concrete plan for meeting the broad spectrum of educational needs and providing all students with a quality education.

Statutory Reference(s):

s. 1002.33(10)

Evaluation Criteria:

A response that meets the standard will present:

- Demonstrated understanding of state and federal requirements regarding the education of English language learner students.
- Sound plans for educating English language learner students that reflect the full range of programs and services required to provide all students with a high quality education.
- Demonstrated capacity to meet the school’s obligations under state and federal law regarding the education of English language learner students.

| CRC Rating | Meets the Standard | Partially Meets the Standard | Does Not Meet the Standard |
|-------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Preliminary | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Final | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Strengths

Concerns/Weaknesses:

The response raises substantial concerns about the applicant’s understanding of state and federal requirements. (Page 102)

The applicant does not demonstrate capacity to meet the school’s obligations under state and federal law regarding the education of English language learner students. (Page 102)

The application states that Plato Academy will follow the district’s ELL plan, however, the procedures described in the application do not align with district procedures. The discrepancies in this section raise concerns regarding the applicant’s understanding of what the district plan entails and what the school’s responsibilities will be to adhere and comply with the ELL plan.

The staffing plan raises questions about the school’s ability to serve the needs of the ELL students. There is mention of the ESOL coordinator but the position does not appear to be in the budget.

The explanation as to how ELL students who enter the school below grade level will be engaged and benefit from the curriculum lacks sufficient detail to determine and evaluate if the needs of these students will be met. (Page 105)

| Areas in Need of Additional Information and/or Clarification | Charter Applicant’s Response |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| <p>Will Plato Academy be following the Sarasota County Public Schools’ guidelines regarding ELLs? If so, how do you plan to determine eligibility of possible ELL students and extension of ESOL Program services for ELLs? (Page 102)</p> | |
| <p>Comment: Please be informed that the school is responsible for purchasing and providing word-for-word English to heritage language and heritage language to English dictionary for state assessments; as accommodations allow. In addition, the District does not participate in an on-line CELLA Assessment nor will the district provide personnel to conduct the assessments. (Pages 102 - 103)</p> | |

8. School Climate and Discipline

The School Climate and Discipline section should describe the learning environment of the school and provide evidence that the school will ensure a safe environment conducive to learning.

Statutory Reference(s):

s. 1002.33(7)(a)(7); s. 1002.33(7)(a)(11); s. 1002.33(9)

Evaluation Criteria:

A response that meets the standard will present:

- A sound approach to classroom management and student discipline.
- Legally sound policies for student discipline, suspension, and dismissal.

| CRC Rating | Meets the Standard | Partially Meets the Standard | Does Not Meet the Standard |
|-------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Preliminary | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Final | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

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|---|
| Strengths |
| The Plato Academy application presents a researched based Positive Behavior Support (PBS) model. (Page 106) |

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| Concerns/Weaknesses: |
| The application does not include a clear description of the procedures that will be followed for dismissing students. (Page 116) |

| Areas in Need of Additional Information and/or Clarification | Charter Applicant's Response |
|---|------------------------------|
| It appears that the school proposes to use a combination of the policies in Sarasota's Code of Conduct and Plato Academy's policies. If this is the case, please identify the policies that pertain solely to Plato that go beyond the policies in Sarasota's Code of Conduct. (Page 106) | |
| The applicant acknowledges the school's requirement to have dismissal procedures. Please indicate where in the application the school's dismissal procedures are described. (Page 108) | |

II. Organizational Plan

The Organizational Plan should provide an understanding of how the school will be governed and managed. It should present a clear picture of the school's governance and management priorities, what responsibilities various groups and people will have, and how those groups will relate to one another.

9. Governance

The Governance section should describe how the policy-making and oversight function of the school will be structured and operate.

Statutory Reference(s):

s. 1002.33(7)(a)(15); s. 1002.33(9)

Evaluation Criteria:

A response that meets the standard will present:

- Documentation of proper legal structure of the governing board, or a plan to organize in conformity with the laws of Florida.
- A clear understanding and description of the governing board's responsibilities.
- Evidence that the proposed governing board will contribute to the wide range of knowledge and skill needed to oversee a charter school.
- A clear, sensible delineation of roles and responsibilities in relation to governance and school management.
- A sensible method for resolving disputes between parents and the school.

| CRC Rating | Meets the Standard | Partially Meets the Standard | Does Not Meet the Standard |
|-------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Preliminary | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Final | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Strengths

The established Plato Academy Board should understand all statutory requirements.

