

Board Meeting Agenda Item Executive Summary

Supt.'s Office Use Only

Board Meeting 6-17-08

Agenda Action

Item No. I. 5.

Board Meeting Date:	June 17, 2008
Submitted By:	Sandra Hollinger, Assistant Superintendent
Item Description:	Request for Renewal of Charter Application for DeSoto High School

Purpose and Explanation:

The Board approved a charter contract with the DeSoto High School, Inc., on March 24, 2003, and the school has operated for five (5) years, since the 2003-04 school year. On May 20, 2008, the school submitted a renewal application, seeking to have its charter renewed.

The district staff have carefully reviewed the on-going operations and functions of this charter school. The administration has some concerns about the school's financial position. As of April 30, 2008, the school has a negative cash balance of \$3,715. and is in debt to its Director for \$34,000. The school's renewal application did not include a financial plan. The school's projected 2008-09 revenue based on the number of students currently enrolled is \$256,181. The district staff will continue to monitor the school's financial operations, and make further recommendations, as appropriate.

Recommended Action: The Superintendent recommends that the Board approve the Renewal Charter Application for the DeSoto High School, Inc., effective July 1, 2008, for a term of five (5) years.

BUDGETARY IMPACT

Funding Source (Description):	Amount:
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Staff Attorney Review & Approval <i>(For Contracts Only)</i>	Date: _____ Initial: _____	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION Yes: _____ No: _____
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MEMORANDUM

TO: Sandy Hollinger
FROM: Sandi Anusavice
RE: **Review of Renewal Application for DeSoto Charter High School**
DATE: May 27, 2008

DeSoto Charter High School serves language impaired and dyslexic students in grades 9-12. The majority of the students have been staffed for ESE services. DeSoto High School offers the standard diploma option only.

DeSoto High School first opened in the fall of 2003 with grades 9 and 10. Their first senior class graduated in the fall of 2006. The directors are seeking a renewal of the initial charter which expires on June 30, 2008.

The school advertises an innovative curriculum with small classes and assistive technology. Specific organizational skills are taught that help students cope with their disabilities. All students take reading each year. Multi-disciplinary units and after-school homework help assist students with comprehension and concept integration.

The application does not address the complete curriculum in much detail. The Jamestown and Wilson materials used for reading instruction are both research-based programs. HeyMath! is an inquiry-based system developed by Cambridge University. No information is given about the literature or social studies programs used, except that the textbooks are state-adopted. DeSoto uses some textbooks with adjusted reading levels.

Although the application does not address the curricular program in much detail, we have had no significant concerns with the curriculum or the instructional strategies used at DeSoto during their first five years of operation.

The statement that student access to a free and appropriate education is being denied if a language-impaired or dyslexic student is not enrolled at DeSoto is misleading. Charter schools are a choice, not the *only* choice. Students with similar disabilities are also appropriately served within the SBAC public schools. While DeSoto serves a specific population of students appropriately, it would be a misrepresentation to say they are the only school at which these students' needs can be met.

Although we have not had any significant concerns with the curriculum offered at DeSoto High School during its first five years of operation, low enrollment continues to be an issue. The school currently owes SBAC \$14,300 in overdue rent. We do worry that a charter school with financial difficulties may not be able to maintain the required level of instruction or may even have to close in mid-year. This creates a disruption for its students.

In summary, the curriculum, as presented in the application is appropriate for DeSoto students, and curriculum staff recommends the approval of the application.

SHA/jwb