



Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools
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April 8, 2013

Mr. Joel Medley
Director, Office of Charter Schools
North Carolina Department of Public Instruction
301 N. Wilmington Street
Raleigh, NC 27601 – 2825
Re: Impact Statement Regarding

Addie C. Morris Children’s School Charter School Application

Dear Mr. Medley:

The Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools (WS/FCS) is submitting this impact statement in opposition to the Addie C. Morris Children’s School charter school application (hereafter referred to as Addie C. Morris). Generally speaking their application does not appear to (1) encourage the use of different or innovative teaching methods; (2) create new professional opportunities for teachers; (3) provide parents with expanded choices in educational opportunities; or (4) promote a performance-based accountability system.

Addie C. Morris proposes to target at-risk students residing in the eastern area of Winston-Salem. The WS/FC Schools have eight elementary schools serving this area - from northeast to southeast Winston-Salem – Ibrahim Elementary, North Hills Elementary, Mineral Springs Elementary, Ashley Elementary, Petree Elementary, Forest Park Elementary, Easton Elementary, and Hall-Woodward Elementary. All of these schools are Title I and serve large numbers of at-risk students.

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Addie C. Morris is described as a “technology-rich school with challenging curriculum supported by a user-friendly software system.” The application suggests that each classroom will have a Promethean Smart board, digital cameras, projectors, 10 desktop computers per class in grades K-2, and laptops available for each student in grades 3-5. Assuming that Addie C. Morris could provide this technology (see the budget calculation in the next paragraph), it is comparable to the technology offered in our elementary schools – a smart board, a document camera, a classroom response system, a

teacher work station, classroom sound enhancement, and at least 5 networked computers. Individual student laptops are provided for each fifth grader.

An example of Addie C. Morris's budget does not provide any line item details. Under the heading of "technology hardware," one finds the following:

Instructional Software	\$75K
Network /internet	\$7.5K
Office Software	\$7K
Other	\$5K

Assuming that \$75K represents the hardware (not the software) the cost of the equipment described above (using the best prices that WS/FCS has negotiated for these items) the cost appear to much greater than \$75K:

Smartboards– 9 times \$3500	\$31,500
10 desktops times six classroom times \$680 per computer	\$40,800
Laptops for each student in grades 3-5 plus three laptop carts – 63 students times \$555 per laptop plus 3 times \$1500 per cart	\$39,465
TOTAL	\$111,765

On page 10 of the application, Addie C. Morris indicates that "state of the art digital software-based technology" will be used. In the budget section the only place software could be purchased from (since the \$75K for software must be for hardware – see above) is Instructional supplies. The following are listed in the budget narrative (no prices are listed): Imagine It on-line reading assessments, Mackiev Digital Storytelling, ThinkQuest, ESE software, Easy Tech, Aha! Math and Science, Wordle, Moodle, and MimioStudio. I would not imagine that any panel of technology experts would agree that this list constitutes "state of the art digital software" for which there appears to only be \$25K available to purchase.

In addition, Addie C. Morris references 4GL Spectrum k-12 Encore software to automate and streamline data collection for exceptional students. The WS/FCS has used this software and it is no longer available for purchase. The new and improved version is called "Exceed" and would cost a minimum of \$100K to purchase. Again, there are no funds identified to purchase this software.

On page 8, the Addie C. Morris application indicates that STEM education initiatives will be maintained “through our innovative Socratic epistemological learning model which challenges our students to demonstrate ‘How they know what they know.’” Nowhere in this application is this Socratic epistemological learning model explained. An internet search of “Socratic epistemological beliefs” about learning reveal that Socrates did subscribe to the belief that students were born with knowledge and that education was the process of discovering what they already know. Clearly students are not born with STEM knowledge in their brain waiting to be “uncovered.”

Assuming that this innovative approach exists, the only reference to staff development in the budget narrative says “staff development: Technical assistance provided by digital consultants and curriculum vendors.” How will teachers be trained in this new innovative approach?

The WS/FC school system offers a k-12, STEM curriculum at three schools: Brunson Elementary, Hanes Middle School, and Atkins High School. These three schools are district-wide magnet schools with transportation provided. Brunson Elementary is less than 2 minutes from the East Winston target area identified in the Addie C. Morris application.

It is important to note that education costs in local districts are not linear; i.e., the addition of one more student does not add \$6520 (the revenue figure used by Addie C. Morris) in costs. Similarly the reduction of one student does not reduce school district costs by \$6520. Unless the students who might attend the Addie C. Morris charter school come in sufficient numbers from one school to allow the WS/FCS to reduce a teacher, park a bus, turn out some lights, or reduce other operational costs, the 189 students attending Addie C. Morris would result in WS/FCS losing over \$1.2 million.

A \$1.2 million experiment may be a valuable investment if the application suggested that Addie C. Morris had the capacity to offer something new and different to the students of East Winston-Salem. The lack of specificity in this application regarding curriculum, training, and the cost of technology is evidence that this proposal is not well-developed and is unlikely to benefit students.

Sincerely,



Donald L. Martin, Jr.