Concerns/Weaknesses:

Comment: The Plato Academy governing board members will not be Sarasota County residents (Pages 117 & 121), which is permissible under state statute but of great concern to the CRC. The CRC strongly believes that it is in the best interest of the Sarasota County taxpayers and the parents/students served that governance and oversight of the proposed school be under the direction of local board members who hold meetings in the community and who understand the needs of its stakeholders.

The Plato Academy governing board does not appear to be “at arm’s length” from the ESP, Superior Schools Corp. The application states that the ESP manages the day-to-day operations of the Plato Schools, which would include the Sarasota school (page 118). The principal reports to the Academic Director who, in turn, reports to Superior Schools, the ESP.

Teachers report to the lead teacher on academic matters. However, it appears that the lead teacher reports to the Academic Director (ESP), not the principal, on academic and educational matters. (Pages 118-119) The principal also reports to the ESP on operational matters. This reporting structure is out of alignment with the duties and responsibilities of the principal delineated on page 127.

The charter school representative for Sarasota that will facilitate parental involvement and serve as a liaison to parents is indicated to be from Pasco County. (Pages 119 & 125)

| Areas in Need of Additional Information and/or Clarification | Charter Applicant’s Response |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| Does the Plato Academy Board plan to add a board member from Sarasota County to its board? | |

10. Management

The Management section should describe how the day-to-day administration of the school’s operations will be structured and fulfilled.

Statutory Reference(s):

s. 1002.33(7)(a)(9); s. 1002.33(7)(a)(14)

Evaluation Criteria:

A response that meets the standard will present:

- A management structure that includes clear delineation of the roles and responsibilities for administering the day-to-day activities of the school.
- A sound plan for the recruitment and selection of the school leader.
- A viable and adequate staffing plan aligned with the projected student enrollment.
- A sound plan for recruiting and retaining qualified and capable staff.

| CRC Rating | Meets the Standard | Partially Meets the Standard | Does Not Meet the Standard |
|-------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Preliminary | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Final | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Strengths

Day to day operation activities clearly defined. (Page 126) However, note the concerns stated in Section 9- Governance and Section 11- ESP.

Concerns/Weaknesses:

The Academic Director is an employee of the ESP. The school principal reports to the Academic Director on academic matters and to other ESP staff on operational matters. This structure dramatically decreases the principal’s authority to serve as the instructional leader and building administrator.

The terms of the teacher annual contract are not clear. The teacher job description states they will work 180 instructional days with eight days of professional development, which totals 188 days (page 129). In another section it states that teachers will report to work three full weeks before school starts (page 133). It is not clear if teachers will be compensated for the professional development in-service days.

| Areas in Need of Additional Information and/or Clarification | Charter Applicant's Response |
|---|------------------------------|
| <p>The terms of teacher employment (page 129) states that teachers will be required to work 180 days with 8 days of professional development. Given that the scheduled days of instruction are 180 (page 41), we interpret this to mean teachers work 188 days. On page 140 it states that "Plato Academy requires all staff to report to school two weeks prior to the opening for training." Is this the time period in which the 8 PD days will occur?</p> | |
| <p>The additional 8 days are not accounted for in the salary schedule or in the job expectations outlined in the job description. Will teachers be compensated for the additional days?</p> | |
| <p>The staffing schedule (Exhibit E) and budget (Exhibit H) do not account for any aide positions. Are aides going to be used?</p> | |

11. Education Service Providers

The term “education service provider” (ESP) refers to any number of organizations that contract with the governing board of a school to provide comprehensive services. The three major types of ESPs that serve charter schools are education management organizations, comprehensive school design providers, and virtual school management organizations. The Education Service Provider section should describe, if applicable, the contractual arrangement between the school’s governing board and such a provider.

Statutory Reference(s):

s. 1002.33(7)(a)(9)

Evaluation Criteria:

A response that meets the standard will present:

- A persuasive explanation of the reasons for contracting with an education service provider.
- A persuasive explanation of how the proposed relationship with the ESP will further the school’s mission.
- A clear description of the services to be provided by the ESP.
- A clear delineation of the roles and responsibilities between the school’s governing board and the ESP.
- A clearly defined performance-based relationship between the school’s governing board and the ESP.

| CRC Rating | Not Applicable | Meets the Standard | Partially Meets the Standard | Does Not Meet the Standard |
|--------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Preliminary | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Final | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Strengths

The Plato Academy Board of Directors and Superior Schools Corporation have worked together for years at other schools and therefore have a clear delineation of their individual responsibility and roles.

