

2018-19

Final Recommendation Report on Charter Application:

Citizens Leadership Academy Southeast

Cleveland Metropolitan School District

1111 Superior Avenue Cleveland, Ohio 44114



Summary Information

Name of Proposed Community School: Citizens Leadership Academy Southeast
Proposed School Location: 15700 Lotus Dr., Cleveland, OH 44128
Lead Applicant Name(s): Megan Johnston
Proposed Opening Date: August 12, 2019
Opening Grades to be Served: 6
Opening Enrollment: 75
Review Team's Recommendation (Approve, Approve with Conditions, or Deny): Approve with Conditions

Description of Proposed School

Citizens Leadership Academy Southeast (CLAS) would be the second replication of Citizens Leadership Academy (CLA), a middle school model that is part of the Breakthrough Charter Schools network. Breakthrough Schools is a charter management organization that oversees three different school models and 11 campuses in the city of Cleveland. Of the 11 Breakthrough schools, eight currently are sponsored by the Cleveland Metropolitan School District (CMSD).

CLA is sponsored by CMSD and first opened its doors to middle school students in 2011. It is located at 9711 Lamont Ave., near E. 97th St. The first replication of the CLA model was the opening during the 2017-18 school year of Citizens Leadership Academy East (CLAE), located at 12523 Woodside Ave., between E 125th Street and E. 128th St. CLAE currently is sponsored by the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation but has applied to transfer its sponsorship to CMSD.

CLAS plans to open in August 2019, serving students in grade 6 in its first year and expanding to grade 7 in its second year and to grade 8 in its third. Opening enrollment is targeted at 75 students, with hopes to expand enrollment to 150 students in year 2 and to be fully enrolled at 225 students starting in year 3.

CLAS would receive significant fiscal and operational support from Breakthrough Schools, as well as support from the other schools in the CLA model. CLAS would have its own Board of Directors that is separate from the board of Breakthrough Schools. CLAS proposes to open at 15700 Lotus Dr., at the intersection with E. 160th St., and to co-locate with Citizens Academy Southeast (CAS), which is sponsored by CMSD and a school in the elementary school model associated with the middle school CLA model and also supported by Breakthrough Schools.

CLAS would be operated as an EL Education school. EL Education, formerly known as Expeditionary Learning, is a national network of schools that prepare students for adult life through “an overarching vision of increasing student engagement and elevating and expanding student achievement through driving student educational excellence in three core areas: mastery of knowledge and skills, character, and high-quality work.” The new school would provide a middle school option that aligns with the educational model of Citizens Academy elementary schools and would be co-located with CAS.

The principal of CLAS would serve as the academic leader under the mentorship of Breakthrough School’s Model Education Leader and with additional support from the leadership of CLA and CLAE. The Director of Operations would serve as the non-instructional leader of the school and receive support from the Breakthrough Schools’ Model Operations Leader. Breakthrough Schools is in the process of recruiting the principal.

The proposed budget reflects funding of \$1,173,209 for 75 enrolled students in the school’s first year, with total expenditures of \$1,083,397 and a school staff of 10.5 positions.

Scoring

The following chart shows the review team’s rating and assignment of points on each of the application sections that were applicable to CLAS’s sponsorship application, as well the number of points possible for each section. This application met the application criteria in 20 of 23 applicable application sections and exceeded the criteria in the other three. It earned 75 of the 94 points it was possible for this application to earn, or 80%.

Application section	Rating	Points assigned	Points Possible
1. Applicant Information	Pass	N/A	0
2. Executive Summary	Meets Criteria	2	2
3. Student Enrollment Plan and Rationale	Meets Criteria	3	4
4. Simultaneous Submissions	Pass	N/A	0
5. Sponsor Status of Other Schools in Model	Pass	4	4
6. Affiliated Organization Information	Exceeds Criteria	4	4
7. Capacity to Replicate	Meets Criteria	3	4
8. Performance Rationale for Replication	Meets Criteria	6	8
9. Rationale for Transferring Sponsorship	N/A	N/A	0
10. School Calendar and Daily/Weekly Schedule	Meets Criteria	3	4
11. Academic Program	Exceeds Criteria	4	4
12. Academic, Organizational, Financial Goals	Meets Criteria	6	8
13. Professional Development	Meets Criteria	3	4
14. Racial and Socioeconomic Diversity	Meets Criteria	6	8
15. Special Student Populations	Exceeds Criteria	4	4
16. High School Graduation Requirements	N/A	N/A	0
17. Business Plan, Org. Chart, Staffing Plan	Meets Criteria	3	4
18. School Leadership	Meets Criteria	3	4
19a. Parent & Community Engagement - New	Meets Criteria	6	8
19b. Parent & Community Engagement - Existing	N/A	N/A	0
20. Governing Authority	Meets Criteria	3	4

21. Budget and Budget Narrative	Meets Criteria	3	4
22. Fiscal Soundness	Meets Criteria	3	4
23. Insurance	Pass	N/A	0
24. Facilities	Meets Criteria	3	4
25. Timeline	Meets Criteria	3	4
TOTALS		75	94
PERCENTAGE AWARDED OF POINTS POSSIBLE			80%

Application's Notable Areas of Strength

This section briefly highlights some of the application's more significant strengths. It does not analyze every aspect of the application.

