

**PINELLAS PREPARATORY ACADEMY**  
**403 FIRST AVENUE SOUTHWEST, LARGO, FL 33770**  
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March 28, 2004

Steve Swartzel, Director of Governmental Services  
Pinellas County School Board  
301 4<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Largo, FL 33770

Dear Mr. Swartzel:

Per our discussion, following are the changes we would like in our new charter:

1. In the introduction, the dates should be changed to reflect the date on which the new contract will be signed and the appropriate statute and date should be changed as well. (I believe the statute is now "Title XLVIII, Chapter 1002.33" as of 2003.)
2. Article 1.2 After "approved application to operate charter," insert "initial signed charter contract, and any amendments thereto,"
3. Article 1.3.1 should be changed to read: "Effective Date: This charter shall become effective upon signing by both parties, and shall cover a term of five (5) years commencing July, 2004 and ending on June 30, 2009, except as otherwise provided in this Charter.
4. Article 1.3.3 should be deleted.
5. Article 1.3.4 delete "initial"
6. Article 2.9 (Second Amendment to contract) should be changed to read: "Number of Students and Grades Served: The school shall serve grades 4-8. The school may enroll a maximum of 375 students, with a focus on students who have shown a love of learning and high emotional intelligence. The school will serve up to 375 students in Grades four (4) through eight."
7. Delete Article 5.1.
8. Article 5.5, first sentence, should be changed to read: Facilities: The school will be located at 403 First Ave. SW, Largo, FL 33770, and may move to another qualified location to meet the needs of the growing student body."
9. Article 8.10 Notices to this school should be changed to read:  
SCHOOL: Pinellas Preparatory Academy  
Attention: Ronald F. Lipton, Ph.D., Principal  
ADDRESS: 403 First Ave. SW  
Largo, FL 33770

Also attached are current financial statements, one covering income and expenditures during the current fiscal year, and the second covering all income and expenditures since the school began receiving funding.

Please let me know if any of these contract changes or financial reports requires change, addition, or further explanation.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Ronald F. Lipton, Principal

CHARTER RENEWAL APPLICATION  
PINELLAS PREPARATORY ACADEMY

*Note: This application follows the Florida Charter Schools Standard Application format, as revised by the Florida Department of Education for 2004-5.*

**I. ACADEMIC DESIGN**

**1) Guiding Principles, Purpose, & Mission:**

*A. Describe the core philosophy and underlying purpose of the school.*

It is our guiding philosophy that many children who are often categorized as emotionally mature or fast learners, can do best if constantly challenged in an environment of cooperative learning, parental involvement, teacher and student empowerment, and learning techniques that take into account multiple intelligences of all students. We have a basic operating philosophy of not permitting a student to become bored by challenging him/her with a level of work and learning appropriate to his/her individual potential and accomplishment.

The school has served grades 4 through 7, and now seeks to expand to the full three years of middle school by adding an eighth grade. This will fulfill our long-stated goal of preparing students to qualify for any secondary school they choose, be it a magnet program such as IB or CAT, a regular high school program, or a private school environment. It is our purpose to encourage students to achieve to their highest possible potential, utilizing their specific skills and talents, and encouraged by a faculty, and a learning environment, that is nurturing and promotes self-esteem, cooperation, and ethics.

*B. Describe how the school will utilize the Guiding Principles found in s. 1002.33(2)(a).*  
*The Guiding Principles are:*

*1. Meet high standards of student achievement while providing parents flexibility to choose among diverse educational opportunities within the state's educational system.*

Our concentration on leadership development, creativity, cooperative learning, both within the core curricula of Sunshine State Standards, and higher level learning opportunities, provides students in need of this kind of nurturing environment to bring out their full potential. In addition, we offer music, art, physical education, and Spanish, all integrated with our core subjects, which themselves are taught from an interdisciplinary standpoint. This form of teaching assumes that students enter the school with a love of learning, while recognizing that all students may not initially have this level of motivation. Therefore, we incorporate in our operation peer and adult tutoring, group activity based on multiple intelligences, cooperative learning structures, special "themes" to encourage creativity, and specialized offerings such as Model United Nations to bring out and develop talents not often concentrated on in larger schools.

*2. Promote enhanced academic success and financial efficiency by aligning responsibility with accountability.*

In terms of measurable achievement, we seek to be an "A" school in our FCAT scores, and have made a credible start toward this goal with our first year scores. In addition, we use Stanford-9 assessment system to ensure that students are not only taught beginning at an appropriate level, but that they progress as rapidly as their abilities allow. The information provided by the Stanford-9 assessments is also used to guide instruction and pinpoint specific gaps in student learning. Students and faculty are held accountable for learning and developing skills through ongoing projects, tests, oral evaluations, and other standard means of assessment. Teachers are held accountable on an ongoing basis by continual review of their curricula and students' progress, through intensive weekly meetings of the faculty as well as observation and review of written materials by the Principal and Assistant Principal. Parents are also encouraged to oversee classes and other activities in the school. We do not have a system of teacher tenure, so every teacher must continue to produce measurable results, in an academically and socially positive environment, or they are not re-hired.

We are also implementing a contract system between school, parents, and students to further enhance accountability. This contract is based on contracts in place at other charter schools in and is in conformity with Charter School Law. (See Appendix 1) This is in addition to our Code of Ethics, to which all members of the Pinellas Prep community must adhere. (See Appendix 2)

Financial accountability is achieved by assigning responsibility to the Principal, with a system of checks and controls to prevent overspending or improper spending. Our first year audit report, attached to this application as Appendix 3, shows clearly that this system works.

*3. Provide parents with sufficient information on whether their child is reading at grade level and whether the child gains at least a year's worth of learning for every year spent in the charter school.*

When a student first enters Pinellas Preparatory Academy, the language arts teacher quickly determines the reading ability of the student through testing, observation, and discussion. If the student appears to have deficiencies in reading, he/she utilizes the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) program. This program provides the student, teacher, and parent with additional data on the reading levels, both instructional and recreational. To date, the vast majority of our students are reading on or above grade level. The few students who are having difficulty with reading are in fourth grade and are on Individual Educational Plans or Academic Success Plans to provide them with the necessary support. This support is provided by the SLD/VE teacher, the classroom teacher, and/or parents as needed.

C. Describe how the school will meet the Prescribed Purposes of a charter school found in s.1002.3(2)(b).

*The Prescribed Purposes are:*

*1. Improve student learning and academic achievement.*

The school constantly improves student learning by regularly assessing progress and changing teaching methods and levels to meet each student's needs and abilities. Here, too, the concept of multiple intelligences forms the basis of how each student is approached. Academic achievement is not only regularly monitored, but grading is done on the internet, with secure access available to parents so that, in effect, progress reports are available daily. When a student's achievement begins to fall, parents are called, and a conference generally results in changes to bring the student's work back to where it should be.

*2. Improve student learning opportunities for all students, with special emphasis on low-performing students and reading.*

Every student participates in a tutorial period offered every afternoon. The purpose of this period three-fold: 1) it provides students an opportunity to do their homework; 2) it provides students structured time to work in cooperative groups for assigned projects; 3) it provides each student with an opportunity to ask questions and receive additional help or additional learning opportunities in any core academic area. Additionally, for low-performing or ESE students this time is used to provide the needed services without losing instructional time in the general education classes.

*3. Create new professional opportunities for teachers, including ownership of the learning program at the school site.*

Teachers have continuous and evolving opportunities to learn and progress. Most decisions in the school are made by the faculty, with the Principal and Assistant Principal chairing meetings, defining areas for decision, and suggesting methodologies for reaching consensus. (Note: The Principal retains ultimate authority for all decisions.) Teachers prepare and consult together and with outside experts in curriculum development, and regularly meet to update and evaluate the efforts of the entire teaching team.

Teachers are also encouraged to participate in as many trainings and seminars as possible. Such training includes offerings by the School Board, as well as paid seminars and meetings. For example, recently the entire faculty and administration participated together in an all day training program on cooperative learning structures by Dr. Spencer Kagan.

*4. Encourage the use of innovative learning methods.*

As the teachers work cooperatively and create their curricula together to assure interdisciplinary and cross-subject symmetry, learning methods are constantly being revised and improved. This is done within the framework of our overall mission of teaching creative learners. For example, the faculty is currently embarking upon a curriculum mapping project. The purpose of this project is

to create an accurate representation of what is being taught in each classroom at each grade level in order to eliminate repetition and ensure that all Sunshine State Standards are met in a timely fashion.

*5. Require the measurement of learning outcomes.*

Learning is measured repeatedly throughout the year. First, all students are given the Stanford-9 assessments (abbreviated battery) at the beginning of the academic year. This assessment provides baseline data for each student as well as additional information to guide instruction. In the spring, these tests are re-administered and instructional outcomes are determined.

Additionally, teachers use a variety of instructional assessments throughout the year to insure that small learning gains are made at each step in the curriculum. These measurements include, but are not limited to, the following: traditional tests, group and/or individual projects, essays and/or lab reports, and oral and/or multimedia presentations.

*D. If applicable, describe how the charter school will fulfill the Optional Purposes of charter schools found on s. 1002.33(2)(c).*

*The Optional Purposes are:*

*1. Create innovative measurement tools.*

Students are required to complete many projects throughout the year. These projects are clearly outlined by the teacher and each student is provided with a grading rubric prior to embarking on the assignment. In this way, students can clearly see the expectation for the project and, over time, become more in tune with the high expectations of the teacher. Although rubrics are currently used in many educational settings, rubrics are used school-wide, as well as across and between disciplines on a regular basis.

*2. Provide rigorous competition within the public school district to stimulate continual improvement in all public schools.*

Pinellas Preparatory Academy provides competition with other schools in the district by offering small classes, few discipline problems, interdisciplinary education, and teacher empowerment. **It is important to note, however, that we see our programs more as alpha tests for other schools to review and adopt as they see fit, rather than competition.** We also have unique programs not regularly offered by schools at our grade levels. For example, our Model United Nations program is usually directed at high school students. We have shown that it is fully applicable beginning with the 4<sup>th</sup> grade. Also, our physical education program is unique in that we do not go outdoors in hot weather; the program is designed to be usable in small spaces such as classrooms, and incorporates self-defense techniques, strength building, games, and flexibility enhancement.

Our mentoring programs with daily tutorials, our empowerment of teachers to make most decisions for the school, our use of the Internet to communicate with the school community (including daily postings of assignments and grades utilizing individual student access codes), and 24 hour access to all staff are a few other examples of programs that differ, at least in detail

and degree, from programs at other schools.

That we do not see these programs as competition is shown by our pro-active dissemination of these programs to all other schools. For example, on February 10, 2004 we hosted a demonstration of elementary and middle school United Nations programs for Pinellas and Hillsborough public school teachers interested in the program.

### *3. Expand the capacity of the public school system.*

Pinellas County still has a growing school-age population, and every addition to our school adds needed seats, and offers additional choices to those offered in other schools. At our planned maximum size we will be able to serve 375 students who otherwise would have to be placed in other schools.

