



Dr. Eric J. Becoats
Superintendent

May 11, 2012

Mr. Joel Medley
Charter School Office
6301 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-6301
joel.medley@dpi.nc.gov

Dear Mr. Medley:

The administration provides the following response in regard to The Institute For The Development of Young Leaders, Reaching All Minds Academy and Successful Start Academy proposed Charter School Application. As the Charter School Advisory Board and the State Board of Education begins to contemplate applications for new fast-track charter schools, we would like to give you some information about the impact of charter schools in our district.

Overview

Our district currently operates 55 schools with another middle school opening in 2012-13. We are projected to serve 33,072 students making Durham the eighth largest district in the state.

Our students are socioeconomically and racially diverse: 52.1% African-American, 20.9% Hispanic, 21.2% White, 3.1% Multiracial, 2.4% Asian, and 0.3% Native American. Sixty-two percent of our students qualify for free or reduced price lunch. Approximately nineteen percent of our students qualify for Academically and Intellectually Gifted services, 13.9% qualify for Limited English Proficiency services and 13.7% qualify for exceptional children's (EC) services.

Currently, there are eight charter schools operating in Durham County serving 3,249 students.

In addition, because Durham is located in the heart of the Triangle region, Durham students attend 14 additional charter schools that are located in neighboring counties (3,509 charter school students total in 22 charter schools). With the opening in 2012-13 of the recently approved new charter Research Triangle High School, the number of charter schools in Durham County will grow to nine and the local charter school number will grow to 15.

Rank	State	District	# of Charter School Students	# of All Public School Students	% Market Share
1	NC	<u>Durham Public Schools</u>	3,058	35,180	8.7%
2	NC	<u>Wilson County Schools</u>	850	13,025	6.5%
3	NC	<u>Nash-Rocky Mount Public Schools</u>	993	18,030	5.5%
4	NC	<u>Alamance Burlington School System</u>	1,205	23,596	5.1%
5	NC	<u>Moore County School System</u>	472	12,957	3.6%

Data from National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2010-11

As of Month 2 of the 2011-2012 school year Durham had 3,509 charter school students with 3,249 of them attending Durham-based charter schools. With the addition of Research Triangle High School the numbers are projected to increase in 2012-2013 to 3,669 and 3,409 respectively.

The proposed charter schools referenced in this letter are projected to acquire 93% of their students from Durham County. This would increase our market share to 11.5% from 8.7% (see chart above) – this being the highest in the state.

We encourage you to carefully review the three proposals since Durham Public Schools already provides these same opportunities for students. Below you will find impact statements related to Academics, Facilities and Finance.

Impact

Academics

Several potential academic adverse impacts can be drawn from the current charter applications. Two of the proposed charters are within a 2-mile radius of one existing DPS elementary school and one approved planned charter, saturating an already thin student population in the East Durham area. This permeation could potentially divide an already small student population among four schools serving the same grade levels resulting in a fragmented neighborhood student population. This potential division conflicts with the research on the positive effects of student connections with their classmates and school community relationships on student achievement (*A New Wave of Evidence – The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement, 2002*). Secondly, transportation for the proposed charters is not offered or provided with limitations. This situation would promote a socio-economic divide and potentially limit student diversity.

As the charter applications are reviewed, it is important to note that there is misrepresentation of Durham Public Schools in the student performance data documented. For example, one charter application suggests that 38% of all traditional schools in Durham Public Schools have less than 50% of students performing at grade level. Conversely, the percentage of schools with performance composites below 50% was 12% and 8% respectively for the 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 school years.

Facilities

Durham Public Schools has more seating capacity than students at the middle school grades. Current grades 6-8 capacity is 7,702 students and 2011-12 enrollment is 7,004 students, a difference of 698 seats.

Elementary capacity is currently 16,410 students with a 2011-12 enrollment of 15,836 students, a difference of 574 seats. While this gap is expected to be closed in 2014-15 or sooner, Durham Public Schools expects to open 630 new K-5 seats in 2017-18, if funded. The proposed charters are in close proximity to our current Y. E. Smith Elementary School. DPS is expanding this school's building capacity through a recent bond. Coupled with Maureen Joy's move to a nearby location, these proposed schools will create an over abundance of K-5 capacity in a 1-to-1.5 mile area of this inner-city region (see map). A sufficient fragmentation of the neighborhood's elementary students could result.

