



MISSISSIPPI
CHARTER SCHOOL
AUTHORIZER BOARD

Charter School Renewal Recommendation Report

The Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board will use the currently adopted Performance Framework for all 2019-2020 renewal decisions, including determining each school's renewal eligibility, renewal recommendation, and, if renewed, renewal term. The MCSAB will consider evidence from the academic, financial and organizational domains of the Performance Framework in making renewal decisions and will draw on the Annual Performance Framework Report, school site visit reports, the renewal application, and other official data. MCSAB will ground its decision in evidence of the school's performance over the term of the charter contract in accordance with the performance framework set forth in the charter contract.

Application for: Reimagine Preparatory Charter School

Report Date: March 31, 2020

RENEWAL APPLICANT SUMMARY

SCHOOL NAME: Reimagine Preparatory Charter School

GRADE STRUCTURE: 5-8

LOCATION: Jackson

ORIGINAL CONTRACT DATE: 6/22/2015

MISSION STATEMENT: The mission of Reimagine Preparatory Charter School 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.

ORIGINAL CONTRACTED ENROLLMENT CHART EXHIBIT E (AS AMENDED):

Academic Year	Grades Served	Total Enrollment
2015-2016	5	110
2016-2017	5-6	220
2017-2018	5-7	450
2018-2019	5-8	600
2019-2020	5-8	600

PROPOSED ENROLLMENT CHART:

Academic Year	Grades Served	Total Enrollment
2020-2021	5-8	570
2021-2022	5-8	570
2022-2023	5-8	570
2023-2024	5-8	570
2024-2025	5-8	570

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION

The evaluation committee recommends a **(5) year RENEWAL** for Reimagine Preparatory.

Record of Performance

Effective Academic Program ~ Meets Expectations

Financial Success ~ Meets Expectations

Organizational Success ~ Meets Expectations

SUMMARY ANALYSIS

The evaluation team recommends a **(5) year renewal** for Reimagine Prep. Reimagine Prep opened its doors in August of 2015 serving grade 5. Today, the school serves grades 5-8 with a contracted enrollment of 600. The school failed to meet academic expectations in 2015-16 and 2016-17 with a state accountability rating of “D” in both years. Improvements began in 2018 when Reimagine Prep earned a “C” rating for the first time and a “B” rating in 2019 making it eligible for renewal.

Reimagine submitted the application for renewal on time and met the criteria for page numbers outlined in the application guidance. Beginning with the required Executive Summary, Reimagine Prep presented a brief history of the school along with a rationale for their work including values and beliefs.

The applicant discussed in detail its commitment to serving an underserved population of students noting their belief that potential and opportunity have not always been distributed evenly. Reimagine Prep perceived this gap as an injustice and recognized a need for students to build strong foundational skills in math, reading and computer science in order to achieve future academic success. The applicant placed a deep value on scholar growth and achievement and established a rigorous curriculum where scholars were held to high expectations as evidenced over time by student outcomes in math and language arts.

Reimagine Prep’s application for renewal includes a financial management plan that met expectations. The plan included a copy of the required financial manual, a financial history including challenges and accomplishments, and evidence of a sustainable model.

The organizational success of Reimagine Prep fulfilling its mission and vision is described in the application with some evidence of implementation provided.

RECORD OF PERFORMANCE

The following is an overview and analysis of the renewal application.

A. EFFECTIVE ACADEMIC PROGRAM ANALYSIS

Exceeds Expectations 25%

Meets Expectations 54%

Approaches Expectations 17%

Fails to Meet Expectations 0%

The academic program at Reimagine Prep **Meets Expectations** as the school has demonstrated progress over time improving accountability ratings from a “D” in school years 2015 – 2017 to a “C” in 2018 and a “B” in 2019. The applicant noted that the 2019 “B” rating with 387 overall points was the highest performing open enrollment fifth through eighth grade school in the Jackson area. Data is provided for comparing Reimagine Prep to eleven other schools with overall points ranging from a low of 206 to a high of 387.

A **history of academic performance** is provided in the narrative; however, no scholar performance data is included from 2015-2016 and there is **no discussion of science outcomes leaving the evaluators with questions**. Data is provided to support its claim that in 2017 Reimagine Prep’s math growth was in the top 6% statewide and growth for students performing in the bottom 25% was in the top 3%. Math proficiency was almost on par with the state and bar charts comparing performance to other schools and districts provided compelling data points of success.

