



Charter School Feasibility Report Cutler Bay, Florida



A Report by EdVisions Schools for the
Town of Cutler Bay, Florida

July 7, 2011



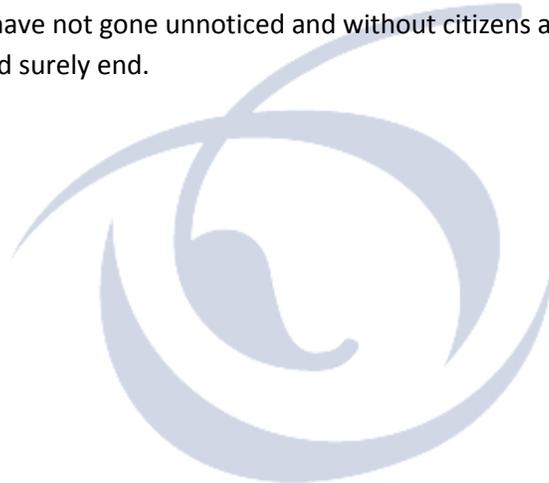
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Acknowledgments

EdVisions Schools would like to thank the Town of Cutler Bay for the opportunity to provide this charter school feasibility report.

We would like to acknowledge the Florida Department of Education and Miami-Dade County Public Schools. Their information was critical in providing the best feasibility report possible for the Town of Cutler Bay.

We would especially like to give our sincerest thanks to those who took time to meet with us and contribute to this report. Additionally, we commend and encourage the efforts of the Charter High School Advisory Committee, the City Council and Town of Cutler Bay staff that have brought us to this point in time. Your efforts have not gone unnoticed and without citizens and stakeholders like you, this school choice process would surely end.



Executive Summary

In early 2010, the Town of Cutler Bay City Council appointed a group of citizens to explore the possibility of establishing a high school in Cutler Bay. Their efforts resulted in a report including a recommendation for establishing a charter high school in Cutler Bay. Based on the recommendations to the City Council, the City Council authorized the Town Manager to engage the services of EdVisions for a feasibility study and to assist In Rem Solutions (application consultant) in writing an application for a Charter High School.

EdVisions met with members of the Cutler Bay City Council, Charter High School Advisory Committee and other city staff in early June 2011. Throughout the month, we also visited with members of the Miami-Dade County Public Schools (MDCPS), Florida Department of Education as well as with individuals from In Rem Solutions.

Our research showed that the major public schools serving the residents of Cutler Bay received progressively worse school grades as a child progresses through the school system, confirming what we had heard from a number of vested parties we talked to in Cutler Bay. Elementary schools were rated either A or B, the middle schools were rated B and C schools and the high school was rated a D school. In addition, we found a higher number of families choosing to take their children out of those schools than the state average. Based on those numbers, both percentage of utilization of choice options and the total number of students choosing a choice option, we determined that there is a market for a charter school in Cutler Bay. We also found that there were a couple of unique facility opportunities potentially available to a new charter school in Cutler Bay in the Town Hall and at the former Bay Point Schools site. During our discovery, we found that there were a number of issues that would need to be addressed with the Bay Point Schools site prior to making it a real consideration in the near term future. This however does not preclude it from becoming a site that the charter school could transfer to once the issues are addressed. The space available in the Town Hall we felt was the best immediate space available and provided some unique opportunities of its own.

The Town of Cutler Bay has put into circulation: Request for Proposals # 11-07: *Design, Build, Operate and Maintain Charter School*. There are a number of successful Charter Management Organizations who operate in Florida and Cutler Bay should be able to find one that meets the needs of its charter school. One area of concern with regard to the CMO RFP would be that it delegates to a large degree the facility, operational, academic design and curriculum, as well as staffing and financial management of the charter school. This can be done successfully, but the City Council and other stakeholders must understand what it relinquishes in terms of those day-to-day operations of the school and how that may change the school from the founding vision to the reality of what happens on a day-to-day basis. With regard to a charter school application, it should be noted that at the time of completing this report, a program has not been chosen. Not defining a program or programs would severely hinder chances of a successful charter school application.

During our investigation, we also found overwhelming support from the community and stakeholders. The State of Florida is one of the top states in the nation for the number of charter schools and for total enrollment in charter schools. In addition, the current Governor of Florida supports charter schools as well. Locally, MDCPS has demonstrated a strong support for charter schools and choice programs thus far.

