

International Community School Renewal Charter Petition Review
Executive Summary

Brief Synopsis: On August 16, 2013, International Community School, Inc. (“ICS”) delivered a charter renewal petition to the DeKalb County School District (“District”) for review. Since this date, the District has completed its due diligence to review every aspect of ICS’s responses in the petition to determine if the school’s continuation is in the best interest of the public. This executive summary is a succinct explanation of the District’s findings after reviewing the Cluster’s petition. However, this document is not all inclusive of the detailed information found in the full Charter Petition Review Results located at www.dekalb.k12.ga.us, on the Charter School webpage.

Financial Impact: ICS’s financial impact for the 2013-2014 school year is approximately 3 million dollars in District revenue. It is estimated that ICS will utilize nearly \$15 million dollars of District funds for five years of operation. Transportation and facility costs are not included in this estimation.

Initial Review Determination: The pagination of the ICS petition is numbered incorrectly and is difficult to follow. Therefore, it is difficult to ascertain the Petitioner’s intent and complete response. Information may have been missed due to this error. The Petitioner will be required to refer to the DCSD Petitioner Guidelines and re-write the entire petition accordingly.

The petition contains assertions and statements that raise questions of concern for the District in the areas of Innovation, Flexibility, Governance, Academic Performance, and Fiscal Responsibility. Some of the responses in the 76-question petition need improvement or do not meet guideline requirements, either because the Petitioner did not address the question, made statements that need further clarification, or the information could not be found, as explained above. The following sections of the petition illustrate some of the District’s concerns with the petition:

I. Charter School/Petitioner Information

- **Finding:** The Petitioner seeks to add middle grades at ICS, but the remainder of the petition does not demonstrate the Petitioner’s plan to implement middle grades, in accordance with petition guidelines.
- **Finding:** The Petitioner seeks a ten year charter.
- **District Inquiry:** Why does the Petitioner want to implement a middle school program at ICS?
- **District Inquiry:** Why does the Petitioner seek a ten year renewal charter?
- **District Inquiry:** Has ICS met all performance goals from the previous charter contract? If not, please explain.

II. Statement of Intent

- **Finding:** The school’s mission statement needs improvement.
- **District Inquiry:** What is ICS’s mission?
- **District Inquiry:** After ten years educating students, has ICS accomplished its mission during the current charter term?

III. Description of the Educational Program

- **Finding:** The Petitioner did not provide a complete description of the planned curriculum, or how it will be implemented.
- **Finding:** The Petitioner’s assertions and statements regarding how the gifted program, special education, English Language Learners program will be implemented, assessed, or monitored presents points of concern regarding legal compliance.
- **District Inquiry:** How will the Petitioner plan to implement curriculum for all programs in a manner that will be legally compliant and fiscally sound?

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IV. State & Federally Mandated Services

- **Finding:** The Petitioner's assertions and statements regarding how state and federally mandated services will be implemented raises questions regarding legal compliance and fiscal responsibility.
- **District Inquiry:** How will the Petitioner remain legally compliant with state and federally mandated services?

V. Performance-Based Goals and Objectives

- **Finding:** The Petitioner asserted that it will "perform above the level that would place it on the Priority Schools list, the Focus Schools list, or the Alert Schools lists." This may be a low performance goal.
- **Finding:** Measurable academic performance goals are missing.
- **District Inquiry:** How will the Petitioner align the charter contract goals with Georgia's new "Accountability System?"
- **District Inquiry:** How will the Petitioner plan to meet and exceed "State Performance Targets?"

VI. Waivers

- **Finding:** The required statement asserting that the Petitioner would meet all requirements of Georgia's Accountability System was not included.
- **District Inquiry:** Will the Petitioner meet all requirements of Georgia's Accountability System?

VII. Description of Assessment Methods

- **Finding:** The Petitioner's statement that they will comply with all appropriate accountability requirements needs to be added.
- **District Inquiry:** How does the Petitioner plan to obtain student performance data and monitor student achievement?

VIII. Description of School Operations

- **Finding:** The Petitioner's description of attendance zones is not consistent in the petition.
- **Finding:** The Petitioner should ensure that all DeKalb students can receive access to information regarding the school's open enrollment.
- **Finding:** The Petitioner must provide information detailing the procedures, interventions, and due process procedures.
- **District Inquiry:** Does the Petitioner plan to serve all of the DeKalb County attendance zones?
- **District Inquiry:** How does the Petitioner plan to remain legally compliant with special education laws, in regard to student discipline?
- **District Inquiry:** Why does the Petitioner state that they will adhere to the DeKalb Student Code of Conduct, but also identify a set of "rules" in the *ICS Parent Handbook*?

IX. Facilities

- **Finding:** The Petitioner has met all requirements and currently leases in the former Medlock Elementary School building.

X. Parent and Community Involvement

- **Finding:** The Petitioner must provide substantial evidence of parent, community, and business support or representation in the development of the petition.
- **District Inquiry:** How did the Petitioner include parental engagement or input in the creation of the petition?

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XI. Demonstration of Fiscal Feasibility and Controls

- **Finding:** The Petitioner was not clear in describing the “targeted marketing operations” for student enrollment.
- **Finding:** The Petitioner does not accurately describe the manner in which the school's enrollment count will be determined for the purposes of calculating charter school funding, pursuant to O.C.G.A 20-2-2068.1(c). The projected enrollment in the petition indicates fluctuations that raise questions.
- **District Inquiry:** What are the “targeted marketing operations?” What organizations and agencies will/can address the needs of the refugee community at ICS? How will this be accomplished? Will this type of marketing be compliant with federal and state laws?
- **District Inquiry:** Why does the Petitioner project increases and decreases in student enrollment between grades K-5, as the students matriculate within a class during the five-year charter term? Please explain.

XII. Description of Governance Structure

- **Finding:** The Petitioner does not state in detail how and when Governing Board members will be trained.
- **Finding:** The Petitioner did not provide evidence of a business contract with the International Baccalaureate Organization.
- **Finding:** The Governing Board’s “Conflict of Interest” forms were not provided.
- **Finding:** The Petitioner’s reference towards escalating a matter to “the legal system” after the Board hearing needs improvement.
- **District Inquiry:** How has the Governing Board received training? How will the Governing Board receive training?
- **District Inquiry:** Does the Petitioner have other business partnerships in addition to Georgia State University and the International Baccalaureate Organization?
- **District Inquiry:** Why does the Petitioner want to escalate grievances to the judicial system after the Board hearing?

XIII. Statement on Annual Report

- **Finding:** The petitioner has met all requirements.

XIV. Renewal Charter School Section

- **Finding:** An “Executive Statement” was found in the petition, but it is not sufficient to meet the requirement of providing an “Executive Summary.” This document should be a 1-3 page snapshot of the school’s academic achievement rates, financial stability, and other praiseworthy events at the school.
- **Finding:** It appears that the school has not met student accountability goals in totality, as demonstrated in Tab 11. Please explain.