AGENDA

METROPOLITAN BOARD OF PUBLIC EDUCATION
2601 Bransford Avenue, Nashville, TN 37204
Special Meeting – August 22, 2014 - 4:30 p.m.
Cheryl D. Mayes, Chair

TIME
4:30  I.  CONVENE
   A.   Establish Quorum
   B.   Pledge of Allegiance

4:30  II.  GOVERNANCE ISSUES
   A.   Actions
        1.  Approval of Recommendation for STRIVE Collegiate Academy Amended
            Charter Application

5:30  III. ADJOURNMENT

GP-2.6
Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools
Office of Innovation

Charter School Application Recommendation Report

STRIVE Collegiate Academy

LaKendra Butler

Evaluation Team

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Introduction

Charter schools are public schools operated by independent, non-profit governing bodies that must include parents. In Tennessee, public charter school students are measured against the same academic standards as students in other public schools. Charter schools are required to serve all eligible students, with the education of at-risk students being of utmost importance.

It is the responsibility of the authorizer, to apply a rigorous authorization process in order to ensure only those charter schools meeting the needs of students open. Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools is interested in charter applicants who demonstrate the capacity to educate the most at-risk students in highly diverse and personalized settings.

Charter schools in Nashville are required to provide appropriate curriculum, aligned professional standards, engaging models of parental and partnership programs, and strategic planning to leverage and grow resources for the school. Schools are held accountable for academic results, responsible school leadership, sound fiscal and operational management and adherence to the laws and rules that govern education in the state of Tennessee.
The Office of Innovation, Division of Charter Schools, has worked closely with the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) to set up an evaluation process that embodies best practices from authorizers throughout the country and is rigorous and thorough.

In accordance with the NACSA Principles and Standards, three review teams were assembled to review the April, 2014 applications. Each team consisted of a team lead plus individuals who had expertise with curriculum, special education, English language learners, charter school financials, operations, management and legal. Each team was given extensive training in application review and interviewing techniques.

The Office of Innovation and one MNPS board representative exercised additional oversight of the process.

The stages of review are as follows:

**Phase I - Capacity Review**
Charter applications are thoroughly reviewed to insure sufficient strength in areas of Education Plan, Organization Plan and Business/Financial Plan, as described below:

- **Proposal Overview**
  Basic information about the proposed school

- **Evaluation**
  Analysis of the proposal based on the four major areas of plan development

  - **Educational Plan** – including Mission, Vision, Executive Summary and Educational Philosophy; Curriculum and Instruction, Target Population, School Calendar and Daily Schedule; Special Student Populations (exceptional education and English Language Learners); School-specific goals and objectives, Assessment; School Climate and Discipline; and Prior Success in Raising Student Achievement

  - **Organizational Plan** – Includes governing body; governing board composition, management and operations; staffing and Human Resources; Professional Development; Student Recruitment and Enrollment; and Community Involvement.
 **Business Plan** – Including budget assumptions, five year budget and first year start-up budget; Financial Management; Transportation/Food Service/Other Partnerships; Insurance; and Pre-Opening Plan
 **Evidence of Capacity** – Including the skills and experience of the proposed governance and leadership team, relevant experience, and record of performance

Opening a successful, high-performing charter school depends on having a complete, coherent plan. It is not an endeavor for which strength in one area can compensate for weakness in another. Therefore, in order to receive a recommendation for approval, the application must meet or exceed the criteria in all four areas of the capacity review in order to move forward to the next phases of consideration.

**Phase II – Absolute Priorities**
If an application meets standard in all four (4) areas of the capacity review, it then moves to Phase II. The application must meet both absolute priorities of strong academic benchmarks and diversity plan that aligns with the MNPS Board of Education diversity goals. A separate diversity plan submitted by applicants will be evaluated for recruiting plans, transportation, facility acquisition and recruitment strategies to discern whether an applicant meets diversity standards. An application that does not meet both absolute priorities in Phase II will not move forward in the application process.