Concerns/Weaknesses:

The ESP services include day-to-day administration of the school and other functions, such as test administration, that should be responsibilities and duties carried out by the school leadership and/or school staff.

It is of great concern to the CRC that there does not appear to be an “arm’s length” between the Plato Governing Board and Superior Schools Corporation. (Page 135, Exhibit F, and see comments under Section 9, Governance). For example, in the Management Contract on page 6, under staff administration, it states that “Superior will identify and provide sufficient qualified personnel to operate Plato

including without limitation, one principal and such other administrators, teachers...and such other staff to enable Superior to operate the Charter School.”

On page 8 under curriculum development: ...“Superior shall (a) design, implement and oversee student recruitment and enrollment procedures and (b) oversee the administration of all standard tests to the students of the Charter School...” This is interpreted as a possible conflict of interest given that the school shall pay Superior a 2% additional fee for maintaining enrollment above 90% and an additional 2% fee if test scores are sufficiently and high relative to criteria. (Management contract amendment in Exhibit F)

Superior Schools shall operate Pre-K and before/after school programs at the school, using school facilities. These are separate from the operations of the school and revenue from extracurricular programs and activities will be revenue earned by Superior Schools.

| Areas in Need of Additional Information and/or Clarification | Charter Applicant’s Response |
|--|------------------------------|
| | |

12. Employment

The Employment section should define the policies and procedures that frame the school’s relationship with its staff.

Statutory Reference(s):

s. 1002.33(7)(a)(14); s. 1002.33(12)

Evaluation Criteria:

A response that meets the standard will present:

- A compensation plan that will attract and retain quality staff.
- Policies and procedures that hold staff to high professional standards or a sound plan for development of policies and procedures.

| CRC Rating | Meets the Standard | Partially Meets the Standard | Does Not Meet the Standard |
|--------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Preliminary | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Final | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Strengths

The school proposes to offer salaries that are competitive with Sarasota’s salary schedule. An award bonus for outstanding performance to be determined by the Board of Directors may serve to attract/retain quality teachers. Matching 401(k) contribution by the school.

The Plato Academy HR policy statement addresses professional standards and discipline. (Page 139)

Concerns/Weaknesses:

The compensation plan may not enable the school to attract and retain quality staff. There are no employer-paid benefits other than medical. Employees will be offered at a pre-tax income for purchase by the employee that includes vision, disabilities, dental, and dependent care. This plan is not competitive with other local public charter and non-charter schools in Sarasota. (Page 139)

The school plans to offer a medical health insurance plan that covers 80% of the individual teacher’s lowest health plan cost. (Page 139) However, a line item dedicated to teacher benefits is not apparent in the budget.

The Plato Academy will utilize the services of a professional employer organization (PEO). The CRC is unable to ascertain the cost allocation in the budget (Exhibit H) for this service.

| Areas in Need of Additional Information and/or Clarification | Charter Applicant's Response |
|--|------------------------------|
| Is Superior Schools Corp also the PEO? (Page 139) | |
| Please indicate the line item in the budget that accounts for the costs associated with PEO/HR services. | |
| The policy statement claims all teachers are required to report to work two weeks prior to the opening of school for professional development and forty-five to sixty minutes each morning, before the students arrive, teachers will be dedicated to staff development. (Page 140) Are teachers compensated for the PD days/time? Please clarify. | |
| Please indicate the line item in the budget that addresses costs associated with teacher benefits. | |

13. Student Recruitment and Enrollment

The Student Recruitment and Enrollment section should describe how the school will attract and enroll its student body.

Statutory Reference(s):

s. 1002.33(7)(a)(7); s. 1002.33.(7)(a)(8); s. 1002.33(10)

Evaluation Criteria:

A response that meets the standard will present:

- A student recruitment plan that will enable the school to attract its targeted population.
- An enrollment and admissions process that is open, fair, and in accordance with applicable law.

| CRC Rating | Meets the Standard | Partially Meets the Standard | Does Not Meet the Standard |
|-------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Preliminary | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Final | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

