



May 9, 2025

**Gwinnett County
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**The Mission of
Gwinnett County
Public Schools**

is to pursue excellence in academic knowledge, skills, and behavior for each student, resulting in measured improvement against local, national, and world-class standards.

State Charter Schools Commission of Georgia
c/o Guin Jones and Allen Mueller
2 Martin Luther King Jr. Drive SE
1356 Twin Towers East
Atlanta, GA 30334

Gwinnett County Public Schools (GCPS) received a letter of intent from The Meliora School on October 11, 2024. The petitioner voluntarily moved forward in the district's process and submitted the full petition for a start-up charter school proposing to open 2026-2027 on January 24, 2025. The Board of Education voted to deny the Meliora School's petition on April 17, 2025.

GCPS 2025 Charter Petition Review Cycle

After receiving the petition on January 24, 2025, the district's review committee evaluated the petition in its entirety and engaged with the petitioners throughout the initial process. The district also hosted The Meliora School for a 90-minute panel interview on March 6, 2025, with members of the district's review committee.

Upon completion of all review cycle activities, the committee recommended that the Board of Education deny The Meliora School's petition. The Gwinnett County Board of Education voted with a majority to deny The Meliora School's petition at the regular business meeting on April 17, 2025. Documentation of the board's vote will be provided to the SCSC on Friday, May 16, 2025, after the Board of Education formally approves the April 17 minutes at their regular business meeting, Thursday, May 15, 2025. Please note that the review and final vote were completed within 90-days of the petition's submission; *SB 82, Section 3, Subsection (b), 69-70.*

Reasons for Denial

- The following legal insufficiencies render this petition irreparable for the 2025 Review Cycle; *SB 82, Section 3, Subsection (d)(2), 85-86:*
 1. Special Education Services
 - The petition had insufficient detail on how individualized education plans (IEPs) will be developed, implemented, and monitored to ensure compliance with federal and state compliance, including the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) as well as state board rules and regulations.
 - The application does not sufficiently describe how the school will meet IDEA requirements (e.g. timely identification and evaluation of students, implementation of specially designed instruction as defined through a student's IEP, etc.).

- During the interview, the charter school team was unable to adequately describe or explain how the school would operationalize required supports, services, and practices to ensure compliance with IDEA.
 - Page 38 also references that school may need more detail regarding the specific services they will request from the district (3% fee). During the interview, the charter school team was not able to articulate what special education supports they will need from the district. GCPS will be the Local Education Agency (LEA). As a result, we are ultimately responsible for any dispute resolution matters including state complaint filings and due process filings.
 - The proposed limited special education certified staff would not be able to provide the full continuum of services required for students with IEPs. At the same time, while the proposed budget has passed the committee's review, the necessary staff required for special education would have a significant impact on the school's proposed budget.
 - The petition states that the school will offer the continuum of services, including co-teaching, resource room (not an option on the continuum), paraprofessional support, and specialized placements as needed to address individual student needs (see page 39, paragraph 1). However, their current staffing model of hiring two special education teachers will not afford the school the opportunity to offer the continuum of services as defined by IDEA.
 - The interview team was specifically asked what and how special education services would be offered. The members of the charter school team were not able to address how they would meet the needs of students who have needs beyond what they could offer based on their proposed staffing model. The application also references that the school would be able to offer paraprofessional support, however the hiring of paraprofessionals is not a part of their staffing model.
2. Counseling and Student Services
- The petition and panel interview responses provided little evidence of the comprehensive counseling services required to meet the diverse needs of the student population (see pages 43-45). While the petitioner states certified counselors will be hired, the committee was not satisfied with their approach in serving tier 2 and tier 3 students with significant emotional needs.
 - The review committee members further probed during the panel interview regarding the implementation of the state-mandated counseling curriculum. The applicant did not list out or share in person an understanding of the requirements around the Bridge Bill

for the students served in their school. For each grade level 6-12 the state requires specific career and college exploration activities to be completed with all students and reported to the state. In addition, the applicant did not mention in the application or interview the understanding of the state requirement regarding personal safety lessons and the mandated suicide prevention lessons for students. Neither area of safety was addressed, which is concerning as both components are also mandated by the state. The petitioner's response did not meet the legal requirements for this provision.

