

**DENY THE RENEWAL OF THE CHARTER SCHOOL AGREEMENT WITH  
NUESTRA AMERICA (A.K.A. ACORN) CHARTER SCHOOL**

**THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER RECOMMENDS THE FOLLOWING DECISION:**

Deny the renewal of the Charter School Agreement with Nuestra America Charter School. Information pertinent to this denial is stated below.

**CHARTER SCHOOL:** Nuestra America Charter School  
3814 W. Iowa  
Chicago, Illinois 60651  
(773) 235-6063  
Contact Persons: Robert Kausal

**OVERSIGHT:** Charter Schools Office  
125 S. Clark, 12<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Chicago, IL 60603  
773-553-1535  
Contact Person: Greg Richmond, Director

**ORIGINAL AGREEMENT:** The original Charter School Agreement (authorized by Board Report 97-0122-EX4) with the ACORN Charter School is for a term commencing July 1, 1997 and ending June 30, 2002. In 2000 the school changed its name to the Nuestra America Charter School. The agreement authorizes the operation of a single facility Charter School focusing on dual language instruction for students in grades 9-12. The school has a current enrollment of approximately 175 students. The Agreement incorporates an accountability plan whereby the school is evaluated by the Board each year based on numerous factors related to its academic, financial and operational performance.

**CHARTER RENEWAL PROPOSAL:** The Nuestra America Charter School submitted a renewal proposal on October 22, 2001 to continue the operation of the school under the same mission and educational programs at its current location.

**CHARTER EVALUATION:** The Charter Schools Office Review Committee ("Committee") has reviewed and evaluated Nuestra America's renewal proposal as well as the school's past academic, financial and operational performance. The Committee has determined that Nuestra America has failed to make reasonable progress towards achieving the academic, financial and operational standards contained in the Agreement's accountability plan.

In reviewing the school's academic performance in both TAP and Prairie State assessments, the school has posted low and declining academic results. Nuestra America has posted no improvements in academic assessment results since 1999. In 2001, Nuestra America's TAP results recorded 10.4% of students were reading at the national norm and Prairie State results recorded 9.8% of students meeting or exceeding State standards. In non-academic areas, the school has a record of poor financial management and poor operational compliance.

The Committee further assessed whether Nuestra America has the capacity for school improvement by having made significant and promising modifications to its educational programs or operations. In this regard, the Committee noted 1) a leadership change in the school's administration and governing board in 2001, 2) the addition of supplemental reading programs for freshmen and seniors plus expanded ESL courses for students whose dominant language is Spanish, and 3) a restructuring of the school's management personnel related to curriculum, professional development and student affairs. After assessing these modifications, the Committee concluded that even with such changes the school did not demonstrate a sufficient capacity to improve their school's performance. Therefore, the Committee has determined that neither the school's past performance nor current plans warrant a renewal and unanimously recommend that Nuestra America's charter renewal request be denied.

**AUTHORIZATION:** Authorize the Director of Charter Schools to issue a letter notifying the Illinois State Board of Education of the action(s) approved hereunder.

**LSC REVIEW:** Approval of Local School Councils is not applicable to this report.


**AFFIRMATIVE ACTION:** Not applicable.


**FINANCIAL:** Not applicable.

**GENERAL CONDITIONS:** Not applicable.

**Approved:**

**Respectfully submitted:**

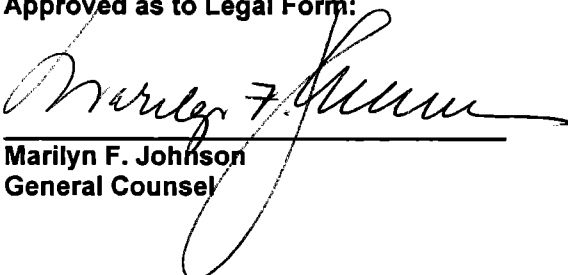
  
Barbara J. Eason-Watkins  
Chief Education Officer

  
Arne Duncan *by (PA)*  
Chief Executive Officer

**Within Appropriation:**

  
Kenneth C. Gotsch  
Chief Fiscal Officer

**Approved as to Legal Form:**

  
Marilyn F. Johnson  
General Counsel