#### *E. Describe the target student population to be served, including student ages and grade levels at the school.*

Our primary target population consists of students who love to learn, show potential for leadership and creativity, and find a small school environment more appropriate to their needs. We serve grades 4 through 7 (and plan to serve grade 8 beginning in 2004-5), and do not set any age limits on the students in these grades.

At the same time, we admit any student without regard to qualification if there is space and they fit the grade criteria. We do give preference, in accordance with Florida Statutes Section 1002.33(10)(d) to siblings, children of Board members, and children of staff. While there are no specific enrollment requirements, admission does not excuse any student from the policies and procedures of the school, including academic progress and behavioral requirements. In extreme situations, a student who poses a threat to other students or continually disrupts the school may be required to have full-time individual supervision provided by the parents.

## **2) Educational Program:**

#### *A. Describe the educational programs of the school, providing an overview of curriculum objectives and content of the main subject areas. The curriculum plan must be detailed and clearly illustrate how students will be provided those educational services necessary for them to attain the Sunshine State Standards.*

Curriculum objectives and content.

1. Students are all currently enrolled in four core courses: Language Arts, Social Studies, Mathematics, and Science. All of the Sunshine State Standards and Pinellas County Grade Level Expectations will be met, at a minimum, upon the conclusion of the appropriate grade level. However, much of our curriculum is accelerated and students will meet standards and expectations prior to completion of grade level.
2. Additionally, electives (or special areas for grades 4 and 5) consist of Spanish, art, music, and physical education.

The faculty is currently embarking upon a curriculum mapping project for all grade levels. While embarking on this project teachers will enhance lines of communication between grade levels and among disciplines. Upon completion of the project, the following benefits will be shown.:

1. Less time wasted on review: Teachers spend a full month each August reviewing concepts taught the previous year in order to gain a better understanding of their students. While activating prior knowledge is helpful after the summer months, too much time is spent on this. Students at Pinellas Prep will not have to endure this as the teacher's curriculum map from the previous year will be made available for the next year's teacher, thereby decreasing the need for review and wondering "what did they cover last year?"
2. Increased parental understanding: Parents, even at the middle school level, want to know what their student is covering in class or will be covering down the road. Curriculum maps increase this communication by accurately portraying what was taught during the year, not simply what was supposed to be taught. Parents will have access to the curriculum maps throughout the year on the internet.
3. Report cards: Upon the completion of the mapping project, reports cards will be reorganized to more clearly display what the student learned each term and how well they mastered each concept. This will replace the original idea of having the faculty mentor chart the progress of each student.
4. Increased interdisciplinary learning: With the current method of curriculum design, we are reliant upon the Sunshine State Standards and grade level expectations to guide instruction. While these are certainly valuable tools, they do not clearly overlap to allow for interdisciplinary curriculum. Teachers currently work together during their planning periods to mesh up their concepts and brainstorm ideas, although these meetings are limited to grade level. During the project, teacher will be able to view each others work and current map to help foster a supportive community. When the mapping project is complete, each teacher at each grade level will have an accurate picture of what is done in each class, allowing them to clearly integrate concepts, ideas, and lessons.

Until this project is completed, however, teachers continue to talk during planning periods and lengthy faculty meetings to integrate curriculum in an effective, if not efficient, manner. The curriculum is clearly aligned to the Sunshine State Standards, showing that what is taught is consistent with all other public schools in Florida (see Appendix 4 for a summary of the current curriculum and the proposed 8<sup>th</sup> grade curriculum). The difference in our charter school curriculum is the way in which the same subject matter is taught. For example, we allow for much creativity in and throughout the curriculum. Students are not expected to sit and take notes on a lecture (although this does happen) but rather to participate in a hands-on activity. Students work cooperatively through structures to ensure that guided learning is possible for all students and that higher level thinking skills are acquired.

B. Describe the school's reading curriculum. Reading is a critical portion of Florida's educational system and the law requires it be a "primary focus" of all school curricula.

Reading is a crucial component to all of our core curriculum classes. By fourth grade, students in all schools are no longer learning to read, rather, they read to learn. This is certainly true of the students currently attending Pinellas Prep. At all levels, students are using textbooks, trade books, or informational material to gain a knowledge base in all subjects. This knowledge base is then built upon with hands-on activities, creative projects, experiments, groupwork, etc. Students in all grades use the literature circle approach to the reading of trade books in language arts. This method, originally proposed and designed by Harvey Daniels, allows students to hone specific reading skills (summarizing, acquiring new vocabulary, making connections, creating imagery, etc.) while actively engaged in an appropriate book. This method allows students, regardless of reading ability, access into quality literature while still acquiring or fine tuning necessary reading skills. Because this approach is successful in small groups, students can be grouped by ability, if needed, and can read books specifically geared toward their instructional reading level. Students above grade level in reading are encouraged to read a more difficult book than the rest of the class, and those students below grade level are encouraged to read a chapter book that is appropriate for them. The teacher often gives a list of titles that have a particular theme in order to ensure educational commonalities among all students. This way all students are able to participate in full class discussions regardless of what book they read or what instructional level they are at. This approach relies heavily on groups; therefore, students are provided roles to assume while in their groups. These roles are gradually taken away as the students learn what is expected of a successful reader. Students also use this technique in other subjects to become more proficient in reading technical literature. For example, when reviewing a lab report or professional findings, students can employ this method in order to better understand the more technical nature of scientific writing.

At Pinellas Prep, we are fortunate in that the vast majority of our students are reading on or above grade level. This means that there is little remediation needed for our students. However, some students are struggling in reading. In these rare instances, additional support for students is available and utilized. The textbook series for students in grades 4-6, SRA's Open Court, provides a great deal of re-teaching tools for students who are below grade level in reading. These tools in conjunction with teacher support throughout the language arts program and during tutorial time. Additional instruction is given to individual students and small groups as needed during tutorial time. This is true in all subjects, not just language arts.

This approach to teaching reading supports the Florida State Reading Program in a variety of ways. The teachers are all trained to effectively utilize the reading methods outlined above. All teachers, regardless of subject area, participate in training in literature circles during the week before school opens. Also, throughout the year the language arts teachers are trained in effective strategies for Open Court and have direct contact with a trainer whenever necessary. The school currently employs a school-based reading specialist and teachers are free to go to her or the curriculum specialist as needed throughout the year with ideas, concerns, etc. The current and proposed five-year budget allots funding for reading resources and additional reading training as needed. Students in all subjects at all grade levels are immersed in a print-rich environment, providing many environmental opportunities for students to read subject-specific information.



Throughout the school day students read for a variety of purposes – informational, recreational, and instructional. Students read for information while searching the internet, looking at a homework assignment, or reviewing a syllabus or rubric. Students are asked to read for instructional purposes in all subject areas on a daily basis and many students read magazines and books at various points throughout the day. The final way in which our school supports the State's reading initiative is through testing. The reading level of each student is tested upon entrance into the school. This data, acquired through the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI), provides recreational and instructional reading levels for each student. This information is then used by the teacher to make informed decisions about books and appropriate levels for each student. Also, this program is used throughout the year as needed. Teachers sometimes require their students to take it to gain a better understanding of a child's levels, but students themselves occasionally use the program to assess their lexile score and have a list of books generated for them.

C. The Goals and Objectives to be used for improving student learning.

The primary goal for the school is to create leaders of tomorrow using creative teaching methods and individualized attention. In order to help students attain these goals, we develop annual goals in association with the Pinellas County School Board. In this, our second year of operation, the goals have been as follows:

1. Improve 4th grade writing scores on the FCAT.
2. Generate a comprehensive, interdisciplinary curriculum for current grades.
3. Show grade-level improvement in at least 90% of all students.
4. For the 2003-2004 school year, it is the intent of Pinellas Preparatory Academy to increase FCAT scores.
  - A. This goal will be measured by comparing the data from the Spring 2003 administration with the Spring 2004 administration.
  - B. Additionally, there is a goal that average scores will be at least 10% higher than state and district averages in all areas.
5. All students will demonstrate achievement gain in Stanford 9 scores.
  - A. Students will participate in grade-appropriate Stanford 9 assessments in September and in April.
  - B. Students will show achievement gains using the norms determined by the Stanford Achievement Tests.
6. The faculty will create a fully-interdisciplinary curriculum for current grades based upon Multiple Intelligence Theory.
  - A. Using the guiding principle of our Charter, the faculty will create an interdisciplinary curriculum that utilizes the multiple intelligences as determined by Howard Gardner.
  - B. All students will participate in three school-wide units and create a portfolio of their projects and academic growth for the 2003-2004 academic year.
  - C. The curricula for each term will culminate with a final project for each student that is interdisciplinary in nature. These projects will be presented and recorded to show cross-curricular academic growth for each student.

D. Briefly outline the instructional methods to be used, including any distinctive instructional techniques to be employed. How will this pedagogy enhance student learning?

Pinellas Prep prides itself on the diversity of teaching methods used. A wide variety of creative teaching methods are utilized to ensure that all students, regardless of their strongest intelligence type, are successful in acquiring curricular information. There are two prominent educational theories that provide the foundation for the school.

The first is William Glasser's vision of "quality schools". A quality school is a school in which the students are empowered enough to do high quality work. Too often students are told what to do, how to do it, and then graded on their product. However, as adults this is rarely the case. How, then, do we bridge the gap between school, where students are told what to do, and the workforce, where adults are working much more independently? To do this a school needs to be a place in which students' ideas and individualities are respected and their voices are heard. Pinellas Prep is such a place. Students are empowered to produce high quality work because it is work they are truly invested in. Teachers are not seen as "the boss" and students as the "unthinking worker;" rather, each party realizes the benefits of working together to achieve a common goal: a high quality, individualized education. Glasser's theory is prominent throughout Pinellas Prep.

Another educational theory that is at the heart of our school is Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences. Gardner has shown through research that all people learn in many different ways and have many different intelligences. For this reason, students should be given a variety of ways to acquire new information. This theory is clearly seen throughout our core curriculum and in our daily classroom practice as students are given a wide variety of ways to learn the same material. This allows students with varying intelligences access to the same material in a way that best suits them.

At Pinellas Prep this theory goes deeper than daily classroom practice. The core academic classes strive to reach all students through all intelligences. In our non-core classes we are able to further fine-tune instruction based upon an individual student's strengths. We strive to individualize our students' educations to their stronger intelligences. For example, if it has been determined that a student has a strong interpersonal intelligence, her schedule will place a heavy influence on elective classes such as Model U.N. If another student seems to learn best artistically, he will take more art classes than some of his peers.

This does not mean that a student is only permitted to focus on his area of strength. All students are required to take some non-core classes in addition to their core academic classes. This provides opportunities to explore their own interests and abilities through added concentration on those courses that most address their talents and interests.

Teachers also use research-based instructional methods such as complex instruction (E. Cohen), literature circles (H. Daniels) and cooperative learning structures (S. Kagan) to enhance each student's education.

