

# Recommendations and Findings of the Review Teams for “Education InnovationsLAB, Polaris Academy, and Three Rivers Youth Leadership Academy” Charter School Applications

Pittsburgh Board of Education  
Education Committee Meeting  
February 6, 2007



## Contents of the Presentation

- Overview of PA Charter School Law (Act 22) “Yes” Test for Granting a Charter
- Each Application will be presented individually as follows:
  - Review Team Membership
  - Review Process
  - Background on Proposed Charter
  - Review Team’s Findings and Recommendations
- Questions and Answers on Presentation



## PA Charter School Law Criteria

- PA Charter School Law requires that an application be evaluated based on criteria including, but not limited to, the following:
  - The demonstrated sustainable support for the charter school by teachers, parents, other community members and students.
  - The capability of the applicant, in terms of support and planning, to provide comprehensive learning experiences to students pursuant to the adopted charter.
  - The extent to which the application considers the information requested by section 1719-A and conforms to the legislative intent outlined in section 1702-A.
  - The extent to which the charter school may serve as a model for other public schools.



## Act 22 Criteria for Granting or Denying a Charter

These requirements are stipulated in the district's Act 22 checklist in the form of a "yes" test. Charter schools must meet the "yes" test for all of the following questions in order to meet Act 22 requirements for the granting of a new charter:

1. Is the charter school nonsectarian and nonprofit?
2. Does it have sustained support from teachers, parents, students, and the community?
3. Does it agree to enroll all students who wish to attend, conduct a lottery if the school is oversubscribed, and only give preference to students whose parents have been involved in the process to plan the school?
4. Does the charter provide the school district with expanded choices in the types of educational opportunities currently being offered by the school system, and is it able to serve as a model to other schools in the system?
5. Does the charter have plans to meet the needs of students with disabilities, bilingual and at-risk students?
6. Does the charter comply with all federal, state, and local regulations pertaining to the health, safety, civil rights and education of students?



## Act 22 Charter Application Requirements

- The PA Charter School Law, section 1719-A, sets forth a list of information that must be a part of a charter school's application. This information includes, but is not limited to:
  - the mission and education goals of the charter;
  - curriculum to be offered;
  - methods of assessing whether students are meeting educational goals;
- The School District's application form was developed in order to insure that all applicants are given the opportunity to submit the required information.



# Education InnovationsLAB

PPS Review of Charter School Applications 2/6/07



# Members of the Review Team for Education InnovationsLAB

- Frances Doyle
  - Curriculum Supervisor – Writing, Pittsburgh Public Schools
- John Garrow
  - Director of Child Accounting, Pittsburgh Public Schools
- Lisa Gonzalez
  - Parent of a Pittsburgh Public Schools Student
- Regina Holley
  - Principal, Lincoln Technology Academy
- Craig Jackson
  - Principal, Student Achievement Center
- Cheryl Kennedy-Chair
  - Special Education Supervisor, Pittsburgh Public Schools
- Reverend Darnell Leonard
  - East End Cooperative Ministries
- Rudley Mrvos
  - Principal, Conroy Education Center
- Susan Sauer
  - Curriculum Supervisor – Reading PreK-5, Pittsburgh Public Schools
- Damen Taylor
  - Senior Accountant, Pittsburgh Public Schools
- Vidya Patil
  - Chief of Construction, Pittsburgh Public Schools



## Education InnovationsLAB Application Review Process

- The application was submitted on November 15, 2006.
- A public hearing was held for the applicant on December 6, 2006.
- A site visit was made by the review team on January 10, 2007.
- The review team's recommendation is being brought forward today, February 6, 2007, for the Board's review.
- The formal Board vote on this application is scheduled for February 14, 2007.





# Background on Proposed Education InnovationsLAB Charter School

- Number of Students
  - Year 1: 180 – K-7
  - Year 2: 360 – K-8
  - Year 3: 500 – K-9
  - Year 4: 560 – K-10
  - Year 5: 620 – K-11
- Grades Served: K-12
- Community to Be Served
  - All Pittsburgh communities
- Length of School Calendar
  - Up to 216 days
- Proposed Location
  - East Liberty: 2 locations: 1) Kingsley Association Building, 15206; and 2) 5938-5948 Baum Boulevard, 15206



## Review Team Findings on Education InnovationsLAB's Application

- The following items are deficient and are significant weaknesses in the application:
  - Purpose and Needs
  - Strategic Planning
  - Management Plan
  - Education Plan



## Review Team Findings on Education InnovationsLAB: Purpose and Needs

- Applicant fails to explain why there is a need for this school and why the proposed charter is an appropriate vehicle to address this need in this particular community.
- Applicant describes the need to invest in the community, but there is little evidence of parental, business, or organization involvement where the charter is proposing to be located.



## Review Team Findings on Education InnovationsLAB: Strategic Planning

- Goals are not related to the Mission and Vision of the School.
  - Measurable goals stated provide little evidence of how the implementation of best practices will be measured.
  - Applicant provides an ill-defined description of the improvement process the school will use and how this will serve as the basis for the development of the school's strategic plan.
  - Applicant did not include a school improvement plan.



