DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL BOARD

Charter Actions Requiring a Vote
☐ Approve a Charter Application
☐ Approve a Charter Renewal (15 yrs.)
☐ Approve Charter Continuance (5 or 10 yrs.)
☐ Approve a Charter Amendment Request
☐ Approve a Charter Agreement
☐ Give a Charter Notice of Concern
☐ Lift the Charter Notice of Concern
☐ Commence Charter Revocation Proceedings
☐ Revoke a Charter
☐ Board Action, Other

Non-Voting Board Items
☐ Public Hearing Item
☐ Discussion Item
☐ Read into Record

Policies
☐ Open a New Policy or Changes to a Policy for Public Comment
☐ Approve a New Policy
☐ Approve an Amendment to an Existing Policy

PREPARED BY: Katherine Dammann, Equity and Fidelity Specialist

SUBJECT: Charter Application – Citizens of the World DC – Vote

DATE: May 22, 2017

The following application to open a public charter school beginning in school year 2018-19 was submitted on March 10, 2017. It was released for public comment from March 14, 2017 through April 26, 2017, and a public hearing occurred on May 1, 2017. On March 14, 2017, the DC Public Charter School Board (“DC PCSB”) notified DC Councilmembers, Advisory Neighborhood Commissions, and the public via the DC Register and two newspapers of the applicants’ intent to open a public charter school in the District of Columbia. DC PCSB received the attached public comment in favor of the application.

Board Action
The DC Public Charter School Board (“DC PCSB”) staff requests that the board vote on the charter application of Citizens of the World DC.

Background
Citizens of the World – DC (“CWCDC”) proposes a diverse by design program that would serve students in grades prekindergarten-3 (“PK3”) though five by 2023-24, starting with 144 students in grades PK3 through kindergarten (KG) and growing one grade per year. It would also open a second campus in 2021-22. Its mission is “to provide students from across DC with an excellent public education focused on developing and demonstrating understanding while building connections within a diverse community.” CWCDC’s educational model is rooted in the theory of constructivism and relies on instructional strategies that allow students to construct their own knowledge (e.g. project-based learning). The proposed school intends to locate in Wards 1, 4 or 5, and recruit a racially and socioeconomically diverse student population. Citizens of the World Charter Schools (“CWC Schools”) would serve as the school management organization and sole member; CWC Schools is based in Los Angeles and operates schools there, in New York, and in Kansas City. CWC Schools has conducted extensive outreach in DC and recruited a large founding group with deep educational and operational experience.
in the District. At capacity, the LEA would serve 1,536 students in grades PK3 through five across both campuses.

**Analysis**

**Demonstrated Need for the School**
DC PCSB staff has concluded that the applicant has satisfied this component of the standard for approval. The applicant group showed existing demand for 18 diverse DC public charter school programs which they consider to be comparable to their proposed program. Additionally, the CWCDC founding group has conducted extensive and ongoing community outreach in DC. They have met with many local groups to understand the educational landscape and discuss the potential challenges of opening a school in the District, and elements of their application, such as offering prekindergarten, reflect learning from the community’s input. The team considered and planned for an expansion to DC for many years before submitting its application.

**Sufficient Progress in Developing the Plan**
DC PCSB staff has concluded that the applicant has partially satisfied this component of the standard for approval. The applicant’s education, operation, and finance plans are detailed and consistent with one another. The school proposes an academic model informed by the theory of constructivism, which is supported by a staffing model, curricular resources and instructional methods aligned to this approach. During the capacity interview, the applicant answered outstanding questions about staffing and operations, including assuring that teachers certified in English language instruction would be hired to provide instruction to English learners (ELs).

However, the growth plan for the school is aggressive and does not allow for adequate time to ensure that the first campus grows to full capacity successfully before opening a second campus. The proposed plan shows that the school would grow each year, starting with 144 students in grades PK3 through KG in the first year of operation and adding both new grades and additional seats to existing grades each year until the initial campus reaches capacity in its eighth year of operation (SY 2025-26). In year four of operation (SY 2021-22), the applicant wants to open a second campus which mirrors the enrollment of the first. The LEA will reach capacity with 1,536 students across both campuses in SY 2028-29. During the capacity interview, the applicant said they expect to have to meet academic targets before opening the second campus.