**Phase III – Competitive Priorities**
Successful applications will serve at least one of three stated competitive priorities as defined by MNPS:
- Growth/Demand
- Management Conversion
- High School continuation for existing operators
Applicant should have identified which of these competitive priorities the application addresses, and the team will evaluate based on the criteria outlined in the RFP.

Once applications have been ranked by tier-level according to their competitive priority ranking, and the district’s annual needs assessment plan report is complete, the Office of Innovation in consultation with Student Assignment, Diversity Management, and the Director’s Office will consider and make recommendation for investment in new schools matched to identified needs of the district.
Proposal Overview

School Name: STRIVE Collegiate Academy

Mission and Vision: The mission of STRIVE is to empower each student with a literacy-based curriculum aligned across all content areas in a culture that encourages leadership, virtue, and excellence as the foundation for success in all of their endeavors.

The vision of STRIVE is to cultivate college-ready high school graduates who will achieve post-secondary success and become leaders in their communities, Nashville, and beyond.

Proposed location: McGavock Cluster

Enrollment Projections (to be copied from the table in the Proposed Overview & Enrollment section)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Year</th>
<th>Planned # of Students</th>
<th>Maximum # of Students</th>
<th>Grades</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year 1 2015-16</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 2 2016-17</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>5-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 3 2017-18</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>5-7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year 4 2018-19</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>5-8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year 5 2019-20</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>5-8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year 6 2020-21</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>5-8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year 7 2021-22</td>
<td>480</td>
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<td>5-8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year 8 2022-23</td>
<td>480</td>
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<td>5-8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year 9 2023-24</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>5-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 10 2024-25</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>5-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At Capacity</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>5-8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
RECOMMENDATION

School Name: STRIVE Collegiate Academy

Summary of Section Ratings
Ratings options for each section are Exceeds the Standard; Meets the Standard; Partially Meets the Standard; Does Not Meet the Standard.

Phase I Capacity Review

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original Review Recommendation</th>
<th>Amended Review Recommendation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deny</td>
<td>APPROVE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Educational Plan
- **Partially Meets**

This includes the plan for the educational program and parent/community involvement.

Organizational Plan
- **Does Not Meet**

This includes the proposed governance and management structure, including skill and experience of governing board, and leadership team, relevant experience and record of performance based on due diligence. Also included is school staffing, start-up and operations, performance management systems and facilities plans.

Business Plan
- **Partially Meets**

This includes the start-up budget, operating budget and budget notes and assumptions.

Evidence of Capacity
- **Does Not Meet**

Included is a summary of all other sections and a statement of the overall confidence of the review committee that the applicant has the capacity to start and operate a successful school.
Phase II Absolute Priorities

Review Recommendation

Approve

Academic Benchmarks

Meets

New school will increase number of Achieving or Excelling schools on an annual and three year rolling basis; new school will serve students currently not served in Achieving or Excelling schools; new school will establish annual performance targets and benchmarks aligned with the Academic Performance Framework (APF)

Diversity Management

Meets

New school will meet diversity definitions in the MNPS Diversity Management Strategy; new school will adopt a diversity plan supportive of and similar in kind to the MNPS Diversity Strategy; new school will not reduce the number of diverse schools (district-run or charter) currently operating in Nashville

Phase III Competitive Priorities (one or more of three)

Recommendation

Approve

Growth/Demand

Approve

New school will assist in serving students currently attending schools that are overcrowded or likely to become overcrowded; new school will offer opportunities to serve students at schools with enrollments that are rapidly declining or below a reasonable threshold; new school will expand district capacity to respond to population growth consistent with its goals for academic excellence and diversity; new school will recruit, retain, locate and offer transportation plans that will add unique and/or new options for access to educational opportunities; new school will expand opportunities for families who are unable to access similar options at present
Management Conversion

New school will serve all students residing in the current school zone of an MNPS school with a three year status of Target on the Academic Performance Framework as of fall 2014; sponsor organization offers experience and planning demonstrating expertise in school turnaround and building schools with readiness to teach, readiness to learn, and readiness to act; new school proposal addresses transition challenges and costs associated with serving all students well who reside in the current school zone of an MNPS school with three year status of Target on the Academic Performance Framework; new school will recruit, retain, locate, and offer transportation plans that will add unique and/or new options for access to educational opportunities; new school will expand options for families who are unable to access similar options at present.