## Review Team Findings on Education InnovationsLAB: Strategic Planning (cont.)

- A yearly Assessment Schedule did not show the alignment between needs, assessments, and accountability goals.
- There are indicators of over-testing:
  - PSSA practice testing every report period.
  - Teachers will monitor and report on a bi-weekly basis, prepare and practice for PSSA every report period, assess students every six days, and monitor progress daily or weekly.



## Review Team Findings on Education InnovationsLAB: Management Plan

- There is no evidence of a comprehensive, high quality, sustainable, long-term professional development plan.
  - A detailed professional development calendar was not provided.
  - The applicant proposes a six day rotation, wherein every sixth day teachers will engage in professional development. However, the professional development itself is not defined.
  - There is no accountability for teachers as to how follow up and evaluation will occur and how ongoing training will be organized.
  - Basic details, such as who is responsible for organizing the logistics, content, evaluation, and monitoring of professional development plans are unclear.



## Review Team Findings on Education InnovationsLAB: Education Plan

- Applicant fails to provide a comprehensive plan of instruction to support the delivery of curriculum.
  - The core instructional program consists of a number of components, including: teacher developed curriculum, inquiry-based learning labs, computer based programs, and reading programs.
    - Teachers are expected to create “teacher developed curriculum” as the “onus of curriculum development is on teachers.” (pg. 20)
    - No plan exists for teachers to develop teaching skills required for the proposed inquiry-based model for learning.
    - The following programs intended for use by the applicant as part of its core instructional program are designed as supplemental education programs, not as core curriculum
      - Destination Success
      - 100 Book Challenge.



## Applicant Lacks a Core Reading Program

- A core reading program is scientifically based, research proven effective, and contains the five essential components of effective reading instruction (phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary development, reading fluency, and comprehension):
  - Comprehensive Core Reading Programs are intended to be the instructional tool used to guide high quality instruction in the primary grades. The selection and adoption of an effective, research-based core reading program will ensure that high priority standards are taught in sufficient depth, breadth, and quality that all learners will achieve or exceed expected levels of proficiency.

*A Consumer's Guide to Analyzing a Core Reading Program Grades K-3: A Critical Elements Analysis. August, 2006.*





## Review Team Findings on Education InnovationsLAB: Education Plan (cont.)

- Neither Destination Reading nor 100 Book Challenge had evidence of program efficacy established through carefully designed experimental studies and cannot serve as Core Reading Programs, either together or separately.
  - The 100 Book Challenge in the Philadelphia Schools was reviewed on separate occasions in 1999, 2001, and 2004 by the Florida Center for Reading Research.
    - Each time, research results proved inconclusive in terms of advancing student achievement. While some students gained skills, others did not. Questions on this variance were grouped around the way the program may have been implemented by skilled teachers at the classroom level in systematic and important ways as opposed to teachers who did not implement in a similar fashion.



## Review Team Findings on Education InnovationsLAB: Education Plan (cont.)

- Because the purpose of the 100 Book Challenge is not to provide instruction—it does not address the scientifically based reading research five essential components of effective reading instruction (phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary development, reading fluency, and comprehension)—it does not meet the criteria for a scientifically based core reading program.
  - The 100 Book Challenge builds on the premise that when students experience success with reading, they are encouraged to read more. The National Reading Panel's 2000 analysis of programs that encourage students to read more could find no gains in reading as a result of such programs. The report further states that an important issue that schools need to consider about programs like this is whether the time it takes to implement during school hours might be better spent providing more direct instruction to students, particularly struggling readers.

--National Reading Panel. (2000) *Teaching children to read: An evidence-based assessment of the scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction*. National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, Washington D.C.



## Review Team Findings on Education InnovationsLAB: Education Plan (cont.)

- Destination Reading has only been used as a supplementary program in other schools/districts.
  - Destination Reading representatives could not provide evidence of classrooms or schools with similar demographics or learning profiles where the program was tested as a core reading program.



## Review Team Findings on Education InnovationsLAB: Education Plan (cont.)

- In December 2002, Destination Reading was reviewed by the Florida Center for Reading Research as a supplemental program. It found:
  - *“Destination Reading is a K-3 computer-assisted instructional reading program designed as a supplement to another reading curriculum already in use.”* (Florida Center for Reading Research Report, December, 2002).



## Proposed Facilities for Education InnovationsLAB

- An on-site inspection of the proposed facilities at 6435 Frankstown Avenue, and 5938/5948 Baum Boulevard was conducted on January 10, 2007.
- It is impossible to make significant evaluations of either facility without more specific drawings or completed construction.
- As is, neither building could support a school at this time without significant construction.