Financially, we believe a charter school, if awarded, can be established and sustained in the Town of Cutler Bay. This can be achieved with a small learning community or a fast growing school. We estimate that with the right local civic leadership and CMO, the only limiting factor of enrollment will be dictated by facilities.

They are a number of hurdles for any charter school to be established. The common hurdle that they all share is getting their application approved. We believe that will be the most difficult step of many difficult steps along the way to establishing a Charter School for and in Cutler Bay, Florida, even in a supportive district like Miami-Dade. MDCPS currently has 91 charter schools; last year there were 41 applications. Competition is very high and approvals are not easily granted. Due to the very tight timeframe of the feasibility study, the CMO RFP, and the application itself, while an approved charter school application is feasibility, we believe is very unlikely for this application cycle. We believe that a year-long inclusive community planning process will result in a much better application and will have a substantially higher chance of approval during the next application cycle.

In summary, we found that all of the right factors are coming together in the Town of Cutler Bay to plan, establish and maintain a high-performing municipal charter school that serves the residents and students of Cutler Bay. Our recommendation is that the Town of Cutler Bay should over the next year facilitate a year-long planning process that includes all potential stakeholders, including but not limited to the members of the Charter High School Advisory Committee, the Education Compact Committee, school district officials and representatives, the City Council, the CMO identified from the RFP as well as all potential parents of students. The planning process should conclude with an application for a charter school that is backed by the entire community and supported by the school board members.

Currently, the Town of Cutler Bay has engaged In Rem Solutions, Inc. with assistance of EdVisions to complete and submit an application to the Miami-Dade County Public Schools district. While we feel it is unlikely that an approval will be obtained, it is feasible that through an appeal after an initial rejection, chances for approval do increase. Additionally, going through the process this year will yield valuable data and experience if the need for applying in the next cycle is realized.

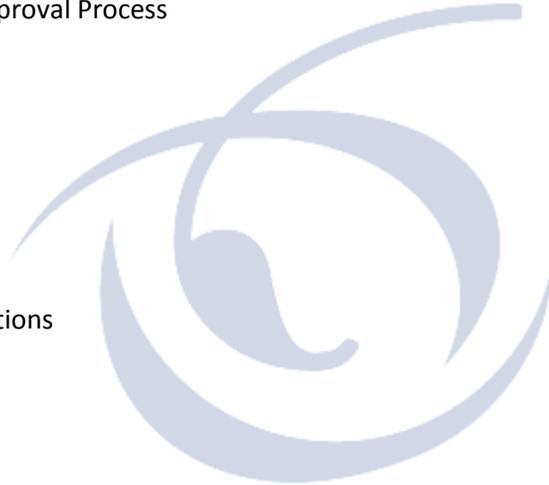
Establishing and maintaining a high-performing charter school is a very difficult goal to accomplish. We believe that Cutler Bay is on the right track to achieve that goal at some point in the near future if it maintains its level of effort and enthusiasm for its community and education options for young people.

Lastly, we encourage the Town of Cutler Bay to continue its effort, regardless the of time frame needed to accomplishing its goal of establishing a charter school for its community. There is no substitute for having your own high school.



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Background and Purpose

This report was commissioned by the Town of Cutler Bay for the purpose of determining the feasibility of establishing and operating a Municipal Charter High School in Cutler Bay.

First and foremost, it should be emphasized that this is a feasibility study. As such, this study describes options that may be feasible and reasonable under the assumptions relative to those options. It is not a study that describes the steps that the Town of Cutler Bay would need to take to make the Charter School happen. Such a study would require more time and investment than allowed and budgeted for in this current situation.

EdVisions Schools is a non-profit educational organization with experience in helping create and sustain over fifty new or converted small high schools across the country over the past eleven years. The flagship school of EdVisions is the Minnesota New Country School in Henderson, Minnesota, one of the most innovative and successful charter high schools in America. This study however, is not presupposed to any particular model of high school.

EdVisions Schools has developed the tools and professional practices to provide guidance and technical assistance to develop or transform schools in order to implement successful education models. EdVisions provides direction and management advisement in order for planners to better organize the learning and operational programs of a school. We believe strongly that a community must determine what educational programs are the best fit for its student populations. Whatever design and practices that are chosen, the community and its chosen professionals must be willing to accept the responsibility for implementation and design, assessing progress and remaining flexible to adjust to results.

