

**BEFORE THE MISSISSIPPI CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORIZER BOARD**

REPORT TO APPLICANT FOR CHARTER SCHOOL,  
REPUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

COMES NOW, the Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board (“Board”), pursuant to Miss. Code Ann. §37-28-19(6), and issues the following report to RePublic Charter Schools Board of Directors (RCSBOD), applicant for a public charter school in the State of Mississippi.

1. At a regular Board meeting on June 2, 2014, the Board considered the application of RCSBOD to own and operate a public charter school in Jackson, Mississippi.

2. After considering all documented evidence collected through the application review process, the Board found that RCSBOD had met the required criteria for approval of a charter school application and voted to approve the RCSBOD application.

3. The specific reasons for approval of the RCSBOD application are set forth in the Charter School Application Recommendation Report contained in the Board Resolution approving the RCSBOD application which is attached hereto and incorporated fully herein as Exhibit “A”.

WHEREFORE, PREMISES CONSIDERED, the Board issues this Report within the ten (10) day period after taking action to approve the RCSBOD application as provided in Miss. Code Ann. §37-28-19(6).

This the 17<sup>th</sup> day of June, 2014

MISSISSIPPI CHARTER SCHOOL  
AUTHORIZER BOARD

By: Tommie Cardin  
Tommie Cardin, Chair

**RESOLUTION OF MISSISSIPPI CHARTER AUTHORIZER BOARD APPROVING  
APPLICATION OF REPUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**WHEREAS**, pursuant to Mississippi Code Ann. §37-28-7, the Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board (“Board”) was created as a state agency with exclusive chartering jurisdiction in the State of Mississippi; and

**WHEREAS**, pursuant to Miss. Code Ann. §37-28-15(1), the Board issued a request for proposals setting forth the requirements for submissions by applicants for prospective charter schools in Mississippi; and

**WHEREAS**, the RePublic Charter School Board of Directors (RCSBOD) submitted an application to open and operate a public charter school in Jackson, Mississippi to be named ReImagine Prep; and

**WHEREAS**, the Board has carefully considered the application of RCSBOD, the final Charter School Application Recommendation Report prepared by the Evaluation Team, the capacity interview and the comments provided at the public hearing; and

**WHEREAS**, the Evaluation Team recommended approval of the application of RCSBOD for the reasons set forth in the report prepared by the Evaluation Team; and

**WHEREAS**, the Board, having considered the criteria set forth in Miss. Code Ann. §37-28-19, finds that it should approve the application of RCSBOD.

**NOW THEREFORE**, be it resolved as follows:

1. Pursuant to Mississippi Code 37-28-19 and the documented evidence collected throughout the application review process, the Board finds that RCSBOD has met the required criteria for approval of a charter school application.
2. The Charter School Application Recommendation Report prepared by the Evaluation Team, attached hereto as Exhibit “1” and incorporated fully herein, contains the specific reasons for approval of the RCSBOD charter application.

3. The Board finds that all procedural requirements and application elements set forth in Miss. Code Ann. §37-28-3 et seq. have been met.

Board member Karen Elam made the following motion: motion to approve RePublic Charter Schools Board of Directors' charter school application for the 2015-2016 school year, provided that execution of the charter contract and final approval of the school to open shall be conditioned on timely satisfaction of a set of reasonable reopening requirements. These reopening requirements will be designed to ensure that the school is prepared to meet its obligations as a public charter school, including but not limited to all building, health, safety, insurance and other legal requirements that must be fulfilled prior to opening. Board member Johnny Franklin seconded the motion for its adoption. The Chair put the question to a roll call vote, and the result was as follows:

Board Member, Tommie Cardin	voted: yes
Board Member, Bonita Coleman-Potter	voted: yes
Board Member, Krystal Cormack	voted: yes
Board Member, Karen Elam	voted: yes
Board Member, Johnny Franklin	voted: yes
Board Member, Chris Wilson	voted: yes
Board Member, Dr. Carey Wright	voted: yes

**RESOLVED**, THIS 2<sup>nd</sup> Day of June, 2014.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Tommie Cardin, Chair

May 28, 2014

Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board

---

# Charter School Application Recommendation Report

New Charter School Application for  
Reimagine Prep

Submitted by  
RePublic Schools, Inc.