Affiliated Organization: CLAS would have a Network Collaboration Agreement with Breakthrough Schools in which, in exchange for a service fee, Breakthrough would manage a broad array of functions, including Finance and Accounting, Human Resources, Facilities Management, Information Technology, Marketing and Communications, Fundraising and Grant Seeking, and Data Analysis. Breakthrough has clear capacity and a strong track record of supporting successful charter operations and startups.

Capacity to Replicate and Performance Rationale for Replication: CLAS would be the second replication in the CLA model. The first replication school, CLAE, opened in the 2017-18 school year. The CLA model has achieved strong performance results, and there is strong interest among families who have children in the Citizens Academy model in continuing to receive the benefits of its approach in middle school. The recent replication of CLA to CLAE provides the applicants with immediate experience with replicating this model under very similar circumstances.

Academic Program: The application provides a strong articulation of, and rationale for, EL Education. Further, the applicants provide a sound and rational case for utilizing a middle school (grades 6-8) model.

Special Student Populations: The applicants demonstrate a strong understanding and model for serving their Special Education (SPED) population. This is evidenced in the school's staffing plan, which calls for one intervention specialist per grade, an additional interventionist for students who are alternatively assessed, and the model special education director.

Parent and Community Engagement: The applicants present a strong plan for parent engagement. Planned parent engagement strategies for the school include: parent orientation and handbook, home visits, regular phone calls and texts, progress reports, student-led parent/teacher conferences, academic celebrations, community events and action days. The applicants have also taken steps to engage the local community, including a plan to capitalize on existing partnerships through Citizens Academy Southeast (CAS) and engaging Ward 1 Councilman Joseph Jones.

Timeline: The applicants provide a clear and detailed timeline setting organizational, financial, and academic steps that the school must complete in order to welcome children. The timeline takes into account the timing required for the CMSD Opening Assurances visit.

Application's Areas of Potential Concern

This section highlights certain aspects of the application that the review team felt raised questions or potential concerns.

Student Enrollment Plan and Rationale: While CLAS has a clear pathway from CAS, there is still a significant projected gap in enrollment due to low cohort sizes matriculating from CAS for the 2019-20 and 2020-21 school years. The review team has some concern as to how CLAS will recruit and retain students to fill that gap.

In the interview of the applicants, it was clear that they fully appreciate this challenge and have discussed it at length. They experienced this same challenge in the opening of CLAE, but now in the second year that school is fully enrolled. They have sound contingency planning for the possibility of enrollment below projection, including strong support from Breakthrough Schools. They also have a good track record of focusing on issues of student retention and attrition. While enrollment will bear monitoring by the school's governing board, the operator, and CMSD, the review team believes these considerations argue for the approval of the application.

School Leadership: The applicants provide a job description for CLAS's founding school leader and identify the key elements necessary for strong school leadership; however, a founding school leader has not yet been identified, despite the applicants' plan to hire the leader by November 2018. The review team is concerned about the difficulty of hiring a highly qualified school leader mid-school-year, especially given the importance the applicants themselves place on ensuring that the founding school leader have a long lead time in which to contribute to a successful startup period and school opening.

Recommendation

The review team recommends that this application be approved with conditions. Specifically, the team recommends conditioning final approval of the application on the applicants' submittal to CMSD, by December 1, 2018, of either:

1. The identity and qualifications of the school leader who is in place to lead the school from that date on through the startup period and through the school's first year of operations; or
2. A written startup contingency plan indicating, with specificity and to CMSD's satisfaction:
 - a. The applicants' plan to accomplish the startup tasks that ideally under Breakthrough Schools' usual startup process would be performed or led by the school leader;
 - b. While the school leader position remains unfilled, who will be responsible for leading or performing such tasks; and
 - c. The new timeline for the completion of the tasks.

The review team recommends that the selection of the school leader or the written contingency plan be approved by CMSD. If the leader is not identified by December 1, the review team envisions the applicants remaining in close contact with CMSD about their progress in filling the position and, in the meantime, the accomplishment of startup tasks according to the contingency plan.

CMSD Application Review Team

Review team members

Erica Adams

School Quality Reviewer
CMSD

Ms. Adams is a member of the team that is providing comprehensive quality assessments of each school in CMSD, an evidence-based process that includes data and information gathered on academic programs and performance, school climate, finance, operations, governance, and stakeholder satisfaction and that is intended to guide school self-assessment and planning. She previously served as a Primary Guide/Teacher and then as the Community Engagement & Admissions Coordinator for Stonebrook Montessori, one of the charter schools sponsored by CMSD. Ms. Adams holds M.A. in Education from St. Catherine University in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Derek Cluse

