

April 25, 2014

Dear Charter School Authorizing Leadership,

Last fall, 14 new schools projected to open for the 2013-2014 school year either failed to open or opened, but closed within a very short time. Considerable state funds were lost and many lives impacted because of these failures to successfully launch. In an effort to avoid a similar circumstance for the 2014-2015 school year, we required authorizers to submit additional documents for department review at the preliminary agreement stage that would show evidence of sound authorizer decision-making and alignment with the Sponsor Application Process and Decision Making section of the new Quality of Sponsor Practices review, which is based upon NACSA's *Principles & Standards*.

The Office of Community Schools found that three sponsors did not show evidence of required best practices for authorizing within their proposals to open seven community schools. This week the department sent letters to leaders of the Educational Resource Consultants of Ohio, Inc., the Warren County Educational Service Center and Kids Count of Dayton Inc., informing the sponsors of the severe deficiencies in their school application and approval process. It was clear that the identified sponsors lacked not only the appropriate processes, but more importantly, the commitment of mission, expertise and resources needed to be an effective charter sponsor.

- Education Resource Consultants of Ohio sought to “recycle” a school that closed for failing to meet academic requirements using the same superintendent, governing authority and location.
- The Warren County Educational Service Center sought to authorize three schools each for 175 students without performing any basic market research to justify state funding for that many students and was willing to authorize each school with basic financials that were identical to the Olympus schools that collapsed last fall.
- Kids Count of Dayton sought to authorize a community school with a developer that owes the state \$65,000 for another school that closed last year shortly after opening. The sponsor does not appear to have performed even a basic internet search to learn about the school developer's past.

The actions of these three sponsors clearly violate the quality principles of authorizing laid out by NACSA and ODE's office of community schools.

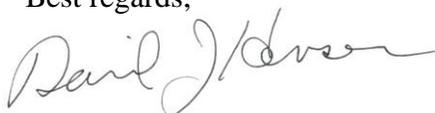
In addition, three other reviewed sponsors showed that they have the desire, resources and expertise required to be effective sponsors.

- First time authorizer Jefferson County Educational Service Center proposes to open Utica Shale Academy (USA) in Columbiana County. This school will prepare students seeking careers in Ohio's booming shale oil industry.

- The Fordham Foundation proposes to open another school in the United Schools Network of Columbus. United Schools Network runs two schools earning “A’s” in value added on their report cards.
- Buckeye Hope Community Foundation proposes to open four schools including the Toledo SMART School, a new school for English language learners, particularly native Spanish-speaking children.

The Department of Education looks forward to working with effective community school sponsors whose application process reflects a desire to set high standards for their schools, uphold school autonomy and protect student and public interests. These are the kinds of sponsors experience shows will be successful. As always, should you have any questions, please contact your lead consultant in the Office of Community Schools.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "David Hansen".

David Hansen,
Executive Director
Office of Quality School Choice