The applicant provided data comparison tables for reference on the **most recent state assessment – the Mississippi Academic Assessment Program (MAAP)**. Student proficient and advanced performance in math on the 2018 – 2019 **(MAAP)** assessment is presented as averages across grades, relative to the district in which the school is located and in comparison to the state. Using this type of comparative analysis demonstrates **combined** grade level success in proficient and advanced levels of performance but does not provide evaluators with specific grade level comparisons.

The applicant reports that scholars who remain in school “year over year” improve their proficiency levels; however, no data is provided in terms of retention rates for students. In *Figure 5*, the applicant illustrates proficient and advanced levels of achievement on the MAAP math assessment are higher for those students in “upper middle” grades versus “lower middle” grades; again, combining grades for comparisons and failing to define them for detailed analysis. With data in *Figures 7 and 8* presented cumulatively it is difficult to discern actual performance and comparisons by grade level and/or cohort groups.

The applicant acknowledges the **challenge** that while the lowest performers are growing, they are not growing as quickly as other scholars. Efforts to close the gap between the low 25% and

others will be addressed using the **Northwest Evaluation Association Measures of Academic Progress (NWEA-MAP)** along with the Achievement First curriculum. According to the application, the online intervention program, MAP is comprehensive and personalizes instruction based on scholar needs allowing teachers to address skill gaps rapidly. Although, the Achievement First curriculum is described in the application as aligned to Mississippi standards, questions from evaluators remained as to how closely the two were aligned.

English Language Arts (ELA) is described as the lowest performing subject for students at Reimagine Prep; nonetheless, combined scholar achievement is on par with the local district. With scholars performing well below the district in ELA, proactive planning beyond the new curriculum, instructional coaching and additional minutes of instruction is not described leaving questions as to how the impact of additional time is measured and if quantity is the answer or if there should be a focus on quality. The percentage of students performing at the proficient and advanced levels over time from 2017 - 2019 is illustrated in *Figure 17*. With data missing from 2016 and student scores combined by grade level it is challenging for evaluators to assess outcomes thoroughly.

Although not required, the applicant presented **additional factors** explaining academic performance with evidence to support that efforts to improve student outcomes have been implemented. Examples of such include adopting the NWEA (MAP) assessment, the Achievement First curriculum, and a commitment to ensuring the classroom experience placed the heavy lifting on scholars. By implementing the intellectual preparation protocol, Reimagine Prep sought to ensure teachers and instructional coaches were well prepared and held accountable for fidelity to the protocol. With 100% of teachers and coaches at the end of the 4th quarter executing the protocol with fidelity, leaders were assured teachers were prepared for classroom instruction, invested in the lesson and the lift was on the scholars. There is no evidence presented to demonstrate how this process translates into improved student outcomes. During the 2018-2019 school year two organizational priorities were rolled out; (1) a warm and demanding classroom culture and (2) text driven literacy instruction both aimed at continuous improvement.

Although the school presents student achievement data in math and ELA on both the MAAP and MAP, it does not present subgroup performance. Describing student population performance by subgroups under the current academic model would provide the applicant with an understanding of which subgroups the model is working for and for those that may need revision or remediation. Generally sound academic evidence is provided of increasingly positive outcomes over the charter term where outcomes surpass both the district and the state in some areas.

B. FINANCIAL SUCCESS ANALYSIS

Exceeds Expectations 37.5%

Meets Expectations 50%

Approaches Expectations 12.5%

Fails to Meet Expectations 0%

A review of the history and challenges related to financial success for Reimagine Prep, under Republic Schools, Inc. suggests the financial health of the organization is strong and challenges are comparable to others operating charter schools. Reimagine Prep has met expectations each year in relation to the Performance Framework indicators. During the 2019 school year as reflected on the Annual Performance Framework Report, Reimagine Prep received a perfect score. Indicators on the **Mississippi Charter School Performance Framework** assesses the Fund Balance, Audit Findings, the Debt to Asset Ratio, and Timely Reporting. With a fund balance target of 7.5% Reimagine Prep has exceeded this long-term goal in each of its first four years of operation.

Financial audits for Reimagine Prep throughout the charter term have been conducted in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP) and have not reflected a material weakness. The applicant reports independent auditors have conducted federal compliance audits for the company as a whole. The applicant does not indicate that the **Mississippi Department of Education** (MDE) has completed any financial audit(s) related to federal programming.

Reimagine Prep's met the required debt to asset ratio target each of its first four years of operation and although the debt to asset ratio has increased during the last two years, the applicant noted this increase as a result of the acquisition and expansion of its facility.