Evaluation Team

Team Lead: Amy McClellan

Evaluators: Dr. Limmie Flowers

Dr. Tommye Henderson

Simeon Stolzberg



National Association of Charter School Authorizers

**EXHIBIT "1"**

© 2014 National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA)

This report carries a Creative Commons license, which permits noncommercial reuse of content when proper attribution is provided. This means you are free to copy, display, and distribute this work, or include content from this report in derivative works, under the following conditions:

**Attribution** You must clearly attribute the work to the National Association of Charter School Authorizers and provide a link back to the publication at <http://www.qualitycharters.org/>.

**Noncommercial** You may not use this work for commercial purposes, including but not limited to any type of work for hire, without explicit prior permission from NACSA.

**Share Alike** If you alter, transform, or build upon this work, you may distribute the resulting work only under a license identical to this one.

For the full legal code of this Creative Commons license, please visit [www.creativecommons.org](http://www.creativecommons.org). If you have any questions about citing or reusing NACSA content, please contact us.

## Introduction

Following the passage of the Mississippi Charter Schools Act of 2013 (HB 369) in April 2013, Governor Bryant created the Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board (MCSAB), a statewide charter school authorizer with exclusive charter jurisdiction in the state of Mississippi. The mission of the seven-member MCSAB is to authorize high-quality charter schools, particularly schools designed to expand opportunities for underserved students. To that end, the MCSAB annually issues a Request for Proposals to operate charter schools.

### Focus on Quality

The 2013–2014 RFP and proposal evaluation process are rigorous and demanding. The process is meant to ensure that approved charter school operators possess the capacity to implement a school model that is likely to dramatically increase student outcomes. Successful applicants will demonstrate high levels of expertise and capacity in the areas of curriculum and instruction, school finance, educational and operational leadership, and non-profit governance, as well as high expectations for excellence in student achievement and professional standards. An application that merits a recommendation for approval will present a clear, realistic picture of how the school expects to operate; detail how the school will raise student achievement; and inspire confidence in the applicant's capacity to successfully implement the proposed academic and operational plans.

### Evaluation Process

For its inaugural RFP cycle, MCSAB partnered with the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) to manage the application process and to provide independent, merit-based recommendations regarding whether to approve or deny each proposal. NACSA assembled independent evaluation teams that included both national and local expertise related to charter school start-up and operation. This report from the evaluation team is a culmination of three stages of review:

#### Proposal Evaluation

The evaluation team conducted individual and group assessment of the merits of the proposal based on the complete written submission. In the case of experienced school operators, the MCSAB and NACSA supplemented this written evaluation with due diligence to verify claims made in the proposal related to past performance.

#### Capacity Interview

After reviewing the application and discussing the findings of their individual reviews, the evaluation team conducted an in-person interview to assess the applicant's overall capacity to implement the plans in the proposal.

#### Consensus Judgment

Following the capacity interview, the evaluation team came to consensus regarding whether to recommend the proposal for approval or denial.

The duty of the evaluation team is to recommend approval or denial of each application based on its merits against MCSAB-approved evaluation criteria. The authority and responsibility to decide whether to approve or deny each application rests with the members of MCSAB.

## Report Contents

This evaluation report includes the following:

### **Proposal Overview**

Basic information about the proposed school as presented.

### **Recommendation**

An overall judgment regarding whether the proposal meets the criteria for approval.

### **Evaluation**

Analysis of the proposal within each of the six required RFP sections (Culture, Leadership, School Structure and Operations, Educational Program, Instructional Staff, Governance), within any of four supplementary sections as applicable (Waivers, Conversion Charter Schools, Education Service Provider Relationship, Information for Applicants Currently Operating One or More Schools), and the capacity of the applicant team to execute the plan as presented.

