

HARLOW CREEK ELEMENTARY

A PRESENTATION TO THE OKLAHOMA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION



PRESENTED BY BILL HICKMAN
MAY 28, 2020

Mission and Vision for School

Mission Statement

Embracing the Reggio philosophy to reach, engage, and improve lives, Harlow will prepare community minded, globally responsible students through an emergent curriculum using project-based learning focused on real-life experiences that expand the traditional classroom and utilize the natural world.

Vision

The location, design of the neighborhood, site layout and school facilities, operations and programming incorporate values of diversity, community, natural resources, equity and equality. Harlow will welcome students from all walks of life. Opening in 2021, Harlow will serve students in grades K-3 and then expand one grade per year to serve PK-5 grades.

Mission strength cited include the unique elements including Reggio, STEM, PBL and community-minded / sustainability-focused learning experiences.

Target Population

Students and Families

Harlow is located in an economically disadvantaged area of northwest Tulsa. The target population will be those families within the Academic Enterprise Zone and students residing in Tulsa Public School District. As a community school, the doors will be open to anyone with a non-discrimination policy.

Enrollment

- **Year One: 80, K-3 graders**
- **Year Two: 100, K-4 graders**
- **Year Three: 132, PK-5 graders**
- **Year Four: 136, PK-5 graders**
- **Year Five: 136, K4-5 graders**

Strategically based educational design with a slow growth / expansion model data driven decision based on increased success rates.

TPS originally requested Harlow Creek to only accept virtual and home-school students, which Harlow Creek respectfully rejected.

Educational Program

Curriculum & Professional Development

- Reggio approach focused on STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics) disciplines
- Utilizing project-based learning method for hands-on application
- Rubicon Atlas to document emergent curriculum across content and grades
- Curriculum aligned to Oklahoma Academic Standards
- Cross-disciplinary approach
- Specific Curriculum:
 - Reading: Primary program is Pearson's Cornerstone Reading supported by Reading Reconsidered.
 - Writing: Primary program is "Being a Writer"
 - Math: Primary program is "My Math" from McGraw Hill
 - Science: Primary program is STEMscopes
 - Engineering and Technology: National Science Digital Library
 - Social Studies: Primary program is provided by Pearson
 - Art / Fitness and well-being
- Robust professional development for instructional and leadership staff

CHARTER SCHOOL PURPOSE

1. Improve student learning and increase opportunities for student learning
 - Culture of community-minded, globally aware citizenry
 - Reggio Emilia approach to learning with more self-directed and experiential driven learning environment; Project based learning
2. Encourage use of different and innovative teaching methods
 - Evolving Communities Development seeks to be an inclusive community aligned with Resilient Tulsa strategies
 - J.A. Banks works in *Cultural Democracy and Citizenship* to create bedrock of community and citizenship based on diversity and inclusiveness.
 - Addressing *Law of Implicit Bias* to build equity, equality, citizenship, culture, diversity and democracy.
3. Additional Academic Choice.
 - Community school for all
 - No private schools in the 74127 zip-code
 - Mark Twain and Wayman Tisdale Fine Arts Academy underlie the AEZ
 - TPS announced that Mark Twain is being closed
 - Historically, failing schools (F & D)
4. Innovative forms of measurement & accountability
 - *Leverage Leadership & Driven by Data*

Timeline of Events

- 2016 - Harlow Creek initiated conversations with TPS
- 2/28/18 – Applicant attended SDE charter training
- 8/18 – Met with TPS and began preparing application
- 11/18 – Meeting with Dr. Gist
- 3/19 - Harlow Creek submitted original application to TPS
- 5/19 - Application denied by Andrea Castaneda, Chief Innovation Officer of Tulsa Public Schools.
 - TPS Board did not vote on application.
 - No rubric or reviewer evaluations provided
- 6/19 - Revised Application submitted to TPS
 - 439 revisions; 105 to 111 pages
- 8/21/19 - Ms. Castaneda again denied application without vote by TPS Board.
 - No rubric or reviewer evaluations provided
- 12/19 –Appeal to SBE; 12/12/19, TPS submitted additional grounds for denial; Applicant directed to TPS Board for vote



TULSA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

EQUITY CHARACTER EXCELLENCE TEAM JOY

TPS Letter Dated August 21, 2019

Application was not officially
taken to the TPS Board of
Education

August 21, 2019

Mr. Scott Pardee
816 E. 6th Street
Tulsa, OK 74120

Mr. Pardee,

Thank you for resubmitting the Harlow Creek Elementary School charter application. Tulsa Public Schools is declining your application due to deficiencies in the educational program design and financial capacity. Although the application reflects some changes based upon our spring 2019 review feedback, core weaknesses persist.