# Review Team's Findings and Recommendations on the Application from Education InnovationsLAB

## FINAL CHECKLIST FOR COMPLIANCE UNDER ACT 22

*Charter schools must meet the following criteria under this Act. Please indicate whether or not each individual criterion has been met.*

Is the charter nonsectarian and nonprofit? ☒ Yes ☐ No

Does it continue to have sustained support from teachers, parents, students and the community? ☐ Yes ☒ No

Does it agree to enroll all students who wish to attend, conduct a lottery if the school is oversubscribed, and only give preference to students whose parents have been involved in the process to plan the school? ☒ Yes ☐ No

Does the charter provide the School District of Pittsburgh with expanded choices in the type of educational opportunities currently being offered by the school system, and is it able to serve as a model to other schools in the system? ☐ Yes ☒ No

Does the charter have plans to meet the needs of students with disabilities, bilingual, and at-risk students? ☒ Yes ☐ No

Does the charter comply with all federal, state, and local regulations pertaining to the health, safety, civil rights, and education of students? ☒ Yes ☐ No



# Review Team's Findings and Recommendations for Education InnovationsLAB

- Do you (the team members) think this application from Education InnovationsLAB should be approved? \_\_\_\_\_Yes      X\_\_\_\_\_No
  
- Reasons:
  - ✓ Charter does not have sustained support from parents, teachers, and the community.
  - ✓ Charter applicant fails to demonstrate its capability to provide comprehensive learning experiences to students pursuant to the proposed charter.
  - ✓ Charter applicant does not provide expanded choice and cannot serve as a model for Pittsburgh Public Schools.
  - ✓ Charter applicant failed to complete the requirements of the application as required by PA Charter School Law, sections 1717-A and 1719-A.



# Polaris Academy

PPS Review of Charter School Applications 2/6/07





# Members of the Review Team for Polaris Academy

- Tracey Burke
  - Parent of a Pittsburgh Public Schools Student
- John Garrow
  - Director of Child Accounting, Pittsburgh Public Schools
- Tracey Gilliard
  - Budget Development Supervisor, Pittsburgh Public Schools
- Noel Hustwit
  - Special Education Specialist, Pittsburgh Public Schools
- Robin Ittigson
  - Math Supervisor: Early Childhood – Grade 5, Pittsburgh Public Schools
- Vidya Patil
  - Chief of Construction, Pittsburgh Public Schools
- Gina Reichert
  - Principal, South Brook Middle School
- Rhonda Taliaferro-Chair
  - Principal, CAPA High School



## Polaris Academy Application Review Process

- The application was submitted on November 15, 2006.
- A public hearing was held for the applicant on December 6, 2006.
- A site visit was made by the review team on January 12, 2007.
- The review team's recommendation is being brought forward today, February 6, 2007, for the Board's review.
- The formal Board vote on this application is scheduled for February 14, 2007.



# Background on Proposed Charter School

- Number of Students
  - Year 1: 132 – Grades 6-8
  - Year 2: 176 – Grades 6-9
  - Year 3: 220 – Grades 6-10
  - Year 4: 264 – Grades 6-11
  - Year 5: 308 – Grades 6-12
- Grades Served: 6-12
- Community to Be Served
  - All Pittsburgh communities
- Length of School Calendar
  - 192 days
- Proposed Location
  - Carrick: 1805 Concordia Street (St. Basil Parish)



## Review Team Findings on Polaris Academy

- The following items are deficient and are significant weaknesses in the application:
  - Purpose and Needs
  - Marketing Data
  - Strategic Planning
  - Management Plan
  - Governance
  - Education Plan



## Review Team Findings on Polaris Academy: Purpose and Needs

- Applicant described why there is a need for a math/science school, but the rationale was not connected to the needs assessment data. The applicant did not explain why the charter school model is an appropriate vehicle to address the need.
  - Applicant did not provide demographics for the community in which the charter school will be located.
  - Rationale did not reference details of current educational opportunities already available to students in the Pittsburgh Public Schools.



## Review Team Findings on Polaris Academy: Purpose and Needs (cont.)

- Applicant failed to demonstrate the sustained support from teachers, parents, students, and the community.
  - Of the 30 letters of support that were submitted, only one was from an organization located in the Carrick area. Most of the organization/business/university support is from outside of the Carrick community and City (i.e., McKeesport, Mon Valley, and Penn State University).
  - Letters of support from parents expressed support for a neighborhood school, not for the proposed charter as an expanded educational opportunity.



## Review Team Findings on Polaris Academy: Strategic Planning

- Applicant did not provide measurable goals and objectives for the planning process.
- Applicant did not describe how data is to be collected. There is no indication of benchmarks or of how the school plans to monitor student achievement.
  - The Applicant failed to describe or demonstrate a working knowledge of NCLB targets. The Applicant stated it will only test grades 8 and 11 for the PSSA (pg. 6). This is not consistent with NCLB.



## Review Team Findings on Polaris Academy: Strategic Planning (cont.)

- Applicant did not include the listed best practices and habits of practice identified by the Commonwealth of PA and therefore could not demonstrate how they will be implemented within the curriculum.
- Applicant's school improvement process is vague. No action plan exists that describes implementation.





## Review Team Findings on Polaris Academy: Strategic Planning (cont.)

- Applicant did not provide high school graduation requirements as required by law.
  - PA Chapter 4 § 4.24 (a) states, “Each school district, including charter schools, shall specify requirements for graduation in the strategic plan under § 4.13 (relating to strategic plans). Requirements shall include course completion and grades, completion of a culminating project, and results of local assessments aligned with academic standards.”
  - Chapter 4 § 4.24 (d) states “Each school district, including charter schools, shall describe in its strategic plan under § 4.13 how its planned instruction is designed to prepare students to meet requirements of subsection (a).”



