



State Public Charter School Commission 2014 Initial Proposal Recommendation Report

Charter Application for
Accelerated Learning Laboratory Hawaii

Academic Performance Evaluators
Beth Bulgeron
Kirsten Rogers

Introduction

In 2012, the Hawaii State Legislature passed a new charter school law, which instituted a rigorous, transparent accountability system that at the same time honors the autonomy and local decision-making of Hawaii's charter schools. The law created the State Public Charter School Commission ("Commission"), assigned it statewide chartering jurisdiction and authority, and directed it to enter into State Public Charter School Contracts ("Charter Contract") with every existing charter school and every newly approved charter school applicant.

The 2014 Request for Proposals ("RFP") and the evaluation process are rigorous and demanding. The process is meant to ensure that prospective schools have a plan with a high likelihood of success and operators that possess the capacity to implement sound strategies, practices, and methodologies.

Initial Proposal Evaluation Process

The Commission examined feedback from its 2013 Application Cycle and researched the application processes from several states to develop a new, multiphase charter school application evaluation process. This recommendation report reflects only the evaluation results from the Initial Proposal phase.

Academic performance evaluators reviewed Initial Proposals, which focus on the academic plan portion of the application, against the minimum quality thresholds contained within the Initial Proposal Evaluation Criteria.

The duty of the evaluators is to recommend whether each applicant should, based on its Initial Proposal, proceed to the Final Application phase or withdraw voluntarily from the current application cycle. The authority and responsibility to decide the Commission's official recommendation to each applicant rests with the Commissioners. Ultimately, each applicant elects whether to proceed to submit a Final Application or withdraw voluntarily from the current application cycle.

Report Contents

Initial Proposal Overview

Basic information about the proposed school as presented in the Initial Proposal.

Recommendation

An overall judgment regarding whether the Initial Proposal meets the minimum quality thresholds.

Evaluation

Analysis of the Initial Proposal is based on five primary areas of the academic plan as presented: (1) Curriculum and Instructional Design; (2) School Calendar, Schedule, and Staff Structure; (3) School Culture; (4) Special Populations and At-Risk Students; and (5) Academic Plan Capacity.

Using the Initial Proposal Evaluation Thresholds, evaluators identify responses that do not meet the minimum quality threshold and deemed them "Substantially Inadequate." A response is "Substantially Inadequate" if it: (1) fails to address the RFP requirements or criteria for approval; (2) presents unreasonable plans or ideas; (3) lacks essential information; or (4) raises significant concerns about the applicant's capacity.

If an Initial Proposal does not receive a "Substantially Inadequate" rating in any of the five primary areas of the academic plans, evaluators will recommend that the applicant proceed to completing and submitting a Final Application.

Initial Proposal Overview

Proposed School Name

Accelerated Learning Laboratory Hawaii

Mission and Vision

Mission: Accelerated Learning Laboratory/Hawaii (ALL) shall demonstrate that children exhibit astonishing academic performance when a comprehensive curriculum is coupled with pedagogy directed by current research on human learning. ALL's educational model shall demonstrate that curricular design and instructional practices are the predominant factors influencing academic performance, rather than ethnicity, culture, social status, economic privilege, or gender. ALL shall confirm that ALL children exhibit unique cognitive and creative gifts when their innate talents are nurtured in a challenging, supportive, and civil environment. ALL shall introduce a 21st Century educational growth model in which learning outcomes exceed those of previous instructional systems.

Vision: ALL-Hawaii shall: provide educational choice to families interested in gaining access to advanced teaching methodology; challenging curricula; gifted level instruction; and remove the 'ceiling-effects' that restrict the performance of high achieving students. ALL shall provide students and their families with access to the best K-12 education this nation has to offer. ALL in Tucson, Arizona has been ranked by the Washington Post as one of the highest performing schools in the nation; ranked by the Arizona Department of Education as an "A" school, and designated a "Title I High Performance Reward School." ALL-Tucson has a 100% graduation rate and its graduates attend many of the highest ranked universities in the world. ALL-Hawaii expects to bring similar distinction to the educational community in Hawaii within its first five years of operation and heretofore unavailable educational opportunity to students and their families the first year of operation.

Geographic Location

ALL-Hawaii will be located in the general area of Kapolei/Ewa Beach, the fastest growing region in the state of Hawaii and Oahu's second largest urban center. Kapolei and Ewa Beach's population is a mix of ethnicities. Three developments will bring about 18,000 new affordable homes into the area. Although new schools are in the plan, the infrastructure will still remain insufficient to support the educational needs of this rapid growth. The schools that exist currently are near capacity. Kapolei and Ewa Beach does not have any private or college preparatory schools in the area. Having ALL-Hawaii in Kapolei and Ewa Beach will enable families who value education and want their children to attend college the opportunity to achieve that without a long commute or high priced private schools. ALL-Hawaii's address is yet to be determined; however ALL-Hawaii expects its campus to be located within the boundaries of a large development in or near Kapolei.