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| Strengths |
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| Concerns/Weaknesses |
| <p>Given that the applicant has not identified an area in Sarasota where the school might be located, the CRC cannot discern if the school will achieve a racial/ethnic balance reflective of the community it serves or with the racial/ethnic range of other local public schools.</p> <p>Comment Only: The school plans to give enrollment preference to students who enroll in the charter school’s Pre-K program. It is the CRC’s belief that this does not meet the intent of s. 1002.33(10)(d)(5), which permits enrollment preference for “Students who have successfully completed a voluntary prekindergarten education program under s. <u>1002.51-1002.79</u> provided by the charter school or the charter school’s governing board during the previous year.” According to the ESP management contract, Superior Schools Corp operates and manages the Pre-K program separate from the management of the K-8 school, and Superior uses the facility and later reimburses the school for usage. The revenues go to Superior Schools. So it does not appear that the Pre-K is provided by the <u>charter school</u>; rather, the school is providing the use of its facility.</p> |

| Areas in Need of Additional Information and/or Clarification | Charter Applicant's Response |
|--|------------------------------|
| <p>The commitment for 30 hours of parent volunteer time seems unrealistic. Based on the trends for the other Plato schools, what percent of parents are able to follow-through with this commitment?</p> | |
| <p>The application states that “failure to abide by or a breach of the parental contract may result in the child’s losing preferential reenrollment status at the school for the following year....” What is the specific criteria that determines a failure or breach? (Page 144)</p> | |
| <p>Please provide a copy of the parent and student contract or indicate where in the application the contract appears. (Page 144)</p> | |

III. Business Plan

The Business Plan should provide an understanding of how the charter operators intend to manage the school’s finances. It should present a clear picture of the school’s financial viability including the soundness of revenue projections; expenditure requirements; and how well the school’s budget aligns with and supports effective implementation of the educational program.

14. Facilities

The Facilities section should provide an understanding of the school’s anticipated facilities needs and how the school plans to meet those needs.

Statutory Reference(s):

s. 1002.33(7)(a)(13); s. 1002.33(18)

Evaluation Criteria:

A response that meets the standard will present:

- A realistic plan for acquiring a facility that is appropriate and adequate for the school’s program and targeted population.
- Evidence that the school has access to the necessary resources to fund the facilities plan.

| CRC Rating | Meets the Standard | Partially Meets the Standard | Does Not Meet the Standard |
|-------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Preliminary | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Final | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Strengths

A school site has not been selected. However, Plato Academy has several other schools around the state and is familiar with the requirements for facilities. An adequate description of what size of a site and buildings was listed as well as the types of spaces needed in a school. (Page 148)

Concerns/Weaknesses:

None

Areas in Need of Additional Information and/or Clarification

None

Charter Applicant’s Response

15. Transportation

The Transportation section should describe how the school will address these services for its student body.

Statutory Reference(s):

s. 1002.33(20)

Evaluation Criteria:

A response that meets the standard will present:

- A transportation plan that will serve all eligible students.

| CRC Rating | Meets the Standard | Partially Meets the Standard | Does Not Meet the Standard |
|-------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Preliminary | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Final | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

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| Strengths |
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| <p>Concerns/Weaknesses:</p> <p>Transportation plan provided lacks meaningful detail and does not address knowledge of required State and Federal regulations that must be followed.</p> <p>The application states that it is the expectation that the majority of parents will provide their own transportation and car pool. It also indicates that it will provide services to those students who will require bus transportation. (Page 151) The budget, however, does not appear to include projected costs for transportation.</p> |
|--|

| Areas in Need of Additional Information and/or Clarification | Charter Applicant's Response |
|--|------------------------------|
| Please indicate the line item in the budget that addresses transportation costs. | |

16. Food Service

The Food Service section should describe how the school will address these services for its student body.

Statutory Reference(s):

s. 1002.33(20)(a)(1)

Evaluation Criteria:

A response that meets the standard will present:

- A food service plan that will serve all students.

| CRC Rating | Meets the Standard | Partially Meets the Standard | Does Not Meet the Standard |
|-------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Preliminary | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Final | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

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| Strengths |
| Plato Academy appears to understand the requirements for the provision of an FNS program. |

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| Concerns/Weaknesses: |
| None |

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| Areas in Need of Additional Information and/or Clarification | Charter Applicant's Response |
| None | |

17. Budget

The Budget section should provide financial projections for the school over the term of its charter.

