

Scoring Sheet: Pittsburgh Public Schools Charter Application Review Process

Name of Charter Applicant: The Education Innovations LAB Charter School

Name of Review Team Reviewer: Frances Doyle, Jack Garrow, Lisa Gonzalez, Regina Holley, Craig Jackson, Cheryl Kennedy, Reverend Darnell Leonard, Rudley Mrvos, Vidya Patil, Susan Sauer, Damen Taylor

Date of Score Submission: February 2, 2007

<u>Section</u>	<u>Possible Points</u>	<u>Actual Points</u>
Part I: Mission, Purpose and Needs, and Marketing Data:		
a) mission statement	18	<u>15</u>
b) purpose and needs	18	<u>5</u>
c) marketing data	18	<u>10</u>

Notes:

The applicants provide a well written mission with the exception of the example of the "Hill" (i.e., Hill District) as a typical depiction of Pittsburgh neighborhoods. Specifically the applicants state, "Throughout this needs section of the charter application, we use the Hill District of Pittsburgh as a typical neighborhood in decline in Pittsburgh (and representative of the typical neighborhood from which students in the Pittsburgh Public Schools come)".

The applicants describe the needs of the students and the community based on various data sources (P. 47 of 84). Data scores include PSSA results for reading and mathematics for low income and African Americans and general statements of neighborhood low levels of higher education rates, high drug and crime rates, and a low workforce participation rate. The needs section outlines the achievement gap across the district. The applicant concludes with the following statement, "With an inadequate primary education experience, no access to higher education, and a lack of marketable job skills, the social fabric of the community is in shambles" (P. 49 of 84). Yet, the educational program proposed does not address the severity of those needs and the educational intensity that is required to address such critical learning and teaching issues.

The rationale for the type of educational program that is described needs further clarification as to how it relates to these needs. It is not fully articulated why this charter school model is an appropriate vehicle to address the achievement gap, in particular in closing the gap in reading and mathematics of students residing within the Pittsburgh Public Schools.

The applicants describe the need to invest in the community but there is little evidence of parental involvement, business, and organizations involvement where the charter is proposing to be located. Different layers of the educational process are described, yet the parents have a limited voice in that process. For example parents will serve on committees concerning school wide projects, volunteer activities, fundraising and event planning (P 43 of 84) but not a voice on committee for curriculum development and policy development decisions concerning suspension and expulsion.

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Part II: Strategic Planning:

a) measurable goals and objectives	18	<u>5</u>
b) best practices and habits of practice	18	<u>5</u>
c) school improvement planning	18	<u>0</u>

Notes:

The applicants describe the mission of the charter as; "to create a nurturing environment where students and teachers connect to the community through rigorous, integrative program of studies that focuses on creative problem-solving and critical thinking". They provide a further explanation of a rigorous program as a program that, "prepares students for life, work, higher education, and citizenship, and instills in them an ongoing love for learning". Yet, the goals could be more appropriate to the scope of the project given this mission.

The goals imply "over-testing" and in particular PSSA practice testing every report period, which will divert efforts from the proposed mission. For example, teacher professionals will monitor and report classroom-level data on a six-day basis and they will immediately respond to the changing needs of students, teachers will prepare and practice for the PSSA every report period, teachers monitor data-based curriculum development at the classroom level on a weekly basis using data collected through the daily learning process (P. 7 of 84). These are indicators of potential "over testing". The Dibels, Terra Nova, PSSA, Gates-MacGinitie, CTB Writing and DRA along with the previous assessment measures will be instituted (P. 40 of 84 and P. 41 of 84).

A graphic representation of a Yearly Assessment Schedule was not included that would illustrate not only timelines, but the alignment between needs, assessments, standards, curriculum, accountability goals, human resources and fiscal resources. A disconnect between the various data collection systems and how resources both fiscal and human will be deployed to ensure the educational process is not interrupted exists.

The applicants provide a less 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.

In the Year 2007-2008 the applicants does not accurately address the development of a School Improvement Plan but instead state they will "create a school improvement plan" if in "Corrective Action".

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<u>Section</u>	<u>Possible Points</u>	<u>Actual Points</u>
Part III: Management Plan		
a) admissions policy and criteria	18	<u>12</u>
b) student discipline and expulsion criteria	18	<u>5</u>
c) governance (board)	18	<u>15</u>
d) plan for involvement of the community and the general public life of the school	18	<u>5</u>
e) description of how the charter will manage and administer the school	18	<u>12</u>
f) description of staff conditions, work, and professional development	18	<u>5</u>

Notes:

The applicant describes the student capacity with an enrollment of one hundred and eighty (180) kindergartens to seventh grade students the first year. The applicants described during the interview process enrollments have been confirmed and will include students from the Pittsburgh Public Schools and the suburban schools. A compulsory attendance policy is included.