High School Continuation for Existing Operators

New school will open a high school pathway with priority enrollment for all students matriculating from an existing middle school managed by the same operator; existing middle school will be in Achieving or Excelling status on the Academic Performance Framework; review of the criteria for replication applications offers great confidence that the new school will continue to serve students well.

Applications that pass the capacity review and meet the absolute priorities in Phases I and II may be considered for their ability to serve the competitive priority of management conversion. All applications found to have the capacity to serve this priority will be then ranked by tier-level according to the relative quality of the plan and the strength of the stated commitments.

Phase IV Annual New School Investment Plan Matching

Once applications have been ranked by tier-level according to their competitive priority ranking, and the district’s annual needs assessment plan report is complete, the Office of Innovation in consultation with Student Assignment, Diversity Management, and the Director’s Office will consider and make recommendations for investment in new schools matched to identified needs of the district. Schools will be selected to fill needs according to their priority ranking until all identified annual needs are met.

NOTE: Schools that receive a competitive priority ranking that places them below the number of schools in their tier level that are identified through the district’s annual needs assessment report and subsequent new school investment plan matching process will be recommended for denial unless they choose to accept an annual deferment to enter the matching process at Phase III in the succeeding year. Applicants that twice fail to earn sufficiently high priority ranking to be recommended for approval as a part of the annual new school investment plan will be recommended for denial.
Educational Plan

Plan Summary – STRIVE Collegiate Academy proposes a middle school with grades 5-8 in the McGavock Cluster, beginning with grade 5 and building out to grade 8 in the 4th year of operation. Strive will have a rigorous college preparatory curriculum with a focus on literacy. STRIVE will have a longer school day and longer school year (189 instructional days) than traditional school calendars, and will design a personal learning profile for each student. Use of data from these profiles will drive instruction, targeted interventions, and enrichment. There will be two hours daily of dedicated literacy instruction in addition to content-driven literacy in other subject areas.

Teachers will be offered 24 full days of professional development and 40 half days. STRIVE will use Common Core Standards and the College Board’s Pre-AP standards.

Interim assessments include NWEA MAP, Fountas and Pinnell, and also classroom assessments.

Analysis – The Educational Plan partially meets criteria for approval because the curriculum lacks sufficient detail to determine whether it is aligned across the school for all grade levels. Although the charter application mentions teaching strategies, models for delivering instruction, and cites common core standards, a comprehensive, quality curriculum was not clearly described within the application, or in the subsequent interview. The curriculum that was provided is not supported by research from known literacy experts to ensure that the curriculum will be appropriate and effective with the targeted population of students.

Multiple research-based strategies and programs were listed as part of the instructional program, but there was not a coherent approach to rolling it out to teachers, and managing their mastery of them. The primary concern for the review team was lack of an instructional coach in the first year. Equally troubling to the review team was the research supporting the chosen curriculum was limited in scope, with no specific details given, even at the interview. An example would be the content for Reading and Writing Workshop was not fully described or cited as an exemplary model for the targeted population of students.

Use of volunteers from Junior Achievement and the Shakespeare Festival is inadequate to meet instructional goals for areas of enrichment in arts and physical education.

It is unclear throughout the application if the proposed school understands and can accommodate both special needs students and EL students. The applicant stated in the
interview that the same instructional strategies work for both groups, which led the review team to question whether the applicant has an awareness of the differences between these disciplines and the training to be successful with either group. There are some concerns that the chosen school leader does not have the expertise needed in special education law and requirements. The plan advanced by the application that the school leader would serve as the special education representative in the first year is unrealistic, given all the other duties which have been assigned to her.

While the applicant stated SIOP as the chosen method of working with EL students, neither the staffing plan nor the school schedule is adequate in the first three years to address this. There is limited capacity to implement SIOP in terms of professional development and the budget does not align with the costs.