E. Describe how the school will meet the needs of Exceptional Education students

There is a wide assortment of exceptional education students currently enrolled in Pinellas Prep. These students needs range from specific learning disabilities, varying exceptionalities, other health impaired, speech/language impaired, occupational therapy needs, and gifted. All of these students are serviced following the guidelines established by PCSB and staffing team meetings are held on a regular basis to update and/or changed placements as required. All of the ESE students receive services during the tutorial period built in to the schedule, with the exception of gifted. This allows students to receive needed services without missing regular education instruction as happens in a traditional pullout program. The gifted students receive gifted services for one full day each week and are currently participating in the *Odyssey of the Mind* program.

F. Describe how the school will meet the needs of limited English proficient students.

Currently the school does not have any LEP students. However, some teachers are ESOL certified and would be able to assist LEP students if the need arises.

**3) Student Assessment:**

A. Describe what Goals and Objectives will be used to measure student improvement, together with information on how student success in meeting the Goals and Objectives will be measured.

All students enrolled in Pinellas Preparatory Academy are expected to improve by a minimum of one grade level for each year enrolled. This is the primary goal and will be measured using both Stanford-9 and FCAT assessments.

All incoming students from public schools will have FCAT scores from previous years and the majority of private school students have norm-referenced assessments (Iowas, Stanfords, etc.). This data will be used when comparing student FCAT scores in the Spring. At least one year's worth of instruction will be shown.

Additionally, all students will be given Stanford-9 assessments twice throughout the year. The first administration of this test will be given in August in order to gain baseline data. The second administration is given in April and will show increase in learning between August and April.

These assessments are also norm-referenced nationally according to the analysis done by Harcourt Educational Measurement.

B. Describe your plan to assess student performance in core academic areas, including your plan to obtain student performance data for each student coming from the district school system. Please include the current baseline standard of achievement, the outcomes to be achieved and the methods of measurements to be used.

The academic goals vary year by year as discussed and approved by the chartering agency. These goals are changed annually as an increase in educational growth becomes a realistic goal.

All students will be given baseline assessments in the form of Stanford-9s and SRI tests. This data will be compared with the post-assessment data. Additionally, student growth will be measured informally through observations throughout the year as well as curriculum-based assessments.

Student performance data for students from the district will be obtained through report cards, progress reports, and FCAT assessments. The current baseline of achievement is for each student to be functioning at grade level, with or without necessary instructional supports.

Describe the methods used to identify the educational strengths and needs of students and the extent to which educational goals and performance standards are being met.

Standardized testing, classroom observations, and curriculum based assessments will be used to identify the instructional needs of each student upon entrance to the school. Each student will also be given SRI assessments, as needed, to determine reading ability.

To the extent possible, describe how students' rates of academic progress will be evaluated and compared with the rates of progress of comparable student populations.

The schoolwide scores on state testing will be compared to district schools of similar demographics. This will complete a performance picture for each student at each grade level comparable to the county.

Describe how students will, at a minimum, participate in the statewide assessment program.

All students will participate fully in the state assessment system as required. We will follow the statewide schedule for these assessments.

## **II. GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT**

### **1) Profile of the application group and management team:**

A. Describe the group submitted the application and other management team members including each person's name, background, and professional or other relevant experience.

Pinellas Preparatory Academy is a not for profit 501(c).3 corporation. It is governed by a Board of Directors consisting of community members, parents, and representatives of non-profit organizations (Model United Nations of Florida and Morton Plant Hospital). The Principal and Assistant Principal sit on the Board as ex officio members, and do not vote. Only the Principal attends Personnel Committee meetings and other executive sessions; the Assistant Principal and others are brought in as needed. The Board hires the Principal, who is responsible for all other personnel.

Members of the Board of Directors are:

- Diane Leikam, President. Certified teacher, trainer with St. Petersburg Police Department, and a parent of a PPA student.
- James Gregg, RN. Secretary/Treasurer. Operating room supervisor. Has been involved in education as a volunteer for over 20 years.
- Roy Oldham. Retired Educator and Administrator.
- Stacy Salmon. Parent. President of Parent-Teacher organization.
- Tom Cook, President, Model United Nations, International businessman.
- Patricia Merker. Real Estate. Parent of a PPA student.
- Ronald F. Lipton, Principal, B.A., M.A. Ph.D. Longtime program manager, teacher and administrator. Over 20 years experience with non-profit organizations, and over 10 years managing government programs.
- Dawn Dolden, B.A. Certified teacher; specializes in curriculum, special education, discipline.

Short bios for the Principal and Assistant Principal are attached as Appendix 5.

*B. Provide information on which members of the governing and management group will continue as members of the governing board or serve as operating officers. Also, describe the relationship between members of the governing board and the operating officers including information on any overlapping memberships and/or authority held by individuals in these two classes.*

All current Board members are expected to serve at least two more years; there is an ongoing recruitment program, concentrating on the business community, to expand the Board to 8 or 9 members. No voting member of the Board has any financial relationship with the school, none have asked to be vendors, and all have made financial contributions.

*C. Detail the relevant expertise of retained consultants or professionals.*

Since the Principal has so many years of management experience, with expertise in finance, management structure, fund raising, community relations, and human resources, the school has not needed a plethora of outside management consultants. We do, however, readily acknowledge weaknesses and contract with experts whenever necessary.

On an ongoing basis, the school has engaged Beemer, Picher, Kuehnhackl & Heidbrink, P.A. to conduct annual independent audits (see Appendix 3). This firm performs audits for many charter schools, in Florida and other states. In addition we have engaged a CPA, Edward Langdon, with expertise in government accounting, to review our books quarterly.

We have used curriculum consultants in the initial planning for the school. For evaluation of our programs and suggestions on improvements in curriculum, personnel, and other areas, we have used Alexandra Penn-Williams, currently Special Assistant to Secretary of Education Jim Horne. She is a former charter school founder and principal.

Pinellas Prep contracts with ACH Corporation of America, a PEO active in the charter school

industry, for payroll, benefits, and tax services. ACH also provides ongoing legal advice related to personnel matters and investment strategies for staff retirement plans.

We have also engaged the firm of Thompson, Sizemore and Gonzalez for legal advice and services.

D. Identify any management or professional expertise that must be acquired and how that task will be achieved..

At this stage of our operations, we have an ongoing need for advanced training of teachers, and utilize all available resources. Our needs are concentrated in need for training in cooperative learning, curriculum development, and classroom management. All teachers have attended special trainings.

On the administrative side, our greatest need is for advice and financing for growth; we envisage building our own campus within two years. We utilize the services of a real/estate/financial services professional at the Florida Consortium of Charter Schools.

We have no formal partnerships with any other organizations, other than Model United Nations (which provides services and materials free of charge), although we are active members of the Florida Consortium of Charter Schools.

We have begun preliminary talks with some small private schools in the hope of developing an informal competitive league for chess, sports such as volleyball, and other areas.

## **2) School Governance:**

A. Describe the legal entity that will organize and operate the school.

As stated above, Pinellas Preparatory Academy is a 501.3(c) corporation, with a community based Board of Directors.

B. Outline the school's governance and management structure. Include clearly delineated responsibilities, policies, and practices needed to effectively manage the school.

The Board of Directors selects and appoints its own replacement members on an annual basis. Standard term of office is two years, renewable. The Board conducts intensive interviews and reference checks of all potential members. The Board sets overall policy, oversees all operations of the school, involves itself in fund-raising and communication with officials and the press, and approves all budgetary decisions. Any expenditure of \$1,000 requires a signature on the check of an officer of the Board.

The Board hires the Principal, whose duties are detailed in Appendix 6, which also contains the job description of the Assistant Principal.

The school operates within a framework of teacher empowerment. An extended weekly meeting

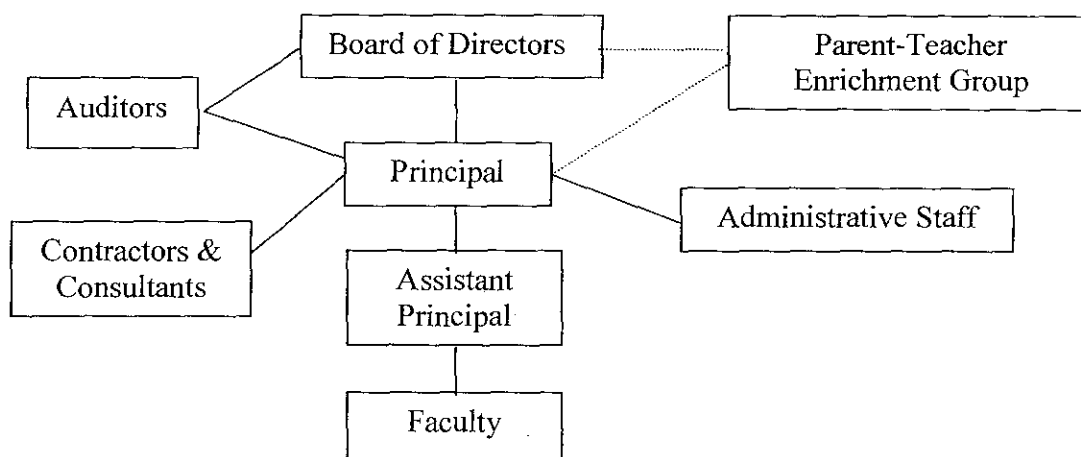
of teachers, chaired by the Principal or Assistant Principal, addresses all issues other than budgetary, including everything related to operation of the school, its curricula, rules of behavior, scheduling, etc. Only when necessary does the Principal intervene and countermand a decision made by the faculty. This has not happened to date, but the structure is in place.

Management duties are divided between Principal, who handles all non-academic areas, and the Assistant Principal, who directly supervises teachers and classrooms. The Principal becomes active in these areas, and has the authority to do so, if and when an issue is not resolved or is deemed serious enough by him for his participation.

The Principal also is responsible for the Policies and Personnel Manual, and submits recommendations to the Board for periodic updates.

The Board oversees all the actions of the Principal, both formally through reports and examination of documents, and informally through observations and discussion.

The following chart shows our management structure.



C. Is the school a public or private employer?

The school is a private employer, and participates in its own benefits program through ACH Corporation. Benefits include health insurance, pension plan, and various other insurances (i.e., life, disability, cancer).

D. How is the school's governing board selected, both now and in the future?

As stated above, the Board of Directors has been in place for nearly two years. We have gone through the typical early stages of frequent turnover; the present Board has been

working together for over a year. The Board elects its own members and solicits applications from the school and outside communities.

E. Describe the governing board's roles and responsibilities, including how it will exercise continuing oversight over school operations.

The roles of the governing Board are as follows:

1. Fiscal oversight and budget approval;
2. Establishment of Policies and Procedures;
3. Student recruitment;
4. Liaison with parents and others as needed;
5. Hiring and oversight of Principal;
6. Approval of physical plant;
7. All corporate legal operations;
8. Authorization of expenditures over \$1000.00.
9. Charter application and charter approval; and
10. Public relations.

The Board meets at least bi-monthly, and public notices are posted at the beginning of the school year, with agendas e-mailed to parents before each meeting.

The Board is expected to visit the school unannounced at least once a month, and to review reports and operations first-hand. The Principal receives an annual review.