Finance

Currently over \$13M of local funding is passed to charter schools. With this planned expansion of Durham-based charter schools an additional \$2.4M of local funding will be added to the \$13M. The loss of this amount of local funding compounded with the state funding impact of this growth will continue to severely impact DPS ability to provide a sound basic education to its students. Durham Public Schools is currently aggressively reengineering the delivery of instruction in our classrooms and the steps we are taking are resource intensive.

Conclusion

Our district has partnered with the East Durham Children's Initiative (EDCI). EDCI is committed to changing outcomes and expectations for children and families living in a 120-block area of East Durham. Modeled after the Harlem Children's Zone, EDCI aims to reach this goal by providing a pipeline of high-quality services that starts with children at birth and continues with them through elementary school, middle school and high school.

The vision for EDCI is to have all children and youth in the EDCI zone successfully graduate from high school, ready for college or a career.

EDCI develops and coordinates new and existing services to best meet the needs of approximately 3,000 children and youth living in the zone. EDCI works to identify barriers that might prevent EDCI kids from succeeding at school and then partners with local organizations to creatively reduce or eliminate those obstacles using strategies that have been shown to be effective.

EDCI's pipeline of services includes early childhood interventions, parent and family support, afterschool and summer programs, literacy programs, health and nutrition services, arts programs and community outreach. EDCI's target schools include YE Smith Elementary School, Neal Middle School and Southern High School.

Founded in 2008, EDCI is an innovative and promising new initiative based out of the Center for Child & Family Health (CCFH) in Durham, North Carolina. EDCI has successfully completed its first year of implementation and continues to impact the lives of hundreds of children, youth and families that reside in East Durham.

Our families have received significant benefits as a result of our partnership with EDCI. These supports/services are provided to students who attend a Durham Public School. Students who do not matriculate through DPS may not have the benefit of receiving these wrap around services.

In conclusion, Durham Public Schools requests that the Charter School Advisory Board deny the proposals for the three charter school applications (The Institute For The Development of

Young Leaders, Reaching All Minds Academy and Successful Start Academy) since these opportunities are currently available to students. In the current economic climate, extending already scarce resources even further for programs already provided to students is not financially prudent and severely impedes our ability to move this district forward.

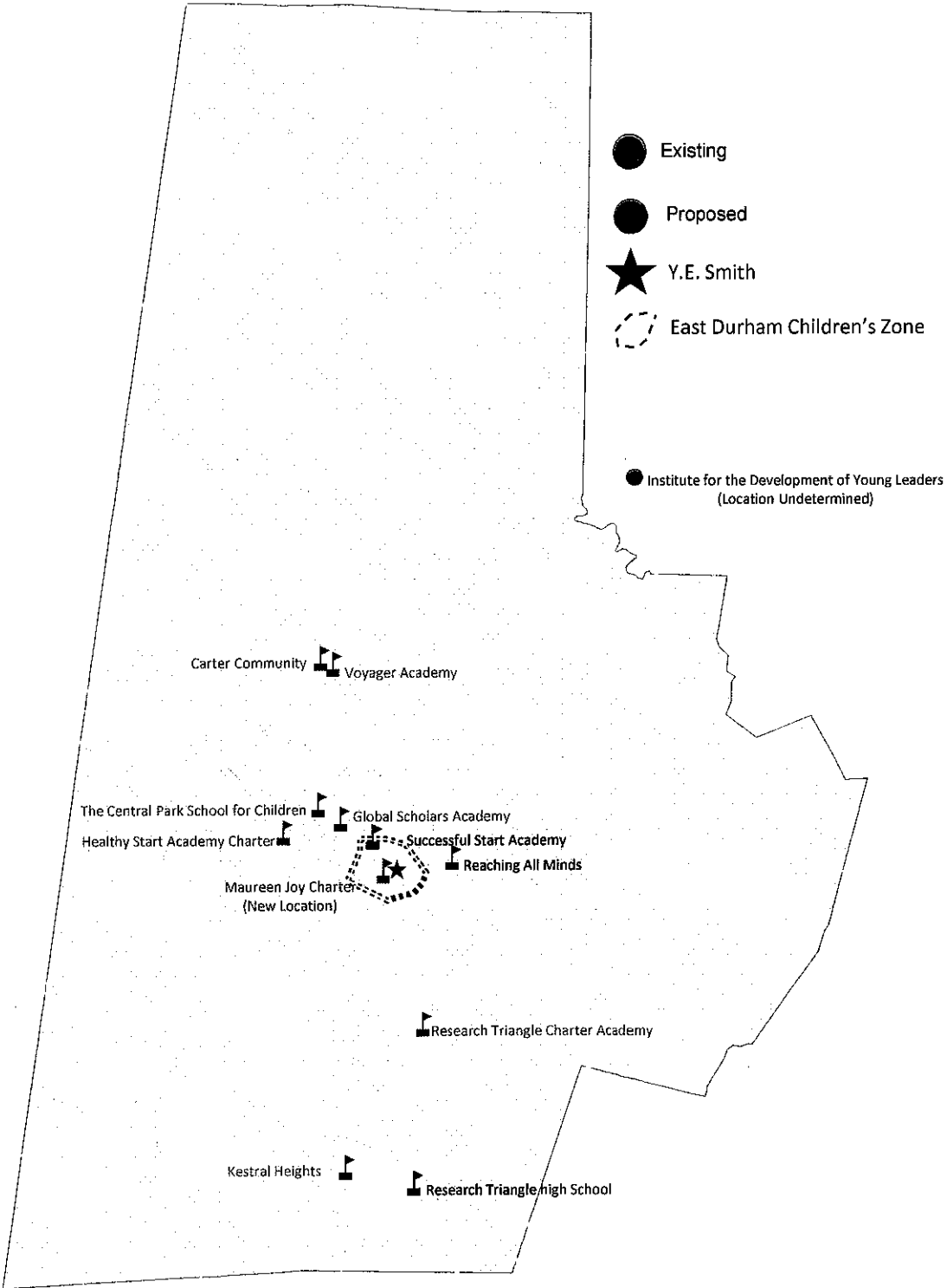
We have included copies of resolutions/letters that have been passed by the Durham Public Schools Board of Education, the Durham County Commissioners and the Durham City Council.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Eric J. Becoats". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Eric J. Becoats
Superintendent