AMENDED APPLICATION EDUCATIONAL REVIEW ANALYSIS

The Strive amended Educational Plan meets the criteria for approval because the applicant was able to elaborate on and clarify those areas of the academic plan the review team had questions about after the first round of review.

The resubmitted application gave much greater detail concerning alignment across the curriculum of their literacy based approach, as well as a comprehensive curriculum based on Common Core State Standards as well as the Springboard Standards, which are the College Board college and career readiness standards for all students in grades 6-12 inclusive. Strive did a very good job expanding upon the curriculum and citing the research that makes the chosen curriculum and instructional methodologies excellent choices for the targeted population of students.

The amended application goes to great lengths to explain the different curricular and instructional approaches that are proven to work with both students with disabilities and English Language learners. The SIOP method for English Language learners was adequately described and a phase-in approach given, which is the recommended approach to this method. The budget assumptions as well as the line-items account for the costs associated with this program, and there will be at least two teachers from the outset that are ESL certified. The applicant also enhanced the RTI2 section, which gives reviewers assurance that students with academic needs will be identified and additional supports put into place to ensure their success.

Teacher and student schedules were aligned and additional staff have been planned to ensure electives such as Jr. Achievement and Shakespeare are taught by and the curriculum overseen by licensed teachers.
Academic benchmarks are ambitious but grounded in reality, and very reachable with the curriculum, instructional strategies, and staffing plan now in place. The review team is confident that this school can begin with strong performance and can sustain that performance.
Organizational Plan

Plan Summary – STRIVE Collegiate Academy has incorporated with a governing board of seven (7) members. The proposed school presented a calendar with 189 instructional days and a school day that begins at 7:15 a.m. and ends at 4:15 p.m. Back office functions such as payroll, accounts payable, purchasing, etc., will be outsourced. The first year the school will hire a school leader who reports to the board of directors, along with a director of operations, two English Language Arts teachers, two math teachers, one social studies/science teacher and one instructional specialist. Organizational charts are presented through year 5, in which the school will be fully staffed.

A start-up plan is presented that begins upon approval and outlines steps to be taken with a timeline until the school would open in 2015. Transportation and food service will be outsourced and will follow all State of Tennessee and federal safety and nutrition guidelines.

Space requirements for the school are outlined, and the school is working with a realtor to search for a facility, although none has been chosen. Two potential properties are identified within the application.

Analysis – The organizational plan does not meet the criteria for approval because the review team has serious and on-going concerns about division of duties for the school leader. Particularly in year one, the school leader is assigned a large number of diverse tasks, including, but not limited to: teaching PE and Art, overseeing IEP’s, providing professional development, teacher evaluation, observing and coaching teachers daily, etc. There is a concern the school leader is spread too thin and will not be able to perform the duties assigned to her with fidelity. When pressed on this concern in the interview, the answers given did not give the review team confidence that the school leader understood the enormity of the time commitment for the duties assigned to her.

The application and subsequent interview did not give reviewers confidence there was a true division of labor between the school leader and director of operations, nor did it give reviewers confidence this school could start up successfully.

There is no certified EL teacher in the first year, and the possibility exists within the targeted location area, there could be up to 15% EL students attending the school. There was no evidence presented to convince the review team that the school leader or other
staff can manage a diverse linguistic group of students with variations in English language mastery.

Additionally, special education teacher to student ratios are very high the first two years of operation. Year 2 has one special education teacher (defined as an instructional coach) for 240 students. With an anticipated special education rate of 17%, the possibility exists one special education teacher could be managing up to 40 IEP’s, which is an unacceptably high ratio.

Within the timelines and schedules given, the review team had significant timing concerns as far as the school being able to put their ambitious plans in place with a small staff and the school leader having most of the responsibility.

The review team was not confident the school has emergency plans in place, nor a cohesive plan for arrival, dismissal and overall safety.

Recruitment and marketing plans were generic and provided a superficial understanding of the diversity of the McGavock cluster and the multiple communities within its borders. There was no evidence presented that gave reviewers confidence the school can reach its first year recruitment goal of 120 5th graders. There was also no evidence of specific plans to recruit families whose first language is not English or economically disadvantaged families.