## Review Team Findings on Polaris Academy: Strategic Planning (cont.)

- The Applicant failed to identify how it will involve community business members in its process.
- The Applicant provided letters from individuals who are employed by and/or who attend institutions of higher learning. The letters imply connections to these institutions; however, no formal letters or written agreements from institutional representatives authorized to pledge involvement or provision of services from these institutions were provided.



## Review Team Findings on Polaris Academy: Management Plan

- Applicant's student discipline and expulsion criteria are vague. Special needs disciplinary actions are not described.
- Applicant did not describe its compulsory attendance policy.
- Applicant did not provide an assurance that students and parents will not be counseled out of the school without having received due process.



## Review Team Findings on Polaris Academy: Governance

- Discrepancies exist between governance description and applicant's budget:
  - The charter application states “the daily operations of the school will be carried out by the Director together with the Dean of Academics, Dean of Students and Operations Manager”(pg. 37). However, for year 1, no salary is listed for the Dean of Academics in the budget. The Applicant stated during the interview that the Director would serve as the Dean of Academics for year 1 due to budget constraints.



## Review Team Findings on Polaris Academy: Governance (cont.)

- Violation of Human Resource Privacy Requirements and Hiring Powers of the Board:
  - The Academic Policy and Personnel Committee consists of parents and staff and is chaired by the Dean of Academics. This committee will:
    - review curriculum,
    - recommend policy changes,
    - participate in program development,
    - be responsible for job descriptions to the Board,
    - review Director's recommendations for hiring and firing, employees and make recommendations to the Board, and
    - provide advice on personnel matters to the Board and the Director.



## Review Team Findings on Polaris Academy: Governance (cont.)

- The Applicant failed to:
  - state how and who will evaluate the Chief Executive Officer. The criteria for this evaluation was not provided;
  - provide its Board meeting schedule;
  - describe how it will periodically assess the effectiveness of the organizational structure, involve stakeholders, and how it will consider compliance requirements;
  - provide a professional development calendar and professional development plan;
  - provide a system for evaluating employee performance;
  - identify who would have oversight and accountability for the human resource function.



## Review Team Findings on Polaris Academy: Education Plan

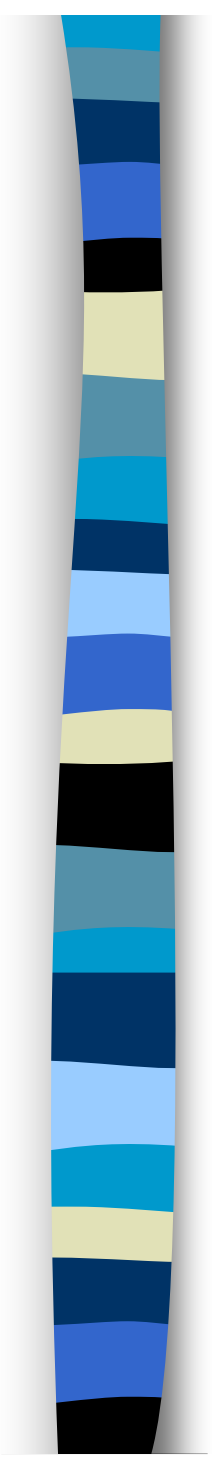
- The Applicant's education plan contains striking inadequacies:
  - A listing of topics to be taught at each grade level for science and math is provided, but this does not show a standards-based, seamless curriculum for grades 6-12.
    - The content to be mastered each month at each grade level is missing.
    - A standards-based curriculum with standards spiraled from one year to the next could not be found.
    - There is no evidence that the applicant understands the difference between "developmentally appropriate math programs" and the textbook that will be used at each grade level. Textbooks are tools and are not, in and of themselves, curriculum.



## Review Team Findings on Polaris: Education Plan

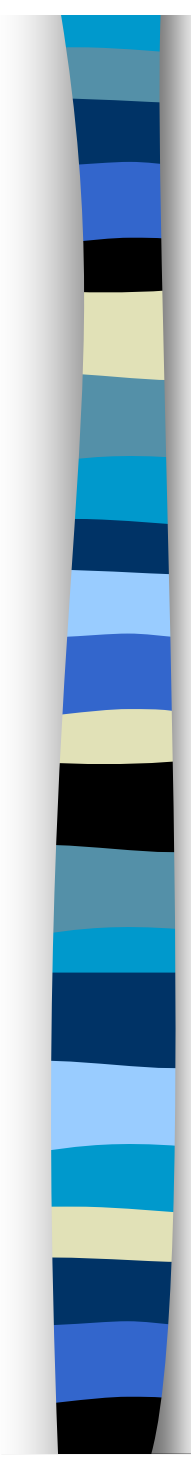
- Applicant does not include a Math and Science curriculum, and therefore does not provide a scope and sequence.
  - The Applicant states its innovative aspect is its Math and Science focus and curriculum. This could not be attested to without the existence of the actual curriculum.
  - Alignment with PA Standards could not be ascertained due to the lack of a curriculum.