## Rating Characteristics

Evaluation teams assess each application against the published evaluation criteria. In general, the following definitions guide evaluator ratings:

### **Meets or Exceeds the Standard**

The response reflects a thorough understanding of key issues. It clearly aligns with the goals of the school. The response includes specific and accurate information that shows thorough preparation.

### **Partially Meets the Standard**

The response meets criteria in some aspects, but lacks sufficient detail and/or requires additional information in one or more areas.

### **Does Not Meet the Standard**

The response is significantly incomplete; demonstrates lack of preparation; is unsuited to the mission and vision of MCSAB or otherwise raises significant concerns about the viability of the plan or the applicant's ability to carry it out.

## Proposal Overview

Nonprofit Applicant Name

RePublic Schools, Inc.

Proposed School Name

Reimagine Prep

Mission

The mission of Reimagine Preparatory Charter School ("Reimagine Prep") is to educate students in grades five through eight, and build the academic and character foundation necessary for success in the most demanding colleges and a life of active citizenship.

Proposed Location

Jackson Public Schools

Enrollment Projections

Academic Year	Planned # Students	Grades Served
2015-2016	110	5
2016-2017	220	5-6
2017-2018	330	5-7
2018-2019	440	5-8
2019-2020	440	5-8

## Executive Summary

ReImagine Prep

Recommendation

**Approve**

### Summary Analysis

The evaluation team recommends approval of this application for ReImagine Prep submitted by RePublic Schools, Inc., a newly formed CMO. ReImagine Prep will replicate an effective college preparatory school model created at two middle charter schools operated by the CMO in Nashville, TN: Nashville Prep and Liberty Collegiate Academy. These schools have achieved exceptional success in improving academic achievement among a predominantly minority and economically disadvantaged student population.

The school's college-preparatory program is ambitious and thoughtfully designed for the targeted population. Comprehensive details are provided about the curriculum, assessment plan, and services for special education students, English language learners, and students in need of academic intervention. Ample professional development will be provided to enable teachers to deliver the education program and rigorous disciplinary plan. An extremely detailed 10-year budget and overall financial plan is provided. Although this will be RePublic School's first attempt to replicate its model outside of Nashville, the founding group demonstrates the capacity to accomplish this successfully. The leadership team consists of a managing partner, Ravi Gupta, founder of RePublic Schools and one of the Nashville schools; Principal Christina McDonald, currently an Assistant Principal and social studies teacher who has a strong track record of academic performance in her classrooms; and Kate Cooper, Regional Director of Operations, who will direct startup and facilities preparation. The governing board of eight has diverse professional expertise. The remarks made by the seven board members attending the interview gave the evaluation team confidence that they have the capacity to govern the school successfully.

In the capacity interview, the applicants clarified a number of issues surrounding the leadership team and organizational structure and future growth of RePublic Schools.

### Summary of Section Ratings

Opening and maintaining a successful, high-performing charter school depends on having a complete, coherent plan and identifying highly capable individuals to execute that plan. It is not an endeavor for which strengths in some areas can compensate for material weaknesses in others. *Therefore, in order to receive a recommendation for approval, the application must Meet the Standard in all areas.*