AMENDED APPLICATION ORGANIZATIONAL REVIEW ANALYSIS

The amended organizational plan meets the criteria for approval because the applicant presented a comprehensive plan designed to maximize the school leader’s time and focus on instruction. A Director of Operations will be hired much sooner, and will assume all critical functions of operations, and the division of duties is clearly described.

At least two teachers hired during year one will have ESL certification, and likewise the special education staff has been adjusted so that the caseload will be manageable and the students more likely to get the supports needed for academic success.

Duties between the Director of Operations and the school leader are clearly delineated and new timelines put into place, including start-up plans, which are realistic and achievable. The applicant did a much better job of describing school emergency and safety plans.
Recruiting and marketing plans were much more detailed and specific, with descriptions of several potential facilities that would be more than adequate for a school. Plans to recruit families whose first language is not English or were economically disadvantaged were given in greater detail and left reviewers confident that the school can meet its goal of 120 5th grade students the first year.
Business Plan

Plan Summary – Strive Collegiate Academy presented their budget on the appropriate state form. The planning year assumes only a salary for the Executive Director, with assumptions of receipt of Walton funds as well as a grant from the Tennessee Charter School Center. A budget narrative was presented indicates the budget was built on anticipation of $9,200 per pupil, $420 per pupil eligible for Title I, IDEA funding at $1,744 per eligible student, and e-rate reimbursements at 80%.

Salaries listed for starting teachers are $45,450 per teacher. Strive will outsource all back office functions to EdTec, including the annual audit.

Contingency plans are listed in the event of unexpected expenses.

Analysis – The business plan partially meets the criteria for approval. The application presented the appropriate budget on state forms, with both revenue and cost assumptions appearing appropriate.

However, the review team was concerned that the governing board did not list a CPA, or someone with extensive school finance experience, as a member. Additionally, the review team felt that the contingency plans were inadequate and unclear. The applicant indicated both in the written application and the subsequent interview that philanthropic support might be solicited, but there was no solid plan presented.

Additionally, the review team did not have confidence that simply cutting personnel or programs would resolve long-term financial shortfalls should they occur.

The review team did not believe the technology budget as presented is adequate for the assessments now given on-line, and there was no evidence of a concrete purchasing and sustainability plan for technology, including hardware, software, and network plans.

One of the two facilities mentioned is actually in the Antioch Cluster and would not be appropriate for a school that is targeting primarily McGavock Cluster students. The review team also questioned whether the build-out costs were adequate, and whether the school would have the needed revenues if they are not.

AMENDED APPLICATION BUSINESS PLAN ANALYSIS
The amended business plan now meets the criteria for approval because it gives a much more detailed financial analysis that includes expanded contingency plans with appropriate budget adjustments, and expanded analysis of philanthropic support that
might be solicited. The budget presented balances without additional supports, and the school will not be dependent upon such support to fully execute their academic plan and programs.

The technology budget accurately reflects all assessments and additional information presented includes expanded hardware, software and networking capabilities that should be adequate to implement not only PARCC, but also NWEA MAP, Compass Learning, and any additional assessments that require on-line participation.

While the initial facilities and build-out costs were considered insufficient by the review team, the amended application includes an additional seven (7) facility choices, and also the fact that the applicant is now working with a reputable commercial real estate firm to assist in facility choice. Additionally, the applicant doubled the build-out costs which are reflected in the budget, which is more in line with the costs incurred by other charter schools in the area.
Evidence of Capacity

**Plan Summary** – STRIVE Collegiate Academy presented a very ambitious plan to meet the needs of the McGavock Cluster Community with a middle school targeting grades 5-8. The governing board has seven (7) members and the school is already incorporated and has by-laws and governing policies in place. The school plan presents a longer school day and year and includes sample school calendars and schedules. The academic focus is on literacy and a rigorous curriculum aimed at getting students ready for college, career and life.