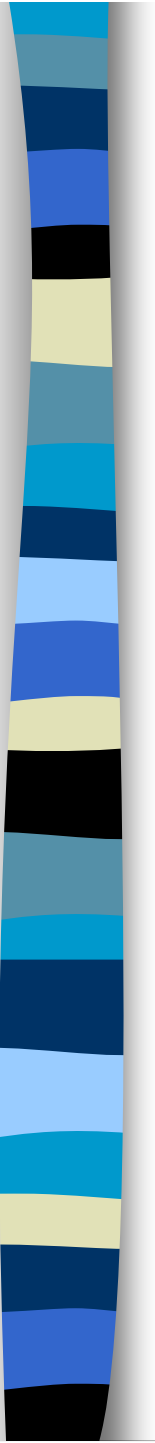
## Review Team Findings on Polaris Academy: Education Plan (cont.)

- Although no curriculum was provided, the applicant describes what it intends to do:
  - “The sixth grade mathematics curriculum is designed to make math relevant and in grade 7 will provide math skills needed to be successful in life.” (pg. 109, Appendix A)
  - “PAC” (Polaris Academy Charter) “will focus on creating a developmentally appropriate math curriculum where children are encouraged to understand the conceptual basis and the quantitative analysis of mathematical relations.” (pg. 110, Appendix A)



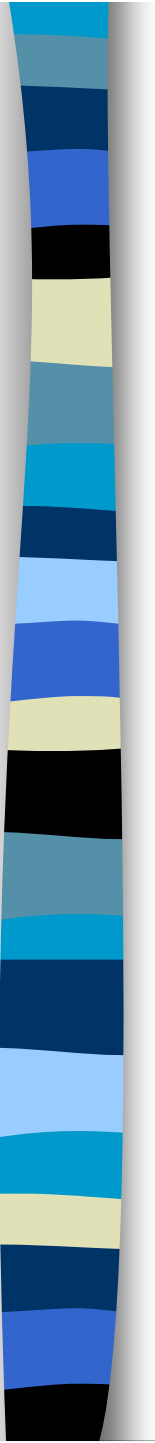
## Review Team Findings on Polaris Academy: Education Plan (cont.)

- Inadequacies in description of student assessment include:
  - Lack of benchmark assessments within the application.
    - No discussion of PA Mathematics and Science Assessment Anchors.
      - There was mention of using 4Sight assessments at the site visit. Neither the plan for implementation nor the budget to support this testing was provided.
    - No schedule of periodic benchmark assessments was provided.
    - “Teacher-made” tests were discussed at the site visit but were not included in the application. There is no evidence these would be based on standards aligned with the 4Sight test, the textbook, or the curriculum.



## Review Team Findings on Polaris Academy: Education Plan (cont.)

- No evidence of a detailed plan for professional development.
  - The applicant does not provide targeted professional development aligned to state standards to assist teachers in delivering instruction that results in students mastering required skills and content at each grade level.
  - No detail was provided on instructional strategies to be used by teachers.
    - Instructional strategies will vary from teacher to teacher “to bring their students to a mastery level” (pg. 60).



## Review Team Findings on Polaris Academy: Education Plan (cont.)

- Applicant could not demonstrate a working knowledge of Chapter 711 or disability categories during the site visit and could not articulate how it will deliver appropriate services to accommodate students with special needs.
  - The applicants do not plan to provide a full continuum for students with special needs. During the interview, the applicants stated that they had “no plans for a resource room unless at least 10 special education students required it.” Legally, if a student arrives with an IEP which includes service delivery in a resource room, that requirement must be met. An IEP is a legal document in which services cannot be eliminated because of miscellaneous reasons, such as not having a group size of 10.



## Review Team Findings on Polaris Academy: Personnel

- Applicants have no experience with teaching at a secondary level.



## Proposed Facility for Polaris Academy

- An on-site inspection of the proposed facility was conducted on January 12, 2007, and the following deficiencies were noted:
  - Modifications will be required to the building's ventilation system
  - ADA accessibility improvements must be made
  - The building's fire tower doors do not seal or engage properly and will require, along with other exit way doors, complete hardware replacement to comply with current code.
- The use of this building as a charter school cannot be endorsed without some specific plan for addressing the ventilation, accessibility, and fire door issues. If appropriate renovations are undertaken and completed, this building could serve as a quality educational facility.



# Review Team's Findings and Recommendations on the Application from Polaris Academy

## FINAL CHECKLIST FOR COMPLIANCE UNDER ACT 22

*Charter schools must meet the following criteria under this Act. Please indicate whether or not each individual criterion has been met.*

- |  |                    |                   |
|--|--------------------|-------------------|
| Is the charter nonsectarian and nonprofit?   | <u>X</u> _____ Yes | _____ No          |
| Does it continue to have sustained support from teachers, parents, students and the community?   | _____ Yes          | <u>X</u> _____ No |
| Does it agree to enroll all students who wish to attend, conduct a lottery if the school is oversubscribed, and only give preference to students whose parents have been involved in the process to plan the school?                       | <u>X</u> _____ Yes | _____ No          |
| Does the charter provide the School District of Pittsburgh with expanded choices in the type of educational opportunities currently being offered by the school system, and is it able to serve as a model to other schools in the system? | _____ Yes          | <u>X</u> _____ No |
| Does the charter have plans to meet the needs of students with disabilities, bilingual, and at-risk students?  | _____ Yes          | <u>X</u> _____ No |
| Does the charter comply with all federal, state, and local regulations pertaining to the health, safety, civil rights, and education of students?  | _____ Yes          | <u>X</u> _____ No |



