



SACRAMENTO CITY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD OF EDUCATION

Agenda Item# 9.5

Meeting Date: March 1, 2012

Subject: Charter School Renewal Petition – George Washington Carver School of Arts and Science, a Waldorf-Inspired High School

- Information Item Only
- Approval on Consent Agenda
- Conference (for discussion only)
- Conference/First Reading (Action Anticipated: _____)
- Conference/Action
- Action
- Public Hearing

Division: Accountability Office

Recommendation: To conference and take action to approve or deny the renewal petition of the George Washington Carver School of Arts and Science. Staff report will be presented at the March 1, 2012 board meeting.

Background/Rationale: The district received the George Washington Carver School of Arts and Science renewal petition on January 17, 2012 and a public hearing was held on February 2. District staff conducted an extensive review of the petition. The staff report and recommendation are being presented for Board Action on March 1, 2012.

Financial Considerations: The financial considerations are outlined within the executive summary document.

Documents Attached:

1. Charter Petition is located on the District web-site: www.scusd.edu
(under Board of Ed./Board Meetings, February 2nd Board Meeting – agenda item 9.1)
2. Revised documents are located on the District web-site: www.scusd.edu
(under Board of Ed./Board Meetings, March 1st Board Meeting – Agenda item)
3. Executive Summary

Estimated Time of Presentation: 10 minutes

Submitted by: Chiem-Seng Yaangh, Ph.D., Coordinator

Approved by: Mary C. Shelton, Chief Accountability Officer

Board of Education Executive Summary

Accountability Office

Charter School Renewal Petition

March 1, 2012



Staff Report on Charter School Renewal Petition – George Washington Carver School of Arts and Science

I. Overview of Charter School Renewal Petition:

The Sacramento City Unified School District (“District”) received a charter petition (“Petition”) from the George Washington Carver School of Arts and Science (“GWC”) on or about January 17, 2012. The Petition proposes the renewal of the charter for five years, from July 1, 2012 through June 30, 2017.

After reviewing the renewal petition, the District provided GWC with a list of five (5) elements that were identified as needing modification prior to staff recommendation for approval of the renewal petition. In response, GWC provided the District with an updated renewal petition. (“Revised Petition”)

The District first granted the charter in June 2003 as America’s Choice High School. Upon renewal in April 2007, material revision was approved to become George Washington Carver School of Arts and Science, a Waldorf-inspired high school. As outlined by the petitioners, the George Washington Carver School of Arts and Science offers “Waldorf methods as our besting practices. Teaching and Learning is a process that engages the head (the intellect and academic content) the heart (students must feel excited and in relationship to what they are learning), and hands (students transform what they have learned and how they felt about it into a product). We integrate creativity, critical thinking and creative problem solving in all our lessons. Students write across the curriculum and engage in discussion of ideas, theories and findings in all their subjects.”

II. Driving Governance:

The Charter Schools Act of 1992 (“Act”) governs the creation of charter schools in the State of California. The Act includes Education Code section 47605(b) which provides the standards and criteria for petition review, and provides that a school district governing board considering whether to grant a charter petition “shall be guided by the intent of the Legislature that charter schools are and should become an integral part of the California educational system and that establishment of charter schools should be encouraged.” (Ed. Code, §47605(b).) In addition, the Act provides that renewals and material revisions of charters are governed by the standards and criteria set forth in Education Code §47605. Specifically, the governing board may not deny a petition unless it makes written factual findings, specific to the particular petition, setting for specific facts to support one, or more of five findings:

- 1) The charter school presents an unsound educational program for the pupils to be enrolled in the charter school,

Board of Education Executive Summary

Accountability Office

Charter School Renewal Petition

March 1, 2012

- 2) The petitioners are demonstrably unlikely to successfully implement the program set forth in the petition,
- 3) The petition does not contain the number of signatures prescribed by code,
- 4) The petition does not contain an affirmation of each of the conditions prescribed by code and
- 5) The petition does not contain reasonably comprehensive descriptions of sixteen certain elements in its program and operations.

Furthermore, the newly-adopted regulations allow for the automatic renewal of a charter school petition, if a school district fails to make written factual findings to support a denial within 60 days of the district's receipt of a petition. (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 5, §11966.4(c).)

In addition, a charter school seeking renewal must also meet one of the standards for academic achievement as set forth in Education Code §47607. If one of those standards is met, the governing board must grant the renewal assuming that the renewal petition also complies with the standards and criteria of Education Code §47605 as discussed above. For example, pursuant to Education Code section 47607, subd. (b)(1), if the charter school attains its Academic Performance Index (API) growth target in the prior year or two of the last three years, it has met their standards for academic achievement under the statute. GWC achieved its academic performance index (API) growth target during the 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 school years. In 2008-2009, GWC's API growth target was eleven (11) and its actual growth was sixty-one (61). In 2009-2010, GWC's API growth target was eight (8) and its actual growth was one hundred fourteen (114).