Academic Plan Summary

The applicant proposes a K-7 school that will, at full capacity in 2021, expand to a K-12. The proposal is for a non-traditional structure where students are selected for classes based on diagnostic assessments referred to as "Subject Baseline Rank" rather than age or grade level. Students work towards individual performance goals within each course, with the overall intended result to reduce academic variance in each class. Students advance through a standards-based curriculum stream at their own rate by demonstrating mastery.

Enrollment Plan

| Grade Level | Number of Students | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|--------------------|---------|-----------------|---------|-----------------|---------|-----------------|---------|-----------------|---------|-----------------|---------|
| | Year 1 | | Year 2 | | Year 3 | | Year 4 | | Year 5 | | Capacity | |
| | 2016 | | 2017 | | 2018 | | 2019 | | 2020 | | 2021 | |
| Brick & Mortar/ Blended vs. Virtual | B&M/ Blended | Virtual | B&M/ Blended | Virtual | B&M/ Blended | Virtual | B&M/ Blended | Virtual | B&M/ Blended | Virtual | B&M/ Blended | Virtual |
| K | 20 | | 20 | | 40 | | 40 | | 40 | | 40 | |
| 1 | 20 | | 20 | | 25 | | 40 | | 40 | | 40 | |
| 2 | 20 | | 20 | | 25 | | 25 | | 40 | | 40 | |
| 3 | 20 | | 20 | | 20 | | 25 | | 25 | | 40 | |
| 4 | | | 20 | | 20 | | 20 | | 25 | | 25 | |
| 5 | | | | | 20 | | 20 | | 25 | | 25 | |
| 6 | | | | | | | 80 | | 25 | | 25 | |
| 7 | | | | | | | | | 80 | | 25 | |
| 8 | | | | | | | | | | | 80 | |
| 9 | | | | | | | | | | | 20 | |
| 10 | | | | | | | | | | | 20 | |
| 11 | | | | | | | | | | | 10 | |
| 12 | | | | | | | | | | | 10 | |
| Subtotals | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Totals | 80 | | 100 | | 150 | | 250 | | 300 | | 400 | |

Executive Summary

Accelerated Learning Laboratory Hawaii

Recommendation

Voluntarily Withdraw from the Application Process

Summary Analysis

The evaluators recommend that the applicant voluntarily withdraw from the application process because the responses within the Initial Proposal are “Substantially Inadequate” and fail to meet the minimum quality threshold in three areas—Curriculum and Instructional Design; School Calendar, Schedule, and Staff Structure; and School Culture.

Throughout this Initial Proposal, essential information is missing about significant components of the plan. In the area of Curriculum and Instructional Design, the proposal is missing a course scope and sequence and curriculum map and/or pacing plan, any curriculum, and graduation requirements. In the School Calendar, Schedule, and Staff Structure area, the daily and weekly schedule is missing. In the School Culture area, the applicant fails to explain how the student culture will be created, implemented, and maintained and further leaves the section on professional culture essentially blank. All of this is essential to perform an evaluation of the proposal and is required by the RFP.

The proposal is not “Substantially Inadequate” and met the minimum quality threshold in the areas of Special Populations and At-Risk Students and Academic Plan Capacity. However, the serious deficiencies in the other three areas warrant a strong recommendation that the applicant voluntarily withdraw from the application process this year.

Summary of Threshold Ratings

While applicants have an opportunity to make minor amendments to their academic plans through the Initial Proposal Amendment contained within the Final Application, changes that would need to be made to address minimum quality threshold deficiencies would typically be major amendments.

In order to receive a recommendation to proceed, the Initial Proposal must not be Substantially Inadequate in any of the five primary areas of the academic plan.

1. Curriculum and Instructional Design

Substantially Inadequate

2. School Calendar, Schedule, and Staff Structure

Substantially Inadequate

3. School Culture

Substantially Inadequate

4. Special Populations and At-Risk Students

Not Substantially Inadequate

5. Academic Plan Capacity

Not Substantially Inadequate

Analysis

Threshold 1: Curriculum and Instructional Design

Rating

Substantially Inadequate

A response to this section of the proposal should provide a framework for a rigorous, quality instructional design (including a course scope and sequence and curriculum map and/or pacing plan that demonstrates alignment with the Common Core State Standards) and a cohesive plan for educating the proposed school’s target population, including appropriate curriculum. If the proposed school plans to serve high school grades, the response should also demonstrate the applicant’s understanding of and commitment to graduation criteria.

The applicant’s response is “Substantially Inadequate” because it does not present a framework for rigorous, quality instructional design or a cohesive education plan and lacks essential information about the applicant’s understanding of and commitment to graduation criteria.

It appears that the course outcomes and mastery-based progression are innovative pieces of this proposal, however, a course scope and sequence and curriculum map and/or pacing plan is not provided. Without this piece, the organization, rigor, and quality of the framework and its alignment to Common Core State Standards cannot be evaluated.

