

January 25, 2024

AUTHORIZE THE RENEWAL OF THE GREAT LAKES ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOL AGREEMENT WITH CONDITIONS**THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER RECOMMENDS THE FOLLOWING:**

Authorize renewal of the Great Lakes Academy Charter School Agreement (the "Charter School Agreement") with conditions for an additional three-year period. A new Charter School Agreement applicable to this renewal term will be negotiated. The authority granted herein shall automatically rescind in the event a written Charter School Agreement is not executed by the Board and the charter school's governing board within 120 days of the date of this Board Report. The agreement authorized herein will only take effect upon certification by the Illinois State Board of Education. The Renewal and any related contracts must be executed by the current contract's expiration date in order for first-quarter funding to be released for the new contract term. Information pertinent to this renewal is stated below.

SCHOOL OPERATOR: Great Lakes Academy, Inc.
8404 S. Saginaw Avenue
Chicago, IL 60617
Phone: 773-599-3614
Contact: John Washington, Board Chair

CHARTER SCHOOL: Great Lakes Academy Charter School
8404 S. Saginaw Avenue
Chicago, IL 60617
Phone: 773-599-3614
Contact: Ebonie Durham, Executive Director

OVERSIGHT: Office of Innovation and Incubation
42 West Madison Street, 3rd Floor
Chicago, Illinois 60602
Phone: 773-553-1530
Contact Person: Zabrina M. Evans, Executive Director

ORIGINAL AGREEMENT: The original Charter School Agreement (authorized by Board Report 14-0122-EX18) was for a term commencing July 1, 2014, and ending June 30, 2019, and authorized the operation of a charter school serving no more than 576 students in grades K through 8. The charter and Charter School Agreement were subsequently renewed for a term commencing July 1, 2019, and ending June 30, 2024 (authorized by Board Report 19-0123-EX6).

CHARTER RENEWAL PROPOSAL: Great Lakes Academy Charter School submitted a renewal proposal on July 18, 2023, to continue the operation of The Great Lakes Academy Charter School. The charter school shall continue to be located at 8401 S. Saginaw Avenue and shall continue to serve grades K through 8 with a maximum enrollment of 576 students.

The agreement will incorporate an accountability plan in which the Board evaluates the charter school each year based on numerous factors related to its academic, financial, and operational performance.

CHARTER EVALUATION: After receiving the charter renewal proposal, the Office of Innovation and Incubation conducted a comprehensive evaluation of Great Lakes Academy Charter School's academic performance, financial viability, and legal and contract compliance. This evaluation included a review of the proposal, academic results, financial performance, governance documents, parental issues, facilities surveys, and special education documentation. A public hearing was held on January 9, 2024, for all contract and charter schools going through renewals to receive public comments, including Great Lakes Academy Charter School. The Office of Innovation and Incubation recommends that, based on the school's performance on these and other accountability criteria, Great Lakes Academy Charter School be authorized to continue operating as a charter school.

RENEWAL TERM: The term of Great Lakes Academy Charter School's charter and agreement is being extended for a three (3) year term commencing July 1, 2024, and ending June 30, 2027.

ADDITIONAL TERMS AND CONDITIONS: The following precondition shall be required before the Board of Education of the City of Chicago enters into an agreement with Great Lakes Academy, Inc:

- On or before April 3, 2024, the charter school must revise its 2024-25 student code of conduct to explicitly state that the principal may not assign K-2 students out-of-school suspensions.

The following conditions shall be incorporated into the Charter Agreement between the Board of Education of the City of Chicago and Great Lakes Academy, Inc.:

- The school must demonstrate progress toward implementing the Recommendations codified in the Special Education Renewal Site Visit Report by the Office of Diverse Learner Supports and Services (ODLSS).
- On an annual basis throughout the term, the school must meet state and federal rules governing English Learners as demonstrated by a rating of Partial or higher on formal compliance reports from the Office of Language and Cultural Education (OLCE). Chicago Public Schools has designated OLCE to conduct school visits and determine school compliance with state and federal rules regarding English Learner programs.
- On an annual basis throughout the term, the school must provide a summary of discipline practices, including staff training and multi-tiered interventions and restorative strategies implemented, and an end-of-year update on the progress and results of its discipline practices, with a demonstrated reduction in in-school and out-of-school suspensions.
- On a bi-annual basis throughout the term, the school must submit a facility deficiency repair plan to communicate the status of the facility and ADA issues identified in the Facilities Assessment Report.

AUTHORIZATION: Authorize the General Counsel to include relevant terms and conditions, including any indemnities to be provided to the charter school, in the written Charter School Agreement and amendment. Authorize the President and Secretary to execute the written Charter School Agreement and amendment. Authorize the Executive Director of the Office of Innovation and Incubation to issue a letter notifying the Illinois State Board of Education of the action(s) approved hereunder and to submit the approved proposal and signed Charter School Agreement to the Illinois State Board of Education for certification. Authorize the General Counsel to further negotiate and execute any amendments to the Charter School Agreement required by the Illinois State Board of Education.

LSC REVIEW: Approval of the Local School Council is not applicable to this report.

FINANCIAL: The financial implications will be addressed during the development of the 2024-25 fiscal year budget. Since the School Code of Illinois prohibits incurring any liability unless an appropriation has been made, expenditures beyond FY24 are deemed contingent liabilities only, subject to appropriation in subsequent fiscal year budgets.

GENERAL CONDITIONS:

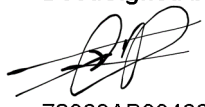
Inspector General - Each party to the agreement shall acknowledge that, in accordance with 105 ILCS 5/34-13.1, the Inspector General of the Board of Education has the authority to conduct certain investigations and that the Inspector General shall have access to all information and personnel necessary to conduct those investigations.

Conflicts - The agreement shall not be legally binding on the Board if entered into in violation of the Provisions of 105 ILCS 5/34-21.3, which restricts the employment of, or the letting of contracts to, former Board members during the one-year period following expiration or other termination of their terms of office.

Indebtedness - The Board's Indebtedness Policy adopted June 26, 1996 (96-0626-PO3), as amended from time to time, shall be incorporated into and made a part of the agreement.

Ethics - The Board's Ethics Code adopted May 25, 2011 (11-0525-PO2), as amended from time to time, shall be incorporated into and made a part of the agreement.


Approved for Consideration:

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Alfonso Carmona
Chief Portfolio Officer

Approved:

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Pedro Martinez
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Chief Executive Officer

Approved as to Legal Form: 

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Ruchi Verma
General Counsel