Amongst these weaknesses, I wish to highlight the budget. The budget is confusing and based on a questionable calculation of state aid. As the staff member responsible for making authorization recommendations to the superintendent and the board, I will reiterate my repeated counsel over the last two years of our engagement: absent permanent and heavy external subsidy, a charter school serving 40-60 students is unlikely to be financially viable in Oklahoma.

We wish you the best of luck in your future endeavors. Please feel free to contact me with questions.

/s/

Andrea Castañeda
Chief Innovation Officer
Tulsa Public Schools

TPS Grounds for Denial – 8/21/19

TPS Denial Letter – August 21, 2019

1. Educational Program Design
2. Finance

TPS Evaluation Rubric – Not provided to Applicant
TPS Application Evaluation Reviews – Not provide to Applicant

Because TPS did not provide rubric and evaluation reviews, Applicant filed an open records request for records.

REVIEWER STRENGTHS

- Student-centered philosophy within mission.
- Unique elements including Reggio, STEM, PBL, and community-minded/sustainability-focused learning experiences.
- Have provided clear descriptions of anticipated student populations and enrollment projections.
- Good philosophy.
- Have named specific program elements such as Reggio, STEM focus.
- Clearly stated desire to involve community members in school programming and vice versa.
- Non-sectarian, unique sustainability focus. Reggio model is not available to most students in Tulsa.
- Discusses family involvement in day-to-day school operations; curriculum, attendance at board meetings.
- Job descriptions and org structure provided.
- Regulations are explained, but in the facilities section, it was stated that there is no immediate plan to build a cafeteria.
- Demonstrates knowledge of compliance.
- Aligns with TPS
- Have done substantial community engagement.

2nd TPS Denial LETTER – 12/12/19

- 4-page, After the fact letter, significantly expanding alleged grounds for denial of revised application:
 - Mission/Development/Opening
 - Educational Program
 - Budgets and Finance
 - Facilities
- TPS added to its grounds for denial from August 21 letter to December 12 letter without any change in charter application

TPS Board Rejects – 1/21/20

Summary of Deficiencies:

- **Curriculum Design and Instruction**

Lack of coherent educational program and questions about curriculum development.

- **Operations Plan**

Lack of a plan to support professional growth of teachers.

Lack of a viable facility plan.

Applicant assumes students will walk to school.

Applicant does not budget for costs associated with child nutrition program.

- **Financial Plan**

Lack of sound financial plan.

- TPS's third denial letter, which is 8 pages long, adds even more grounds to deny application even in areas that there were no changes to the application.

ISSUE 1: Mission/Development/Opening

According to TPS, Harlow's application is inconsistent with the Oklahoma State Charter School Act. However, Application provides evidence otherwise:

- 1. Harlow Creek Elementary School will improve student learning and increase opportunities for student learning.***
- 2. Harlow Creek Elementary School will encourage the use of different and innovative teaching methods.***
- 3. Harlow Creek Elementary School shall provide additional academic choice for parents.***
- 4. Harlow Creek Elementary School will require the measurement of scholar learning and create different and innovative forms of measuring scholar learning and establish new forms of accountability for schools.***
- 5. Harlow Creek Elementary School will require the measurement of student learning and create different innovative forms of measuring student learning.***
- 6. Harlow Creek Elementary School will establish new forms of accountability for schools.***

ISSUE 2: Educational Program

TPS states application is under-developed, and lacks detailed planning, critical student services, and sufficient professional development.

- Harlow Creek Elementary School's response is that the Reggio model provides an educational philosophy through which all teaching, learning, and assessment are approached. This philosophy believes in the innate strength of children as learners and empowers them to take ownership of their learning.
- Through project-based experiential learning, Harlow's Reggio approach to its educational program is designed to make academic standards come to life for students by connecting learning to real-world issues and needs specifically in the core content areas of mathematics and science and interfused with technology, engineering and the arts.
- To improve teaching and learning, teachers will regularly meet in professional learning communities to engage in the analysis and understanding of recent assessment results and to develop authentic practices for making learning more visible to the community.
- In addition to regular and sustained professional development, teachers will be supported in the Reggio approach through memberships in Reggio collaboratives, the North America Reggio Emilia Alliance, and Reggio Children (the international organization).

ISSUE # 2 – Educational Program

- Charter law requires “a description of the instructional design of the charter school, including the type of learning environment, class size and structure, curriculum overview and teaching methods.”
 - Note law only requires “**overview**” – specifics developed once school leader and teachers are hired.
- Harlow’s Amended Application addresses the educational program on pages 4 – 56 in much more detail than an overview.
- Unique Reggio inspired educational philosophy with integrated project-based learning with curriculum emphasis on STEAM. They all work together
 - Hundreds of Reggio inspired schools across the nation
- Application (p. 15; pp. 33-35) indicates that Rubicon Atlas provides tools to enable teachers to work together on curriculum and develop their own unique curriculum, easily aligned to OK standards and quickly share classroom best practices with colleagues.
- Given curriculum innovations, we plan for a robust professional development sequence for instructional and leadership staff
- Application (p. 15) sets forth five educational goals and four of these goals are student-level instructional goals.