The Town of Cutler Bay was incorporated in 2005 with a population of approximately 40,000 residents and is within the border of Miami-Dade County, Florida. The public school district that serves the Town of Cutler Bay is the Miami-Dade County Public Schools. The Miami-Dade County Public Schools (MDCPS) was founded in 1885 and is the largest school district in Florida and the fourth largest in the United States. MDCPS serves a diverse student body of over 400,000 students in PreK-Adult with an annual budget of \$4.3 Billion, 53,000 employees and over 47.5 million square feet of facilities. The facilities include almost 200 elementary schools, 56 middle schools, 22 K-8 centers, 37 high schools, 53 charter schools, 23 vocational schools, 5 magnet schools, 18 alternative schools and 5 special education centers.

The traditional public school facilities that currently serve the Town of Cutler Bay are:

Elementary Schools: Dr. Edward L. Whigham Elementary
 Gulfstream Elementary
 Cutler Ridge Elementary
 Whispering Pines Elementary

Middle Schools: Centennial Middle School
Cutler Ridge Middle School

High School: Miami Southridge Senior High School

All four elementary schools and the two middle schools are located in the Town of Cutler Bay. The high school that serves the Town of Cutler Bay, Miami Southridge is located in the Goulds neighborhood of Miami, just east of the Town of Cutler Bay across US Highway 1. While other schooling options exist within and around the Town of Cutler Bay, the initial membership (student) numbers in the public schools reports includes those students prior to choosing a Choice option.

Starting in early 2010, the City Council appointed a group of citizens (the Charter High School Advisory Committee) and was charged with studying feasibility and logistics of bringing a local public high school to the students of Cutler Bay. Their mission was to conduct and evaluate research of the many viable options available through the Miami Dade County Public Schools existing facilities, and/or Miami Dade county School Choice Program, which include Magnet and Public Charter Schools.

The following needs were stated in the Committee's April 20, 2011 report to the City Council:

- The students of the Town of Cutler Bay are entitled to a superior education within the boundaries of their community, and in a smaller learning environment
- The students of the Town of Cutler Bay will benefit from a local High School
- The High School serving the Town of Cutler Bay is over-enrolled and has an historical "F" school rating average
- Currently, children are removed from the local schools during the 6th grade in order to avoid attending the over-crowded high school currently serving the Town of Cutler Bay students
- Students will be spared longer commutes; the lack of alertness due to the early morning rising required by transportation; and will benefit from additional homework time due to less amount of time spent on the road
- The School Board and parents will net substantial savings on transportation costs
- Local schools foster a sense of community and increased revenue for the Town since students and parents create additional demand for local goods and services
- Traffic, thereby pollution, is reduced, contributing to our Green Town Initiative
- Public Charter Schools and other public Schools of Choice increase property values due to the willingness of parents to settle and/or relocate to areas with excellent schools, thus enhancing the economic infrastructure of the Town of Cutler Bay
- Other possible benefits include providing adult education, trade school, distance learning and after-hour activities. Additionally, there will be opportunities for tutoring and mentoring of students by our highly qualified retirees
- Public Charter Schools offer local, customized learning environments that foster academic achievement

The committee's recommendations in the report were as follows:

Type of charter and grade levels:

- A municipal charter
- A 6-12 public Charter School
- Use of a management company

Management companies recommended:

- Academica (with the understanding that other management companies may apply during the RFP process, and all proposals must be considered)

Site recommendation:

- 48-acre site of the former Bay Point Schools at 22025 SW 87th Ave. (with the understanding that other sites may be considered)

The scope of this feasibility study is to answer the question of feasibility of these recommendations as well as other options that may or may not be possible as they would relate to the Town of Cutler Bay. This feasibility study will not make recommendation as to how the school should be operated on a day to day basis, therefore, will not make a recommendation of feasibility on the use of Academica as a Charter Management Organization.