F. Propose a method for resolving disputes between the charter school and the sponsor.

Disagreements between the Pinellas County School Board and the school are handled informally, and to date discussion has resolved all issues. If necessary, either party could resort to legal action, but this has not been remotely necessary and we do not envisage such a situation in the future. Formal procedure for resolution of disputes is contained in the existing charter.

G. Describe parental involvement, including: input comment, and/or participation in the school's operations or governance, and methods for handling disputes between parents and school.

We operate an open school, and all parents are encouraged to spend as much time at the school as possible. We operate an on-line bulletin board where parents raise and discuss issues with no interference from staff; this has continued to provide excellent input to the Administration and Board that has resulted in improvements and changes.

Parents are expected to meet with teachers regularly, and conferences are arranged within a few days of request by the parent or the teacher.

Parents are encouraged to apply for Board membership, and to participate in the Parent-teacher organization.



Currently, over 80% of parents belong to the Parent-Teacher Enrichment Group (PTEG).

Parents constitute at least 50% of the governing Board, and all parents have contact numbers, addresses and e-mail addresses for all Board members. Lines of communication are always open.

With such open lines of communication, disputes between parents and school are handled informally; should a parent be dissatisfied with the staff's response to an issue, he/she may appeal to the Board of Directors, which has ultimate authority to direct the Principal.

H. How does the school comply with Florida statutes relating to public records and public meetings?

The school complies fully with all statutes regarding openness of records and provides access whenever asked. Meetings are publicly noticed in compliance with the law. This has been verified by the annual audit.

**3) Length of Charter and Implementation Timetable:**

A. State the requested charter term.

We request the longest possible charter term, or a minimum of 5 years.

B. Present a timetable for start-up.

The school is already in operation, and we have a seventh grade class prepared to advance to the new requested 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Teaching staff for the expanded school is already being recruited, and we have approximately 50 resumes on hand. All teachers will be appropriately certified and qualified. Physical plant preparation for 2004-5 will begin in May 2004, and will be completed prior to August 1, 2004.

**4) Recruiting and Marketing Plan:**

A. Demonstrate how you will publicize the school to attract a sufficient pool of applicants.

The school is already well known in the community. We currently have nearly 150 students, and applications on hand for next year for an additional 60.

We will continue to advertise in local newspapers and radio, and if necessary on cable TV; ads and spots are prepared and have been proven to work. We participate in the Magnet School Fair and in Parent University. In addition, newspaper coverage, such as the article on our United Nations Program (Appendix 7) attracts many students. We distribute brochures throughout the county, and the School Board Choice Office occasionally distributes them as well.

Our web site is extensive, and is visited by approximately 40 new viewers each week.

All recruiting includes details on the kind of school we operate, and the kinds of students who can best benefit from PPA. We do not turn anyone away, so long as there is room, but we do emphasize to all that we generally teach above grade level, and that we are focused on high achievers and those with leadership potential.

We strongly encourage all interested to visit the school at any time – we do not put on “shows” or have open houses, and all visitors are afforded full tours and as much time as they need to speak with teachers and staff. We also strongly encourage potential students to “shadow” for a day to see if PPA will indeed meet their needs.

*B. What steps are taken to reach students representative of the racial and socio-economic diversity in the community, including typically “harder to reach” families?*

We will continue to advertise throughout minority communities and to distribute brochures to churches and community centers in predominantly minority areas. We will also continue to provide guidance counselors and teachers at other school with information about our programs and the benefit specific students, including minority students, can derive from attending PPA. Placement of media advertising takes into consideration the demographics of the readership/viewership of the medium purchases, and we choose locations and times shown to attract the traditionally “hard to reach” populations.

### **III. FINANCE, FACILITIES, AND RISK MANAGEMENT**

#### **1) Facilities:**

*A. Describe the facilities to be used and their location, or a plan to locate facilities.*

1. Current facilities at 403 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue SW, Largo, are sufficient for 250 students, as we expand the available space by 6 classrooms for next year. This will enable us to continue separation of 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades from the middle school classes by locating the younger children on different floors and in different buildings. As is our current practice, lunch, social events, and other group activities are organized by grade level.
2. We plan to begin constructing our own campus during the next school year, to be ready for opening in August, 2005. We have identified several potential sites, and potential sources of funding, but cannot proceed until the charter is renewed. This is because we are not “bankable” without a committed future. When the charter is renewed, we will be eligible for commercial loans, supplemented by charter school development grant allowances and grants such as The Walton Foundation Expansion Grant fund (we have already received one such grant which is being held for construction/purchase),

Federal charter school building funds (which have increased from 37 million dollars in FY 2004 to 100 million dollars for FY 2005), and other sources.

B. Demonstrate how the site is a suitable facility for the school and included plans to renovate and bring the facility into compliance with applicable local building codes.

1. The current facility has already been approved by local building officials, and upgrades in fire safety and the outdoor playground have either been made or are scheduled for construction in June 2004.
2. The new facility will meet all code requirements; this will be certified prior to construction or renovation. Construction and/or renovation will not begin until the City of Largo or other jurisdiction has approved the plans.

C. Discuss any progress, partnership developments, or other future steps towards the acquisition of a facility

As noted above, we have identified several locations. Among them is land belonging to Calvary Methodist Church in Seminole (approximately 3 miles south of our current facility). We have begun negotiation with this organization for use of approximately 5 acres of vacant land, with the planned goal of concluding a lease-purchase arrangement. This will entail meetings with neighbors and other interested parties, planned to begin in June 2004.

D. Describe the financing/leasing plans for the facility.

1. Our current lease is being renewed for at least another year, and this has been approved by the Board of Directors of the church we lease from.
2. As noted above, we are negotiating with other organizations for new lease/purchase arrangements, and have been discussing construction options with several architectural and school construction companies. Financing for the new facility will begin with security provided by our budget surplus, which is expected to reach approximately \$150,000 by the end of school year 2004-5. The Florida Consortium of Charter Schools is supplying a construction/financing expert, at no cost to us, to help arrange conventional financing and to assist with obtaining government and private support, as noted in "c" above. We are confident that these efforts will be successful; thus far, Pinellas Prep has succeeded with every grant application we have submitted. Please see our budget projections in the following section for details on these funds.

**2) Finance:**

A. an annual financial plan for each year requested by the charter for operation of the school up to a maximum of 5 years.

*Each annual plan must contain:*

*1. Anticipated fund balances based on revenue projections that take into account all expected sources of income including income derived from projected student enrollments and community support.*

We have predicted fund balances for the next three years. These are shown as predicted surplus on the budgets in Appendix 8. Surplus for these three years, and last year (2002-3) are as follows:

2002-3:	\$104,179
2003-4:	\$171,340
2004-5:	\$ 88,567
2005-6:	\$152,643
Total:	\$516,729

Budget projections with surpluses can also be made for years four and five of the requested charter. These will show growing surpluses, less expenditures for facility acquisition and construction. However, the uncertainties of school finance make it impractical to predict this far in advance. We do expect, however, that support will continue at at least the same rates of student support as we receive at present.

*2. A spending plan based on projected revenues and expenses. The spending plan shall include a full accounting of the costs of operation.*

The budgets in Appendix 8 show details of projected sources and amounts of income as well as projected expenditures.

Current surpluses will be used to provide the basis for site acquisition and construction.

*B. Describe the financial management and internal accounting procedures of the school.*

All funds received are deposited in the school's checking account, and recorded in QuickBooks categorized by source, with a backup copy of data updated daily and kept off-site. Incoming invoices are reviewed by the Principal, and, if approved, checks are written by the school secretary. The Principal then signs the checks; all checks over \$1000.00 also require a signature of a member of the Board of Directors.

Monthly reports are given to the Board, and members of the Board regularly check the financial records during each month when they make unannounced visits to the school. All expenses are categorized by source of funds and expense account – we follow the Florida Red Book for coding. At least twice each year our records are given to an outside accounting consultant, who reviews them for compliance and accuracy. An annual independent audit is also conducted at the end of each fiscal year.

C. Present the format in which accounting records shall be maintained.

Pinellas Prep utilizes "QuickBooks" for financial management and reporting. This program produces reports in GAAP format for non-profits. Accounts are determined and coded, however, using Red Book account numbers and descriptions; therefore all required reports are easily prepared in required State and County formats.

D. Discuss the projected enrollment for a 3-year period needed to generate sufficient funds to support planned expenditures.

Enrollment for 2003-4 was projected to be 140, and the budget barely allowed for basic operations without the use of grant funds at that level. Current enrollment is nearly 150.

Enrollment for 2004-5 is projected at 200, again an amount that allows for all operating expenses. We already have 200 students enrolled for 2004-5. With continued word of mouth referrals, press coverage, and participation in the Magnet Fair and Parent University, we do not anticipate any problems reaching a goal of 250 students in 2005-6. Again, this number of students covers operating costs, as shown by the budget (Appendix 8).

In addition, we expect to continue to apply for and receive, grant funds from a variety of sources; as noted above, we have been successful with grant applications to date.

(Note: Previous discussions with Pinellas County School Board staff indicated as approximately 160 the number of students required to support the operations of the school without additional grants).

E. Explain the plans for obtaining an annual audit of financial statements from and independent public account firm.

As stated above, we have engaged the firm of Beemer, Pricher, Kuenhackl, and Heidbrink, P.A. to conduct annual audits. See Appendix 3 for the 2002-3 audit report.

F. Describe how the school will address the storage of student and financial records in a protected environment.

All student records are kept in locked cabinets in an office which is locked when no staff members are present. Hard copies of financial records are kept in the same place (in a separate cabinet); in addition, password-protected financial data is kept in an in-house computer and on a disk that is kept off-site (updated at least weekly).

G. Discuss the format and frequency of financial reporting to the sponsor (balance sheet, income statement, bank reconciliation, etc.)

Financial reports are prepared for the School Board as requested, in the format requested. Since most purchases are made through the School Board's computer system,

expenditure reports are always available to the sponsor. Expenditures from special grant funds are made directly by the school, with frequent detailed requests for reimbursement made to the sponsor; such requests provided full detail of every expenditure.

Additionally, we have notified the School Board that all records are available for review at any time, with or without notice.

### **3) Risk Management:**

#### **A. Describe procedures that identify various risks and provide for a comprehensive approach to reduce the impact of losses.**

Risks associated with physical plant are identified both prior to the school year by administration and insurance consultants who are also parents, and during the year as they arise and are identified by members of the school community and others. Procedures, such as safety drills, traffic controls, elevator procedures, health crises, etc. are in place and practiced regularly. We adhere to Pinellas County School Board procedures regarding fire, hurricanes, tornadoes, etc. Losses are minimized by responding immediately to any and all perceived threats of loss by implementing new procedures, changing aspects of the physical plant (i.e., updating fire and smoke detection devices), and always having on-site at least one administrator to direct activities in case of emergency. Where losses could occur from actions or inactions of faculty, students, and/or families, we have a comprehensive policy of obtaining releases for all activities that can in any way be considered not part of regular school days (i.e., field trips).

Additionally, we have implemented a system of prospective employee checks that are far more comprehensive than those utilized by the Pinellas County School Board.