Sustainability of the model is discussed relative to cash on hand as it relates to the number of days the organization can continue to operate if no additional cash is received; however, evaluators noted the model is reflective of Republic Schools, Inc. and not Reimagine Prep as a stand-alone school generating questions from evaluators regarding cash management policy and shifting cash between schools. The model does not consider additional philanthropy and no other discussion of sustainability is included in the application.

The **Financial Policy and Procedures Manual** is detailed covering all major areas; however, questions ensuring the school's role in financial oversight and co-mingling of funds still exist.

Challenges presented by the applicant are not uncommon within the charter term or to the charter sector nationally. The applicant demonstrates it has responded with viable solutions to move forward.

C. ORGANIZATIONAL SUCCESS ANALYSIS

Exceeds Expectations 19%

Meets Expectations 44%

Approaches Expectations 37%

Fails to Meet Expectations 0%

Organizational success is reflected in meeting the mission, vision and Essential Terms of a charter school's contract. Reimagine Prep's vision is to ensure every child has access to a high -quality public school. Evidence presented to support the actualized vision includes the daily schedule

and curriculum. While vision metrics reflected time on task, hours in class, interventions and guided reading, there is no evidence presented to correlate outcomes in terms of demonstrated scholar success. Expanding on “high quality education” and academic rigor would have provided the evaluators with more confidence around the achieved vision.

In order to demonstrate its achieved mission, the applicant relies on the number of students served, enrollment increases, the MAP assessment and scholars on grade level in reading and math increasing by 20% and 40% respectively. This data point is inconsistent with the academic stagnation of ELA on the state assessment. The applicant cites school acceptance for 42 of 120 founding 8th grade scholars leaving Reimagine Prep. There is no confirmation that students are attending the schools listed and no reference to the other 78 students.

Character education is described as “critical” for students to go on to have a life of active citizenship. Little evidence is provided other than acceptance to “exceptional institutions” which does not necessarily correlate to scholars having a strong character foundation.

The applicant provided some evidence of achieved essential terms. In particular, **Essential Term 1, Culture**, staff engages in a significant amount of professional development to ensure systems are internalized and implemented with integrity. Only anecdotal evidence is provided in the application. Data from school climate staff, student or family surveys is not included.

Evidence for meeting **Essential Term 2, College Preparatory Academics** is described in the narrative as it relates to scheduling, double blocks of math and literacy and the inclusion of complex texts. The applicant noted that school electives are aligned to 21st century learning skills by including them in coding and science. Examples are provided however, there is little evidence to support the statements other than references to student participation in a variety of STEM related activities as opposed to embedded into the curriculum where student outcomes can be measured against a set of standards.

Reimagine Prep’s **Essential Term 3 is Coding**. The applicant indicated that all students take computer coding as a core academic subject. A description of the programming languages by grade level is provided in the application.

The application did not include quantifiable data beyond that of student assessment data found in the section on academics. “Continuing to improve communication and partnership with families” is presented without specifics for new interventions to address the current transfer rate of students. Additional metrics and data points would better demonstrate the quality and impact of the Essential Terms.

While the applicant provides rationale as to not meeting such targets as the transfer rate, the out of school suspension rate, an out of date fire extinguisher and evacuations signs not illuminated, it should be noted the focus is on meeting the metrics from the **Mississippi Charter School Performance Framework**. Additionally, factual responses to the Annual Performance Framework Report were due to MCSAB 90 days after the receipt of the report on 9/27/2019.

II.FUTURE PLANS

This section of the renewal application allows each charter school to detail its plans for the next charter term, specifically the areas in which the school plans to make changes or improvements. The MCSAB will consider this information in determining what conditions to impose, if any, and in developing the proposed contract for charter renewal.

MISSION, VISION, AND ESSENTIAL TERMS

No changes are requested for the Mission, Vision or Essential Terms.

GOVERNANCE

No changes are requested for Governance.

FUTURE FISCAL PLAN ANALYSIS

Exceeds Expectations 50%

Meets Expectations 50%

Approaches Expectations 0%

Fails to Meet Expectations 0%

The applicant described personnel needs including salaries and benefits as well as detailed descriptions of other needs beyond that of personnel. The applicant projects stable enrollment at 570 which is 30 students less than the current contracted enrollment terms of 600. The staffing plan is projected to remain the same based on the delivery model. The application included references to revenue streams such as state, local and federal as well as philanthropic which was not budgeted for in the plan. The school does not anticipate significant changes that would impact revenue or expenditures outside of the natural inflation and increases. Assumptions cover all standard areas and appear reasonable although fundraising is not mentioned in the application and there is minimal language included connecting the fiscal plan to the academic program.