ISSUE # 3 – Budget / Finance

- TPS admits Harlow provided a financial plan as required by law.
- TPS denies Amended Application with the commentary opinion of the reviewer that “absent permanent and heavy external subsidy, a charter school serving 40-60 students is unlikely to be financially viable in Oklahoma.”
- Denial of Amended Application because reviewer does not think Harlow is enrolling enough students is not a valid basis for denial. In fact, charter schools are charged with being innovative, which includes small class-room sizes.
- Harlow relied upon experts to assist with budgeting, including representatives with OPSRC and others with decades of experience in school finance.
- Vague comments about the budget and questionable calculations that were not discussed with Harlow are not proper grounds for denial.
- Areas of concern were not raised prior to submission of Amended Application.
- Harlow meets the legal requirements by submitting a five-year financial plan that addresses all required areas – revenues and expenses.

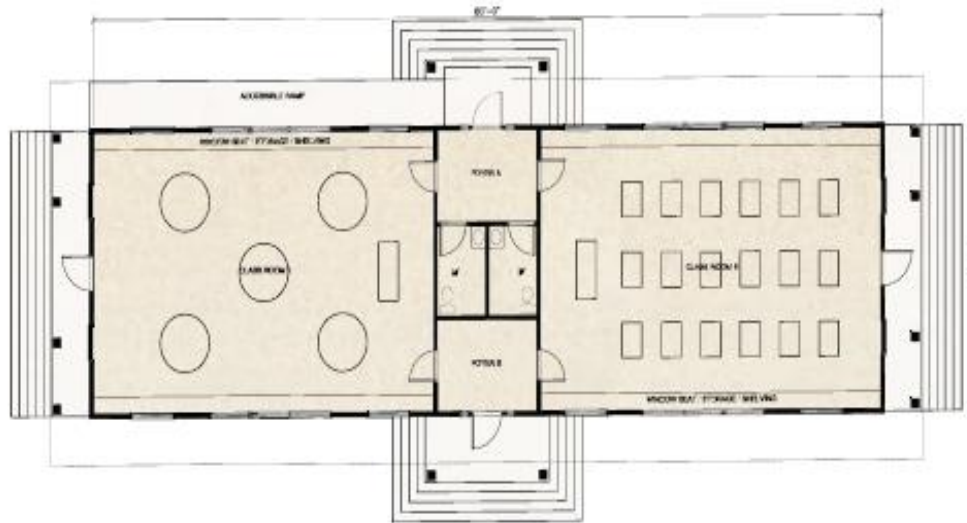
ISSUE 3: BUDGET / FINANCE

TPS argues that application is based on flawed assumption that the Anticipated WADM should be based on 73.3 rather than 99.2.

- However, TPS "Historical Data" projection is based on their lowest charter school. The highest charter school in the TPS system has a WADM that is considerably higher.
- Revised application increases enrollment from 40 students in first year to 80 students.
- Revised application adjusts administrative error in calculation referenced by TPS.
- Application is compliant with the law

ISSUE 4: FACILITIES

- TPS states that application fails to identify an existing facility.
 - Application identifies school site & provides floor plans for school to be erected upon authorization.
- Not realistic to have existing facility (not required).
- Developer donating school building valued at \$350,000 and a \$20/month contribution each house.



The standard floor plan of the Learning Cottage, designed by DPZ, is flexible to accommodate varied learning environments. The 80'x24' floor plan is used with all elevations.

TPS Authorizing Practice

- TPS claims to be “one of Oklahoma’s most mature charter authorizers.”
 - Why then did TPS Board not vote on Harlow’s application as required by law?
 - Why then did TPS not provide evaluation rubric and evaluator remarks to Harlow Creek?
- TPS has not acted in good faith as evidenced by multiple denial letters, including last minute letter to SBE and adding grounds for denial even when no changes to application.
- Harlow Creek Elementary School should not be delayed any further and, respectfully, SBE should authorize the school.

Community Support & Engagement

- 110 Parent enrollment interest requests
- Multiple Community Events
- Multiple Letters of support
- Approx. 150 petition signatures of support
- Strong Social Media – 250 Facebook likes
- Multiple news reports about importance of Harlow School in the Evolving Communities Development as a back-bone to revitalizing northwest Tulsa.
- TPS instructed not to market so Harlow limited its community engagement efforts.

Community Support & Engagement

Community Discussions

Community meetings to discuss the Evolving Communities Development, which Harlow School is bedrock.



Community Engagement & Partnerships

- Excited about how community partnerships to help achieve our mission and vision
- Opportunity for programs / providers not traditionally involved in our public schools to be involved and improve an impoverished area in northwest Tulsa that currently has failing schools

Question and Answer Opportunity