



**Initial Memorandum To
International Community School
November 3, 2023**

The DeKalb County School District's Initial Memo provides the petitioner with feedback from the DCSD Charter Petition Review Committee. The Initial Memo includes identified strengths, clarifying questions, and requests for additional information or documentation.

Directions:

1. Review the Initial Memo.
2. Respond in writing to each item. Written responses should be submitted with the revised petition. Below is an example.

Feedback: Describe the process for collecting data on stakeholder satisfaction. It is unclear as written.

Petitioner's Response: *Process revised in petition. See pages 2-3. Copy of survey included. See exhibit #32.*

3. Revise the original petition and save the revised document in Microsoft Word. All changes made to the original petition should be made using the "track changes" feature in MS Word. **No additional changes to the petition will be accepted unless requested by the DeKalb Board of Education.**



How to Submit the Final Revised Petition and Response to the Initial Memo

By November 10, 2023 (12:00 PM), deliver to the School Innovation/Governance Department via DropBox at charterschools@dekalbschoolsga.org the revised petition (including exhibits) and the Response to the Initial Memo. Use electronic folders for sections, exhibits, and appendices.

Your Application Package must include the following:

1. Microsoft Word version of your Application Cover Page (page 14)
2. REDLINED Microsoft Word version of your Application and Exhibits
3. PDF version of your Complete Application Packet in the following order: Cover Sheet, Application, signed Assurances Form(s), Affidavit, and Exhibits
4. PDF version of your Locally-Approved Charter School Partners Roles and Responsibilities Chart
5. Excel version of your completed Budget Templates
6. Microsoft Word version of the Response to the Initial Memo

Faxed or emailed copies will not be accepted. Only complete applications that comply with these guidelines will be evaluated.



SUMMARY

On October 17, 2023, International Community School submitted a DCSD charter renewal application seeking the DeKalb Board of Education's approval for a five-year contract term. In evaluating the petition, the Charter Petition Review Committee identified aspects of the petition, which would affect students attending the charter school.

Commendations from the Petition Review Committee:

- The Governing Board is high-functioning, knowledgeable, and collaborative.
- It is evident that ICS is allocating resources to support academic priorities.
- ICS has developed partnerships with several community organizations that support their diverse community.
- The financial plan is developed and aligned with the school's mission, vision, and education program.
- The ICS instructional staff is strong. ICS had 100% staff retention for SY23-24; 90% of the teachers are certified, and almost 100% of those have achieved ESOL certification.

Process:

Items requiring a response are listed below. If applicable, questions correlate to the page number in the Microsoft Word version of the petition. Additional areas of concern may be raised by DeKalb Board of Education members during their review of the petition or by GADOE during its review process.

Community Support



Item	Committee's Feedback	Petitioner's Response
	n/a	

School Governance

Item	Committee's Feedback	Petitioner's Response
	n/a	

Academic Plan

Item	Committee's Feedback	Petitioner's Response
1	<p>Provide a summary of the academic proficiency level(s) of students entering ICS in kindergarten and first grade. Specifically, what percentage of kindergarten and first grade ICS students were exposed to early learning? How do these student groups compare to kindergarten and first grade students entering Indian Creek ES, Dunaire ES, and Jolly ES? – Superintendent Site Visit</p>	<p>Page 25 of the revised Petition includes the following revision as well as additional figures that summarize MAP data for ICS and comparison schools:</p> <p>Students entering ICS in Kindergarten and First Grade enroll with varying levels of abilities and school experience. For the 2023-2024 school year, 13 of 85 ICS students enrolled in Kindergarten participated in a Pre-K program. Similarly, 14 of 93 ICS students enrolled in First Grade participated in a Pre-K program. Figures 4 and 5 below illustrate the growth of ICS Kindergarten and First Grade students compared to Indian Creek Elementary, Dunaire, Elementary, and Jolly Elementary.</p>
2	<p>How does ICS provide translation and interpretation services for families whose primary home language is other than English (PHLOTE)? What curriculum is used for your ESOL class (45-minute segment)? Is there a reason there using Fountas & Pinnell to</p>	<p>Additions to the Petition on Pages 71 and 72 include the following:</p>