#### I. Culture ▾

**Meets the Standard**

#### VI. Governance ▾

**Meets the Standard**

#### II. Leadership ▾

**Meets the Standard**

#### VII. Waivers ▾

**Not Applicable**

#### III. School Structure and Operations ▾

**Meets the Standard**

#### VIII. Conversion Charter School ▾

**Not Applicable**

#### IV. Education Program ▾

**Meets the Standard**

#### IX. Education Service Provider Relationship ▾

**Not Applicable**

#### V. Instructional Staff ▾

**Meets the Standard**

#### X. Applicants Currently Operating One or More Schools in Any State or Nation ▾

**Meets the Standard**

## I. Culture

Reimagine Prep

Rating ▾

**Meets the Standard**

### Plan Summary

Reimagine Prep will offer an academically rigorous program for grades five to eight based on six "imperatives" for literacy and math instruction, high-quality teachers, extended learning time, data-driven instruction, customized student supports, and instruction in computer coding. The educational program will follow the model at Nashville Prep and Liberty Collegiate Academy, two high-performing middle schools serving at-risk students operated by the CMO in Nashville, TN. Recruitment will focus on students whose home middle schools are Whitten, Peeples, Siwell Road, and Cardozo. The anticipated population is 90 percent free and reduced lunch, less than 1 percent English language learners, and 10.22 percent special education.

The school will create a highly-disciplined environment with consequences for even minor infractions and reinforcement of positive behavior. Partnerships have been established with Jackson business and nonprofit organizations. Parents will be engaged through orientation meetings, "family university nights," daily discipline reports, and a family contract.

### Analysis

This section meets the standard. The applicants demonstrate the compelling need for a college preparatory program for the target population of predominantly African-American students in the Jackson Public School District. Supporting academic and demographic data is provided, including low graduation rates and ACT scores. The applicants draw a compelling contrast with adjacent Clinton School District, which has student proficiency rates that are approximately twice as high as those in the Jackson Public Schools District.

The school's goal to enable all students to graduate from a competitive four-year college is supported by the description of the educational foundation. This includes six clearly stated instructional imperatives, the goal to recruit skilled and dedicated teachers, and a rigorous, disciplined learning environment.

The elements that will create the desired school culture are clearly detailed: how teachers will model and enforce expected behaviors, how the school will "sweat the small stuff" by holding students accountable for even the smallest disciplinary rules, and how students will be recognized daily for positive behaviors ("catch them doing good"), such as showing empathy or helping teammates.

The description of the school's philosophy, which includes seven beliefs underlying the school's code of conduct, presents a well-developed plan for creating a safe learning environment that will also build students' character and self-esteem. The applicant explains that the approach to discipline and character-building is based on research of KIPP charter school alumni and has been implemented successfully at Nashville Prep.

The founding group has already garnered the support of several community organizations and has begun working with the school district on common goals.

The plan for parent involvement is also presented in good detail and supports the vision for the school culture. It includes annual family orientation meetings, "family university nights," a family contract, an annual family survey, a monthly newsletter, and daily PREP reports sent to parents on merits and demerits earned by students. In the governance section, the applicant states that a parent representative will be elected to the board.

## II. Leadership

Reimagine Prep

Rating ▾

**Meets the Standard**

### Plan Summary

The school will be managed and governed by a newly-created CMO organization incorporated in Mississippi — RePublic Schools, Inc. The school will be overseen by a "managing partner" of RePublic Schools, Ravi Gupta, who is the founder and former executive director of Nashville Prep.

Mr. Gupta will supervise the selected principal, Christina McDonald, and the school's governing board will oversee Mr. Gupta. Ms. McDonald is presently the assistant principal of culture and arts and a fifth grade social studies teacher at Nashville Prep. Ms. McDonald and the regional operations lead for RePublic Schools, Kate Cooper, plan to move to Jackson in the summer of 2014 to implement the startup plan.

Two high-performing middle schools in Nashville are now under RePublic School's management: Nashville Prep and Liberty Collegiate Academy. RePublic Schools will also manage future charter schools that it plans to develop in Nashville and Jackson.

### Analysis

The section meets the standard. The narrative and the interview demonstrated that Reimagine Prep will have a capable leadership team with experience launching and operating a successful charter school. The team is headed by Mr. Gupta as managing partner, the founder of a very successful charter middle school serving a similar target population. Mr. Gupta's background and varied professional experience, including participation in the Building Excellent Schools program, brings valuable organizational and communications skills to this project. In the interview, he noted that he will spend 50 percent of his time at Reimagine Prep. The board has strong capacity to implement its plan of monitoring and evaluating Mr. Gupta on an ongoing basis.