#### **B. Discuss plans to endure the safety and security of students and staff.**

In addition to the procedures described above, the entire building is kept locked, and entry must be approved – there is a remote identification system on each door. When students are outside the main building, they are always accompanied by at least one staff member. Teachers carry walkie-talkies to report any safety or security problems as they occur and they are responded to immediately, either internally or by calling the local fire (including emergency medical teams), or police department.

#### **C. Describe plans that identify, minimize and protect others from violent or disruptive student behavior.**

We have a zero tolerance policy toward disruptive or violent student behavior of any kind, and students engaged in such activity are immediately separated from other students, counseled, and sanctions are imposed, up to and including (as a last resort) requiring a parent to accompany the offending student to school for a period of time until the administration is satisfied that the improper behavior will not be repeated. In extreme cases, we have in place a procedure for calling the Largo Police Department.

D. Describe your school's insurance coverage plans, including applicable health, worker's compensation, general liability, property insurance, and directors and officers liability coverage.

1. *Employees.* All employees are paid through a staff leasing company, ACH Corporation, which provides health, dental, life, workers compensation, and other employee insurances. Workers compensation is paid by the school directly to ACH; other insurance benefits are chosen by each employee and paid by the school, up to \$400 per month. Costs in excess of this amount are borne by the employee.

2. *Liability and other insurances.* The school maintains a comprehensive liability policy, in conformity with School Board requirements, that covers general liability, directors and officer liability, and property insurance. The landlord and School Board are named as "also insureds" on this policy.

E. Detail emergency plans to include or including fires, hurricanes, tornadoes, building evacuation, and child safety issues.

As noted above, there are regular fire and other safety procedures. A 24 hour connection with the School Board emergency notification system is also maintained. Teachers are trained in building evacuation and tornado safety procedures; in conformance with local fire code, evacuation diagrams are posted in every room. Also as noted above, there is ongoing communication among faculty and administrators through the walkie-talkie system. Please note also that we are located across the street from the Largo Emergency Response team, and maintain ongoing communication with them. Regular fire and other safety drills, including building evacuations, are implemented without notice.

#### IV. OPERATIONS

##### 1) Admissions and Registration Plan:

A. Describe the admissions procedures you will use. If students are articulating from one charter school to another, describe the process of articulation.

We accept students on a first-come first-served basis, and require that prospective students spend time at the school, preferably with a full day of shadowing, to ensure that there is a fit between parents, student, and school. This encourages a joint decision by parents, children and school about whether any child can benefit from the multiple-intelligence, cooperative learning environment. There are no additional formal requirements at this time, but in 2004-5 we will require parents to sign a contract for themselves and their child(ren), as permitted by State law. A copy of the contract is attached as Appendix 1. Transfers from other schools within the Pinellas County Public School system, including admissions from other charter schools, require only the completion of a registration form and proof of residency; Pinellas Prep obtains other records from the previous school.

B. Describe the timetable to be used for registering and admitting students, including a plan for the admission lottery if the number of applicants exceeds the program capacity.

We accept applications and permit registration at any time, with no time limit to start or complete enrollment. When our class size quota is filled we place applicants on a waiting list in order of application date. We do this because we feel we are in a somewhat unique situation in Pinellas County, and parents can plan for participation in the choice program if given as much advance decision-making on our part as possible. Should applicants exceed capacity prior to the end of the current school year, we will submit names to the School Board to conduct a lottery for us.

C. Describe the ways in which the school will endeavor to achieve a racial/ethnic balance reflective of the community it serves.

Pinellas Prep has always taken a pro-active stance in recruiting minority students, and we of course have a completely non-discriminatory policy toward all students. We have sent representatives to minority communities, advertised in minority newspapers and on minority-directed radio stations. In the past two years, we have spent over \$10,000 on minority recruitment and will continue these efforts.

**2) Class size requirements:**

All our classes currently comply with the class size amendment, and we intend to stop enrollment when the limit for each class is reached. Our budget and enrollment projections are based on adherence to the class size amendment requirements.

**3) Code of Conduct and Discipline:**

A. Describe the Code of Conduct to be implemented in the charter school.

Following is the discipline policy of the school – changes are made as needed and approved by the Board of Directors.

All disciplinary action within this Schoolwide Discipline Plan is consistent with the guidelines as outlined in the Pinellas County Schools' "Code of Student Conduct".

William Glasser is a prominent educational theorist, one whose ideas provide a foundation for Pinellas Preparatory Academy. In brief, Glasser's theory on quality schools revolves around the sharing of power in a school situation. This power needs to be shared by administrators and teachers as well as teachers and students. Students are commonly told what to do and how to do it, yet that is often seen as disrespectful in the adult world. Glasser suggests that power should be redistributed back to the students so that, because they are empowered and not simply



thoughtless machines, they will produce higher quality work and function on a higher level. Clearly, teachers and administrators are still the authority although no longer all-powerful.

Pinellas Prep has adopted a discipline plan that is reflective of this idea. All students at Pinellas Prep are expected to adhere to the rules of behavior to ensure a safe and productive learning environment for all students. Failure to follow these rules will result in disciplinary action as outlined in the Schoolwide Discipline Action Document, included with this application as Appendix 9. Parents are required to read and sign this document.

#### **4) Human resource Information:**

##### **A. Describe the standards and potential strategies that will be used to recruit, hire, train, and retain qualified staff.**

At the present time, we have a surplus of applications for all teaching positions. We require appropriate credentials, appropriate experience, commitment to our mission and the students, an ability to work as a member of a team, and an extensive set of background checks that go well beyond the background checks used for Pinellas County School Board employment. In addition, wherever practical, finalists for any teaching position are asked to teach a class and be interviewed by a group of students – this is to ascertain their ability to communicate with our students and is not a part of the rest of the hiring process.

New teachers are required to report for work at the beginning of the school year a week early, to be trained in our policies and procedures.

When openings do occur, we have found that posting notices on the PCSB job board sufficient to attract applicants, and we participate in the annual DOE job fair in Orlando.

We have not had difficulty finding applicants because: (a) we empower teachers to make most decisions about the school, (b) our pay scale matches that of Pinellas County Schools (we do have a lower maximum salary and somewhat different benefits); (c) we tend to have less discipline issues than many larger schools; and (d) we support teachers in every way possible.

##### **B. Describe your human resource plan that will govern: salaries, contracts, hiring and dismissal, and benefit packages.**

The Board of Directors approves the salary and benefit scale for each year; currently we pay according to the same scale used by the Pinellas County School Board, but with a cap on annual salaries of \$36,000. The current benefit package is a modified cafeteria plan; each employee receives a \$400 per month allowance to be used for benefits such as health and dental insurance, other insurances, a medical savings plans, and a retirement

plan. All benefits are provided through the staff leasing company we use – ACH Corporation.

Our employment contract calls for a 90 day probation period, and adherence to all our policies and procedures as published in the Policy and Procedures Manual of the school.

Final authority to hire and fire rests with the Principal.

C. Describe how the qualifications of the teachers will be described to parents considering the charter school for their children.

Teacher qualifications are posted on the school web site. Printed statements of qualifications are available to all prospective parents.

D. What is the targeted staff size, staffing plan, and projected student-to-teacher ratio?

Full-time teaching staff is calculated at one full-time teacher per class section, and the class sections do not exceed the requirements of the class size reduction amendment. Current teacher-student ratio is approximately 19 to 1. In addition, part-time staff is hired to provide instruction in music, Spanish, gifted studies, art, physical education, and to provide ESE services. In these classes, as with classes taught by full-time teachers, class size and teacher ratios are well within the requirements of the class size reduction amendment.

Since enrollment for 2004-5 may increase by 50-100 students, we plan to add at least 2 full time staff for each 25 students added; this will keep us well within class size reduction amendment requirements.

Administrative staff consists of the Principal, Assistant Principal, School Secretary, and a part-time data prep clerk. Plans for 2004-5 call only for making the data prep position full-time.

**5) Transportation:**

*A. Discuss the plans for transporting students to and from school.*

Relatively few of our students live within the range of 1-3 miles where we are asked to provide transportation, and it has proven more effective and preferable to parents and students to utilize car pools, organized with the help of the school, than to arrange direct school transportation. The definition of “reasonable distance” has been determined by the School Board. We assist with car pool organization with all students – not just those residing within the “reasonable distance” area. In fact, more than 60% of our students utilize car pools; the remainder are transported by parents, and a few walk to and from school. Should transportation become a barrier to any student attending the school, individual arrangements will be made.

B. How has the "reasonable distance" for requiring availability of transportation been determined?

The Pinellas County School Board has determined the distance to be from one to three miles of the school.

**V. Final Documentation**

**1) Facilities:**

A. Documentation of the school's property interest in its facility.

A copy of the lease under which we operate is on file with the School Board.

B. Inspections by relevant fire and building inspectors.

Documentation is on-site, as required by the City of Largo; these documents are available for inspection.

C. Certificate of Occupancy.

Documentation is on-site, as required by the City of Largo; these documents are available for inspection.

D. Compliance with other applicable federal and state health and safety laws and regulations.

We have received no notices of violations of any laws or regulations, and believe we are in full compliance. Should a new law or regulation arise, we will immediately comply.

**2) Governance Documents:**

A. Documentation of the school's organization such as Articles of Incorporation, bylaws, amendments, etc.

Copies of these documents are on file with the Pinellas County School Board, and copies of updates are sent to the School Board as they are provided by the Department of Corporations.

B. Updated governing board members' names, addresses, phone numbers, resumes, and evidence of fingerprinting.

All documentation is up to date and copies have been sent to the School Board.

### **3) Certificates of Insurance and Other documents.**

#### *Certificates of insurance*

Certificates of insurance are on file with the School Board; originals are available for inspection at the school.

#### *Other Items as agreed in the charter.*

We believe all required documentation has been provided. We are prepared, however, to provide any additional documentation requested.

**PINELLAS PREPARATORY ACADEMY**  
**403 FIRST AVENUE SOUTHWEST, LARGO, FL 33770**  
PHONE: 727-581-9550 FAX: 727-581-9590 E-MAIL: PINELLASPREP@TAMPABAY.RR.COM  
WWW.PINELLASPREP.ORG

March 28, 2004

Steve Swartzel, Director of Governmental Services  
Pinellas County School Board  
301 4<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Largo, FL 33770

Dear Mr. Swartzel:

Per our discussion, following are the changes we would like in our new charter:

1. In the introduction, the dates should be changed to reflect the date on which the new contract will be signed and the appropriate statute and date should be changed as well. (I believe the statute is now "Title XLVIII, Chapter 1002.33" as of 2003.)
2. Article 1.2 After "approved application to operate charter," insert "initial signed charter contract, and any amendments thereto,"
3. Article 1.3.1 should be changed to read: "Effective Date: This charter shall become effective upon signing by both parties, and shall cover a term of five (5) years commencing July, 2004 and ending on June 30, 2009, except as otherwise provided in this Charter.
4. Article 1.3.3 should be deleted.
5. Article 1.3.4 delete "initial"
6. Article 2.9 (Second Amendment to contract) should be changed to read: "Number of Students and Grades Served: The school shall serve grades 4-8. The school may enroll a maximum of 375 students, with a focus on students who have shown a love of learning and high emotional intelligence. The school will serve up to 375 students in Grades four (4) through eight."
7. Delete Article 5.1.
8. Article 5.5, first sentence, should be changed to read: Facilities: The school will be located at 403 First Ave. SW, Largo, FL 33770, and may move to another qualified location to meet the needs of the growing student body."
9. Article 8.10 Notices to this school should be changed to read:  
SCHOOL: Pinellas Preparatory Academy  
Attention: Ronald F. Lipton, Ph.D., Principal  
ADDRESS: 403 First Ave. SW  
Largo, FL 33770

Also attached are current financial statements, one covering income and expenditures during the current fiscal year, and the second covering all income and expenditures since the school began receiving funding.