	<p>determine reading level and differentiate ELs instead of the WIDA ACCESS domain scores or the WIDA screener? - p. 63</p>	<p><u>Translation services are provided for families through 7 staff interpreters(Burmese, Nepali, Arabic, Somalian, Pashto, Farsi, and Hindi which are our main languages). We also use Language Line for languages not on staff and MARS Translation services for document translation.</u></p> <p>ESOL Curriculum: <u>We use the WIDA 2020 standards and framework and focus on the language functions and four domains (speaking, reading, writing, listening) as the foundation for our ESOL program.</u></p> <p>With the emphasis on guided reading and the use of the <u>ACCESS domain scores/WIDA Screener Fountas and Pinnell tool</u> to find each student's reading level, EL students continue to receive differentiated instruction at the level most appropriate for them during their homeroom instruction</p>
<p>3</p>	<p>Include analysis of data for 3-5 comparison schools. Use the map provided by DCSD Operations to identify those schools. – pp. 31-35</p>	<p>An additional data figure that illustrates 2022 CCRPI measures for ICS and nearby charter schools in DCSD is included in the revised Petition on Page 38.</p>
<p>4</p>	<p>Special Education records are digitally maintained in the district's Infinite Campus not the Power School Special Program. – p. 62</p>	<p>Page 66 of the Petition includes the following revision:</p> <p>Students who transfer within the school district do not require a Parent Consent for Placement form. Transfer student IEPs will already be in the PowerSchool Specialized Instruction (PSSI) system.</p>



<p>5</p>	<p>The CCRPI metrics reported for the 2018-2019 and 2021-2022 school years are accurate. The petition does not include the content mastery CCRPI targets for the 2018-2019 school year. ELA target- 52.12- met target (actual- 65.47) Math target- 54.69- met target (actual- 58.52) Science target- 44.90- did not meet the target (actual- 38.89) Social Studies target- 39.78 did not meet the target (actual- 33.34) Exhibit 5</p>	<p>Exhibit 5 has been updated to reflect 2018-2019 CCRPI targets for ICS and Page 28 of the revised Petition includes the following addition:</p> <p>For the 2018-2019 school year, ICS met its target scores for CCRPI content mastery targets for ELA and Math, but we did not meet the target scores for Science or Social Studies. ICS exceeded its target Content Mastery Score of 52.12 in ELA with an actual score of 65.47. ICS exceeded its Content Mastery Score of 58.52 in Math with an actual score of 58.82. ICS did not meet its target Content Mastery Score of 44.90 in Science with an actual score of 38.89. ICS did not meet its Content Mastery Score of 39.78 in Social Studies with an actual score of 33.34.</p>
<p>6</p>	<p>How does the performance of ICS students compare to the performance of other IB PYP elementary school students in the district? – p. 18</p>	<p>Page 18 of the revised Petition includes the following addition as well as an additional data figure that summarizes 2022 CCRPI performance for ICS and other IB PYP schools in DCSD.</p> <p>The performance of ICS students, as measured by Milestones testing scores for the 22-23 SY, demonstrates notable strengths in comparison to other IB PYP elementary schools within the DeKalb County School District. In the assessment areas of 3rd and 4th-grade math and reading, as well as 5th-grade science, ICS students have outperformed their peers at Midvale and Avondale.</p> <p>In particular, ICS has a significant number of students who scored proficient or distinguished in these key subjects,</p>



		<p>showcasing their academic excellence. This performance difference is especially commendable considering the demographic differences between ICS and the other IB PYP schools in the district. ICS serves a higher number of English language learners, making their achievements even more impressive.</p> <p>Furthermore, ICS is actively engaged in the IB PYP community and has recently presented at the IB Global conference on the topic of Multicultural family engagement. This commitment to professional development and collaboration with the IB community further demonstrates ICS's dedication to academic excellence and the enhancement of its programs.</p> <p>As illustrated by the 2023 Georgia Milestones results summarized in Figure 3 below, ICS students' performance, as indicated by Milestones testing scores, is a testament to the school's commitment to academic excellence and multicultural family engagement. Their success in comparison to other IB PYP elementary schools in the district highlights the strengths of ICS and its unique ability to support diverse learners.</p>
7	How is ICS continuing to address learning loss? – Superintendent Site Visit	<p>Page 40 of the revised Petition includes the following addition:</p> <p>To address learning loss, ICS implemented a Summer Bridge Program, which prioritized students across the grades K-5 that did not make adequate reading growth and/or achievement. The program was refined over the years to include more flexible groupings and incorporate more science content.</p>