Charter Schools in Durham County, North Carolina 2012/2013



**Resolution by the Durham Public Schools Board of Education to the
State Board of Education
Opposing the Proposed Fast-track Charter School,
Research Triangle High School**

WHEREAS, charter schools are public schools which were originally designed to explore innovative approaches to educate all students; and

WHEREAS, charter schools operate with greater autonomy than traditional public schools, unbound by many state, federal and local regulations including only requiring 50 percent of middle and high school teachers to be certified; and

WHEREAS, charter schools draw funding away from North Carolina's already underfunded traditional public schools; and

WHEREAS, many charter schools outsource administrative duties to for-profit entities; and

WHEREAS, charter schools are funded by the citizens of Durham yet have no locally elected governance and only limited oversight by the State Board of Education; and

WHEREAS, peer-reviewed research shows that 37% of charter schools performed worse than traditional public schools and only 17% performed better; and

WHEREAS, North Carolina law requires charter schools to "reasonably reflect the racial and ethnic composition of the general population residing within the local school administrative unit in which the school is located"; and

WHEREAS, some charter schools have barriers to admission and lack necessary student services including, but not limited to, academic prerequisites, lack of transportation, lack of school lunches, unfair discipline policies, application and marketing materials solely in English, required access to expensive technology; and

WHEREAS, in some cases, charter schools have resulted in the increased segregation and racial isolation of students; and

WHEREAS, traditional schools serve all students, regardless of intellectual ability, measures of achievement or aptitude, athletic ability, disability, race, creed, gender, national origin, religion, or ancestry; and

WHEREAS, strong traditional schools are the foundation of a strong democracy and are vital to healthy, safe and vibrant communities, and

WHEREAS, the Durham Public Schools Board of Education is working continuously to improve our comprehensive K-12 traditional schools while offering numerous year-round, magnet, specialty schools and career clusters; and

WHEREAS, Durham County citizens have been supportive of public schools, local per pupil funding is relatively high and Durham already has the highest market share of students enrolled in charter schools of any Local Education Agency (LEA) in the state of North Carolina; and

WHEREAS, several of Durham's eight existing charter schools already plan expansions in their student enrollment that will continue to negatively impact Durham Public Schools; and