Please let me know if any of these contract changes or financial reports requires change, addition, or further explanation.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Ronald F. Lipton, Principal

**THE LOVE OF LEARNING, INC.**  
403 FIRST AVENUE SOUTHWEST, LARGO, FL 33770  
PHONE: 727-581-9550 FAX: 727-581-9590 E-MAIL: LOLADMIN@TAMPABAY.FL.COM

March 3, 2003

Hon. Lee Benjamin, Hon. Nancy N. Bostock, Hon. Mary Tyus Brown, Hon. Carol J. Cook, Hon. Jane Gallucci, Hon. Linda S. Lerner, Hon. Mary Russell, Dr. J. Howard Hinesley, Superintendent  
Pinellas County School Board  
301 4th Street S. W.  
Largo, Florida 33770-3599

Dear Board Members and Dr. Hinesely:

Please accept this application for an amendment to our charter. The specific change we are requesting is: Article 2.9 to be amended to read "Number of Students and Grades Served: The School shall serve students in grades 4-7 for the school year 2003-2004, with a maximum number of students of 375. For the school year 2004-2005, the School shall serve Grades 4-8, unless standardized test scores indicate lower levels of achievement than the average Pinellas County school for equivalent grades. In school year 2004-2005, the school may enroll up to 400 students."

Given the demands on the school system, state-mandated requirements, and, most importantly, our significant first year successes and stability, this amendment will help the entire community. We in no way detract for the public school system – on the contrary, we enhance it, both objectively and in the eyes of the public. Should any modifications to this request, or other amendments to the charter be required, we are happy to work with PCSB staff and Board members to create a situation where the entire community continues to benefit from our operations.

We look forward to meeting with the Staff, and to discussing this with the Board at any time, and we urge all to visit us with or without notice, to participate in our faculty meetings, to sit in on classes, and to meet with parents, students, Board of Directors, administration, and faculty.

This application consists of several sections, as follows:

1. Comparison of actual operations with terms of the Charter
2. Comparison of actual operations with the terms of the original application for charter, as attached to the Charter document
3. Academic achievement and processes
  - Benefits to the school system and the community
  - Problems encountered in the first year of operation
4. Special needs served by Love of Learning and negative effects of prohibiting these special students from continuing into the 7<sup>th</sup> grade

5. Uniqueness of Love of Learning techniques and environment
6. Community, parent, and student support
7. Current 4-6 curricula
8. 7<sup>th</sup> grade curriculum
9. Awards and accomplishments

We are more than happy to expand upon any of these items, to answer any questions you may have, and to provide any material you request. We again extend an invitation to all School Board members and PCSB staff to visit us at any time, with or without notice; we have nothing to hide and welcome your visits.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Ronald F. Lipton".

Ronald F. Lipton, Ph.D.  
Principal

# **1. CHARTER CONTRACT REQUIREMENTS**

## **Article 1.0 GENERAL PROVISIONS**

We are, and have been, in full compliance with all items in this article.

## **Article 2.0 STUDENTS**

1. Racial/Ethnic Issues. We are in complete compliance with all items in this article, have been certified as in compliance by the Student Assignment Office prior to opening, and are the only charter school in this area to have had a specific program for recruitment of minority students.
2. Admissions Policy. We accept all applicants on a first come, first served basis.
3. ESE Students. We have programs in place that fully comply with all requirements for special needs students, including gifted and those with specific learning disabilities. All IEPs are fully up to date, and the providers of all services are fully qualified. Requests from parents for meetings, revisions, etc. of the IEPs of their children are always met within 3 weeks, and sooner if all parties agree to waive the waiting period.
4. Choice Participation. Item 2.6.4 We have requested full participation in the Choice program, but to date charter schools are not participants. We strongly believe that inclusion of charter schools in the Choice program will help the school system by offering students expanded choices without adversely impacting assignments to other, non-charter schools.
5. Discipline. In addition to adopting the PCSB discipline policy, a copy of which has been provided to all parents, we have also implemented specific rules and procedures described in Appendix 1.
6. Records. All records are maintained in accordance with law and PCSB policy, and student records are kept in locked file cabinets.

## **Article 3.0. Academic Accountability.**

1. Educational Goals. We have four central educational goals at the heart of our contract. They are 1) to provide a structured learning environment for students to become more academically and emotionally mature; 2) to meet or exceed all PCSB and Sunshine State Standards; 3) to establish cooperative groups in which individual strengths are showcased and all voices are heard; and 4) to generate a teacher-focused approach to curriculum and some administrative decisions. We are currently meeting all of these goals.
2. Outcome Measurement. All students who have attended Love of Learning since August have been given preassessments in both reading and math. It is our intention to administer these tests at the end of the academic year as well to show academic growth.
3. Assessment. In addition to the FCAT, students' academic success is measured formally and informally on a daily basis in most subject areas. Assessment takes many forms, including homework, long- and short-term projects, oral presentations, periodic quizzes, and standard chapter tests. Students' learning is monitored during class discussions and groupwork.
4. Data, records, grading procedures. We are fully compliant with all requirements of law and PCSB regulations. All required data regarding students is maintained through the PCSB central online reporting system (SIS).



5. **Annual Progress Report.** This application constitutes our first self-evaluation, half way through the school year. A more complete, detailed final report will be submitted in accordance with the Contract. Our policy is to conduct at least two evaluations per year, and to address all problems as they are identified.

**Article 4.0. Financial Accountability.**

1. **Records.** Full records of all revenue and expenditures are maintained and updated daily. All expenditures, with backup documentation, are submitted to PCSB in accordance with the process the Accounting Office of PCSB has established.
2. **Cost Accounting.** Our records are maintained in *QuickBooks*, using account codes and definitions per the 2003 edition of the "Red Book." This makes it possible to produce a detailed report within a day or two of a request from the PCSB.
3. **Fiscal Responsibility.** We have never operated in the red, and closely watch all expenditures, with monthly budget reviews by our Secretary/Treasurer.
4. **Annual Audit.** We will engage one of three firms under consideration, all with experience auditing nonprofits and charter schools. The audit will take place in July, 2003.
5. **Reports.** We are prepared to submit an annual financial report within 2 weeks of the end of the Fiscal Year, and we are also prepared to submit interim reports as requested.

**Article 5.0. Administrative Management.**

1. We are in compliance with the terms of this Article, including use of the PCSB automated data system, accurate reporting of FTEs, and other requirements.
2. **Facilities.** The correct location of the school is 403 First Avenue Southwest, Largo, FL 33770. PCSB inspected the site prior to opening and continues to visit.
3. **Lease.** Copy attached as Appendix 2.
4. **Human Resources.** We are in complete compliance with all personnel requirements of state and federal laws, as well as all PCSB regulations.

**Article 6. Indemnification and Insurance.**

1. We have purchased insurance policies to fully comply with the requirements of this Article. Copies of the policies are available for inspection at any time.

**Article 7. Governance.**

1. We are a 501(c)(3) corporation, governed by a Board of Directors, with a majority consisting of parents of students.
2. **Administrative Structure.** There has been a change in administrative structure since the initial proposal, in response to actual needs. We have abolished the position of Dean, and now have the Principal in charge of all operations. We have added a Vice-Principal. Appendix 3 represents our current organizational structure. As promised, we have empowered teachers with authority to make academic and some administrative decisions, so long as they follow State requirements and the agreed-upon expectations, assessments, etc. The faculty meets weekly for a minimum of 2 hours – parents and PCSB members and staff are encouraged to sit in.
3. **School Improvement.** We have an extremely active parent-teacher organization, with over 70% of students' families represented. This organization serves as an ongoing school improvement organization, and is directly represented on the Board of Directors and membership on Board committees. In addition, we solicit

ongoing input from all parents, in part through an Internet-based bulletin board which is open to all parents and staff, and which carries on constant discussions about issues raised by parents, administration, and/or faculty. Since September, over 1000 messages have been sent. A sample of these messages is included as Appendix 4.

4. Parental Involvement. In addition to constituting a majority of the Board of Directors, our very active parent teacher group, and our community Internet bulletin board, we have a large group of parent volunteers. There are usually at least 2 volunteers on site at any time. Parents have also organized and run two book fairs and a fund-raising walkathon in our first four months of operation. Parental involvement is not required, but parents have ongoing access to faculty and staff, and are welcome in all classes at any time, with or without notice and to serve as helpers. This is part of our overall policy of openness (please note, however, that the building is very secure, and all visitors must identify themselves before they are permitted inside the school).
5. Public Notice. All meetings are noticed, including messages sent home with students and posting on the internet bulletin board. Public input is encouraged at meetings.
6. Conflict of Interest. Our Board of Directors has adopted a policy that prohibits all conflicts, or appearances thereof, for all funds, including government, grant, and donation funds.

Article 8. Miscellaneous. We are in full compliance with this Article.

Article 9. Compliance with Court Order. We are in full compliance with this Article.

## **2. CHARTER APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS**

### **Academics**

Vision: We continue to seek students with a love of learning, and potential for leadership skills development. In accordance with the law, we do admit all applicants, and those who do not yet fit our targeted student definition are provided with an education that encourages development of emotional and academic maturity, as well as leadership skills practice.

Mission: As stated, our operations are grounded in the multiple intelligence work of Dr. Howard Gardner. We also adhere to the principles of Quality Schools of Dr. William Glasser.

In sum, our Mission and Vision have not changed very much, with the only exception being that we have de-emphasized the formal assessment of emotional intelligence/maturity and instead work with each student as his or her academic and other needs arise. In parent conferences, where specific issues have arisen, we have suggested to parents that they might benefit from an outside emotional/psychological evaluation and follow-up, but we are not psychologists and do not take on this role.

### **Target Population**

We do have a significant number of gifted and mature students, and our curriculum and teaching system are geared to encouraging creativity and growth without structural limitations. In addition to our gifted program, we encourage all students to participate in programs which might be considered "gifted" in other schools, but which, at Love of Learning, simply provide students with an opportunity to foster creativity. In some instances, we encourage parents to have their children tested for formal inclusion in gifted programs.

As noted, our recruitment program has a component devoted to minority recruitment, and we spent nearly \$10,000 in the past year in this area. Because we were not as successful as we had hoped, this year we have requested assistance from the Black Alliance for Educational Options, a national organization devoted to getting African-American students into charter, private, and parochial programs. An excerpt from BAEO's literature is attached as Appendix 5.