Another academic standard for a charter to obtain for renewal is if it ranked in deciles 4 to 10, inclusive, on the API in the prior year or in two of the last three years. (Education Code section 47607, subd. (b)(2).) GWC has met this standard. Its statewide API rank in 2011 is 6.

GWC has met their standards for academic achievement and has complied with the standards and criteria of Education Code section 47605 and we recommend that the governing board grant GWC's renewal petition.

III. Results of Petition Review:

Although the Petition generally provided the information required by the Charter Schools Act of 1992 (Education Code §47605) there were concerns from staff and legal counsel as to whether the Petition provides a program entirely consistent with the required affirmations. The five (5) areas identified by the District as requiring modification prior to approval were: 1) Element A,

Board of Education Executive Summary

Accountability Office

Charter School Renewal Petition

March 1, 2012

Education Program as it Relates to Special Education and English Language Learners; 2) Element D, Governance Structure Pertaining to Parent Involvement; 3) Element G, Means to Achieve a Reflective Racial and Ethnic balance; 4) Element M, Description of Employee Rights; and 5) the financial plan specifically in relation to the budget reserve.

GWC timely and effectively responded to staff concerns by submitting to the District the Revised Petition.

1. Element A, Education Program as it Relates to Special Education and English Language Learners

The original renewal petition can be strengthened through a more explicit description of the services and instructional support provided to students with special needs. This would need to include how instruction is designed and differentiated to provide accommodations and modifications as well as how student learning is monitored. Similarly, the English Language Learner section needs more detailed description of how students will be supported to acquire English language proficiency and how learning of English is monitored.

GWC's Response: The revised petition expanded the Special Education and English Language Learner sections, which provided the comprehensive descriptions that are required for Element A. The Special Education section further described how students with disabilities are served at GWC. GWC states that the first place for intervention is Student Study Team (SST) where an administrator, teacher, and parent meet to discuss the academic and behavior of the student and develops an intervention plan which is follow-up two to three months to make necessary modification. However, when it is clear that a student may need special education services, a referral is made for special education testing to determine if the student has disabilities. In such case, GWC complies with all applicable regulations:

Carver complies with all applicable state and federal laws in serving students with disabilities including but not limited to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act ("Section 504"), the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA). Carver staff work directly with the SCUSD Special Education Department in delivering Special Education Services. (Revised Petition, page 27).

For instance, when a student is found to have a disability under Section 504, the 504 team shall be responsible for determining what, if any, accommodations or services are needed to ensure that the student receives the free and appropriate public education (FAPE). In developing the 504 Plan, the 504 team shall consider all relevant information utilized during the evaluation of the student, drawing upon a variety of sources, including, but not limited to assessments conducted by the school's professional staff. The 504 Plan shall describe the Section 504 disability and any program accommodations, modifications or services that may be necessary.

Board of Education Executive Summary

Accountability Office

Charter School Renewal Petition

March 1, 2012

The English Language Learner section includes description of how English Language Learners are identified, assessed, reclassified, and served at GWC. To support English Language Learners, GWC:

- Assesses students annually;
- Reclassifies ELL students when they achieve English proficiency;
- Provides high quality professional development in ELL strategies for teachers;
- Fosters parent and community involvement to support ELL developments;
- Notifies parents annually of their student's progress.

(Revised Petition, page 26)

Also, GWC administers the Home Language Survey (HLS) for all students upon enrollment so that staffs know who the potential ELL students are and conducts the annual CELDT testing accordingly. All teachers at Carver possess the appropriate CLAD, BCLAD, or SDAIE certification as required by SCUSD. Teachers with CLAD, BCLAD, and/or SDAIE certifications share additional strategies for teaching EL students and can assist with adapting class materials for EL instruction.

The Waldorf oral lesson delivery offers almost continuous opportunities to hear and speak English. The non-competitive and artistically creative school environment supports the student when trying to communicate in a new language. Waldorf methods offer opportunities for students to see visually the content of the lesson which supports EL development. Each EL student will have a specific written plan of English language support, which will be developed by the teacher, the student and the parents.

(Revised Petition, pages 25-26)

2. Element D, Governance Structure Pertaining to Parent Involvement

George Washington Carver School of Arts and Science's charter renewal petition does include parents in their overall teaching approach, in the governance of the school and in numerous other ways. However, it is recommended that a school-based parent involvement policy be developed that specifically states how parents may be involved.

GWC's Response: The revised petition expanded the governance structure pertaining to parent involvement, particularly in the area of parent involvement policy and opportunities for parents. Some of the parent involvement policies include but limited to:

- Families provide the primary educational environment.
- Parent involvement in their children's education improves student achievement.
- Parent involvement is most effective when it is comprehensive, supportive, long-lasting, and well-planned.
- To ensure the quality of schools as institutions serving the community, parents must be involved at all levels in the schools.

Board of Education Executive Summary

Accountability Office

Charter School Renewal Petition

March 1, 2012

- Families and schools need to collaborate to help children adjust to the world of school. This is particularly critical for children from families with different cultural and language backgrounds.