The selected principal, Christina McDonald, has a strong track record of exceptional academic performance with students in her classrooms. It was noted that 97.5-98 percent of her students scored proficient or advanced in the Tennessee state assessment in social studies during the last two years, outperforming the district. In the interview, she spoke articulately about how she would lead teachers in developing the school's in-house curriculum. Prior to the school's opening, Ms. McDonald will participate in intensive training for new charter school leaders through Building Excellent Schools to prepare her for the principal role. She will be evaluated by Mr. Gupta using a school leader evaluation rubric used successfully at Nashville Prep.

Three other leadership positions—director of operations, director of student supports, and dean of students—are to be recruited. Their qualifications and roles are well-defined. The regional operations lead for RePublic Schools, Kate Cooper, will be responsible for hiring and training the director of operations as well as leading recruitment efforts and preparing the facility for opening. She has previous experience in these areas. Ms. Cooper plans to move to Jackson with Ms. McDonald in the summer of 2014 to implement startup operations.

The narrative created confusion about the exact composition of the leadership team. This was cleared up in the interview. It should be noted, however, that a complete job description for the managing partner and principal are not included in the application.

### III. School Structure and Operations

Rating ▼

**Meets the Standard**

ReImagine Prep

#### Plan Summary

The school staff at full enrollment of 440 fifth- through eighth-grade students includes a principal, director of operations, director of student supports, dean of students, director of curriculum, and 28 teachers. Bus transportation, speech and language pathology services, custodial services, and information technology services will be outsourced. Students from nine targeted elementary schools will be recruited through door-to-door outreach.

The salary schedule for teachers will be 2.5 to 19.91 percent higher than Jackson Public Schools' salaries. Comprehensive health benefits will be offered.

Free bus transportation will be provided to all students living outside of a set radius from the school. Breakfast, lunch, and a snack will be offered each day, to be delivered by an off-site food service provider. A possible facility site for the school is the Horizon Christian Academy building in South Jackson, which has sufficient classrooms, a gym, cafeteria, library, kitchen, and office. Startup activities will begin in September 2014.

#### Analysis

This section meets the standard because the plans for staffing, recruitment and enrollment, transportation, food service, insurance, securing a facility, and startup are sensible, support the educational plan, and are described in sufficient detail.

A sufficient number of administrative staff and teachers will support the intensive academic program described in the application, including a director of student supports to oversee SPED and other high-need students. Teachers' salaries will be higher than the local district to attract high-quality teachers and compensate them for the longer school day. Master teachers "who excel and are dedicated to longevity" will be encouraged to stay by a more flexible salary structure.

The student recruitment plan is extremely detailed, aggressive, and measurable. It includes specific goals for door-to-door family outreach, identification of community partners, and collection of intent-to-enroll forms by targeted dates.

The attendance policy aligns with the strict disciplinary policy. The school will not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences, and students may be retained after 15 absences during the year. This should result in higher than usual expectations for attendance.

A possible suitable facility has been identified. The applicants have a letter of commitment from Bishop Ronnie Crudup to lease the New Horizon Christian Academy facility located in South Jackson. The application refers to 15 classrooms in the facility but in the interview, one of the board members who had toured the facility mentioned that 27-30 classrooms might actually be available, which would allow room for the school to grow to full enrollment. Ms. Cooper, who has experience overseeing facility renovations, will oversee facility improvements.

The startup plan is detailed, comprehensive, and well-developed. The time line appears to be reasonable. In the interview, Ms. Cooper noted that the group will make a special effort to ensure access to the school by the neediest students, including offering "extensive" bus transportation. The food services plan is based on an efficient one used at the Nashville schools that depends upon a local food service delivering pre-prepared meals. It was not clear if the group had investigated food services in Jackson to determine if this arrangement would be possible.