**Analysis** – Based on the totality of the application and interview sessions, this applicant had some very strong ideas and well-thought out portions of her application. The review team was impressed with the literacy focus, the alignment with the MNPS performance framework, and attention to well-researched academic strategies.

However, as evidenced above, there are enough questions about this application, particularly with organizational structure, that the review team does not have confidence at this time that the applicant can successfully start and sustain a high performing school.

**NOTE:** Because the applicant did not meet the standard in all three of the capacity review areas – educational, operational, and business plan – this application will not move to Phases II and III of the review process.

**AMENDED EVIDENCE OF CAPACITY ANALYSIS**

The review team is confident, based on the strength of the re-submitted application, this applicant has the capacity to open and sustain a high performing charter school. The literary focus, along with the additions to address deficits identified by the review team, makes this application much stronger and allows us to recommend approval based on capacity.

**The application now moves into Phase II of this review cycle.**
### STRIVE’S Academic Goals

#### Academic Goals and Benchmarks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Goals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Absolute Performance</strong></td>
<td>• 75% of all STRIVE students will demonstrate proficiency on the PARCC ELA and mathematics assessments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 90% of all students who have attended the school for two or more years will score Proficient or advanced on the TCAP.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• All STRIVE 8th graders will score in the upper quartile on the ACT Explore.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• By the end of the 8th grade, all students will score at 75 percentile or higher on the NWEA MAP assessment in reading, math, language and science.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Growth Measures</strong></td>
<td>• All students will show five percentiles of growth each year on the MAP until they reach the 75th percentile or higher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Achievement Gap and Comparative Measures</strong></td>
<td>• There will be a 4% or less achievement gap between student subgroups (i.e., race, economic status, disability, and English language proficiency) on the PARCC ELA and mathematics assessments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• STRIVE will outperform surrounding middle schools and the MNPS district on all PARCC and TCAP assessments in every grade and subject tested.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mission Specific Literacy and Leadership Goals</strong></td>
<td>• Students who are on grade level will grow one or more grade levels in reading using the NWEA MAP and Fountas &amp; Pinnell Assessments.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Students who are not on grade level yet, will grow two or more grade levels in reading using the NWEA MAP and Fountas &amp; Pinnell Assessments.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• All students will read at least 3000 pages (~ 20 novels) over the course of the school year.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Leadership</strong></td>
<td>• 90% of students will score Proficient/Advanced on the I STRIVE Leadership Rubric.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• All students will plan and implement a service learning project aligned to their leadership development class each year.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Each student will complete an oral presentation related to a text they have read during the year.</td>
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</table>
Analysis – The Academic Benchmark plan meets the criteria for approval because it is rigorous, thorough, and ambitious and is indicative of the high standards with which it will hold not only its students, but the school leaders and teachers as well. The application indicates the school will embrace the MNPS Academic Framework as well as the Operational and Financial Frameworks as indicative of the rigorous high standards of school accountability grounded in the best practices of the National Association of Charter School Authorizers, on which the MNPS standards were modeled. The review team has confidence the school will meet its benchmarks and goals based on the amended application review.
Diversity Plan

Plan Summary – STRIVE Collegiate submitted a diversity plan that indicates that seeks to enroll a student population reflective of the diversity found in the McGavock cluster. The school plans to implement several race-neutral approaches, beginning with targeting a diverse group of students, outreach to a wide variety of community partners such as the Nashville Hispanic Chamber, Tennessee Charter School Center, Chamber of Commerce, YMCA, and assorted business and faith leaders. The school plans to actively recruit students by attending community events, door-to-door visits, targeted mass mailings, hosting events such as Family Data Days, offering transportation, and reaching out to feeder elementary schools.

Analysis – The diversity plan meets the criteria for approval because the school has conducted an in-depth analysis of the McGavock Cluster and its already diverse schools and has created strategies that will extend and promote that diversity. The review team is confident that the school will reach the widest possible group of students and will actively recruit students and families whose first language is not English, along with students with disabilities. Transportation will be provided not only for students, but also families when there are school events in order to ensure that lack of transportation within a family is not a barrier to participation in their child’s education.