## Review Team's Findings and Recommendations on Polaris Academy

- Do you (the team members) think this application from Polaris Academy should be approved? \_\_\_\_Yes      X\_\_\_\_No
  
- Reasons:
  - ✓ Charter does not have sustained support from parents, teachers, and the community.
  - ✓ Charter applicant fails to demonstrate its capability to provide comprehensive learning experiences to students pursuant to the proposed charter.
  - ✓ Charter applicant does not provide expanded choice and cannot serve as a model for Pittsburgh Public Schools.
  - ✓ Charter does not have plans to meet the needs of students with disabilities, bilingual, and at-risk students.
  - ✓ Charter does not comply with all federal, state, and local regulations pertaining to the health, safety, civil rights and education of students.
  - ✓ Charter applicant failed to complete the requirements of the application as required by PA Charter School Law, sections 1717-A and 1719-A.





# Three Rivers Youth Leadership Academy



# Members of the Review Team for Three Rivers Youth Leadership Academy

- Dalhart Dobbs -Chair
  - Principal, Student Achievement Center
- John Garrow
  - Director of Child Accounting, Pittsburgh Public Schools
- Tracey Gilliard
  - Budget Development Supervisor, Pittsburgh Public Schools
- Melvin Hubbard El
  - Parent of a Pittsburgh Public Schools student
- Toni Kendrick
  - Principal, Allegheny Traditional Academy Middle School
- Vidya Patil
  - Chief of Construction, Pittsburgh Public Schools
- Susan Wiegand
  - Special Education Specialist, Pittsburgh Public Schools



## TRYLA Application Review Process

- The application was submitted on November 15, 2006.
- A public hearing was held for the applicant on December 6, 2006.
- A site visit was made by the review team on January 4, 2007.
- The review team's recommendation is being brought forward today, February 6, 2007, for the Board's review.
- The formal Board vote on this application is scheduled for February 14, 2007.



# Background on Proposed Charter School

- Number of Students
  - Year 1: 75 – Grade 9
  - Year 2: 150 – Grades 9-10
  - Year 3: 225 – Grades 9-11
  - Year 4: 300 – Grades 9-12
  - Year 5: 300 – Grades 9-12
- Grades Served: 9-12
- Community to Be Served
  - All Pittsburgh communities
- Length of School Calendar
  - 192 days
- Proposed Location
  - East Liberty: 6117 Broad Street



## Review Team Findings on Three Rivers Youth Leadership Academy (TRYLA)

- The following items are deficient and are significant weaknesses in the application:
  - Mission, Purpose and Needs, and Marketing Data
  - Strategic Planning
  - Management Plan
  - Education Plan



## Review Team Findings on TRYLA: Mission

- The mission statement makes no mention of leadership, which is the core reason for the Applicant's claim of innovation.



## Review Team Findings on TRYLA: Purpose and Needs

- Applicant fails to address how it has considered the needs of all students:
  - Applicant states “school districts do not welcome students from residential group home settings with open arms.” (pg. 12) However, the School District of Pittsburgh does welcome and place students from residential home settings within its schools daily as student needs arise.
  - Applicant states its target audience is students who are affected by poverty, violence, abuse and neglect, but could not explain during the site visit how it would attract a student who is not a part of this target audience or who is already an excellent student academically.



## Review Team Findings on TRYLA: Purpose and Needs (cont.)

- Applicant fails to demonstrate how it will provide expanded opportunities beyond those currently provided by PPS. The following components of the application are already offered by PPS or one of its existing charter schools:
  - Extended school day and year – This is not evident in the charter application.
    - *City Charter High School currently provides an extended school day and year,*
  - Gender-based design for life and leadership – There is no program in the application supporting this.
    - *PPS offerings include, but are not limited to, Best Friends, Best Men, etc.*





## Review Team Findings on TRYLA: Purpose and Needs (cont.)

- The following components of the application are already offered by PPS or one of its existing charter schools (cont.)
  - Leadership development – This is not evident in the application.
    - *PPS offerings include but are not limited to leadership and student government, community service and leadership activities, student clubs—such as Family Career Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) and Health Occupations Students of America (HOSA).*
  - Strengthening of core academic skills – This cannot be attested to without the presence of curriculum, which the application lacks.
    - PPS offerings include, but are not limited to, extended day programming, and tutoring partnerships such as the Career Literacy for African American Youth Program.



## Review Team Findings on TRYLA: Purpose and Needs (cont.)

- The following components of the application are already offered by PPS or one of its existing charter schools (cont.)
  - Coordinated curriculum aligned with state standards – The application did not contain a curriculum.
    - PPS' curriculum is coordinated and aligned. All public school entities, including charter schools, are required by law to coordinate and align their curriculum with state standards.
  - Coordinated social services that address physical and mental issues for students.
    - PPS provides coordinated social services that by law include all public school entities and charter schools all of which are required to provide services to students who are identified with physical and mental issues.



