

SARASOTA COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Office of School Choice and Charter Schools

Preliminary Report for 2013 Charter Application Reviews and Next Steps

On August 1, 2013 the district received six applications for new charter schools to open in the fall of 2014. The applications are for the following schools: Horizons Unlimited Creative Learning Academy, Pivot Charter School, Sarasota Academy of Math & Science, Sarasota Military Academy Prep, SKY Academy of Englewood, and The Classical Academy of Sarasota. Charter applicants agreed to waive the 60 day statutory requirement for School Board action on the application to allocate sufficient time to complete the district's comprehensive application review process. Upon inspection of the application packets several omissions and minor errors were identified. The applicants were permitted to correct omissions in the application that were deemed to be of a technical nature and not substantive.

The Sarasota County Public Schools charter application review is a four phase process: (1) a review and analysis of the application by the district's Charter Review Committee (CRC) utilizing the *Florida Department of Education Charter School Application Evaluation Instrument*; (2) a Work Session with Sarasota County School Board members to discuss the application; (3) an opportunity for the applicant to respond to initial evaluation findings; and (4) the CRC clarification/capacity interview with the charter applicant's founding board members. This comprehensive process will assist the School Board to determine if the applications meet the standards necessary to properly administer and operate a charter school benefiting all students, as specified in Florida Statute 1002.33.

The district CRC is comprised of school administrators, including two charter school administrators, and district staff with experience reviewing charter school applications as well as expertise in specific areas such as bilingual and exceptional student education, curriculum and instruction, assessment, student progression, staffing, transportation, food services, facilities, charter school operations, organizational management, and finance. The CRC met nine times from August 6 through September 10, 2013, to review and discuss each application both independently and collectively based upon the state's standards and application requirements utilizing the *Florida Department of Education Charter School Application Evaluation Instrument*.

The attached preliminary reports entitled *Analysis of Application and Initial Findings, September 11, 2013*, reflect the CRC's preliminary findings and initial ratings reflective of the extent to which the applications met the standards. The applicants are being offered an opportunity to address the CRC's stated concerns and answer the questions posed to clarify the information contained in the original application by September 18, 2013.

The preliminary reports of the CRC evaluation findings are provided to Sarasota County School Board Members and charter school applicants in preparation for the School Board Work Session on September 17, 2013. During the Board Work Session, School Board members will have an opportunity to meet the applicants and their board members, to ask questions and provide feedback concerning the charter school proposals.

Following the School Board Work Session, the applicants are invited to a final clarification interview with the CRC on September 26, 2013, to discuss any unresolved issues or concerns of the CRC and the School Board. The interviews are designed to determine the level of knowledge concerning the information in the application as well as the capacity of the charter board members to open and operate a school as described in the application.

Considering all information presented in the original application, the written responses submitted by the applicant to clarify information, and the oral responses provided by the applicant during the Clarification/Capacity Interview Session, the CRC will meet again to designate the final ratings for each standard through unanimous consensus.

The School Board of Sarasota County, at its regular meeting on Tuesday, October 15, 2013 will consider all charter school applications and take action to approve or deny each application.