Additionally, the STRIVE founders will seek partnerships with TFA, TNTP’s Nashville Teaching Fellows, and Historically Black Colleges and Universities to recruit a diverse and highly qualified teaching staff. Taken together, these approaches will work towards a diverse student and teacher population and the review team is confident the STRIVE leadership is committed to adding to MNPS portfolio of diverse schools.
Phase III

Successful applicants will serve at least one of three stated competitive priorities as defined by MNPS:
- Growth/Demand
- Management Conversion
- High School Continuation for existing operators

Applicants will be asked to respond to criteria associated with each priority and direct reviewers to the sections of their capacity plans including but not limited to detailed transportation plans, student recruitment plans, community engagement and communication plans, and facility plans.

Best interests of the students, the district, and the community

Plan Summary – The Resolution adopted by the MNPS BOE identifies its second priority as “new charter schools locating in cluster tiers in which capacity is projected to exceed 120% as of fall 2017 based on the MNPS School Enrollment and Capacity Report.” This school proposes to locate in the McGavock Middle School Cluster tier, whose fall 2017 projected enrollment rate for all middles schools in the cluster is 106.8%. Each of the 4 middle schools in the McGavock Cluster is projected to exceed 103% of their identified capacity according to the MNPS School Enrollment and Capacity Report. The Board’s Resolution identifies its first priority as “applications that propose conversion of traditional schools designated as “target” status as of the fall of 2014 based on the three-year composite measure on the MNPS Academic Performance Framework.” Although not proposing to manage a specific school in the cluster, and ahead of the final determination of 2014 statuses, the prior year’s statuses show 3 of the 4 middle schools in target or review status. The proposed school will serve 480 students at capacity which is roughly the number of students above capacity the four cluster middle schools are projected to be and will serve students whose schools have performed below expectations, offering parents an added opportunity to choose a strong school without over-serving the cluster.

Analysis – In considering our recommendation, our first duty is to the students we serve. Tennessee Charter School Law requires authorizers to make decisions that are not contrary to the “best interests of the students, the district, or the community.” Good practice suggests that authorizers ought to consider those best interests broadly, and when able to articulate needs for new schools that advance those best interests, do so by
issuing a call for proposals. The MNPS Board of Education Resolution articulates legitimate interests in building school capacity to serve our growing population and advancing opportunities for parents to choose schools with strong academic performance. While the thresholds and strategies identified in the resolution demonstrate our greatest needs, this application calls on us to consider whether these represent our only needs. Legally, we are required to determine if we think that denial of the schools would be contrary to the best interests of the students, the district, and the community.

When the authorizer articulates its priorities and needs, applicants that serve those articulated interests directly may safely assume that a quality application will be approved. The MNPS Board of Education Resolution acknowledges the importance of the quality standards approved by the National Association of Charter School Authorizers, one of which is:

“A quality authorizer broadly invites and solicits charter applications while publicizing the authorizer’s strategic vision and chartering priorities, without restricting or refusing to review applications that propose to fulfill other goals.”

When an applicant proposes to fulfill other goals, the burden to demonstrate need for the school falls squarely on the applicant. This proposal, however, satisfies that burden.

This application has been vetted by a rigorous quality review process and found ready to operate at excellence. Its absolute commitments to strong academic outcomes and diversity are well established and enforceable by virtue of the commitments within the charter application.

In this case, the applicant has made a convincing case that approval of a new school in this cluster will actually advance the same goals as those identified by the Board and within the year’s Call for Proposals. Serving students in overcrowded schools and advancing quality options where academic performance has lagged are the goals in the Resolution, and they are the goals advanced here. The definitions of overcrowding and the strategy of management conversion are the only differences. Denying this application would therefore be contrary to best interests of the students in schools that are overcrowded and students in schools where academic performance lags.

This application will represent the first and only charter school within the McGavock Cluster. The Cluster is strong and growing and enrollment in every middle school in the cluster will exceed capacity while the academic performance of some of the middle schools lags. The applicant in this case has demonstrated a need and is therefore “not contrary to the best interests of the students, the district, and the community.”