Deputy Chief Financial Officer
CMSD

Mr. Cluse helps manage the department responsible for supporting CMSD schools, employees, and vendors and coordinating CMSD's budget. He has broad experience in financial planning, accounting, and reporting, financial systems and information technology, human resource management, labor relations, facility management, business startups, training and development, infrastructure development, and enterprise resource planning. He formerly served as the business manager for Ashland City Schools and then the Hudson City School District. In the charter school sector, he also previously served as chief financial officer of the Institute for Charter School Management, an education management organization, and as treasurer of the schools the Institute managed. Mr. Cluse hold a B.S. in Accounting from Southern University and Agricultural and Mechanical College in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

Meagan Coggins

School Quality Reviewer
CMSD

Ms. Coggins is a member of the team that is providing comprehensive quality assessments of each school in CMSD, an evidence-based process that includes data and information gathered on academic programs and performance, school climate, finance, operations, governance, and stakeholder satisfaction and that is intended to guide school self-assessment and planning. Before joining CMSD, she taught English and history at Shaker Heights Middle School and at Hathaway Brown School in Shaker Heights. Ms. Coggins holds a B.A. in Integrated Language Arts Education from Ohio University.

Jessica Gilway Gelbart

Director of Curriculum & Instruction, PreK-8
Urban Community School

Dr. Gilway works collaboratively with her independent school's academic leadership team to develop and support strategic short-term and long-term academic goals and, among other leadership responsibilities, serves as instructional and data coach for a teachers and instructional aides. Previously she was the founding principal, K-8, of the Global Ambassadors Language Academy, a charter school sponsored by the Ohio Council for Community Schools, through the school's planning year and first year of operation. Before that she served as Director of School, K-8, of Two Rivers Community School, a charter school in Boone, NC, and was a middle school teacher for nine years. Dr. Gilway holds an Ed.D. in Educational Leadership from Appalachian State University, Boone, NC, and an M.A. in Elementary Education from the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Joseph S. Micheller

Executive Director, New School Development
CMSD

Dr. Micheller works with CMSD staff and community partners to design, launch and support new and innovative school models. Prior to coming to CMSD, he served as Director of Educational Services for Cleveland Heights-University Heights City Schools, Superintendent of Cuyahoga Falls City Schools, and Assistant Superintendent of Brunswick City Schools. He began his career as a middle school social studies teacher with the East Cleveland City School District. Dr. Micheller holds an Ed.D. in Leadership and Administration from the University of Akron and an Ed.S. in Educational Administration and Supervision from Cleveland State University.

Joseph Saitta

Data Analyst
CMSD

Mr. Saitta conducts quantitative and qualitative research, program evaluation, analytics, visualization, technical assistance, and predictive modeling for CMSD at both the school and district levels. His graduate research work focused on topics such as school choice, neighborhood change, and spatial inequality of access to high-quality schools between varying levels of neighborhood socioeconomic status. His professional background also includes investment banking and financial consulting. Mr. Saitta holds an M.R.P. in Urban Studies, Quantitative Research, from Cornell University in Ithaca, New York.

Additional participants

Applications Process Manager:

Tom Hutton

Independent Consultant
Education Adjuncts LLC

Mr. Hutton is a Hawaii-based consultant who advises education stakeholders, including charter school authorizers, on policy formulation and training and supports them with program implementation. He has done extensive work with CMSD's Office of Charter Schools. He is a leadership coach for the National Association of Charter School Authorizers and serves on the governing board of Wai'alaie Elementary Public Charter School in Honolulu. He was formerly the executive director of the Hawaii State Public Charter School Commission, a school attorney for the National School Boards Association and in private practice, and a co-founder of Thurgood Marshall Academy, a charter high school in Washington, D.C. Mr. Hutton holds a J.D. from Georgetown University Law Center, Washington, DC.

Charter Schools Office Staff:

Matt Rado

Director of Charter Schools
CMSD

Mr. Rado was a consultant to CMSD's Charter Schools Office for a year and half before joining the office full-time in February of 2018. His responsibilities have included compliance monitoring and school site visits, opening assurances for newly approved schools, and revisions to CMSD's charter contracts and organizational performance framework. He previously worked for StudentsFirst Ohio, as field coordinator and then state outreach director, where among other things he did organizing work with many Cleveland charter schools. Mr. Rado holds an Master of Public Administration, (M.P.A.) in Nonprofit Management from Cleveland State University.

Shemekia Love

Administrative Assistant
CMSD

Ms. Love provides administrative support to the Charter Schools Office, where among other duties she reviews reporting by schools and fields their inquiries, as well as to CMSD's Office of School Choice and Enrollment. Before joining CMSD, she worked in long-term care at Menorah Park and in-patient care at the Cleveland Clinic. Ms. Love holds an associate's degree in business administration from Remington College-Cleveland Campus.

Executive Supervision:

Christine Fowler-Mack

Chief Portfolio Officer
CMSD

Ms. Fowler-Mack’s oversight of new and innovative schools and programs and choice and enrollment at CMSD includes supervision of CMSD’s Office of Charter Schools and has placed her in a key leadership role in CMSD’s implementation and supporting of Cleveland’s ambitious city-wide education reform initiative, the Cleveland Plan for Transforming Schools. She is a former chief of staff for CMSD and previously served as interim superintendent and assistant superintendent for the Cleveland Heights-University Heights School District. Ms. Fowler-Mack holds an M.A. from the University of Akron.