## Review Team Findings on TRYLA: Purpose and Needs (cont.)

- The following components of the application are already offered by PPS or one of its existing charter schools (cont.)
  - Intimate school with smaller class sizes
    - *PPS currently provides sheltered, small learning environments and small classes for special needs students at a ratio of 1 teacher to 17 students.*
  - Community partnerships that strengthen the concept (of the proposed charter) - This was not evident in the application.
    - *PPS has a wealth of community partnerships that strengthen the district's academic and social goals for students, including leadership.*



## Review Team Findings on TRYLA: Purpose and Needs (cont.)

- The following components of the application are already offered by PPS or one of its existing charter schools (cont.)
  - Expanded professional development of teachers (although no evidence of this was provided in the actual application or during the site visit)
    - *PPS currently has a wide array of in-house professional development, as well as active partnerships with the Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers (PFT), Education Research and Dissemination Program (ER&D), the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), and the Pittsburgh Teachers Institute (PTI), among others*



## Review Team Findings on TRYLA: Purpose and Needs (cont.)

- There is a lack of support for the school:
  - The East Liberty community support—the community in which the school proposes to establish itself—is not evident.
    - Support hails from Brighton Road near the location of the Three Rivers Youth Council’s current operations.
    - Additional support is provided from Three Rivers Youth Council’s current relationships with other youth service agencies/organizations and state and local representatives.
    - There are no letters of support from parents or post-secondary training institutions.
    - No teachers or parents were present at the public hearing to provide testimony to support the proposed charter.



## Review Team Findings on TRYLA: Strategic Planning

- Goals are associated with the mission statement are unrealistic, vague and not measurable.
  - There are no target dates for measurable annual goals.
  - Data collection for goals is not evident.
  - No specific measurement devices available.



## Review Team Findings on TRYLA: Strategic Planning (cont.)

- Goals are associated with the mission statement, but they are unrealistic, vague and not measurable. (cont.)
  - One goal states “students will meet the charter school’s established leadership benchmarks” (pg. 21). These benchmarks were not evidenced in the application.
  - Another goal states the charter will “create new professional opportunities for teachers being responsible for the learning program at the school” (pg 21). However, the professional development calendar (pg. 80) does not identify what professional development will take place.



## Review Team Findings on TRYLA: Management Plan

- Applicant provides templates of policies and procedures that are from Three Rivers Youth Council in order to address many of the aspects of both the management and education plans within this application.
  - These documents from Three Rivers Youth Council are not designed for a charter school and contradict policies and procedures of the proposed school, as well as requirements of the Public School Code.





## Review Team Findings on TRYLA: Management Plan (cont.)

- Applicant proposes Three Rivers Youth Council as its external management agency but fails to provide an operating agreement between the proposed charter and the Council.
  - This was addressed at the site visit, and the Applicant stated that such an agreement did not exist.
  - Three Rivers Youth Council employees will also be responsible for staffing the charter school. Aside from actual teachers, there will not be a separate staff for the charter. Some non-teaching positions—such as the school counselor—require under the PA Code specific certification to work in a school. The Applicant does not express an understanding of these requirements.



## Review Team Findings on TRYLA: Management Plan (cont.)

- Admissions policy and criteria state that enrollment is open to PPS students; however, there is mention of preference being given to youth who attend Three Rivers Youth Council's program and services (p 27)
  - Over 50% of these students are from the Philadelphia area living in Three Rivers Youth Council's shelters.
  - When asked about enrollment of students outside of Three Rivers Youth Council programs, the Applicant stated that "parents would probably not want to send their child to the school because of the types of children who would be attending the school."



## Review Team Findings on TRYLA: Management Plan

- Applicant provided no evidence or plan to raise the parent's awareness of the special education services or a plan for systematic screenings as required by the Commonwealth.
  - PA Code Chapter 711.21 states, "to enable the Commonwealth to meet its obligations under 34 CFR 300.125 (relating to child find), each charter school shall establish written policies and procedures to ensure that all children with disabilities that are enrolled in the charter school, and who are in need of special education and related services, are identified, located, and evaluated. These policies shall include:
    - Public awareness activities sufficient to inform parents of children applying to or enrolled in the charter school of available special education services and programs and how to request those services and programs.
    - Systematic screening activities that lead to the identification, location and evaluation of children with disabilities enrolled in the charter school.



## Review Team Findings on TRYLA: Management Plan (cont.)

- Applicant was unable to demonstrate a working knowledge of Chapter 711 regulations pertaining to students with disabilities.
  - During the interview process, the Applicant was unsure of many of the terms and procedures of Special Education and how services are delivered.
  - Applicant does not display an understanding of inclusion and the least restrictive educational environment. There was evidence that the applicant's knowledge of accommodations for children with disabilities was lacking.
    - There is no mention as to how students are to benefit from regular education environment to the maximum extent with accommodations, modifications and adaptations.
      - Applicant made reference to many technological devices such as computers, laptops, blue tooth as accommodations for students with disabilities as the single strategy for students with disabilities.



## Review Team Findings on TRYLA: Management Plan (cont.)

- Applicant did not demonstrate any instances of parent involvement in the planning of the school.



## Review Team Findings on TRYLA: Management Plan (cont.)

- Applicant fails to provide a comprehensive staff development plan.
  - This was addressed at the interview where the applicant stated there would be rigorous staff development in the Leadership Curriculum, differentiated instruction and IDEIA regulations. The Applicant has only five days scheduled prior to school to accomplish these trainings.
  - Professional development is mentioned throughout the application and professional development days are built into the schedule. However, there is no defined focus and nothing related to curriculum planning, teaching methods, lesson planning, or anything having to do with the instruction of students.