The applicant description of suspension and expulsion policies for students with disabilities is not innovative nor a model which would be implemented by the Pittsburgh Public Schools. The applicants outline a "Zero Tolerance" Policy for bullying, continued intimidation, threatening and/or physical actions motivated by prejudice and hate which would result in expulsion from the charter. Given the needs of students described in the mission and vision statement, innovative services and supports is needed, but not proposed. Suspension and expulsion are traditional practices and policies that have little to no impact on increasing positive behaviors or closing the achievement gap for struggling learners the applicants describe in their mission and needs statements.

The applicants provide no plan for Alternative Education Programs or Placement (e.g., Pittsburgh Public Schools has designed the Student Achievement Center for this purpose) of general education or special education students requiring a long term suspension due to disciplinary action.

The Professional Development Plan does not include strategic planning, expectations, or accountability for all educational programs and staff. No evidence of a comprehensive, high quality, sustainable, long term professional development plan. A detailed "Professional Development Calendar" that identifies topics, audience, dates, times, location, evaluation measures, implementation and follow up plans was not provided. Particularly, the six (6) day rotation is not defined, as to what teachers will be doing on day 6 for which they are scheduled for professional development. Additionally, what will teachers are held accountable for as a result of attending professional development activities, how will follow up occur in the classroom and school wide, who will evaluate the follow up in the classroom and school wide, and how will ongoing training be organized given school wide and individual teacher needs. Basic details such as who is responsible for organizing professional development activities such as the logistics, content, evaluation, and monitoring of professional development plans is unclear. Furthermore, a plan for concrete professional development to ensure proper implementation of the various educational programs is not evident.

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Notes:

The applicants do not provide a description of a plan to train and support teachers in how they will supplement the "software curriculum".

Part IV: Education Plan

a) education program	18	<u>6</u>
b) accountability, student assessment, and evaluation	18	<u>6</u>
c) meeting the needs of at-risk students, bilingual students, and students with disabilities	18	<u>6</u>

Notes:

The plan for curriculum development is unclear. What curriculum are the teachers developing? What training is being offered to them to enable the writing of effective, efficient, and quality curriculum? It is unclear as to how teachers will participate in professional development every 6th day, conduct research of such quality for publication in peer reviewed journals, and develop curriculum simultaneously. These plans to hold the teachers accountable for various activities including curriculum development are of concern. The task of curriculum development alone requires a deep knowledge base, extensively training and teaching experience to sufficiently write curriculum which is not addressed in the education plan.

EILAB Charter School 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
- Teacher developed reading Curriculum

These programs selected by the applicants cannot serve as a core reading program—neither together nor separately—as they are intended to be supplementary programs and have not been proven to be valid, effective, research-based programs resulting in gains for students.

"Comprehensive Core Reading Programs are intended to be the instructional tool used to guide high quality instruction in grades 1-3. 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".

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

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Notes:

1). Program Efficacy

Neither Destination Success nor 100 Book Challenge had evidence of program efficacy established through carefully designed experimental studies. When asked, Destination Success representatives (Site Visit Interview, January 10, 2007) could not provide evidence of classrooms or schools with similar demographics of learning profiles where the program was tested as a core reading program.

The 100 Book Challenge was reviewed by the Florida Center for Reading Research. The report indicates that three studies were conducted to evaluate the reading achievement of participating students. In 1999, Ducette reported on data collected from approximately 2,000 first, second, and third grade students in 12 elementary schools in Philadelphia that were participating in the *100 Book Challenge Program*. In a quasi-experimental design, classrooms volunteered to participate and were compared to a control group of classrooms within each school that did not volunteer. Students were not matched and no pretest was given. Data provided were derived from the end of the year administration of the reading achievement section of the SAT-9. Though students in the treatment group achieved a higher score on the open-ended section of the SAT-9, these results are ambiguous with regard to the effectiveness of the program. When groups are not matched on a number of variables or on a pretest, there is a risk that the two seemingly equivalent groups may have some notable dimension that is significantly different and that may have influenced the experimental results. In addition, there is at least a reasonable possibility that teachers who volunteer to try a new program are different in systematic and important ways from those who do not.

In 2001, Ducette conducted a second evaluation with second and third graders using 10 schools participating in the *100 Book Challenge Program* in a Philadelphia school district. Twenty schools chosen as the comparison group were matched on four variables: Achievement Accountability Index Scores, grade range serviced in the school, poverty level of the students, and racial distribution of the students. Each treatment school was matched with two comparison schools, one immediately above the treatment school in rank order on the Achievement Accountability Index Score, and one immediately below. No pretest data was collected on student achievement for students in the experimental and control schools. Results showed second grade students in treatment classrooms scored higher on the open-ended portion of the SAT-9, while third grade differences were not significant. The weaknesses in this study included lack of random assignment to the instructional and control condition and uncertainties about comparability of the experimental and control students at the beginning of the year. The fact that results were inconsistent between second and third grade students raises questions about the way the program may have been implemented at these two grade levels.

