



State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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Deborah A. Gist
Commissioner

Enclosure 6a3
July 15, 2013

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TO: Members of the Rhode Island Board of Education

FROM: Deborah A. Gist, Commissioner 

RE: **Renewal of Blackstone Valley Prep Mayoral Academy**

Continuation of the Blackstone Valley Prep Mayoral Academy (BVP) is dependent upon approval of the school's renewal application. The network's current authorization period expires at the conclusion of the 2013-2014 school year. In accordance with the Board of Regents' Regulations Governing Public Charter Schools C-4-3, the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) coordinated the process of evaluating Blackstone Valley Prep's performance during this authorization period to determine the merits of the charter.

As context, Blackstone Valley Prep opened one school with a kindergarten class in the 2009 school year. The network of three schools now serves 770 students in grades K-3 and 5-7 from Central Falls, Cumberland, Lincoln and Pawtucket.

In their renewal application, Blackstone Valley Prep requested a charter amendment to reconfigure its program to open a third elementary school beginning in 2015 and a third middle school beginning in 2017. The organization's plan to eventually operate a high school is unchanged.

PERFORMANCE REVIEW PROCESS SUMMARY

In order to support the Commissioner's renewal recommendation to the Board of Education, The Office of Transformation and Charter Schools conducts a review of the school's performance based on the three following core questions:

- 1) Is the school's educational program an academic success?
- 2) Is the school providing the appropriate conditions for academic success?
- 3) Is the school a viable organization?

The **first** question of the review considers relevant student outcome measures using the most generalizable data available. Those measures include Mathematics and English Language Arts NECAP performance, IDEA SPP indicators, federal Adequate Yearly Progress designations and ESEA waiver requirements, student-level growth, and, if applicable, ACCESS proficiency.

The **second** question of the review considers instructional leadership, classroom instruction, and curriculum development and implementation relative to the standards set forth in the Board of Regent's Basic Education Program (BEP). Evidence for this portion of the review is gathered through a three-day site visit accompanied by a document review.

The **third** question of the review considers organizational viability, including parent/guardian satisfaction, student attendance and whether or not a school is using public funds responsibly. RIDE staff review the school's financial audits over the course of the charter term as well as other relevant documentation on the school's compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements.

The school completes a Renewal Application. This application provides the school an opportunity to

- 1) present any important new or supplemental information pertaining to the above guiding questions, to enable a more comprehensive assessment of school performance; and
- 2) articulate the school's strategies and capacities for sustaining success and continuing to improve over the next charter term.

PERFORMANCE REVIEW RESULTS SUMMARY

- ❖ **Blackstone Valley Prep demonstrated academic success during the authorization period.** The network is outperforming its sending districts and demographically similar schools. The network's student growth percentile is above the state median. In 2012, Blackstone Valley Prep Middle School received a Commended school classification using the state's composite index score. In 2011, both Blackstone Valley Prep Middle School and Elementary School 1 Met AYP. (See attachment 1)
- ❖ **Blackstone Valley Prep demonstrated success in providing conditions for academic success during the authorization period.** Blackstone Valley Prep has established internal systems and structures to measurably improve achievement of its students. The network has established structures to lead the focus on student learning and continuous improvement, including structures for staff evaluation. The network has a system for school-wide data analysis and a guaranteed, viable curriculum. Blackstone Valley Prep stakeholders share a common understanding of the school's mission. The network engages the community and provides a safe, healthy, and supportive learning

environment. The network is establishing a coherent set of instructional strategies that include BEP strategies and are consistently implemented.

- ❖ **Blackstone Valley Prep demonstrated mixed organizational viability results during the authorization period.** Blackstone Valley Prep has experienced mixed fiscal health according to the US Department of Education composite score for nonprofit and proprietary organizations. The most recent unqualified opinion for Blackstone Valley Prep illustrates the school's adherence to accounting principles and soundness of significant estimates made by management. The school maintains attendance rates above the statewide average while chronic absenteeism is below the state average. Parent and student satisfaction is above state levels. The school has complied with legal and compliance requirements.

RECOMMENDATION: THAT, the Rhode Island Board of Education moves to renew the charter of the Blackstone Valley Prep Mayoral Academy for a five (5) year term, and to grant an amendment to the charter reconfiguring the program to three elementary schools, three middle schools and a high school, to operate in accordance with and comply with the conditions set forth in this recommendation, from July 1st, 2014 to June 30th, 2019.

This renewal is subject to the following condition being met by or before July 1, 2014:

1. Blackstone Valley Prep Mayoral Academy must meet the financial standards as set forth in Standard 3.1 of the Performance Framework.

This condition shall be removed upon a review of evidence indicating the condition has been met.

Attachment 1

STANDARD 1

IS THE SCHOOL'S 1 EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM AN ACADEMIC SUCCESS?		2010	2011	2012	
1.2	Is the school outperforming its students' sending districts as measured by NECAP?	Math		Above	Above
		Reading		Above	Above
1.3	Is the school outperforming demographically similar schools as measured by NECAP?	Math		Above	Above
		Reading		Above	Above
1.4	Is the school's student-level growth percentile higher than the state's median (elementary and middle school only)?	Math		Above	Above
		Reading		Above	Above
1.5	Are students with Limited English Proficiency making typical growth in English fluency as measured by ACCESS?	Not applicable			
1.6	Is the school meeting its mission-specific educational goals?	Not applicable			
1.7	Is the school meeting federally required academic performance targets?	Met AYP		Commended	

Sending District = A weighted average of a school's sending district(s)' proficiency levels. Blackstone Valley Prep draws students from Central Falls, Cumberland, Lincoln and Pawtucket.

Similar Schools = An estimate of the proficiency level of Rhode Island schools with similar numbers of ELL, SPED, and FRPL students as Blackstone Valley Prep.