## Review Team Findings on TRYLA: Education Plan

- Applicant does not provide an actual curriculum aligned to PA Standards.
  - Applicant lists various strategies and programs mistaking these for a curriculum. Examples include:
    - Applicant plans to use “Universal Design for Instruction,” which is the product of a group of architects, product designers, engineers and environmental design researchers from North Carolina State University. The seven principals that comprise the “Universal Design for Instruction” are not a curriculum but are instead meant to create ideal environmental conditions that are accessible and
    - Applicant references Writing Across the Curriculum and Gender-based strategies, both of which are used extensively across the Pittsburgh Public Schools at the present time.



## Review Team Findings on TRYLA: Education Plan (cont.)

- There is no mention of the teaching of leadership—the promised “unique” and “innovative” aspect of the charter—in any of the course descriptions.
- Applicant does not evidence accurate knowledge of PA graduation requirements.
  - No mention of a Graduation or Culminating Project is provided in the application.





## Review Team Findings on TRYLA: Education Plan (cont.)

- Assessment issues include:
  - Prescribed “over-testing” indicates a lack of assessment knowledge and knowledge of compliance reporting in general. Applicant proposes to include:
    - “Data based test selection developed by teachers”
    - Terra Nova
    - Iowa (pre- and post-test full battery)
    - PSSA (Reading, Math, Writing and Science)
    - Unit/Block/Term Exams 6 times during the year
    - SAT and PSAT and NOCTI



## Review Team Findings on TRYLA: Education Plan (cont.)

- Proposed length of school day is from 8:30 a.m to 3:05 p.m., actually ½ hour shorter than the school day of students in PPS High Schools, or a total of 2.5 less hours of education per week.



## Review Team Findings on TRYLA: Education Plan (cont.)

- Applicant references differentiated instruction but shows only rudimentary understanding of what is required.
  - Minimal time (5 days) has been provided for this staff development before the start of the school year, which is insufficient. Differentiated instruction requires multiple staff development sessions, ongoing practice, and coaching support, none of which is evidenced in this application or during the site visit.
- Differentiated instruction is not a unique approach. It is used extensively in Pittsburgh Public Schools at the present time.



## Review Team Findings on TRYLA: Personnel

- Information presented on key personnel was thorough.
- Application lacking in special education consultation and input, as well as proposed community member input.



## Proposed Facility for TRYLA:

- An on-site inspection was conducted on January 4, 2007. The following deficiencies were noted:
  - Existing configuration is for a business, not a school.
    - The first year of operation would require at least 5 classrooms for projected 15 students per classroom.
    - Rooms on second floor slated for offices and small group work were small.
  - Plans submitted show inadequacies that would still need to be reviewed by the Bureau of Building Inspections regarding code compliance. Pending that outcome, significant renovations will have to be made before this building could be endorsed as a school.



# Review Team Findings and Recommendations on TRYLA Application

## FINAL CHECKLIST FOR COMPLIANCE UNDER ACT 22

*Charter schools must meet the following criteria under this Act. Please indicate whether or not each individual criterion has been met.*

- Is the charter nonsectarian and nonprofit?                     X                     Yes                      No
- Does it continue to have sustained support from teachers, parents, students and the community?                      Yes                     X                     No
- Does it agree to enroll all students who wish to attend, conduct a lottery if the school is oversubscribed, and only give preference to students whose parents have been involved in the process to plan the school?                      Yes                     X                     No
- Does the charter provide the School District of Pittsburgh with expanded choices in the type of educational opportunities currently being offered by the school system, and is it able to serve as a model to other schools in the system?                      Yes                     X                     No
- Does the charter have plans to meet the needs of students with disabilities, bilingual, and at-risk students?                      Yes                     X                     No
- Does the charter comply with all federal, state, and local regulations pertaining to the health, safety, civil rights, and education of students?                      Yes                     X                     No



## Review Team's Findings and Recommendations on TRYLA Application

- Do you (the team members) think this application from Three Rivers Youth Leadership Academy should be approved? \_\_Yes      XNo
  
- Reasons:
  - ✓ Charter does not have sustained support from parents, teachers, and the community.
  - ✓ Charter applicant fails to demonstrate its capability to provide comprehensive learning experiences to students pursuant to the proposed charter.
  - ✓ Charter does not agree to enroll all students who wish to attend, conduct a lottery if the school is oversubscribed, and only give preference to students whose parents have been involved in the process to plan the school.
  - ✓ Charter applicant does not provide expanded choice and cannot serve as a model for Pittsburgh Public Schools.
  - ✓ Charter does not have plans to meet the needs of students with disabilities, bilingual, and at-risk students.
  - ✓ Charter does not comply with all federal, state, and local regulations pertaining to the health, safety, civil rights and education of students.
  - ✓ Charter applicant failed to complete the requirements of the application as required by PA Charter School Law, sections 1717-A and 1719-A.

# Recommendations and Findings of the Review Teams for “Education InnovationsLAB, Polaris Academy, and Three Rivers Youth Leadership Academy” Charter School Applications

Pittsburgh Board of Education  
Education Committee Meeting  
February 6, 2007