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Notes:

A third study conducted in 2004 by Offenbergl compared 89 different Philadelphia schools; fourteen schools that provided the *100 Book Challenge* Program to all first through third grade students, and seventy-five comparison schools that did not offer the program. Analysis of student outcome data showed that pupils attending schools that used the *100 Book Challenge Program* had significantly higher test scores on the TerraNova reading test than comparison school students. However, there is at least one important weakness in this study. Although attempts were made to match the treatment and control groups based on student demographic variables and first grade reading scores, comparison-group designs of this type may produce inaccurate estimates of an intervention's effect. This is because of unobservable differences between the members of the two groups that differentially affect their outcomes. For example, if participants volunteer for the intervention, as these *100 Book Challenge* participants did, they may be more motivated to succeed than their control-group counterparts. Their motivation, rather than the intervention, may then lead to their superior outcomes. Many comparison-group designs in education and other areas produce inaccurate estimates of an intervention's effect. The FCRR stated that future studies that employ control groups and include random assignment to groups would need to be conducted to further establish the evidence base for this program.

[Cited: Florida Center for Reading Research Report. 2002. DuCette, J. (1999). *An evaluation of the 100 book challenge program* (monograph). Philadelphia, PA, Temple University; DuCette, J. (2001). *An evaluation of the 100 book challenge program in the schools funded by the William Penn Foundation* (monograph). Philadelphia, PA, Temple University; Offenbergl, R. (2005). *Evaluation of American reading company's 100 book challenge reading program* (monograph). Tallahassee, FL.]

2). The use of supplementary programs as core instruction

Destination Success had only been used as a supplementary program in other schools/districts. Although the program does provide a scope and sequence that includes instruction in each of the five critical areas of reading instruction, it was indicated that the teachers would have the latitude to modify the progression which could result in less effective instructional outcomes for students.

In December, 2002 **Destination Success** was reviewed by the Florida Center for Reading Research as a supplemental program: "Destination Success 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).

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100 Book Challenge is an independent reading motivation program that provides students with opportunities to learn the habits of independent reading.

In November, 2006, 100 Book Challenge was reviewed as a supplemental program by the Florida Center for Reading Research: "100 Book Challenge, provided by American Reading Program, is a supplemental independent reading motivation program." Because the purpose of the 100 Book Challenge is not to provide reading instruction, the Florida Center for Reading Research could not evaluate it for evidence of scientifically based reading research. "Since the purpose of the 100 Book Challenge is not to provide reading 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) and would therefore, not meet the criteria for a scientifically based core reading program."

The FCRR report indicates that the program 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.

[Cited: 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.].

The applicants state they will use learning labs to promote inquiry-based teaching and learning. The application does not contain a full description of specific inquiry based teaching strategies. A clear professional development plan for training of teachers, assessing of teachers implementation of these strategies does not exist

The applicants do not propose innovative programs, practices or service delivery options for the range of individuals with disabilities that may wish to enroll. A collection of educational practices is described, but programs are not described. Instead of a detailed description of program offerings (e.g., self-contained service option or resource room service option) the applicant list general teaching strategies which would be used "depending on the needs of students" (P. 31 of 84).

Overall the education plan does not offer innovative or expanded choice. The plan for curriculum, instruction, and professional development is not thoroughly planned and can not serve as a model for other schools within the district.

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<u>Section</u>	<u>Possible Points</u>	<u>Actual Points</u>
Part V: Operations		
a) budget and fiscal operations	18	<u>12</u>
b) facilities, transportation, and food services	18	<u>6</u>
c) liabilities, insurance, and risk management	18	<u>12</u>
d) legal issues	18	<u>12</u>

Notes:

The Food Service Plan is vague. "The current plans for food service will include vending machine areas. Students will be expected to bring their own lunch" (P 79 of 84). The applicant does not include the National School Meal Program, which would include the provision of free-and-reduced meals and also would provide adequate nutritional meals.

An onsite 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.

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Part VI: Personnel/Leaders

a) information on key personnel	18	17
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Notes:

Key personnel are listed. Including the for profit organization, Total Learning Center.

TOTAL	360	171
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What the score means:

- components scoring at 18 meet the full requirements of the application
- components scoring at 12 meet some of requirements of the application
- components scoring at 6 fail to meet the requirements of the application

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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 school nonsectarian and nonprofit?

Yes No

Does it 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 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?

Yes No

Does the charter have plans to meet the needs of students with disabilities, bilingual students, 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

Use the space below for any additional comments concerning the application:

Do you think this application should be approved? Yes No

Use the space provided below to state your reasons. Why do you think that this application should or should not be approved. Use additional space if necessary.

Team Member's Signature

Date