WHEREAS, Durham already has two existing charter high schools; and

WHEREAS, Durham Public Schools already offers several Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) schools and programs, including Hillside New Tech, City of Medicine Academy, Southern School of Engineering, Jordan High School Animal Sciences Pathway, and Riverside High School Engineering Pathway, in addition to choice programs such as the Josephine D. Clement Early College, Middle College High School, Gateway to College, Durham School of the Arts, Performance Learning Center, Holton Career and Resource Center and the IB Programme at Hillside High School; and

WHEREAS, Durham Public Schools is currently working with the North Carolina New Schools Project to transform Southern High School into a model STEM school effective August 2012; and

WHEREAS, Durham Public Schools has experience in growing and developing schools, City of Medicine Academy and Hillside New Tech High School serve as model STEM schools for the nation; and

WHEREAS, Durham Public Schools has a strong, existing working relationship with the School of Education at the University of North Carolina, the School of Education at North Carolina Central University, the Program in Education at Duke University, the North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics, the North Carolina Virtual Public High School, and many businesses and non-profit groups within Research Triangle Park including the Contemporary Science Center, and

WHEREAS, the Durham Public Schools Board of Education is committed to building and sustaining a system of high quality public schools for all children; and

WHEREAS, the Durham Public Schools Board of Education is open to collaboration with local education leaders within our district schools; and

WHEREAS, the Durham Public Schools Board of Education governs public funds and strategically plans for projected student growth throughout the county and already has built adequate high school capacity for the next ten years' projected growth; and

WHEREAS, North Carolina statute requires that "the State Board shall consider any information or comment it receives from a local board and shall consider the impact on the local school administrative unit's ability to provide a sound basic education to its students when determining whether to grant preliminary and final approval of the charter school"; and

WHEREAS, the proposed Research Triangle High School ("RTHS") has the stated objective of serving the "children of the 42,000 employees of Research Triangle Park," which reflects a lack of commitment to serving children from a cross-section of the community, especially those whose parents are not currently employed; and

WHEREAS, the instructional model of RTHS requires substantial independent student work at home using the internet which creates a barrier for students who lack internet access or adequate parental support at home; and

WHEREAS, RTHS will provide only limited transportation and school meals that would not meet the needs of students of limited means; and

WHEREAS, RTHS will function effectively as a de facto private school supported by taxpayers; and

WHEREAS, the STEM focus of RTHS will unnecessarily duplicate the many STEM programs in traditional public schools in the Triangle area; and

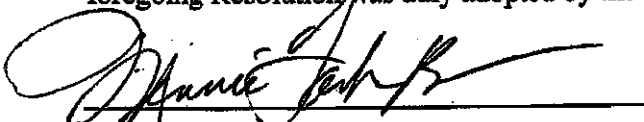
WHEREAS, the focus, location and lack of support for low income students of RTHS will effectively exclude poor and minority students from participating in the school and promote racial and economic segregation; and

WHEREAS, the approval of RTHS would negatively impact the ability of the Durham Public Schools Board of Education's ability to provide a sound basic education to all students;

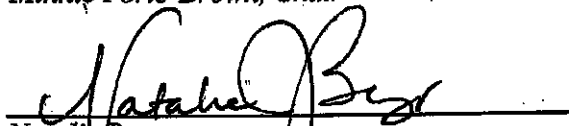
THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Durham Public Schools Board of Education requests that the State Board of Education deny the proposed Research Triangle High School; and


BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that the Durham Public Schools Board of Education will urge citizens to work to support Durham Public Schools to educate all children to their highest potential.

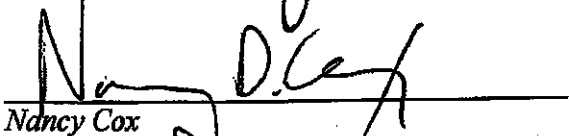
Approved and adopted the 24th day of January, 2012. We, the undersigned, hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was duly adopted by the Durham Public Schools Board of Education.



