

Minutes
Charter Authorizing Panel Meeting
August 16, 2023

I. Call to Order

The Charter Authorizing Panel met on August 16, 2023. Panel Chair Dr. Matthew Sutherlin called the meeting to order at 9:06 AM.

Present: Dr. Matthew Sutherlin, Ms. Karli Saracini, Dr. Sonya Wright-McMurray, Mr. Kim Davis (virtual), Mr. Phil Baldwin, Ms. Toyce Newton, Dr. Tina Moore

The transcription of this meeting may be accessed on the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education website at the following:

<https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/about/archived-minutesvideo>

II. Action Agenda

II.1. Consideration of Bentonville School for Advanced Studies New Open-Enrollment Charter School Application

Presenter: Dorie Summons, Public School Charter Director

Description: Bentonville School for Advanced Studies has submitted an application to establish an open-enrollment charter school beginning in the 2024-2025 academic year. The charter will follow a college prep education model.

Deanna Rowe presented on behalf of the applicant. She presented information about the founding team, the structure of the sponsoring entity, and the composition of the Board of Directors

Dr. Peter Bezanson spoke about the managing company and how that entity controls curriculum, assessment, hiring, and day-to-day operations. He also talked about the history and growth of other charters as well as PISA and OECD exam results.

ACT/SAT data was presented to show that students in other network schools perform at or above the state and national averages.

Shawn Clark presented on the core pillars (World Liberal Arts, Beyond Teacher Quality, Student Scholars, Engaged and Authentic School Culture). These pillars are supposed to drive all operations.

Chris Ferguson spoke about high quality instructional materials and how EdReports was leveraged.

It is important to note that it is not all about academics; and that the applicant is committed to a well-rounded opportunity for all students.

Ms. Shastady Wagner presented the legal review.

There was a question about the waiver of AP requirements. Dr. Sutherlin asked if there was an intention to scale up as grades were needed. That was confirmed by the applicant.

Dr. Moore asked about schools in neighboring areas. The applicant indicated that the intention was to include all schools within the region.

Dr. Moore asked from where they would be recruiting teachers. The applicant indicated that they would be targeting teachers from the University of Arkansas saying that the teacher quality was imperative to the model.

Dr. Sutherlin asked what training would be offered to teachers. The applicant spoke about the teacher institute where they train through coaching, observations, compliance, and SPED training. They also indicated that there would be RISE training and AP training.

Ms. Newton asked what process was used to determine the need of this type of school in Arkansas. Aaron Kindel talked about how the organization identified districts based on geographical data. There is a combination of need and demand.

Mr. Baldwin asked about the college going rate. How many years has the entity achieved the current level. The applicant indicated that that has always been the case as it is a requirement to be admitted to college.

Mr. Baldwin asked for the applicant to speak to challenges to this requirement.

The applicant indicated that the two most difficult schools were in high poverty areas and the schools where the significant number of students were first generation college students.

Mr. Baldwin asked about budgeting vs. enrollment cap (growth over time). The applicant said that their end goal would be to have schools throughout Arkansas, but they were humbly asking for one school to start.

Mr. Baldwin also asked about the community service project requirement. The applicant responded by addressing the budget and enrollment cap and how they have used a conservative budget projection and then to build. The service-

learning projects will start in 5th grade with projects. It would grow to more sophisticated projects.

The Office of Special Education had a question as to how BASIS would ensure that SPED students had access to all the services guaranteed. The applicant indicated that there were directors in place and that services would be provided. She indicated that it was important to provide services and access to all students. As part of the model, all students should have access. In other states, services are provided in different ways based on different needs. There will be a licensed SPED teacher on the staff. The applicant is accustomed to providing these services and is committed to training the teachers.

Ms. Saracini commended the applicant on their teacher quality portions of the application.

Dr. Wright-McMurray asked about how they might close the gap for lower achieving students or do they only attract students with a propensity to be higher achieving. The applicant indicated that the goal was both. In terms of closing the gap, they would use low stakes opportunities such as early PSAT and ACT to help students improve.

Dr. Wright McMurray asked about possible locations. The applicant talked about goals related to accessibility and facilities. They do not yet have a facility identified. The intention is to lease initially, but it is hard to decide until the school might be approved.

Dr. Wright-McMurray asked if the applicant would come before the panel with information about the lease. Ms. Wagner indicated that the applicant would have to submit a debt request to the Secretary to be approved.

Dr. Wright-McMurray asked about how the applicant decided which CTE pathways would be offered. The applicant indicated that they relied on the management organization relied on their areas of expertise but would be open to expanding.

Dr. Wright-McMurray asked why the decision was made to split Key Code and Career Development. The applicant indicated that they would be willing to pair those courses if that was in the best interest of students.

