



June 2, 2017

Lydia Whitham  
5207 Iroquois Road  
Bethesda, MD 20816

Dear Ms. Whitham,

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 (DC PCSB) has completed the Spring 2017 Application Review process. As you know, at its public meeting held on May 22, 2017, DC PCSB did not approve your application to establish the Washington School of Arts and Academics.

DC PCSB's decision was based on a thorough evaluation of the written application and information gathered from the capacity interview, and the public hearing. While there were some strong aspects of the application, the following findings were the basis for denial:

- Lack of demonstrated need: The founding group demonstrated neither a need nor a demand for a Waldorf high school in Wards 7 or 8. The applicant provided little evidence of having done community engagement in Wards 7 and 8 to establish that there is demand for the school. Furthermore, the applicant did not demonstrate a strong understanding of the DC educational landscape, particularly in the proposed area of the city. The applicant provided no substantive community engagement plan for involving diverse stakeholders should the school have been approved.
- Insufficient progress in developing the academic program: The academic plan lacks sufficient development to ensure that all students would be successful. For example, the curriculum offering and course sequence offers little clarity on how the anticipated student population will be adequately prepared for academic success. There is also insufficient detail into how students coming from traditional elementary and middle schools would be able to adjust to the Waldorf cultural and academic model. There were significant concerns with the school's plan to begin its Waldorf program in high school with few incoming students having experienced this model and the lack of successful examples from around the country.
- Insufficient supports for students with disabilities: The plan for serving students with disabilities (SWD) is not sufficiently developed to ensure SWD would be well served by the school. While the applicant describes that a Waldorf school creates an inclusive community, the plan itself does not provide details for providing the appropriate continuum of services for SWDs nor does it adequately address special education compliance requirements.

- Founding group ability: The applicant has not demonstrated the expertise necessary to start and run this program. The team has three identified leaders. The Dean of Faculty has no work experience in schools other than as the business office administrator. The Principal has limited school administrative experience and has no experience with the Waldorf model. The Curriculum Specialist is the sole member of the team with extensive experience in education, but none in public or urban schools. The additional leadership positions are not yet filled.

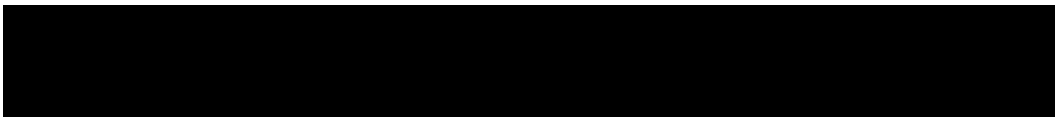
During the vote, many Board members expressed an interest in seeing a Waldorf school open in the District, albeit one with experienced Waldorf leadership, a realistic academic plan, appropriate community engagement, and one that began, as most Waldorf schools do, with grades younger than high school. Please know that many of the existing public charter schools in DC applied a second time, with revisions to the application made in response to the reasons for the initial denial.

Should you choose to file a petition again, that petition must meet the requirements of the School Reform Act. D.C. Code § 38-1802.02. Specifically, it should appropriately resolve the deficiencies cited above and establish: (a) a demonstrated need for the school; (b) sufficient progress in developing the plan; (c) alignment of the entire school program with the school's mission and philosophy; (d) inclusion of and adequate support for special populations; and (e) the founding group's capability to ensure that the school can meet the educational objectives outlined in the application. If you would like, DC PCSB staff would be happy to discuss with you in more detail your application's strengths and weaknesses.

Should you want to appeal the denial of your application, you may seek review of this decision pursuant to D.C. Code §38-1802.03(j).

We recognize the hard work and effort that went into the development of your application. 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.

Best,



Scott Pearson  
Executive Director  
DC Public Charter School Board

Darren Woodruff, PhD  
Chairman  
DC Public Charter School Board