Minnie Forte-Brown, Chair


Heidi Carter, Vice Chair

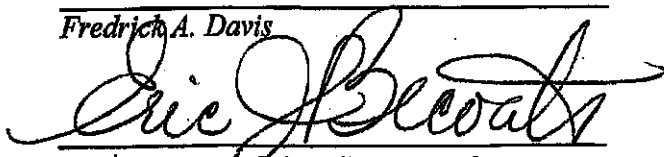

Natalie Beyer


Leigh Bordley


Nancy Cox


Fredrick A. Davis


Omega Curtis Parker


Eric J. Becoats, Ed.D., Superintendent

DURHAM COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Resolution

WHEREAS, charter schools, which are public schools, were originally created to maximize innovative and creative approaches to educate students; and

WHEREAS, while charter schools draw funding away from regular public schools across the state, such schools are not bound by some very basic and fundamental educational responsibilities required of traditional public schools, and charter schools have only limited oversight by the State Board of Education; and

WHEREAS, state law requires charter schools to "reasonably reflect the racial and ethnic composition of the population living within the local school administrative unit in which the schools is located"; and

WHEREAS, some charter schools lack some critical and necessary student services, including transportation and school lunches, and the lack of these basic needs provides a major barrier for many families whose children could academically benefit from attending charter schools; and

WHEREAS, as a result, there is a strong likelihood that without the aforementioned resources, such schools can result in the increased racial and economic segregation of students:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that we, the members of the Durham County Board of Commissioners, do hereby call upon the members of the State Board of Education to deny additional charter schools until legislation can be modified to provide basic supportive services including transportation within a reasonable proximity of the campus and school meals for students who qualify for free and reduced lunch at a minimum.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we call on the State Board of Education to require that all charter schools submit an annual report to the Board of Commissioners outlining their student body profile, educational achievement during the previous year, and innovative educational practices.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this resolution be sent to the State Board of Education and Durham Public Schools.

This the 27th day of February, 2012.

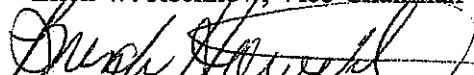


Michael D. Page, Chairman

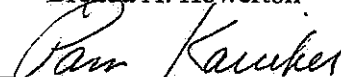
Joe W. Bowser



Ellen W. Reckhow, Vice-Chairman



Brenda A. Howerton



Pam Karriker





CITY OF DURHAM

Office of the Mayor

101 CITY HALL PLAZA | DURHAM, NC 27701

919.560.4333 | F 919.560.4801

www.durhamnc.gov

February 13, 2012

Dr. William C. Harrison
Chairman, State Board of Education
301 N. Wilmington St.,
6302 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-6302

Dear Chairman Harrison and Members of the State Board of Education:

I write today on behalf of the Durham City Council which voted unanimously on February 9 to oppose the granting of a charter to Research Triangle High School (RTHS). We join the Durham Public Schools Board of Education and also Durham's full delegation to the North Carolina House of Representatives in our opposition to this charter.

Every child who dwells within Durham County has access to Durham Public Schools regardless of previous academic achievement, disability, family finances and access to private transportation. We believe it is essential that charter schools in Durham meet the same standard for access for all of our children. This is fundamental to equality of educational opportunity.

Charter schools which do not provide the federal lunch program or which do not provide bus transportation are *de facto* excluding students who need meals to be provided or who need bus transportation to get to school. Similarly, charter schools which require certain previous academic achievements to attend are excluding students from their lotteries unfairly—and often the students excluded are poor and minority children.

RTHS is an especially egregious example of this. RTHS requires students to have passed algebra by the ninth grade to enter its lottery. While most Durham Public Schools students have done this, about 19% of our students have not. These are by-and-large our neediest students, the ones most likely to be from poor families, and the majority of them are African-American or Hispanic. RTHS seeks a charter which would prohibit these students from even entering its lottery for admission. We believe this is wrong for our children, and we hope the State Board will agree with us.

Charter schools must be open to all. If not, the result will be a two-tiered system of public education. One tier will be the charters who will be "skimming" students of means and achievement from the top of the school population. The other tier will be

Dr. William C. Harrison
February 13, 2012
Page 2

the systems like Durham Public Schools who will be unfairly burdened with educating all the ESL students, students with significant disabilities, students whose families cannot afford private transportation, students who need the federal lunch program, and students whose families cannot afford fees for extra-curricular programs required at some Durham charters. Any school paid for by tax dollars should be open to any student in our community, and there should be no barriers to entry such as the algebra requirement at RTHS.

We understand that charter schools are here to stay and that there is much good teaching going on inside many charter schools. But we also feel it is essential that these schools share the burden of educating the poor children in our community. Otherwise, we will be simply re-segregating our schools along lines of race and class—and doing so on taxpayers' dollars.

Thank you for your consideration, and we ask you to deny the charter to RTHS.

Sincerely,



William W. "Bill" Bell
Mayor

cc: Durham City Council Members
State Board of Education Members