**Alignment with the Mission and Philosophy**
DC PCSB staff has concluded that the applicant has partially satisfied this component of the standard for approval. CWCDC has proposed an instructional approach, curriculum, and teaching methods aligned to the school’s mission. For example, the applicant adopted The Creative Curriculum for its PK program because it aligns with the school’s philosophical approach, using a project-based learning model to guide instruction. However, during site visits to New York, California, and Kansas City, DC PCSB staff did not observe instruction that was consistently aligned with the mission and philosophy laid out in the written application. Furthermore, the instructional philosophy and approach were not aligned across schools or even across classrooms within the same school.

**Inclusiveness**
DC PCSB staff has concluded that the applicant has satisfied this component of the standard for approval. The school’s educational philosophy and approach, rooted in diversity, lends itself to an inclusive school environment. The applicant’s proposed instructional methods, which include project-based learning, balanced literacy and
workshopping, and cognitively guided instruction, are intended to allow teachers to differentiate more easily and meet the needs of individual students. During the site visits, DC PCSB staff did not see the implementation of a full continuum of services for students with disabilities (SWD) due to the special education LEA structures. In both California and New York, the CWC schools are dependent, in some capacity, on the local public school district for special education funding and service provision. In Kansas City, where the school is independent from the school district and responsible for providing a full continuum of services, the school did not have students requiring a high number of hours of supports of specialized instruction and/or related services. The school had two special education instructors who conducted pull out and push-in support for students; and they anticipate enrolling and students with higher needs as the school grows. However, the thorough development of the written plan to serve all learners leads staff to believe the founding group can provide a full continuum of services at the DC school, which will be independent. DC PCSB staff did not have any compliance-related concerns about the applicant’s proposed plan to serve students with disabilities or English Learners.

**Founding Group Ability**

DC PCSB staff has concluded that the applicant has not satisfied this component of the standard for approval.

The founding team comprises members who have the combined skillset needed to build and implement its program, including many experienced DC school based personnel, a former Deputy Mayor for Education, representatives from KIPP DC PCS, DCPS, Building Hope, and independent education consultants. Also, the three proposed CWCDC board members have legal, educational, and management/finance expertise. However, no staff with CWC experience are identified or planned for the DC school opening. The founding team is in the final stages of hiring an Executive Director for the DC school.

Based on the proposed governance structure, CWC Schools, CWCDC’s management organization and sole member, would have significant power over the local school that does not strike the right balance between local board authority and necessary CMO control to ensure fidelity to the model. Through its counsel, the applicant has submitted a letter indicating willingness to negotiate or adjust some of these powers.

Further, the applicant has not demonstrated a history of strong academic results with student populations similar to those found in DC public schools. CWC Schools operates three schools in LA, which consistently perform on par with or above the state and district across all subgroups; two schools in New York City, which have struggled academically, as described below; and one school in Kansas City, which is in its first year of operations.

CWC Schools opened two schools in New York in 2012 and both underperform academically relative to the city and state. Data released by the New York charter school authorizer\(^1\) shows both CWC schools scoring up to 19 percentage points below the district and city averages. When opening in New York, CWC Schools faced significant community pushback and did not enroll a diverse student body at either new location. During the capacity interview, the CEO of CWC Schools was reflective about their experience in New York and that lessons learned in New York – specifically having a longer pre-application planning period and conducting more and earlier community

---

\(^1\) CWC Williamsburg performance data can be found here: http://bit.ly/2nDgNUZ
CWC Crown Heights performance data can be found here: http://bit.ly/2ovRGwe
engagement – have informed the DC application. She said that they have scaled back growth and are focused on serving the students in the school.

Site visits across the network revealed a lack of consistency in instructional approaches and implementation of elements of the CWC diversity by design model. DC PCSB staff did not uniformly see essential instructional elements of the program, as described in the written application, including inquiry based learning and differentiated instruction. Furthermore, the applicant articulated that there are some non-academic benefits to the diverse-by-design model, but could not explain what these benefits are or how they could be measured. It was unclear from the site visits how CWC is codifying and supporting their network schools to implement their model with fidelity. Often organizations with strong unwritten programs and models ensure fidelity to these models in replication by having experienced staff lead the opening of new site. This is not the case with this plan.