		<p>Additionally, when we returned from virtual learning, we implemented a daily intervention block for all students K-5. We then developed an Intervention Task Force. This task force developed instructional priorities and frameworks for the intervention block. From this task force, a new position, MTSS Coordinator, emerged. We also decided to use the i-Ready platform as an intervention and provide additional data. We have also received data from Rebecca Braaten that shows our students with the most learning loss according to MAP. We are sharing this information with homeroom teachers and the MTSS coordinator to develop plans as needed.</p>
8	Provide additional detail on implementation of the MTSS process. – Superintendent Site Visit	<p>Page 63 of the revised Petition includes the following additional information regarding the MTSS process:</p> <p>Students are initially identified through screeners which include MAP and GMAS. Additional screeners are provided through 1:1 assessments such as the GLoSS or iReady and a review of any student work samples to determine student gap areas. Combining scores with teacher input, the MTSS teams determine if students should have T3 intensive interventions or Tier 2 interventions. Tier 3 students receive prescribed lesson plans based on gap areas. The MTSS Coordinator meets with the Interventionist weekly to review student scores, discuss observations and address any challenges with implementing interventions. Data is gathered and entered into Infinite Campus to chart student’s progress with the goal of 80% proficiency on each skill introduced. Grade level team and ESOL team meet monthly to discuss student progress as well as gather additional</p>



		<p>information concerning student academic abilities. Students who show progress towards their goal are reviewed after additional screening such as MAP or 1:1 assessment to determine if they should move to Tier 2 or continue. Students that are not progressing will be provided a different intervention to address the academic concerns or the MTSS Coordinator will confer with the School Psychologist, Speech Language Pathologist, Homeroom Teacher, ESOL Teacher (if student is receiving ESOL services) to review student’s progress for next steps.</p> <p>ICS works to make data-based decisions regarding student progress to filter between disabilities, general lack of growth and ESOL acquisition to create a complete picture of whether evaluation of Special Education is appropriate for a student. Students' intervention lessons are reviewed weekly for progress and are adjusted if a student continues to struggle with a concept. ICS focuses on strategy based interventions that provide supports to students who are able to complete the work but need additional help with problem solving.</p>
9	<p>What has ICS identified as the root cause(s) of its percentage of students with disabilities (5%) remaining below the district and national average? What measure will ICS put in place to prepare for a possible increase in the SWD population due to increasing the school’s maximum enrollment? – p. 56</p>	<p>Page 61 of the revised Petition includes the following additions:</p> <p>ICS works to make data-based decisions regarding student progress to filter between disabilities, general lack of growth and ESOL acquisition to create a complete picture of whether evaluation of Special Education is appropriate for a student. Students' intervention lessons are reviewed weekly for progress and are adjusted if a student continues to struggle with a concept. ICS focuses on strategy based interventions that</p>



		<p>provide supports to students who are able to complete the work but need additional help with problem solving.</p> <p>As our population of students with disabilities grew, we added a coordinator position. This position is a hybrid position that fills in service gaps when needed, supports Special Education Staff, serves as a liaison with the district, and ensure compliance.</p>
10	<p>What information does the ICS Special Education Unit utilize to evaluate the number of students eligible for services annually to project the number of students who may be referred in the subsequent year maintain appropriate staffing? – p. 62</p>	<p>Page 61 of the revised Petition includes the following addition:</p> <p>The Special Education Coordinator looks at the big picture of students returning to address the amount of students that will be moving to the next grade level as well coordinating with the MTSS chair to get a projected number of students that are in Tier 3 that may be given consent for eligibility.</p>
11	<p>What data/findings led to ICS's decision to not pursue the additional middle grades during the current charter renewal cycle? - p. 71</p>	<p>Page 78 of the revised Petition includes the following addition:</p> <p>ICS conducted stakeholder surveys and input sessions to gather feedback regarding middle school expansion. During this process, we learned that our families would love to have Middle School and/or pre-K. However, our current facilities would not permit the expansion of these grade levels. Our families stated in the Listening Sessions in 2022-23 that their preference would be for everyone to be on one campus if we were to expand.</p>