Further, the response does not present a cohesive education plan because of the absence of curriculum or a plan to develop curriculum. While the response provides a framework for instructional design, it does not provide a description of the actual curriculum within the framework, even though the applicant states that the curriculum is fully developed. Instead of curriculum, the response provides a simple list of topics the proposed school plans to cover (such as penmanship, political geography, and math).

Lastly, the response lacks essential information about graduation criteria. The graduation requirements section of the proposal is left essentially blank. The evaluators recognize that the proposed school will not serve high school grades in the first five years of operation, and the applicant appears to propose to serve high school grades at full capacity in year six. However, the applicant did not provide this or any explanation (as is required by the RFP) and instead left the entire section essentially blank.

Threshold 2: School Calendar, Schedule, and Staff Structure

Rating

Substantially Inadequate

A response to this section of the proposal should present a daily and weekly schedule reflecting the needs of the academic plan and demonstrate the applicant’s understanding of and commitment to collective bargaining agreements and their impacts on the proposed school’s calendar, schedule, and staffing.

The applicant’s response is “Substantially Inadequate” because it lacks essential information about the weekly and daily schedule as well as the applicant’s commitment to collective bargaining agreements.

The response lacks essential information because it does not provide a daily and weekly schedule. Instead, the applicant provides a typical student’s schedule, which evaluators cannot use to determine what all students would be doing on a daily or weekly basis. Evaluation of this section requires a comparison of the daily and weekly schedule to the staffing chart. Without a daily and weekly schedule, evaluators cannot determine whether the staffing chart would be in line with collective bargaining

agreements. As such, there is not enough information to assess what the applicant is proposing that teachers do on a daily and weekly basis.

Threshold 3: School Culture

Rating

Substantially Inadequate

A response to this section of the proposal should describe the shared beliefs, attitudes, traditions, and behaviors that will promote high expectations and a positive academic and social environment; explain how that culture will be created, implemented, and maintained for students, teachers, parents or guardians, and administrators; and describe the professional culture of the proposed school.

The applicant’s response is “Substantially Inadequate” because it raises significant concerns about the applicant’s understanding of and commitment to school culture or ethos that will promote high expectations, a positive academic environment, and intellectual and social development for all students.

The applicant does not appear to understand or be committed to school culture. The response describes the shared attitudes and behaviors of the students that will attend the proposed school, but does not explain how those shared attitudes and behaviors that will make up the culture will be created, implemented, and maintained. Further, the section of the proposal that asks for a description of how the professional culture will be created, implemented, and maintained is left essentially blank.

Threshold 4: Special Populations and At-Risk Students

Rating

Not Substantially Inadequate

A response to this section of the proposal should demonstrate an understanding of and commitment to identifying and meeting the needs of all special populations (students with an Individualized Education Plan or Section 504 plan, English Language Learner students, students performing below grade level, etc.).

The applicant’s response is not “Substantially Inadequate” and meets the minimum quality of this threshold because the response demonstrates an understanding of and commitment to special populations by describing interventions for special populations as well as general plans for screening, identification, referral, and exiting.

While the applicant has demonstrated this understanding and commitment, evaluators note that the proposal should include an explanation of how intellectually gifted students are served.

Threshold 5: Academic Plan Capacity

Rating

Not Substantially Inadequate

A response to this section of the proposal should present evidence that the proposed school’s leadership and management team has the collective qualifications to implement the proposed school’s academic plan successfully.

The applicant’s response is not “Substantially Inadequate” and meets the minimum quality of this threshold because the career accomplishments of the applicant leadership team generally appear to demonstrate capacity in the areas of leadership, administration, curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

The evaluators note, however, that it is difficult to truly assess whether the proposed school's leadership and management team has the collective qualifications to implement the academic plan when significant portions of the academic plan (such as the curriculum and course scope and sequence, as described in Threshold 1: Curriculum and Instructional Design) are missing.

Evaluator Biographies

Beth Bulgeron

Before joining the Commission, Ms. Bulgeron was an administrator in charter schools in Chicago, Illinois and Santa Cruz, California. She has developed standards-based curriculum and assessments for public school districts and charter schools and has served as a curriculum consultant. Prior to that, she taught for five years in charter high schools. She earned her BA at the University of Wisconsin, Madison and her JD and LL.M. in Education Law and Policy at the University of the Pacific, McGeorge School of Law.

Kirsten Rogers

Ms. Rogers is an Evaluation Specialist in the DOE's Accountability Section, which administers the public school system's statewide accountability program with a focus on developing and implementing educational indicators on school performance. She formerly served the Commission as its Academic Performance Specialist. She has experience as a middle school teacher at both a charter school in Tennessee and at Wheeler Intermediate, a DOE school in Hawaii. She is a Teach for America alumna, a former corps member advisor, and former content community leader for the organization. She also holds a Master of Education in Teaching from the University of Hawaii at Manoa.