Statutory Reference(s):

s. 1002.33(6)(a)(5); s. 1002.33(6)(b)(2)

Evaluation Criteria:

A response that meets the standard will present:

- Budgetary projections which are consistent with all parts of the application, including the school’s mission, educational program, staffing plan and facility.
- A realistic assessment of the projected sources of revenue and expenses that ensure the financial viability of the school.
- A sound plan to monitor the budget and make adjustments as necessary.

| CRC Rating | Meets the Standard | Partially Meets the Standard | Does Not Meet the Standard |
|-------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Preliminary | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Final | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Strengths

The Plato Academy’s budget projections are in alignment with the school’s educational programs and operations. (Pages 153-157, Appendices G & H)

In that the FEFP revenues have been estimated below the FEFP calculations in Appendix G, removal of the capital outlay and CSP amounts and replacement of the full FEFP calculation will still allow the school to have an excess of revenues over expenditures. (Appendix H)

Concerns/Weaknesses:

Estimated revenue includes the CSP start-up grant. The CSP is a competitive state grant and there is no assurance that the applicant will be awarded the funds.

Comment Only: Under general and administrative costs the application addresses the 10% management fee and states that “this projection will increase by 2%” if enrollment is maintained above 90% and by another 2% if the school’s test scores are relatively high. The additional 2% fees seem to be more like monetary incentives for the ESP rather than a true cost for services to the school.

The application states that donations and fundraising are not included in the budget calculations. However, the start-up budget (Appendix I) shows a donation from the ESP, Superior Schools Corp, in the amount of \$62,630. In the management agreement (page 2 of amendment in Exhibit F) it states, “Superior shall offer school start up financial and organizational support for all new licensed schools. Financial support shall be in the form of cash advances or loans as needed and in accordance to Superior’s financial ability, at not more than five percent (5%) annual interest rate.” The applicant will be given the opportunity to clarify.

Staffing does not appear to include the ESOL Coordinator mentioned on page 102, Section 7.A.

| Areas in Need of Additional Information and/or Clarification | Charter Applicant’s Response |
|---|------------------------------|
| Other than history, on what basis is it assumed that the school will receive CSP grant funds? | |
| The CSP amount in the 5-year budget projections (Appendix H) is \$175,000 in year 1 but is shown as \$25,000 in the start-up budget (Appendix I) and stated to be \$375,000 on page 153. Please clarify. | |
| Please provide justification for your interpretation of 1013.62 F.S. that supports a new school’s eligibility to receive capital outlay funds based on SAC accreditation. | |
| Please indicate the line item in the budget that reflects the management fee paid to Superior Schools Corporation. | |
| Please indicate the line item in the budget appendix/staffing that corresponds to the Academic Director’s salary. | |
| Is the \$62,630 start-up provided by Superior Schools considered a cash advance or loan? Will the Plato Board have to repay the \$62,630 donation? Please explain. | |
| The management contract (Exhibit F) states that Superior is responsible for the training and PD for faculty and staff at the school and that “costs associated with such activities shall be paid for from the annual charter school budget.” Are the fees for PD part of the 10% management fee or are these additional service fees to be paid by the school to Superior Schools? | |

18. Financial Management and Oversight

The Financial Management and Oversight section should describe how the school’s finances will be managed and who will be responsible for the protection of student and financial records.

Statutory Reference(s):

s. 1002.33(6)(a)(5); s. 1002.33(7)(a)(9); s. 1002.33(7)(a)(11)

Evaluation Criteria:

A response that meets the standard will present:

- A clear description of how the school’s finances will be managed. The description must include assurances that the governing board retains ultimate control over the school’s finances.
- A clear description of strong internal controls. The system of internal controls must be sufficient to safeguard finances.

| CRC Rating | Meets the Standard | Partially Meets the Standard | Does Not Meet the Standard |
|-------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Preliminary | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Final | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

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| Strengths |
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| Concerns/Weaknesses: |
| |

| Areas in Need of Additional Information and/or Clarification | Charter Applicant’s Response |
|--|------------------------------|
| none | |

19. Action Plan

The Action Plan should provide a clear roadmap of the steps and strategies that will be employed to prepare the school to be ready to serve its students well on the first day of operation.

Statutory Reference(s):

s. 1002.33(7)(a)(16)

Evaluation Criteria:

A response that meets the standard will present an action plan that:

- Provides a thoughtful and realistic implementation plan that covers major operational items and provides flexibility for addressing unanticipated events.

| CRC Rating | Meets the Standard | Partially Meets the Standard | Does Not Meet the Standard |
|-------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Preliminary | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Final | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

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| Strengths |
| The Plato Academy’s action plan covers the essential key steps to opening a school and presents a realistic timeline for implementation. (Page 165 & Appendix J) |

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| Concerns/Weaknesses: |
| None |

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| Areas in Need of Additional Information and/or Clarification | Charter Applicant’s Response |
| None | |