Financial Plan

Item	Committee's Feedback	Petitioner's Response
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<p>12</p>	<p>Exhibit 16 for the International Community School does have a Certificate of Insurance. However, the certificate does not name the local board of education and the state board of education as additional insured as required by the contract. Please make sure that the certificate names the local board of education and state board of education as addition insured.</p>	<p>An updated Certificate of Insurance is included as Exhibit 16 and is located on page 433 of the completed revised Petition.</p>
<p>13</p>	<p>The district does not retain “state and local special education funding” in exchange for the provision of special education staff funding. – p. 61</p>	<p>Page 69 of the revised Petition includes the following revision:</p> <p>ICS entered into a MOA (see Exhibit 18) with DCSD regarding IDEA funding and special education oversight. Per the terms of this agreement, the district will retain any portion of IDEA funding, as well as State and local special education funding (allotment sheet footnote), in exchange for the provision of special education staff funding.</p>

Organizational Plan

Item	Committee’s Feedback	Petitioner’s Response
<p>14</p>	<p>In your renewal petition, you submitted the DCSD Code of Conduct, along with your own schoolwide discipline plan. Is it your plan to implement both for discipline and safety procedures?</p> <p>Have you reviewed both documents to determine if there are any procedural conflicts or concerns?</p> <p>If you do not plan to utilize the DCSD Code of Student Conduct, how do you plan to handle legally mandated procedures like hearings, appeals (local, state, and Superior Court), violations with state-mandated penalties, etc.?</p>	<p>Page 74 of the revised Petition includes the following clarification:</p> <p>ICS implements its schoolwide discipline plan that is consistent with the DCSD code of conduct. The ICS schoolwide discipline plan provides the school the overall framework for addressing school behavior as ICS implements the details of the DCSD Code of Conduct. ICS believes both guides are aligned in policy and</p>



	<p>Do you have a school police contact? If yes, have you discussed procedures for handling threats, weapons, bomb threats, evacuations, etc.?</p> <p>Have you attended the training sessions on student discipline conducted by the Department of Student Relations? Exhibit 12 and 13</p>	<p>procedure; however, to the extent there is any conflict, ICS will follow the DCSD code of conduct. ICS works collaboratively with DCSD to ensure that its legally-mandated procedures to afford students due process comply with applicable law. Because we follow the DCSD Student Code of Conduct, we collaborate with the department when there is a need. We have not had any discipline situations that have required tribunals, etc. We work closely with the Safe Schools Department to ensure protocols are met, such as drills and audit requirements.</p> <p>Additionally, ICS maintains a school police contact and have attended safety training. We also report all monthly drills to portal. DCSD will be providing CRASE training in December. Moreover, in partnership with the Student Relations Department, we have designated Bullying Liaisons to support safe schools efforts. The principal and assistant principal both attended the Title IX training day in which safe schools held presentations on fire safety. We also received a perfect score on our Safety Audit.</p>
<p>15</p>	<p>Clarify how ICS works with DCSD’s Student Relations Department. – pp. 68-69</p>	<p>Page 74 of the revised Petition includes the following clarification:</p> <p>Moreover, in partnership with the Student Relations Department, we have designated Bullying Liaisons to support safe schools efforts.</p>
<p>16</p>	<p>Provide 1-2 examples of ICS’s promising leadership practices (as defined on p. 37).</p>	<p>Page 41 of the revised Petition includes the following summary of 1-2 examples of promising leadership practices at ICS for each of the 6 key practices:</p>



		<p>The ICS instructional practices aligned to the Promising Leadership Practices include, but are not limited to the following:</p> <p>Key 1- Cultivate educator mindsets that support student success</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Encouraging teachers to take ownership of student learning, both within and beyond their own classrooms (e.g. home visits, Title I events, CRC).• Establishing a schoolwide commitment to do whatever it takes—with available resources—to support the success of every student (reiterating mission, vision, and theme at all meetings, innovative budgets to allow for resources like grade-level budgets, staffing for MTSS) <p>Key 2- Create a culture of data</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Professional development opportunities (we offer a ton of professional development opportunities, including all staff having access to an individual PD budget, embedded staff led PD,• Clear norms and expectations around using data to drive improvements (using I-Ready and MAP data as universal screeners for MTSS and midyear data is used to tweak Roadmap as needed) <p>Key 3- Prioritize meeting the needs of the whole child</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community Resource Center• Workshops• Food Co-op• SEL Coach and Second Step Curriculum
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