

Providence Preparatory Charter School Local Impact Analysis

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Rhode Island Board of Education
c/o Angela Teixeira
Special Assistant to the Commissioner of Elementary
& Secondary Education and
Liaison to the Board of Education
255 Westminster Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

Dear colleagues:

When considering the authorization of new charter public schools, Rhode Island General Law §16-77.3-3(f) directs the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education to “*place substantial weight on the fiscal impact on the city or town; programmatic impact on the sending school district; and the educational impact on the students in the district to ensure that the proposal is economically prudent for the city or town and academically prudent for the proposed sending school district and for all students in the sending district.*” I have been asked by the founding group behind Providence Preparatory Charter School to submit this analysis to assist members of the Council in considering these impacts. I am pleased to share my findings with you below.

Summary of Proposal

The mission of Providence Preparatory Charter School is to prepare a diverse group of Providence middle school students for success in college-preparatory secondary schools. As proposed, PVD Prep would be a college-preparatory, charter middle school proposing to serve a small, racially and economically diverse group of learners from across the City of Providence. PVD Prep proposes a small-by-design school, with co-taught classes, quarterly expeditionary learning experiences, evidence-based curricula, a year-round calendar, daily academic interventions and a warm, safe and family-like school culture. PVD Prep’s proposed learning community – students, staff and Board members alike – would be racially and economically diverse, proudly representing the diversity of Providence’s many neighborhoods. The school’s proposed eight-and-a-half-hour school day and 220+ day school year would allow for significantly more academic intervention and enrichment than the typical school year. Along with proposing to use high quality, evidence-based materials across the curriculum, PVD Prep also seeks to partner closely with families through home visits, daily text messages and other forms of communication. PVD Prep proposes assess frequently and offer one hour each day of personalized intervention and support and each grade at PVD Prep will participate in four “signature experiences” per school year.

PVD Prep proposes to serve Providence students in grades five, six, seven and eight. PVD Prep proposes to serve 63 students per grade, for a total of 252 students. PVD Prep proposes to open with

grades five and six in the 2021-2022 school year and phase in one grade per year in each of the successive two years. The school’s proposed enrollment plan is shown below.

Proposed Enrollment			
Charter Year	School Year	Cohorts	Total Student Enrollment
Year 1	2021 – 2022	1 & 2	126
Year 2	2022 – 2023	1, 2 & 3	189
Year 3 (at scale)	2023 – 2024	1, 2, 3 & 4	252
Year 4	2024 – 2025	2, 3, 4 & 5	252
Year 5	2025 – 2026	3, 4, 5, & 6	252

Demographics of Enrolling Community		
Demographics (%)	Providence	State Average
Economically Disadvantaged	84.36%	47.36%
Multi-Lingual Learners	29.37%	9.54%
Differently-abled students	15.43%	15.63%
Minority students	91.41%	43.43%

How does the charter’s projected enrollment fit within the overall portfolio of Providence schools?	
Enrollment Category	Student Enrollment¹
Total # of students enrolled in Providence Public School District	23,836
PVD Prep’s at-scale enrollment as a % of PPSD’s enrollment	1%
Total # of students residing in Providence, inclusive of independent, parochial schools and homeschooled students	25,234
PVD Prep’s at-scale enrollment as a % of total # of students residing in Providence	.9%

PVD Prep’s proposed at-scale enrollment of 252 students would represent 4.6% of Providence’s 2019 middle school enrollment.

Family demand for charter school seats, as measured by applications received per available seat, remains strong. PVD Prep could provide an alternative option for families seeking charter school enrollment.

¹ October 1, 2019 Enrollment Data as available from RIDE FRED Database

Student Demand Analysis for Middle Level Grade Charter Seats²	
# of 2019-20 applications for enrollment, grades 5, 6, 7 and 8 statewide	903
# of 2019-20 available seats, grades 5, 6, 7 and 8 statewide	101
Ratio of available middle level charter seats to applications statewide	9:1

Section I: Fiscal impact on the City or Town

Pursuant to Rhode Island’s school funding formula, educational funding dollars follow each K-12 child to the schools of choice. This includes career & technical programs within and between school districts, statewide schools and public charter schools. The table below illustrates the funding projections used by the charter applicant in developing their proposed five-year budget model.

Providence student funding projections	Projected per-pupil funding
Local share - Estimated per-pupil funding, FY22	\$4,050
State share - Estimated per-pupil funding, FY22	\$10,750
Federal share - Estimated per-pupil funding, FY22	\$1,250
Total projected per-pupil funding, FY22	\$16,050

Fiscal Year	Proposed Enrollment	Total Projected Local Share	Total Projected Per-Pupil Funding
FY22	126	\$ 510,300.00	\$2,022,300.00
FY23	189	\$ 765,450.00	\$3,033,450.00
FY24	252	\$1,020,600.00	\$4,044,600.00
FY25	252	\$1,051,218.00 <i>Assuming 3% increase</i>	\$4,165,938.00 <i>Assuming 3% increase</i>
FY26	252	\$1,082,754.54 <i>Assuming 3% increase</i>	\$4,290,916.14 <i>Assuming 3% increase</i>

We note here several points regarding PVD Prep’s fiscal impact on the City of Providence.