FACILITY PLAN ANALYSIS

Exceeds Expectations 25%

Meets Expectations 75%

Approaches Expectations 0%

Fails to Meet Expectations 0%

The school's current facility appears adequate to meet the needs of students and the academic program with no changes anticipated for the future. Current updates support an enhanced school environment with more office space for mental health services, speech/language services, the school support team, and a separate cafeteria. Reimagine Prep proactively planned renovations to the site and made them in small increments throughout the charter term

PROPOSED GRADES AND ENROLLMENT

Minor changes are requested. A reduction in total enrollment from 600 to 570.

III. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Annual Performance Framework Report

Reimagine Prep received its first Annual Performance Framework Report in the fall of 2019. School visits had been conducted and feedback had been provided to the schools in years prior. Additionally, the Annual Performance Framework Report includes references to areas outlined in the Mississippi Charter School Performance Framework. Scores are reflected only in areas where prior or current data is available. Notices of concern are reflected in the comment or note sections of the report. A partial list of what was included in the school's Annual Performance Framework Report is provided below:

- **Measure 1 State Accountability Score Components**
 - Proficiency levels below state average in math and ELA
 - Growth levels all student ELA below state average
 - Refer to SQR for academic areas of concern and opportunities
- **Organizational Performance Rating Section B**
 - Transfer Rates During the School Year – refer to spring site visit report actual 10 % with requirement <7.5%
- **Organizational Performance Rating Section C**
 - Discipline – school has low in school and out of school suspension and expulsion rates – note variation in self-reported and MDE reported numbers – numbers appear higher than the district in which school is located
- **Organizational Performance Rating Section E**
 - School Environment i. school meets local and state fire and life safety codes – permit – see report details from spring site visit 2019

INDEPENDENT EVALUATORS

Dr. Vanda Brumfield

Dr. Vanda Brumfield is the Director of Schools and Accountability for the Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board. As the director, she is responsible for monitoring operating charters, as well as overseeing the renewals, revocations, and non-renewals of charters in the state. Dr. Brumfield coordinates and leads school site visits, pre-opening procedures, and the renewal process. She has served as an elementary and middle school teacher, college instructor, and as the Director of Dual Enrollment and Dual Credit at Hinds Community College. Dr. Brumfield holds a bachelor's, master's, Educational Specialist, and a Doctorate of Education from Delta State University.

Lauren Iannuccilli

Lauren Iannuccilli is an independent consultant providing tailored services in areas including program evaluation, project management, strategic planning, and charter authorizer development. Prior to independent consulting, Lauren led evaluation and accountability work for the School District of Philadelphia's Charter Schools Office. This included managing the teams responsible for comprehensive renewal reviews, annual reporting, and ongoing engagement to support the quality and legal adherence of over 80 charter schools. Before her work in authorizing, she led program evaluation efforts and executed a research study on teacher networks at an education nonprofit and taught middle school math and science for the School District of Philadelphia. Lauren holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in sociology from Villanova University and a Master of Public Policy degree from the George Washington University.

Dr. Lisa Karmacharya

Dr. Lisa Karmacharya is the Executive Director of the Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board. She leads the development and implementation of the organizational structure required to operate the office and carry out the activities of the Authorizer Board. Dr. Karmacharya ensures the work and decisions of the board align with national best practices to maintain high standards for charter schools, uphold school autonomy, and protect student and public interests. Before her work in authorizing, she served as the Executive Director of the Mississippi Association of School Administrators where she honed her skills for marketing, budgeting, conference planning, and program planning. Dr. Karmacharya has over 25 years of experience in public education, having served as a teacher, assistant principal, principal, superintendent, and executive director of federal programs curriculum and elementary schools. Dr. Karmacharya holds a Bachelor of Special Education from the University of Mississippi, a Masters in Supervision of Instruction from Mississippi College, and an Educational Specialist and Doctorate of Education in Educational Leadership from the University of Southern Mississippi.

Dr. Kelli Peterson

Dr. Kelli Peterson, a native of Flint, Michigan, serves as the Chief Portfolio Innovation and Accountability Officer for NOLA Public Schools. She has served in the capacity as a charter school elementary teacher, middle school teacher, school administrator and district charter school authorizer. Through educational pursuits, her efforts to alleviate inadequate educational opportunities and experiences for students of color is embedded within the equity, accountability, and charter authorizing work that she leads, and it is the core of her current role. Dr. Peterson earned her bachelor's degree from Spelman College, Master of Education from the University of Illinois-Urbana Champaign, and Doctor of Education from Tennessee State University.

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