Dr. Moore commended the acceleration plan. What would they do for a student who came to the school to accelerate them. The applicant addressed strategies to serve students who were not accelerated.

Dr. Moore asked about the lack of concurrent credit options in the application. Have they spoken to NWAAC about concurrent. The applicant indicated that they

have not considered concurrent credit. The applicant can create a tailored/known system for a student. They can provide college level work for all students through AP work.

Dr. Wright-McMurray asked about the connection between course offerings and the ability for students to explore and engage in additional career opportunities. The applicant responded that this could be done through the service-learning project and defense in the senior year based on student interest and pursuits.

A motion was made by Ms. Newton to approve and seconded by Dr. Moore. The motion carried unanimously.

II.2. Consideration of the Institute for the Creative Arts New Open-Enrollment Charter School Application

Presenter: Dorie Summons, Public School Charter Director

Description: Institute for the Creative Arts has submitted an application to establish an open-enrollment charter school beginning in the 2024-2025 academic year. The charter will follow a performing and visual arts high school college and career prep education model.

Ms. Shastady Wagner, DESE Legal, reviewed procedures for the hearing.

Dr. Sutherlin swore in all who were speaking on behalf of the charter applicant.

Jeannine Cole, Chairman of the Board, spoke on behalf of the applicant.

Dr. Rosalee Russell presented on behalf of the applicant. She spoke about the mission of the school and to the point that the purpose of the school was arts integration and that the school would be a training center for the arts.

Although the core academic content would be the center of the model, there would be a clear path for students studying the arts through immersion.

Dr. Russell indicated that the school would have AP, CTE, and enrichment offerings. There would also be an advisory period to help support students.

State Senator Justin Boyd presented public comment about the arts and sciences. He indicated that there was an opportunity to bring these things back to the community of Fort Smith.

Ms. Summons read an email which included public comment from Mr. Carl Geffken.

Ms. Wagner conducted the legal review.

There were no legal concerns, and the health and safety waiver request was removed.

Tripp Walter from APSRC spoke on behalf of the applicant and their waivers.

Dr. Wright-McMurray asked for a point of clarification that there didn't seem to be interest from schools other than the Fort Smith Area, and that there was not a complete list of schools that they might pull from.

Dr. Russell talked about plans for community forums to attract more students from across the area.

Dr. Wright-McMurray indicated there happened to be a lot of detail abouts how to support the arts. She asked what details the applicant might provide to support the academic side of the operation.

Dr. Russell talked about the role of the counselor, lead teachers, and academic directors to address the needs of the struggling student. On the accelerated side, the applicant intends to start AP offerings as early as possible. They will be looking for teachers with strong content areas. She said that the advisory time could be used. After-school assistance could be possible as well.

Ms. Saracini asked about the new building and the enrollment cap. Can the building accommodate 500 students?

Dr. Russell indicated that the school was working with an architect to provide additional space, including a cafeteria and science labs, if necessary.

Mr. Baldwin asked for the history of the Community School of the Arts. Dr. Russell provided background information.

Mr. Baldwin asked who, outside of the arts, would be handling the day-to-day academic challenges of opening a school. Dr. Russell indicated that a consultant had been identified to develop a comprehensive plan for starting the school.

Ms. Newton indicated that there was concern about transportation, academics. She had pause around the idea that there were not well-developed plans.

Dr. Moore asked about correlation between the arts and success, but not causation. There needs to be a great academic plan. Dr. Moore pointed out that the needs of the potential students could be a challenge in one-on-one support. She also had concerns about the waiver of teacher certification.

Dr. Russell clarified that there would not be a waiver of licensure for any core content. The school is only seeking the waiver for teachers under the arts areas.

Dr. Moore asked about the plan for professional development for teachers. Dr. Russell indicated that would be the duty of the academic director.

There have been discussions with UAFS related to concurrent credit. There are also colleges interested in partnering with the school.

Dr. Sutherlin asked if the only waivers were primarily for core content areas. He also asked about true arts integration and what it would look like in the classroom. Dr. Sutherlin talked about the willingness of the core teachers to engage in arts integration.

Mr. Baldwin indicated that the application was a work in progress. He would like more details.

The panel expressed concern about the gaps in the application that would lead them to believe that there wasn't a clear plan.

Motion by Ms. Newton to defer the application until November. Seconded by Mr. Baldwin. Motion carried unanimously.

III. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by Dr. Wright-McMurray, and it was seconded by Mr. Baldwin. The motion carried unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned at 12:15 PM.

Minutes prepared by Thomas Coy



Dr. Matthew Sutherlin, Charter Authorizing Panel Chair