Goals: Our goals remain as stated in our charter application. At this early phase of our operations, we have not yet held seminars for other educators, although School Board members and employees, and teachers and administrators, are encouraged to visit. We do conduct educational sessions for parents on our philosophy and techniques for encouraging life-long learning.

### **Educational Program**

We adhere to the principles stated in our proposal. In practical terms, however, it is not realistic to operate as a college with a syllabus-catalog approach. Instead, we publish our curricula for families in print, they are posted on our web site, and daily and weekly assignments are posted on the school's Internet Bulletin Board (see Appendix 4). Our non-core courses to date have not been 'electives,' and are taken by all students. Beginning next year, students will be able to concentrate on one of the non-core courses by participating in extra classes. We do not, and do not plan to, have the students declare a 'major.'

Lectures have also been de-emphasized in favor of more group work and assignments.

Our mentoring and peer tutoring programs are in operation and are quite successful. These programs can best be evaluated by unannounced visits to the school by School Board members and staff.

Teachers have been empowered to create curricula, design schedules, create grading and disciplinary systems, and make many other decisions usually reserved for administrators. Administration's roles are: 1) to ensure that plans, programs and standards are met; 2) to serve as a resource to arrange for whatever is needed in classrooms to continuously improve our practices and processes; 3) to maintain records and full compliance with PCSB rules and regulations; 4) to evaluate teachers; 5) to supervise our discipline program; 6) to be the main point of contact with the world outside the school; and 7) to ensure that teachers act as a team, in planning and in teaching.

We also utilize the methods and theories listed in the Application, with emphasis on Gardner and Glasser, literary circles, and writer's workshops.

We already have several student-parent-faculty clubs, and add one or two each month, as students express interest. At present these clubs are: Forensic Science, Newspaper, Drama, United Nations, and an after-school Bible study group supervised by parents. Students may also participate in an after-school violin class. All students are encouraged to belong to as many of these groups as they wish; participation in clubs in no way affects student evaluations or grades. While many of these clubs operate at no cost, some clubs have enrollment fees to offset expenses. Scholarships are made available to families who may not be in a financial position to pay for extra activities and field trips.

Parental involvement has been greater than anticipated. Our Parent-Teacher Enrichment Group (our equivalent of a PTA), acts as a very active SAC (note that Charter Schools are not required to have SACs), parents constitute a majority of our Board of Directors, parent volunteers are always at the school and help in classrooms, the office, with field trips, and in many other ways. Examples of the extent of parental interest and involvement are a membership rate of 70% in our parent teacher group, the activity of the Bulletin Board, (Appendix 4) and a 65% return of detailed questionnaires sent to all parents without follow up. This questionnaire has been used by evaluators of several charter schools. Results are attached as Appendix 6.

#### **Student Assessment**

Our assessment methods follow the Application, again with emphasis on specific techniques and materials, and a de-emphasis of areas that have proven to be impractical or not contributory to the educational program.

All students who have been at Love of Learning since August have been given preassessment tests. Upon entrance into the school, all students were given the Singapore math assessment for the beginning of their current grade level. In addition, students were given the Qualitative Reading Inventory-3 (QRI-3) in reading as a measure of their reading level. We will be reassessing these students at the end of the year using these measures to determine their academic growth.

As a public school, one of our required forms of assessment is the FCAT. In addition to this statewide test, formal and informal assessments are done on each student on a daily basis. Our teachers measure students' learning through a variety of assessments including homework assignments, long- and short-term projects, oral presentations, periodic quizzes and standard tests. In addition, we take the time to monitor students' understanding in informal ways such as class discussions and note-taking during groupwork. By implementing these measures we believe we have a strong understanding of our students and their abilities and achievements.

### **Governance and Administration**

Our governing Board has been re-constituted and parents of current students constitute a majority. Board members are listed in Appendix 7. Our administrative/governance structure has been streamlined, with clearer lines of communication and authority, and inclusion of some of the proposed committees included in the Board of Directors, the Faculty (through weekly faculty meetings), and the parent-teacher enrichment group (PTEG). For example, we have found it unnecessary to have a separate Operations Advisory Committee as proposed in our initial application.

Our current structure is attached as Appendix 3.

We have contracted with a staff leasing company, American United Employers, a firm that specializes in charter schools, to handle our payroll and benefits. The fee for this service is more than offset by savings in benefits and workers comp rates.

We are currently interviewing CPA firms to conduct our initial financial audit. As previously stated, our financial records are in order and we welcome this audit. To the extent that any findings indicate any need for procedural or record-keeping changes, they will be immediately implemented.

Resolution of Disputes: To date there have been no disputes between LOL and the School Board. We have implemented some minor changes in policies and procedures as the School Board has requested (i.e., procedures for transfer of student records, purchase requisitions, requests for funds, etc.). These changes have improved our operations and our compliance with regulations and laws. We have not been cited for any significant issues regarding compliance.

Compliance: We have been, and remain, committed to compliance with statutes related to public meetings and records, and with all the stipulations of Amended Stipulation in *Bradley vs. Pinellas County School Board*, dated June 28, 2000.

### **Support**

Parental and community support is readily shown by involvement in our governance and day-to-day activities. In addition, Appendix 9 contains a representative sample of the letters of support we have received. Additional letters will be forwarded to the School Board as they are received.

### **Business and Management**

As discussed throughout this document, our management structure is simple, efficient, and completely open.

Detailed budgets are prepared and approved by the Board of Directors, and the Board's Treasurer works with the Principal to oversee financial practices. As an example of our conservative approach to finances, no expenditures may be made which place the school in debt. All expenditures of more than \$1,000.00 must be previously approved as part of the budget and the checks must be signed by a Board member in addition to the Principal.

### **Facilities**

Prior to signing the contract with the School Board, we agreed, with input from School Board staff, that the Oldsmar site initially proposed would not be appropriate. Instead, we have leased the educational building of the First United Methodist Church of Largo, 403 First Avenue SW, Largo, 33770, less than two blocks from the School Board (Appendix 2). We are, and have been, in full compliance with all building codes, fire and safety codes, and other physical plant requirements, including handicap access. Funds for the relatively minor changes in the building came for our Federal start-up grant, and financing was not necessary.

It is important to note that there is absolutely no church identification in any of the rooms we use. Where we share space, religious symbols are covered during the school week. While we are not opposed to religion and discuss it in our classes as part of comparative culture studies, we are in full compliance with the separation of church and state mandated for public schools.

### **Recruiting and Marketing**

We have used TV, radio, newspapers, community meetings, educational fairs, and mailings to recruit students and publicize the school. This will continue, with specific modifications based on our experience to date. Students are accepted at any time during the year, and applications for the 2003-2004 school year are currently being accepted. Of course, current students and their siblings are automatically enrolled for next year.

Our web site ([www.loveoflearning.us](http://www.loveoflearning.us)) provides information about philosophy, goals, procedures, teaching methods, staff biographies, curricula, admissions, and links to other relevant sites.

### **Dismissal**

To date, no students have been dismissed. We have agreed with School Board staff that, should all avenues of remediation fail, we will ask the School Board to mediate, and perhaps "counsel" a student to withdraw. As stated, this situation has not arisen. See Appendix I for our discipline policy.

### **Human Resource Policies**

All policies are fully compliant with Federal, State, and local laws, and with the School Board's regulations. All job openings are publicly posted. Our faculty hiring process is as follows:

1. Review of application and resume;
2. Initial interview with administration and faculty representatives;
3. Investigation of credentials;
4. Checking of references;
5. Preparation of a sample lesson plan;
6. One day of practice teaching;
7. Participation in a faculty meeting

8. Meeting with representative students – this is to see if they can communicate with students and to permit students to tell us if the prospective teacher does, in fact, like children. Students have no say in evaluating a teacher's academic or organizational abilities.
9. Offer of position
10. Acceptance of offer.

Our salary scale is the same as that of the Pinellas County public schools. We differ in that we are not part of the public retirement system, and all benefits are part of a cafeteria plan to which the school contributes. The plan includes options for health and dental care, life and other insurances, and a 403(b) retirement plan.

Staffing Plan: We have an unbendable policy of never exceeding a student-teacher ratio of 25 to 1, in classes as well as for general enrollment. We plan for 2 sections of 25 students each in each grade. For 2003-2004, assuming approval of a 7<sup>th</sup> grade, we will have two teams of teachers of core subjects. One team of four teachers will team teach the core classes for 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades, and the second team of four will each teach a subject for 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grades. Part-time specialized instruction will utilize the experts we currently employ. Since we now are able to operate without deficit with 4 sections and 4 teachers, the ratio of teachers to sections will remain the same, and no additional financial burden will be incurred. As the school grows, we intend to maintain the same size administration, with the possible addition of a part-time support person should the work load so require.

#### Transportation

We have had no requests for the school to provide transportation within the areas required by the School Board. Instead, we actively support car pools, and there are currently 7 such pools for our 75 students, operating from as far away as Safety Harbor and St. Petersburg.

#### Food Service

Students bring their own lunches; this has been fully supported by parents and students. We do maintain a small supply of packaged lunches for students who occasionally forget to bring theirs – this supply is replenished by donations from the families of the students who use these lunches. At present we do not have any students who participate in the Federal lunch program. The only student we did have left the school to enroll in a local school in fear that we would not be able to offer a 7<sup>th</sup> grade. This student was provided with funds for her mother to prepare meals for her, so that she would not be identifiable to the student body. This was extremely successful, and we can obtain verification of this from the family should the School Board wish.

### **3. ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AND PROCESSES**

Attached as Appendix 9 is a report commissioned from Dr. Alexandra Penn-Williams, a well-known consultant to the Florida Department of Education and other schools. This report stands on its own, is objective, and utilizes accepted assessment methodologies.

The issues requiring attention have all been remedied based on discussions with Dr. Penn-Williams prior to her final report. In sum, these issues were:

1. Curriculum
  - Course syllabi are now fully aligned with the Sunshine State Standards. See Appendices 11 and 12.
  - Texts are now all grade-appropriate.
  - Teacher training has been improved with attendance at PCSB training sessions. The budget has been revised to pay for additional training for all teachers.
  - As part of FCAT preparation, all students are assessed for mastery of the grade-appropriate Sunshine State Standards.
2. Planning Instruction
  - All teachers prepare and use daily lesson plans. Coursework is coordinated with the Assistant Principal to further interdisciplinary teaching.
3. Assessment
  - As noted in Section 2 of this application, assessment tools have been clearly defined and utilized. The changes from our original proposal are primarily a choice from a limited set of assessment tools.
4. Professional Development
  - As noted above, the budget now includes funds for professional development and the hiring of substitutes as needed.
  - Faculty have enrolled in courses related to Dr. Penn-Williams' recommendations.

