



June 13, 2014

Mr. Gabriel Sanchez Zinny
[REDACTED]

Dear Mr. Zinny,

Thank you for submitting an application to establish a public charter school in the District of Columbia. The District of Columbia Public Charter School Board ("PCSB") has completed the 2014 Application Review process. I regret to inform you that at its public meeting held on May 19, 2014, PCSB did not approve your application to establish Xcelerate Institute as a public charter school in the District of Columbia.

The Board's decision was based on a thorough evaluation of the written application and information gathered from the capacity interview and the public hearing. The following findings were the basis for denial:

1. The applicant did not demonstrate that the school would establish a climate conducive to learning for its hard-to-serve target population, most of whom have been unsuccessful at traditional schools. For example, the responsive classroom model that the group identified as appropriate to address behavior is designed for elementary school students, not high school drop-outs.
2. The application did not fully describe procedures the school would follow to comply with the Individual with Disabilities in Education Act. It assumed a lower level of students with disabilities ("SWD") than consistent with DC schools that serve students seeking to obtain a high school diploma or a GED through a credit recovery program. Further, the applicant group did not provide a clear process for identifying, assessing, and servicing SWD. Also, the application did not include specific instructional strategies that would be used by teachers to instruct SWD.
3. The curriculum model was under-developed and lacked the details about the school's implementation of the blended learning model:
 - The curriculum did not provide details in terms of its development, scope, and timeline for each student to meet the adult education program's school-to-work goals.
 - The curriculum did not include standards, resources, and methods of instruction and did not provide adequate detail to show how it would be differentiated based on results from the intake assessments to meet the needs of all learners.
 - The applicant offered few examples for how the blended learning program would be made accessible to all types of learners (e.g., SWD, struggling and advanced learners, and English language learners).
4. The proposed budget did not account for all of the mission-critical staffing positions mentioned in the application's Educational Plan. For example, the budget did not account for the Director of 21st Skills and the Director of Evaluation and Application of Knowledge – two positions central to the program's school-to-work mission. It also indicates that the school would only hire social workers or counselors to provide wrap-around services for the high needs population the school intends to target in year three.

5. The applicant group lacks experience operating schools or non-profit organizations. The founding members identified in the application have experience in technology, business, and education policy; however, none of the founding members has experience in the education field, particularly in adult education. Other than the one year of experience that a founding member has as the Center Director of the Sylvan Learning Center, there is no evidence that the founding members are prepared to manage an adult education program.
6. There were vague details about staffing and the structure of the school day. The school day would run from 9:00am to 8:30pm with three sections (morning, afternoon, and evening). There was no explanation for how six teachers and two vocational teachers would provide instruction from 9:00am to 8:30pm to 160 students in the first year of operation.
7. The application was riddled with typos and inconsistencies within and across sections, which impacted the reader's ability to fully understand how the educational program would be implemented. For example,
 - One part of the application states the school will serve students 18 years and older and later says it will serve ages 16 and older.
 - The mission of the school to move high school drop outs into the workforce with a GED is questionable when the applicant cites research that says eight in ten jobs require a post-secondary degree.
 - The proposed school's zero tolerance policy is not designed to reduce instructional time lost to exclusionary discipline.
8. The application did not discuss how the school intends to secure tech-based learning internships during the planning year and the technology plan left out technical support and recovery procedure details.

Should you choose to file a petition again, that petition must meet the requirements of the School Reform Act. See D.C. Code § 38-1802.02. Specifically, it should appropriately resolve the deficiencies cited above and demonstrate: (a) that all components in the petition's Education Plan are aligned to the other plans in the petition, including the budget; (b) that the adult education program is well developed and describes how it will serve all students, including students with disabilities and English language learners; (c) and that the proposed budget will support all aspects of the proposed program.

Should you want to appeal the denial of your application, you may seek judicial review in an appropriate court of the District of Columbia or review by the Office of the State Superintendent of Education, pursuant to the procedures found in Chapter 5-A54 of the D.C. Municipal Regulations.

We recognize the hard work and effort that went into the development of your application and there were many positive parts of the application that are not mentioned in this letter. Thank you for your interest in public charter schools and your commitment to improving public education in Washington, DC.

Sincerely,



Naomi Rubin DeVeaux
Deputy Director
DC Public Charter School Board