First, because of its small size PVD Prep’s projected local share upon opening would represent less than half of one percent of Providence Public Schools’ approximately \$385 million annual expenditures. Indeed, between 2014-15 and 2018-19 the District spent more nearly \$16,500 *more* on textbooks for students who attend parochial schools outside of the district than we estimate PVD Prep’s total projected local share upon opening.³

Secondly, we note that unlike a statewide school of choice or a charter school with a regional catchment area, PVD Prep’s proposed enrollment pattern would keep school funding within the

² 2019-2020 Charter Lottery Report, Rhode Island League of Charter Schools. This analysis was computed by selecting only middle grade applicants to charter schools that serve Providence residents.

³ Providence School Department, 2018-2019 Proposed Local Budget, 5 year comparison by object code

portfolio of public schools serving Providence students. In this way, PVD Prep’s fiscal impact to the City be comparable to the District opening a new middle school.

Finally, we note here that the State of Rhode Island assumed control of the Providence Public School District (“PPSD”) on November 1st, 2019. As detailed in the October “Order of Control and Reconstitution,” the City of Providence has been relieved of all powers and authorities over “budget, program and personnel” relating to Providence schools.⁴ Accordingly, addressing the fiscal impact of new charter school seats on the City of Providence now rests with the Commissioner of Elementary & Secondary Education. Providence Mayor Jorge Elorza affirmed this interpretation in a September 30th Boston Globe article regarding proposed new charter school seats noting that “not having to take into account the finances and how we’re going to balance the budget” changes how the City evaluates proposed new charter school seats.⁵

Section 2: Educational & Programmatic Impact Analysis⁶

Academic impact: The chart below displays the percentage of students who demonstrated math and language arts proficiency in Providence middle schools as measured by the 2018-2019 Rhode Island Comprehensive Assessment System (RICAS). As demonstrated, only approximately 11% of Providence’s 5,418 students demonstrate proficiency in math and/or language arts.

% Meeting or Exceeding Expectations, 2018-19 RICAS			
<i>School</i>	<i>Enrollment</i>	<i>ELA</i>	<i>Math</i>
Esek Hopkins Middle School	566	13%	7%
Nathan Bishop Middle School	695	18%	13%
Gilbert Stuart Middle School	945	8.5%	<5%
Nathanael Greene Middle School	988	26%	20%
Roger Williams Middle School	787	9%	<5%
Governor Christopher DelSesto Middle School	942	7%	5.3%
West Broadway Middle School	495	10%	8%

PVD Prep has set internal school goals that are benchmarked to Rhode Island’s high performing public middle schools that, if achieved and averaged across its four grade levels, would outperform Providence middle schools by 56 and 68 percentage points in ELA and math respectively.⁷

⁴ State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, Commissioner of Education In re: Providence Public School District: RIDE No. 19-089

⁵ McGowan, Daniel. *Why Mayor Elorza changed his tune on charter schools in Providence*. September 30, 2020. Boston Globe

⁶ In November of 2016, the Rhode Island Innovative Policy Lab provided a “Memo for Charter Fiscal Impacts” to RIDE Commissioner Ken Wagner regarding a proposed charter school expansion in Rhode Island. This section applies similar methodology to the PVD Prep proposal.

⁷ Providence Preparatory Charter School proposal, page 14

Impact on overcrowding: We note briefly that several Providence middle schools suffer from “overcrowding.” Across the District’s seven public middle schools, 2018-2019 actual enrollment exceeded the LEA reported capacity of each building by an average of 122%.⁸ We note here as well that Providence Prep has not yet identified a facility for its school. Because charter schools typically pay facility costs out of their per-pupil funding, we do not anticipate that PVD Prep would have any direct impact on PPSD’s existing facility assets.

Other long-term impacts: Finally, we note here that in *The Effect of School Choice on Intrinsic Motivation and Academic Outcomes*, economists Hastings, Neilson, and Zimmerman estimated that admission to high performing charter schools is correlated with improved rates of math and language arts proficiency. In a November 2016 local impact analysis regarding charter school expansion in Rhode Island, the Rhode Island Innovative Policy Lab converted this student level standard deviation to a student growth percentile to predict long-term impacts on outcomes like college going rates and lifetime earnings. Citing methodology from a 2014 publication from Chetty, Friedman and Rockoff, the Rhode Island Innovative Policy Lab concluded that a single year of attendance at a high performing charter school may result in both increased earnings and improved college going rates for graduates.

Section 3: Conclusion

Our analysis demonstrates that Providence families may benefit from a new middle school option. Demand for middle school seats at Providence charter schools outstrips availability by a ratio of 9 to 1. Providence’s existing middle school facilities are overutilized, on average, by more than 20%. As of 2018-19, the vast majority (90+%) of Providence middle school students were not receiving the support they need to meet grade level expectations in math and language arts.

PVD Prep could prove a welcome addition to the portfolio of public schools in Providence while causing a relatively small enrollment and financial impact to the City of Providence. The proposed school would serve less than 1% of the district’s total enrollment and the total projected local share of the school’s per-pupil funding would, even at full scale, represent less than 2% of the district’s 2018-2019 expenditures. Additionally, the Council may wish to further understand how State intervention in the district will support expansion of high-potential charter school seats.

We encourage the Rhode Island Department of Education to offer its careful and favorable review of Providence Preparatory Charter School’s application for authorization. Please do not hesitate to contact me at kenneth_wong@brown.edu.

Sincerely,

Kenneth Wong

Kenneth Wong, Ph.D.

⁸ State of Rhode Island Schoolhouses, September 2017. Rhode Island Department of Elementary & Secondary Education, School Building Authority