

11/21/06

Response to Questions, Comments, and Suggestions from Richard Karas

Budgetary questions 1-7 answers emailed to Jon Nelson 11/16/06 with request to forward to REIJ Board, DAAC Members, and Administrative Team.

1. Accountability Plan

- a. As stated in the application, the specific goals and objectives for each year in the sciences will depend on the learning expedition topics. It is our intention that throughout the course of each child's time at LMCS, they will have covered a broad range of topics providing opportunities to know, understand, and apply scientific thinking, inquiry, investigation, and research in all of the sciences. We would appreciate the chance to collaborate with the district as well as with other EL schools to create the most appropriate way to include these goals and objectives in our Accountability Plan.
- b. Similarly to the sciences, the arts will be emphasized in different ways throughout different themes. Some studies will lend themselves to dramatic arts, while other learning expeditions will be infused with sculpture. Again, we would appreciate the opportunity to work with others who have created successful models for incorporating arts goals and objectives appropriately into Accountability Plans for this type of learning situation (I.e., where the scope and sequence is based on subject matter and authentic integration rather than grade level).
- c. At this point, the proficiency measure in the application is a starting point. Certainly, we would be expected to meet or exceed District performance, as measured by CSAP. However, as the school is developed, additional rubrics and tools for evaluating the school will be sought or created and implemented. Well-documented, purposeful school review is an important part of EL schools. State Standards serve as a minimum, a starting point.
- d. Revenues have been very conservatively estimated within the proposed budget. Start up grants and funds should allow a „cushion%” during the first three years in which PPR revenue is not covering expenditures. The goal for the end of the first three years is to have a reserve in place which will consist of start up grant money not yet spent, additional grant money sought during the first three years, fundraising, and if possible, an endowment.

2. Curriculum

- a. It is the intention of LMCS to provide an enriching and sound science education program. Each theme will present opportunities to take a specific scientific discipline to a deep level of understanding and application. For example, a learning expedition on geology would be heavily focused on earth science, where a learning expedition on the human body would center on biology.
- b. The intention was for the application to explain that the learning expeditions and standards addressed by each theme would be mapped regularly and topics for subsequent learning expeditions would be purposefully selected in order to address any areas that hadn't yet been covered in depth. This will be done in order to ensure that each student at LMCS receives a well-rounded education where all standards are addressed during their time at the school. The additional attachment entitled „sample learning expedition%” seeks to demonstrate ways in which one learning expedition would address state standards.

- In addition, in ELS, Guiding Questions, based on state standards, are generated by each teacher at the onset of an expedition; those questions serve as a reference point throughout the theme. They ensure that the direction/s within the expedition that each child or class pursues is still aimed at addressing the learning goals and objectives, which are also based on standards. Those guiding questions are also the basis for evaluation at the end of each learning expedition. The questions are carefully crafted to be broad enough to allow for emergent curriculum, yet specific enough to address the standards.
- c. We are not completely certain that we understand this question; however, we will attempt to respond based on our interpretation. There will always be subject areas that some students are less interested in than others. Learning expeditions seek to offer opportunities for children to examine subject matter through various lenses. As an example, a learning expedition on 20<sup>th</sup> Century history could allow individual students within a class to delve into a study of the heroes, architecture, social movements, events, art, scientific advances, or any other interdisciplinary connection that would allow them to engage in the subject matter and address the Guiding Questions, one of which might be, What were the driving forces for change in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century? The answers to this Guiding Question would address several state history standards K-8, among others depending on the lens (science, art, literacy, and so on). Students learn through their own research and projects as well as those presented by their peers for critique, collaborative assessment, portfolio products, and final presentations.
3. Mathematics
 