**Recommended Conditions**

If the Board finds that the application satisfies the requirements of the School Reform Act, D.C. Code §§ 38-1802 et seq., and that the applicant has the ability to meet the educational objectives outlined in the application, DC PCSB staff recommends that the Board include the following conditions listed below to fully approve its charter.

1. **Governance**
   The school shall submit revised bylaws, articles of incorporation, and management agreement to appropriately balance local control of the school with the need for the school management organization to ensure program quality and consistency.

2. **Growth**
   The school shall submit a revised enrollment ceiling and budget that reflects only one campus, enrolling no more than 768 students at capacity in School Year 2025-26.

3. **Fidelity to CWC Model**
   To ensure fidelity to the Citizens of the World Charter Schools model, the school shall create materials that identify specific elements of the program that must be in place for a successful replication, including leadership staff, teacher training and background, curriculum, student outcomes, and how these would change based on the student body (e.g., more or less diverse population attends the school). Further, the school shall name a founding Executive Director or founding Principal who has at least three years of experience in a high-performing CWC School.

4. **Subgroup Performance Goal**
   In collaboration with DC PCSB, the school shall adopt an additional mission-specific charter goal addressing student performance by subgroup.

DC PCSB staff further recommends that the Board include the following conditions common to most new charter schools:

5. **School Leadership:**
   The school’s founding team consists of Kriste Dragon, who has experience with school founding and leadership; Dr. Kristin Droege, who has experience with curriculum and instruction; Vanessa Rodriguez, who has experience with
leadership and recruitment; Andrew Hodgson, who has experience with policy and research; Andrea Arroyo, who has experience with new site development and community engagement; and founding board members Victor Reinoso, Cynthia Robinson-Rivers, and Warren Seay, who have a range of legal, educational, and operational expertise. Should any member of the founding team leave these roles in the school corporation prior to the school corporation receiving full charter approval, the school corporation shall replace the founding team member with someone with similar experience. This replacement shall be subject to DC PCSB's approval of fulfillment of this condition.

6. **Governing Board**
The school shall identify a governing board that complies with the School Reform Act.

7. **Governing Board**
The school’s governing board shall complete background check release forms to undergo background checks and, based on the results of those background checks, the school will resolve any substantial concerns raised by DC PCSB.

8. **Discipline Policy**
The school shall submit to DC PCSB for review its draft discipline policy and, based on DC PCSB’s review, the school shall resolve any substantial concerns raised by DC PCSB.

9. **Draft Charter Agreement**
The school shall negotiate with and submit to be executed by DC PCSB a draft charter agreement that is consistent with DC PCSB’s charter school agreement template, including all attachments. Please note that pursuant to D.C. Code § 38-1802.03(h)(2), the following sections of the charter application comprise the School’s Charter and may require revision and are subject to Board approval, per D.C. Code § 38-1802.03(d)(1)(B):
   - The School’s statement regarding the mission and goals of the School and the manner in which the school will conduct any district-wide assessments;
   - Proposed Rules and Policies for Governance and Operation of School Corporation;
   - Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws;
   - Procedures to Ensure Health and Safety of Students and Employees, including the school’s proposed discipline policy;
   - Enrollment Ceilings;
   - Assurance to Seek, Obtain, and Maintain Accreditation; and
   - Relationship between School and Employees.

Within seven days of the DC PCSB Board voting to approve the charter agreement, the school shall submit a signed charter agreement, with all attachments.

10. **501(c)3 status**
The school shall apply for and obtain 501(c)3 status.

11. **Facility**
The school shall submit appropriate documentation evidencing that it has acquired title to or otherwise secured (e.g., a lease or letter of intent) a sufficient school facility to DC PCSB.
**Attachments**

CWCDC Spring 2017 Charter Application Public Hearing Transcript  
CWCDC Spring 2017 Charter Application Public Comment  
CWCDC Spring 2017 Charter Application Capacity Interview Transcript  
CWCDC Spring 2017 Charter Application Executive Summary  
CWCDC Spring 2017 Charter Application Additional Submissions  

The full CWCDC Spring 2017 Charter Application is available here:  