## IV. Education Program

Rating ▾

**Meets the Standard**

Reimagine Prep

### Plan Summary

The school will offer a college preparatory curriculum aligned with Mississippi curriculum standards and Common Core that includes mandatory instruction in computer science. Teachers and administrators will develop curricula and assessments during the summer. Pedagogy will include the Gradual Release of Responsibility model ("I do, we do, you do"), flexible ability grouping, reading and writing across the curriculum, an emphasis on grammar, and other proven instructional techniques. The calendar includes 187 instructional days and 30 days of professional development. The extended school day will be from 7:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m., four days a week.

The assessment plan includes baseline reading assessments, criterion-referenced tests, and end-of-the-year exams. An assessment data system, such as Kickboard, will be used to record and monitor student data. Strategies for students in need of academic intervention include a longer school day and year, flexible ability grouping, literacy interventions and remediation, homework and a homework club, and tutorials.

### Analysis

This section meets the standard. The school's college preparatory program is ambitious and thoughtfully designed for the targeted population. It is based on the program at the Nashville schools, which serve a similar population. The program includes both research-proven and internally-developed curricula aligned with state and the Common Core standards. The applicants explained convincingly how teachers who develop their own curricula are more able to adjust their instruction to meet student needs. Emphasis on Common Core gives students more rigorous preparation for state assessments. Required coursework in computer programming prepares students for careers in technology.

The narrative describes in depth the school's research- and evidenced-based pedagogical methods. The commitment to a longer school day (9.5 hours) and school year (187 days) improves their chances of reaching the goal to bring every student to grade level within two years. The assessment plan is described well. Three types of assessments will be administered: absolute, value-added outcome, and internally developed (by teachers using "backward mapping" from the Common Core standards). The applicants noted that common interim assessments will be used in all of the RePublic Schools to allow valid comparisons between schools.

The Evaluation Team asked for more information in the interview on staffing and other resources for SPED students. The explanation that the director of student supports will oversee and provide SPED services, and that the Nashville schools have had success serving SPED students who might have otherwise been placed in special programs in district schools, helped to address these questions. Strategies to serve students in need of academic intervention and acceleration are particularly strong. These include a longer school day and year, flexible ability grouping, literacy interventions and remediation, homework and a homework club, and tutorials. The performance framework is articulated well and includes ambitious but attainable goals.

The RFP requests a statement about the applicants' intent to use response to intervention (RTI). The Reimagine plan does not reference RTI; however, the Evaluation Team finds that the proposed plan for academic intervention should achieve comparable results.

If the application is approved, the pre-opening preparation should include development of more robust co-curricular and extracurricular programming plans. These were minimally adequate for the proposal.

## V. Instructional Staff

Rating ▾

**Meets the Standard**

Reimagine Prep

### Plan Summary

The school will seek highly-qualified teachers through Teach for America, career fairs, college alumni associations, and multimedia sources. Candidates must be aligned with the school's mission and demonstrate academic success with the target population. State teaching certification will be required before hire. New hires will be required to spend at least one day analyzing the highest performing urban charter schools.

Each teacher will be assigned a coach. Frequent observations of teachers will address student engagement, lesson delivery, instructional methodologies, and classroom management. Feedback will be provided within 24 hours of observation. Teachers will be evaluated twice a year using the RePublic School's own evaluation instrument.

Twenty summer professional development days will be devoted to school culture, assessment and data, and curriculum and instruction. During the school year, teachers will participate in 10 full professional development days and weekly sessions after early dismissal on Fridays.

### Analysis

This section meets the standard because the recruitment plan, evaluation system, and professional development plan illustrate a strong commitment to hire high-quality teachers and prepare them to fulfill the school's mission.

The requirements for new teachers provided in the application suggest that all teachers will be highly qualified, interested in fulfilling the school's mission, and hold a valid teaching license. Recruitment strategies make sense and are detailed even further by task in the startup plan.