- The petition does not provide a response plan for students in crisis or the explanation for the staffing needs or district support needs for this provision. It was not clear in the application or in the interview the plan to support a student in crisis of any sort, emergency housing, suicide ideation, food insecurity, or the process for DFCS referrals and or training. These needs are critical to the health and wellness of our students and require a structured and clear approach to support.

3. Title I Compliance

- The petition does not address the potential student population who qualify for free or reduced lunches. Therefore, the committee had no context to assess the potential Title I compliance needs and supports the school would require.

4. Due Process for Long-term Suspensions

- The petition did not include the due process for long-term suspensions (see pages 81-82). The petitioner was asked for clarification on the school's due process for long-term suspensions on February 28th, and they provided a timely response on March 5th. The clarified response as well as their provided explanation during the panel interview still did not meet the legal requirements for this provision.

5. Academic Program

- The proposed standards and the scope and sequence do not meet the legal requirements of this provision (see Exhibit 10, pages 139-261). The proposed academic standards included in the petition do not include all of the state standards in some of the courses, and do not reflect the correct state standards for mathematics and language arts courses. The proposed partnership with Khan Academy, one of the primary mediums for instruction, demonstrates an alignment with Common Core standards rather than the Georgia standards. This misalignment was addressed during the panel interview, and the interview team's response did not satisfy the district's evaluation.
- The petition provided little evidence for the school's approach in how they plan to meet the diverse academic and language acquisition

needs for multilingual learner students. The petition only cites two strategies. First, the petition names the use of the Sheltered Content Instruction model which only best serves a specific group of Multilingual Learner students. Second, the petition states the school will solely rely on the online platform IXL for its ESOL curriculum (see page 42, paragraphs 3 and 4). This limited approach will not serve all students that could enroll. The interview team was specifically asked how the school would serve county's diverse multilingual learner population, and the team did not provide an adequate response.

Existing School Choice Options

- Gwinnett County Public Schools provides a comprehensive menu of school choice options for students in the local school system; *SB 82, Section 3, Subsection (d)(2), 86-87*. All programs or schools are hyperlinked to their landing page to provide additional information. Student numbers presented are actual enrollment for the 24-25 school year or projected enrollment for the 25-26 school year.

1. [New Life Academy of Excellence Inc.](#) 614 students
2. [Maxwell High School of Technology](#) 1114 students
3. [Paul Duke STEM High School](#) 1468 students
4. [McClure Health Science High School](#) 1203 students
5. [Grayson Technical Education Program](#) 548 students
6. [Phoenix High School](#) 734 students
7. [CHARGEnorth](#) 381 students
8. [GIVE East Center](#) 516 students
9. [GIVE West Center](#) 361 students
10. [SOTA \(School of the Arts\)](#) 192 students
11. [Gwinnett School of Mathematics, Science, and Technology](#) 1269 students
12. [Gwinnett Online Campus](#) 2316 students
13. [Play 2 Learn](#) 2175 students
14. [North Metro Academy of Performing Arts](#) 182 students
15. [Anniston Elementary Spanish Dual Language Immersion](#) 240 students
16. [Baldwin Elementary Spanish Dual Language Immersion](#) 240 students
17. [Bethesda Elementary Spanish Dual Language Immersion](#) 450 students
18. [Camp Creek Elementary Spanish Dual Language Immersion](#) 270 students
19. [Hopkins Elementary Spanish Dual Language Immersion](#) 85 students
20. [Ivy Creek Elementary Spanish Dual Language Immersion](#) 270 students
21. [Level Creek Elementary Spanish Dual Language Immersion](#) 270 students
22. [Meadowcreek Elementary Spanish Dual Language Immersion](#) 240 students
23. [Mulberry Elementary Spanish Dual Language Immersion](#) 135 students