(Revised Petition, page 37)

To this end, Carver works with the parents to create and develop many opportunities for parent leadership and decision-making:

- Membership on the Charter Advisory Board (CAD)
- Membership on the Parent Teacher Organization (PTO)
- Volunteer opportunities—library, garden, classroom
- Supervise field trips
- Fundraising
- Community outreach
- Enrollment recruitment activities

(Revised Petition, page 37-38).

3. Element G, Means to Achieve a Reflective Racial and Ethnic Balance

The description in this element requires more detail description, including a list of several specific practices and policies likely to lead to a diverse applicant pool/enrollment. The practices and policies should be selected to target relevant racial and ethnic groups.

GWC's Response: The revised petition provided further details of outreach strategies in the hopes to obtain racial and ethnic balance reflective of the District. Some of the examples include:

- The scheduling of open houses and visit days, Waldorf informational seminars and prospective parent nights for parents, and other activities during the school year where the community is invited in to learn about Carver's instructional and operational philosophy, including Spanish and Russian translation
- The advertisement of outreach activities on its website, through community newsletters and in local newspapers, ethnic radio broadcasts, as appropriate.
- Bulletins and table displays at ethnic supermarkets
- Presence at local ethnic festivals

(Revised Petition, pages 40-41)

4. Element M, Description of Employee Rights

This element of the charter did not describe sick/vacation leave ability to carry it over to and from charter school, did not describe whether staff will continue to earn service credit (tenure)

Board of Education Executive Summary

Accountability Office

Charter School Renewal Petition

March 1, 2012

in the district while at charter school, did not show how employees will be paid, and did not provide a description of employment benefits.

GWC's Response: The revised petition further addressed employee rights and this element is now reasonably comprehensive. GWC indicates faculty and staff are employees of the district:

- are part of the collective bargaining unit;
- may resume employment within the district if they leave Carver;
- sick/vacation leave carry over;
- continue to earn service credit (tenure) while at the charter school;
- are salaried employees of SCUSD;
- eligible for all SCUSD employee benefits;
- earn tenure per the SCUSD policy;
- are eligible for STRS or PERS per SCUSD policy.

(Revised Petition, page 43)

5. Financial plan specifically in relation to the budget reserve

The original renewal petition's financial plan of cash reserve is not at a sufficient amount. Base on the projections of ADA and increase in staffing will not meet the expenses the school will incur.

GWC's Response: In the revised petition, GWC modified the charter school's budget reserve by decreasing expenditures and increasing the reserve. GWC's modified financial plan meets the expectation of the District.

IV. Budget Implications

Even though a negative financial impact to the District cannot be used as criteria to deny a charter school petition, the potential loss of district students does reduce available revenue. The following are estimates based upon known information:

To estimate the Loss of Revenue Limit and Lottery Funds for 285 ADA for 2012-2013 school year, offset by a reduction in expenses for teachers and supplies, the potential reduction of funds to the district is approximately \$475,000.

These losses would be offset by any fees paid to the district, including (but not limited to) fees for lease of facility. Also, one percent of the Charter School's state revenues would be paid to the district for oversight. A Memorandum of Understanding and/or Facility Use Agreement would outline those fees.

Board of Education Executive Summary

Accountability Office

Charter School Renewal Petition

March 1, 2012

V. Conclusion:

The revisions made to the Petition by GWC meet the requirements and recommendations of the District. Staff recommends that the Petition be approved.

VI. Next Steps:

- Upon board approval, District Staff will continue to monitor the development and implementation of George Washington Carver's goals and objectives set-forth in the petition.

SACRAMENTO CITY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

RESOLUTION NO. 2693

**RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE RENEWAL OF THE CHARTER PETITION OF
George Washington Carver School of Arts and Science**

WHEREAS, petitioners for George Washington Carver School of Arts and Science (“Petitioners”) submitted to Sacramento City Unified School District (“District”) a charter renewal petition (“Petition”), dated January 17, 2012, for the George Washington Carver School of Arts and Science (“GWC”); and

WHEREAS, the District’s Governing Board held a public hearing on February 2, 2012, as required by law; and

WHEREAS, the Governing Board has considered the level of public support for GWC and has reviewed the Revised Petition and all information received with respect to the Petition, including all supporting documentation; and

WHEREAS, in reviewing the Petition, the Governing Board has been guided by the intent of the California Legislature that charter schools are and should become an integral part of the California educational system and that establishment of charter schools should be encouraged; and

WHEREAS, after analysis of the Petition and the related supplemental materials, the Superintendent and District staff have recommended approval of the Petition.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Sacramento City Unified School District Board of Education hereby approves the Petition.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED the term of the charter shall be for approximately five (5) years, beginning on July 1, 2012 and expiring June 30, 2017.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the Sacramento City Unified School District Board of Education on this 1st day of March, 2012, by the following vote:

AYES: _____
NOES: _____
ABSTAIN: _____
ABSENT: _____

Diana Rodriguez
President of the Board of Education

ATTESTED TO:

Jonathan Raymond
Secretary of the Board of Education