The teacher evaluation instrument is comprehensive and focused on the important elements of the teaching/learning process. It includes meaningful indicators in the areas of cultural expectations, curriculum and assessment design, lesson design and execution, professionalism, professional development, and student achievement. Many of the indicators are specifically aligned with the school's unique mission and culture.

The ample time devoted to professional development in the summer (20 days) and during the school year (10 full days plus every Friday afternoon) demonstrates a commitment to provide frequent and deep training to teachers to enable them to develop and deliver the proposed curriculum.

Although the narrative notes that each teacher will have a coach and that experienced teachers will eventually assume the role of coach, it is not clear who will provide initial coaching.

## VI. Governance

ReImagine Prep

Rating ▼

**Meets the Standard**

### Plan Summary

RePublic Schools, Inc. will hold the school charter. It was incorporated in Mississippi in March 2014. An application for 501(c)(3) status has been submitted but not yet approved. The RePublic Schools' board will govern ReImagine Prep and the two Nashville schools. The board is responsible for selecting and removing the managing partner, entering into contractual agreements, borrowing money, and incurring debt.

The board includes eight members, four of whom will be Mississippi residents. Board members have backgrounds in education, non-profit management, finance, fundraising, law, and community outreach. A parent representative will be elected once the school is open.

The 10-year budget outlook is included in the application. The budget for the startup year is \$379,403. The first school year budget totals \$1.2M, increasing to \$4.0M when the school is at its full enrollment of 440 students in 2018-19. The board has secured a pledge for a \$400,000 donation for startup.

### Analysis

This section meets the standard. The governance structure and the financial plan are well documented in the application and the Evaluation Team received satisfactory answers to remaining questions and concerns during the capacity interview.

The board has strong capacity to oversee the school in terms of members' knowledge, commitment, and diverse professional expertise. Since only four of the eight members on the board will reside in Mississippi, some meetings will be held by video conference. When asked how these would be accessible to parents, they explained that they would abide by the open meetings laws and that meetings that handle grievance issues would be held in Jackson.

The Evaluation Team asked for clarification about the organizational structure of RePublic Schools, since the staffing and board organizational charts provided do not depict clear lines of authority for the managing partner. The group confirmed that Mr. Gupta will report to the board and the school principal will report to him.

They also explained that the structure of RePublic Schools may change in the future, possibly by creating separate boards for each school or region. RePublic may place CMO administrative staff both in Jackson and Nashville. Although these details are still being resolved, the evaluation team had the impression that the board will make sound decisions in the best interest of the school.

A detailed 10-year financial plan (instead of the required five-year plan) and budget narrative are provided. The group was asked several questions arising from the due diligence report about certain line items. In their answers, they demonstrated a sophisticated understanding of their assumptions and explained how they would adjust the budget if necessary. The applicants explained that they will work with the company EdTec to establish strong fiscal controls that ensure that funds from the different schools under the CMO are not commingled.

A \$400,000 commitment in private donations for startup operations was confirmed by the donor himself who attended the capacity interview. The applicants noted they are also optimistic about receiving funding from the Charter School Growth Fund for an additional \$600 per student seat.

## X. Applicants Currently Operating One or More Schools in Any State or Nation

Rating ▾

**Meets the Standard**

Reimagine Prep

### Plan Summary

The founding group operates two middle charter schools serving predominantly minority populations in Nashville, TN: Nashville Prep and Liberty Collegiate Academy. Both schools opened in 2011. Beginning in 2012, they began showing superior academic achievement results compared with the local district and state in both proficiency and growth. A third Nashville school, Nashville Academy of Computer Science, is scheduled to open in the fall of 2014. RePublic Schools will govern and manage Reimagine Prep and the three Nashville schools under one board of directors.