#### **Benefits of a 7<sup>th</sup> Grade at LOL to the Pinellas County School System**

Current benefits to the school system include the following:

1. A quality education is offered in a small setting, utilizing a pedagogy that is necessary for some students, and which cannot be obtained in larger schools.
2. Since the school has attracted several students who were previously home schooled, the overall reputation of the County's schools has improved among this population, and added financing for these students has flowed into the County.
3. We are already in compliance with the 25-student/classroom mandate, making it a bit easier for the PCSB to comply, at no additional cost to the school system.
4. We are serving as a successful 'laboratory' for teaching methods, interdisciplinary education on a school-wide basis, teacher empowerment, and parent involvement, among other things.



5. We cost the School Board nothing – instead we contribute 5% of our budget to the PCSB administration while offering a resource to the county for the class-size amendment.
6. Some of our programs, such as Model UN, the only such program in the world offered to 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders (see Appendix 10), and our innovative physical education program can serve models for other schools.
7. Our governance system serves as a successful model for other charter schools.
8. Many of our students simply cannot survive in larger schools.
9. Our Internet Bulletin Board and web site serve as a model for communication among teachers, administrators, parents, students, and the general public. For example, our nightly Bulletin Board posting of assignments has proven to be simple and effective.
10. We provide all required ESE services, in accordance with law. Additionally, we offer many of these students extra tutoring and assistance by parent volunteers, many of whom are certified teachers or professional in the areas they tutor.

#### **Benefits of a 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Addition**

1. Adds a quality school to the Choice program, and blunts some of the criticism currently being voiced by parents who feel they do not have an opportunity to choose the school which is best for their child(ren).
2. Adds 25-1 ratio capacity without increasing costs to the School Board
3. Provides continuity for students who are successful in our environment.
4. Through our planned interscholastic competitions with similar size schools, we will offer students an opportunity to compete in games, some sports, intellectual contests, etc. which many of our students would not have in larger schools.
5. Provides further testing of the validity of our educational model, and opens the door to further visits and exchanges between LOL and other public school personnel.
6. Enhances the School Board's public reputation by our academic successes, and by the awards we have already won (and will continue to win).
7. Provides, in our second year, an opportunity to apply for, and utilize, grant and special program funds that have not thus far been accessed. This is especially true because our Principal has a track record of successful grantsmanship, and now that our first year of operations has established regular policies and procedures, he will have more time to pursue alternative funding.
8. By increasing the size of our student body, we enhance our financial viability, which in turn lessens the responsibility of the School Board. This has been an issue with many charter schools that were not able to grow.
9. Adding grades increases our ability to attract experts from various fields (i.e., physical education, diplomacy, etc.) introduces these people to the Pinellas school system, and makes it easier for other schools to utilize their services, whether volunteer or paid.

10. Increased recruitment of teachers from beyond Florida provides us, and therefore the entire county system, with input of new ideas and practices. Although the Florida-trained and experienced teachers are quite capable, every field benefits from fertilization beyond its regular pool of staff and ideas.
11. Further enhances the value of parental involvement as a model for how a SAC can be organized and operate productively in elementary and middle schools.
12. We provide another placement site for additional gifted, near gifted, and other exceptional students who are not admitted to other special or magnet programs.

#### **Problems Encountered in Our First Year of Operation – And Solutions**

1. As a new institution, we have had to learn the detailed administrative procedures of the PCSB very quickly, and we have made occasional errors and omissions. In every such instance, we immediately addressed and rectified these situations as they arose.
2. Faculty recruitment was a slight problem, since we did not have a track record and could not show the stability many experienced teachers want. This is no longer the case, and we have already received over 20 applications from qualified, experienced teachers for next year. At the same time, the enthusiasm of our young faculty has in large measure compensated for their lack of years of formal teaching experience, as has been their willingness to learn, to adapt to more cooperative faculty structures, and to accept empowerment. They also work extremely long hours - this is voluntary.
3. The Choice program has been our single biggest problem. Parents were given conflicting information about the relationship of the charter schools to the choice program; this continues despite all attempts by supervisory personnel at the PCSB to prevent false information from being disseminated. For example, some PCSB personnel continue to tell parents that the school is either out of business or will be long before the next school year. Parents have also been told that enrollment in Love of Learning makes them ineligible to apply for enrollment in a high school of their choice.
4. Another direct negative effect of the choice program is that several of our 6<sup>th</sup> grade students have left in fear that they would not be admitted to a good middle school should our 7<sup>th</sup> grade application be rejected. They felt it necessary to participate in the grandfathering permitted to students enrolled in a regular school this year. Most of them have said they will return as soon as our application for a 7<sup>th</sup> grade is approved, and we have reserved their seats for them.
5. Although we have received open support from many school faculty and administrators, some school administrators have overtly opposed charter schools, and have given out false information without contacting us. We expect this will continue for some time, until they see we are indeed not a threat; PCSB supervisors have been helpful in combating this.

#### 4. SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS AT LOVE OF LEARNING

Students at Love of Learning strive to be intellectually and/or emotionally mature. Within the student body we have a variety of students ranging from students with gifted status to students with individual education plans, service plans, and 504s. As a public school we continually meet the needs of our students throughout the broad spectrum of the student body. As a charter school, we have the ability to provide smaller class sizes and a smaller physical environment than traditional public schools. These two attributes of Love of Learning have proven invaluable to many of our students with special needs.

As a physically handicapped student, Christina<sup>1</sup> would be unable to maneuver in the hallways of some public schools. When the halls swell with students in a typical, middle school, Christina might find herself lost among the shuffle of bodies, backpacks, and noise. It might be a dangerous place for her to navigate with her handicap. In addition, Christina would sometimes be late for class, missing valuable instructional time, as she is unable to walk quickly and for long periods of time. However, at Love of Learning, Christina is in a small school with a small physical environment. This enables her to walk safely in our hallways, which are less crowded than at most schools. Our small physical plant allows Christina to get to her next class on time and navigate around our school with ease. Love of Learning is able to provide Christina with an environment that meets her physical needs while maintaining high, mainstream academic standards.

In addition to Love of Learning's success with Christina, we also have the ability to meet the needs of some of our SLD students that other schools may be unable to meet. For example, some students that have been diagnosed with SLD simply need a smaller teacher-student ratio to perform at or close to grade level. In traditional public schools, these needs are successfully met by pulling students out of their general education classes and placing them in a smaller resource room for all or part of the day. At Love of Learning, our small class sizes already allow SLD students a great deal of individualized attention while keeping them with their peers in general education classes. By addressing many academic needs this way, we are providing a service to our students that is not currently available to many traditional public school students due to higher class size and funding cutbacks. However, not all students needs can or should be addressed by the classroom teacher. Clearly, for some SLD students, a specialist is required to help them overcome specific educational hurdles. For these students we provide an SLD teacher. By meeting needs and being compliant with their IEPs in this manner, students do not miss valuable instructional time in their general education classes.

As a small charter school, Love of Learning is able to provide services for our special needs students in a manner that is minimally intrusive to the student. We will continue to keep all of our class sizes small in order to meet our stated mission as well as to continue aiding students with individual needs.

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<sup>1</sup> Christina is a hypothetical student.

## **5. UNIQUENESS OF THE LOVE OF LEARNING ENVIRONMENT**

Love of Learning provides many unique opportunities for our students to learn and explore the world around them. In addition to what occurs in our classrooms (please refer to our pedagogy in Appendix 11) we afford students unique experiences to enhance their education and to grow intellectually.

One of our accomplishments thus far has been our use of drama. Students in all grade levels have written and produced plays in language arts classes - plays that were then performed in the evening for the entire school community. While drama is a wonderful methodology for students in the classroom, it has proven just as beneficial to our students as a club. We offer a drama club that meets twice per week for a total of four hours. During this time students explore different types of plays and many different facets that make a theatrical production complete. Our language arts, music, and art teachers are all involved in this club to allow students insight into all aspects of theater. When students have acquired substantial knowledge of theatrical productions, they rehearse and produce plays. Students are responsible for all aspects of the production including music, props, costumes, and sets. This use of drama throughout our school has proven to be a highly-valued addition to our community.

Drama is not the only club that we offer. The students also have the opportunity to participate in a Newspaper Club and a Forensic Science Club. Students in the Newspaper Club produce our school newspaper, the LOL Times. They generate news topics, research and write the articles, interview students and staff, design the layout, and produce and distribute the paper.

The Forensic Science Club was the idea of some of our sixth grade students. The students designed the parameters for the club and participate in the club one morning a week before the start of the school day. During this time they read "cases" and uncover clues. They conduct experiments similar to those used in a crime lab to help uncover suspects. Finally, using deductive reasoning, the students discover the person(s) guilty of the crime.

While our clubs meet before or after school hours, some of our other unique programs and practices take place during school. One of these programs is the Model United Nations course. Using actually political issues, students in grades 4 through 6 emulate the UN Security Council, representing different nations and debating the many sides of the issue. Our students are the youngest in the world to participate in this course and have had great success understanding the complexities of many issues facing our world today.

Additionally, our administrators also teach classes or clubs. By intertwining education and administration we feel that our students are given greater opportunities to flourish academically and personally. Students also have the ability to create clubs in areas of their interest. Students are therefore given opportunities to explore fields of interest while taking ownership of clubs and the ideas. This also keeps administrators in touch with the classroom.

As educators, we have an obligation to expose our students to a wide variety of professions. To accomplish this, we have implemented career luncheons. Once a week a person from a different profession comes to the school. This person may be a doctor, a lawyer, a teacher, a veterinarian, a firefighter, a member of the police force, or any other

profession students have expressed interest in. This person sits with students during lunch, providing an informal opportunity to discuss the field and what path the professional took to get there. Students gain exposure to a variety of professions as well as insight into the amount of hard work and specific steps it takes to get into that profession.

At Love of Learning we provide a broad spectrum of opportunities to our students. We believe firmly in the abilities and motivations of all members of our school community. Parents, students and faculty all have opportunities to be heard and influence change and expansion in our school.

## **6. SUPPORT**

We have discussed the involvement of parents and students at all levels of our operations and planning, and have attached letters of support in Appendix 9. Additional expressions of support will be forwarded to the PCSB as they arise. Many of our parents and students also would like to meet with School Board members and staff at any time, in addition to public presentations to be made when this proposal is formally considered.

## **7. CURRENT CURRICULA**

Attached as Appendix 12 are our current sixth grade curricula and scope and sequence documents for grades 4 through 7.

## **8. 7<sup>TH</sup> GRADE CURRICULUM**

We have fully prepared for the seventh grade, and the curricula we plan to use are attached as Appendix 13.

## **9. AWARDS AND ACOMPLISHMENTS**

In the 6 months we have been in existence, our students have entered and won four contests- three countywide and one statewide art and essay contest (the winner received \$2,100 in bonds and prizes). Our initial contest entry, a poster for the Veterans' Administration patriotism campaign, won first prize. Another set of entries in a countywide art contest won several prizes for three of our students. WEDU, the Florida State Fair, and the Florida Lottery sponsored the statewide art and essay contest, and one of our fifth graders won first prize over several hundred applicants. A detailed breakdown of the contests and prizes can be found in Appendix 13.

Our United Nations program is unique in the young age at which our students participate. Its success is shown by the letter of commendation attached as Appendix 10.