As stated in the application, it is our intention to integrate mathematics authentically into learning expeditions as appropriate. (See Sample Learning Expedition in attachment for an example of authentic integration.) It doesn't necessarily make sense to concoct superficial math experiences simply to be integrated, so in cases where there is not a logical integration it is our intention to ensure that students still get mathematics practice daily.
  4. Student body: multiculturalism
    - a. We have created a Spanish flyer announcing the December 4<sup>th</sup> Town Meeting and a fact-sheet about Loudon Mullin Charter School for distribution to interested families. We have contacted Ellen Pederson at the Multicultural Center, the staff at Gunnison County Literacy Action and Mary Burt, Gunnison County coordinator of the Colorado Trust Supporting Immigrant and Refugee Families Initiative on Immigrant Integration. We plan to distribute flyers and information sheets to businesses around town and as volunteers are available, door-to-door in neighborhoods.
    - b. Karen Immerso and Janet Welsh Crossley of the Loudon Mullin Charter School Steering Committee have connections with the ELL community. It is anticipated that in future employment interviews for staff and management, this would be an area of community connection that would be considered as part of an applicant's range of applied experience.
    - c. The answer to your second question first: the enrollment will be determined by lottery, so at this point in time there is no way of predicting how many ELL families will actually solicit enrollment in the charter school nor to know how many will be arbitrarily chosen by the public lottery. We can tell you that some

ELL families have expressed interest to individual Steering Committee members. Now for the first part of your question, our goals, as stated on page 41 in our application submitted on October 6<sup>th</sup>: „ELL families will enrich the school environment and ELL parents will be validated as both native language models to their children and invited to share their culture and experiences with the greater school community, as well as participate in classroom and building activities. Loudon Mullin Charter School respects and honors different languages and cultures and welcomes the opportunity for all students to learn from each other about the world. Sensitivity to students’ language and culture will be reinforced by school values and design principles.‰

#### Operations

1. Daily Schedule: We are curious how many hours at RE1J schools are devoted to activities that are not subject related in order to make this comparison. Furthermore, it is our intention that all subject areas are enriching the learning expedition or character development. In addition, if you could please clarify which 2.5 hours are referenced in this question.
2. Calendar: Possible modifications would be made based on parental input, the Crested Butte Community School calendar, Western State College calendar, possible multi-day outdoor education opportunities, or others. It is our intention to be in compliance with requirements regarding contact hours while remaining open to input in creating this calendar.
3. Parent Involvement:
  - a. Provisions for liability include researching insurance programs used by similar schools. The figure in our budget reflects appropriate insurance for schools conducting outdoor education and adventure experiences as part of their curriculum, including Slate River School and Sage Mountain School. Philadelphia Insurance is the main carrier we have conferred with.
  - b. Background checks: Does RE1J require background checks for all parents accompanying classes on field trips or volunteering in the classroom? Certainly evidence of insurance would be required of parents transporting students on field trips.
4. Facilities
  - a. We are still assessing locations. It is not unusual for charter applicants to not commit to a location until the charter has been granted. Historically start-up charter schools have been housed in a huge variety of kinds of locations. Furthermore, our committee has spoken with Dustin Jones of C.B. Richard Ellis, whose specialty is in charter school facilities.
  - b. It is our understanding that the likelihood for obtaining start up grant money for a facility is great. We suggest that with respect to facility, our charter application be granted with the contingency that we locate and secure a facility and demonstrate that the funds are in place for said facility by a reasonable date, which all parties agree upon.
5. Transportation: We anticipate helping families who live close to each other to carpool with each other. While we cannot arrange said transportation for individuals, we can put families in contact with each other to negotiate their own arrangements.
6. Access to enrollment:

- a. As allowed by Federal law, priority in the lottery may be granted to founding families as defined by the charter application. Currently, founding families have six children guaranteed enrollment. This is 10% of the school's projected full enrollment. Furthermore, the language of the Federal policy specifies only that "a small number" of enrolled students may come from founding families. According to the Colorado League of Charter Schools, most charter schools in the state aim for 10%. This is clearly not a conversion of an existing private school to a charter school as the RE1J Administrative team's report of November 13<sup>th</sup> to the Board indicates, as there are currently 22 students at Sage Mountain School, 16 of whom will be subjected to the lottery should their families decide to apply.
  - b. It will be a public lottery in the purest sense. As stated in the application, there will be an enrollment period during which applications will be accepted. On the lottery date, names will continue to be drawn until the number of openings per classroom has been filled. The main criteria to be considered will be classroom capacity. To clarify the waiting list procedure, siblings of exiting LMCS students will be given priority for existing or subsequent openings. It is our hope to keep families together, if possible, but that will depend upon the order in which the person administering the lottery draws their names.
7. Disciplinary Policy: We would like to receive a copy of the District's discipline policy regarding suspension and expulsion. We have not yet developed our own policy and are researching policies from schools of similar size and/or philosophy.
  8. Food Service: Again, we are interested in exploring the food service needs of low-income students with the District. Some charter schools contract sack or hot lunches from their local school district, others have sack lunch policies. In order to avoid setting these students apart as low-income from the other students, some families may choose to provide their own sack lunches regardless of whatever food service is provided. We look forward to working with the families and meeting their needs.
  9. Special Needs Students
    - a. ADA Equipment: We intend to work with Dustin Jones of C.B. Richard Ellis or another firm that specializes in charter school facilities to ensure compliance with ADA accessibility requirements. The line item in our budget regarding facilities is liberal and should cover any modifications of a temporary facility.
    - b. Most IEPs are specifically designed to be individualized and meet the special needs of students. Our program is individualized in order to meet the special needs of all students. In addition, we are exploring the three models of contracting special services and look forward to working with the school district on an approach that we can all support. The ELL plan was written specifically for LMCS based upon training documents on the CDE website for ELL Educators. If you are referring to the "X Charter School" reference under the ELL Program section of the application, in your comment about generic text, this is simply a case of poor editing on our part, as "X Charter School" was how we referred to the proposed school throughout the application prior to selecting a name for the school. We are open to working with the District on this section of our application, and we are also collaborating with Sandy O'Banion from Western State College's Special Education program within the Teacher Education Department, who is also on our Community Advisory Council. In addition, can you please be more specific about your concerns regarding this portion of the application.

## Employment, Organization and Governance

### 1. Employees

- a. Employees will be informed verbally upon an offer for employment and in writing upon signing any contract for employment that our staff will in essence be „at-will employees%”.
- b. No, the teachers and staff will not have the right to organize. We do not believe this serves our philosophy that excellence shall be rewarded. We shall maintain the right not to rehire staff that is not meeting our needs and expectations.

### 2. Governance

- a. The Steering Committee will eventually become the founding board and then the Board of Trustees. The Community Advisory Council will meet with the Board of Trustees two times per year to collaborate and discuss community feedback. We are in the process of writing formal bylaws which will lay out the organization and duties in detail. Currently, the Steering Committee and Community Advisory Council are in place. A Family Council will be formed upon approval of our charter application prior to opening if possible. It is possible that the Family Council will not be formed until school is in session.
- b. The Board of Trustees will have the responsibility of fundraising, and accountability will likely be the responsibility of the Board of Trustees with the input of both the Community Advisory Council and the Family Council. The Director will also participate actively in meetings about accountability. Again, the bylaws will explicitly state each group’s roles and responsibilities; we are examining the governance structures of similar schools.
- c. The timelines for establishment of each committee has been discussed. The term of any one member will be between 1 and 4 years.

### 3. Family participation

- a. Yes, it is an explicit requirement for attendance, that said, once admitted for a school year, no student will be expelled should his or her family refuse involvement. However, if a family stubbornly refuses efforts of the staff and administration to foster participation, this might become an issue for reenrollment for a subsequent year.
- b. Not direct financial support; other types of direct support would be activity fees, but as is the case with REIJ school fees, we would not exclude students for their family’s inability to pay activity fees; yes, families are expected to participate in fundraising.
- c. Yes, there are opportunities for family participation on many levels, from lunch room monitors to custodial work to school maintenance repair to helping put on a cultural event for the school that bridges different cultures. Through creative outreach, we are confident that participation solutions can be found for every diverse family situation.