24. [Trip Elementary French Dual Language Immersion](#) 240 students
25. [Parsons Elementary Korean Dual Language Immersion](#) 240 students
26. [Jones Middle School Spanish Dual Language Immersion](#) 100 students
27. [North Gwinnett Middle School Spanish Dual Language Immersion](#) 40 students
28. [Radloff Middle School Spanish Dual Language Immersion](#) 40 students
29. [Shiloh Middle School Spanish Dual Language Immersion](#) 100 students
30. [Summerour Middle School Spanish Dual Language Immersion](#) 100 students
31. [Sweetwater Middle School Spanish Dual Language Immersion](#) 130 students
32. [Trickum Middle School Spanish Dual Language Immersion](#) 100 students
33. [Bay Creek Middle School French Dual Language Immersion](#) 100 students
34. [Hull Middle School Korean Dual Language Immersion](#) 100 students
35. [Berkmar High School Spanish Dual Language Immersion](#) 60 students
36. [Grayson High School French Dual Language Immersion](#) 50 students
37. [Shiloh High School Spanish Dual Language Immersion](#) 50 students
38. [Norcross High School Spanish Dual Language Immersion](#) 20 students projected
39. [Parkview High School Spanish Dual Language Immersion](#) 40 students projected
40. [Seckinger High School Spanish Dual Language Immersion](#) 30 students projected
41. [Paul Duke STEM Spanish Dual Language Immersion](#) 32 students
42. [Anderson-Livsey Elementary Pre-K Program](#) 32 students
43. [Beaver Ridge Elementary Pre-K Program](#) 32 students
44. [Benefield Elementary Pre-K Program](#) 32 students
45. [Hopkins Elementary Pre-K Program](#) 32 students
46. [Lawrenceville Elementary Pre-K Program](#) 32 students
47. [McKendree Elementary Pre-K Program](#) 32 students
48. [Nesbit Elementary Pre-K Program](#) 32 students
49. [Norton Elementary Pre-K Program](#) 32 students
50. [Norcross High School International Baccalaureate](#) 1447 students
51. [Shiloh High School International Baccalaureate](#) 70 students
52. [Shiloh Middle School International Baccalaureate](#) 230 students
53. [Peachtree Elementary School International Baccalaureate](#) 670 students
54. [Pinckneyville Middle School International Baccalaureate](#) 1111 students
55. [Summerour Middle School International Baccalaureate](#) 1301 students
56. [Norcross High School 3DE by Junior Achievement](#) 400 students
57. [South Gwinnett High School 3DE by Junior Achievement](#) 315 students
58. [Parkview High School 3DE by Junior Achievement](#) 406 students
59. [Mountain View High School SUMMIT](#) 159 students projected
60. 56 [middle](#) and [high schools](#) offer Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education Pathways 60731 students

District Academic Performance

- The academic performance for all 142 GCPs schools can be found at the following hyperlinked locations; *SB 82, Section 3, Subsection (d)(2), 87-88.*

- [GCPS School Profiles](#)
- [GCPS Milestones Data Dashboard](#)
- [GADOE Milestones Data Dashboard](#)
- [GOSA Dashboards, Data, Report Cards](#)
- [GADOE CCRPI Portal](#)

Gwinnett County Public Schools appreciated the opportunity to review The Meliora School's charter petition. The district embraces the opportunity to provide students a choice of educational experiences that align with the mission and vision of the Gwinnett County Board of Education. If you have additional questions or points of clarity regarding the district's review process, the Board's majority vote of denial, or any of the documentation provided in this letter, please reach out to Dr. Emily Coady at emily.coady@gcpsk12.org or at 470-589-0517.

In partnership,
DeNelle West
Chief Learning Officer