Ravi Gupta and other founders formed RePublic Schools, Inc. in 2012 as a new charter management organization. The organization's mission is to "reimagine public education in the South. RePublic prepares scholars to enter, succeed in, and graduate from college, and operates schools that value innovation and ownership." The organization's website notes that RePublic plans to establish schools in Tennessee, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Alabama.

### Analysis

This section meets the standard. There is clear evidence, provided through data on student proficiency and growth data in state assessments, that the two middle schools operated by the founding group have produced statistically significant gains and proficiency levels in comparison to both the school district and state averages. The founding group, with its strong leadership team and board, has the capacity to replicate its school model in Mississippi.

In the narrative, the applicants referred briefly to both Nashville schools that they currently operate but attached detailed academic achievement data on just one school, Nashville Prep. When asked why they did not include data on Liberty Collegiate Academy, Mr. Gupta noted that since the school leader for Liberty will not be involved in Reimagine Prep, that it should not be included. The due diligence report prepared for the Evaluation Team included student achievement data on Liberty Collegiate Academy, which showed similar success in raising student achievement levels, but with a slightly different target population that includes a higher percentage of Hispanic and White students over African-American students.

The target populations of the Nashville schools are similar to the projected population at Reimagine Prep in terms of the percentage of economically disadvantaged students, but have a more diverse population that includes Hispanic (9-19 percent) and White (7-13 percent) students. Even with these differences, the success of the Nashville schools indicates that the RePublic Schools model presented in the application should be well-suited to meeting the needs of the target student population at Reimagine Prep in Jackson.

Although the CMO's legal name is "Republic Schools, Inc.," the application and organization's website refer to it interchangeably as "Republic Charter Schools" and "Republic Schools, Inc." If the application is approved, the applicants should establish clarity and consistency in the organizational name and references for both legal and practical purposes as part of their preparation to open.

# Evaluator Biographies

## Evaluator's Name

Amy McClellan

Amy McClellan is an independent grant writer and non-profit consultant. She has worked extensively with the Florida charter school movement since 1999 and with the state charter school association, the Florida Consortium of Public Charter Schools. She has served as program director for the Gold Seal of Excellence Charter School Program in Florida and the Walton Family Foundation's Florida Grant Partners Program from 2003-2009. Amy has also served as a reviewer and editor for charter school applications in Louisiana, New Jersey, and Tennessee through the National Association of Charter School Authorizers. Amy received a B.A. from Occidental College, Los Angeles and an M.F.A. in Art History from Princeton University.

## Evaluator's Name

Dr. Limmie Flowers

Dr. Limmie Flowers is a 40-year veteran educator. She has held many roles in the education field, ranging from school administrator to instructional leader to elementary school teacher. She has also served as principal of high performing schools in both Jackson Public School District and Clinton Public School District. She currently works as a leadership and coaching specialist at the National Institute for School Leadership in University, Mississippi. Prior to this Limmie served as director of Federal Programs for Clinton Public School District. She holds a B.A. from Tougaloo College, and an M.S. and Ph.D. in education from Jackson State University.

## Evaluator's Name

Dr. Tommye Henderson

Tommye Henderson is currently an assistant professor in the School of Education at Mississippi College. With over 30 years in the education field, Tommye has served in many capacities including as superintendent of Clinton Public School District and as director of personnel for Columbus Municipal School District. She has also served as a principal and teacher and is active in many community organizations in Clinton. She graduated with a B.S. in elementary education from the University of Southern Mississippi, an M.Ed. from Mississippi State University, and a Ph.D. in educational leadership from Mississippi State University.

## Evaluator's Name

Simeon Stolzberg

Simeon Stolzberg is currently an education consultant who works primarily with charter school authorizers, operators, and founding groups. Prior to this he was the director of school evaluation at the SUNY Charter Schools Institute, which oversees charter schools across New York State. He has been a school teacher and principal and is the founder of the Berkshire Arts and Technology Charter School in Massachusetts. Simeon holds an M.A. in public policy and served at the U.S. Department of Education in the Clinton administration.