The process that EdVisions Schools utilized during this study included primary and secondary sources, including one-on-one interviews and group meetings including the following individuals and groups:

- Mayor Edward P. MacDougall, Town of Cutler Bay
- Vice-Mayor Ernest N. Sochin, Town of Cutler Bay
- Councilmember Sue Loyzelle, Town of Cutler Bay
- Councilmember Peggy R. Bell, Town of Cutler Bay
- Town Manager Steven Alexander, Town of Cutler Bay
- Charter High School Advisory Committee, Town of Cutler Bay
 - Additional members of the community were present as well

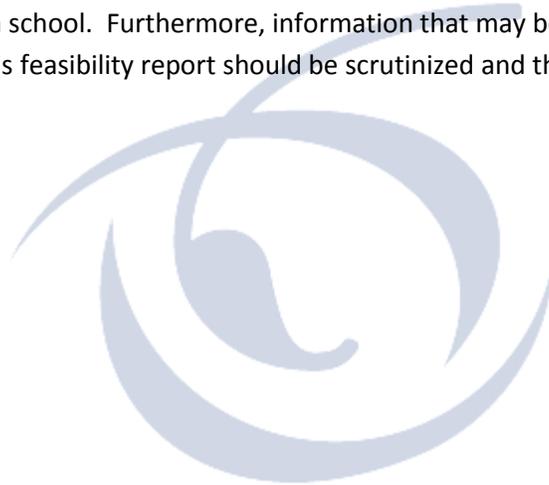
During the course of completing this feasibility study for the Town of Cutler Bay we spoke with representatives from the Florida Department of Education and from the Miami-Dade Public County Schools. Those individuals included:

- Jackie Fals, Office of Dr. Larry Feldman, MDCPS
- Nicki Brisson, School Choice & Parent Options, MDCPS
- Kim Ward, Education Information Services, Florida Dept. of Education
- Cyndi Holleman, Education Information Services, Florida Dept. of Education

The time frame available for completion of this feasibility did present some scheduling conflicts with individuals that may or may not have had a material impact on the recommendation of this feasibility study.

During our visit to Cutler Bay we visited the potential sites for the charter school, which included the former Bay Point Schools site and the upper levels of the Town Hall. It was during this time, that we also gathered additional details about the surroundings of the community relative to those sites.

The overall findings of this feasibility study can be taken or rejected in whole or partially as every reader has the right to make an independent judgment. It is that type of critical thinking that we encourage and hope for all students to develop and to have the choice to attend schools that foster such thinking. Our findings do not include additional information that may not have been available at the time of completion. Nor does this feasibility report include all the information we collected during the process. Included in this report is the data we felt most relevant to the Town of Cutler Bay as it moves forward in evaluation of a charter high school. Furthermore, information that may become available that could have material impact on this feasibility report should be scrutinized and then applied with independent and thorough judgment.



Market

In order to determine market feasibility of a charter high school in Cutler Bay, we needed to take a look at a current enrollment of the schools serving Cutler Bay and be able to answer these questions: Do the current enrollment figures of the schools serving Cutler Bay justify the creation of a school? If a charter school were created, what would that enrollment look like?

Prior to looking directly at enrollment, we looked to the Florida Department of Education performance grading for the schools serving the Town of Cutler Bay and evaluated the recent history with regard to those schools. In addition, we examined the FACT results and selected demographic data that corresponded to each school.

School Name	% Meeting High Standards in Reading	% Meeting High Standards in Math	% Meeting High Standards in Writing	% Meeting High Standards in Science	Free or Reduced Lunch Rate	Minority Rate
GULFSTREAM ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	81	77	87	54	78.6	88.6
DR. WHIGHAM ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	65	63	89	40	71.1	88.7
CUTLER RIDGE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	82	82	94	59	61.1	78.0
WHISPERING PINES ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	82	82	89	62	49.2	64.0
CENTENNIAL MIDDLE SCHOOL	52	50	89	37	85.9	92.5
CUTLER RIDGE MIDDLE SCHOOL	56	51	87	33	83.9	85.6
MIAMI SOUTHRIDGE SENIOR HIGH	25	55	84	23	73.7	92.9

School Name	Grade 2010	Grade 2009	Grade 2008	Grade 2007	Grade 2006	Grade 2005
GULFSTREAM ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	A	A	B	C	B	B
DR. WHIGHAM ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	B	B	B	C	A	C
CUTLER RIDGE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	A	A	A	A	A	A
WHISPERING PINES ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	A	A	A	A	A	A
CENTENNIAL MIDDLE SCHOOL	B	C	C	C	B	C
CUTLER RIDGE MIDDLE SCHOOL	C	C	C	C	A	C
MIAMI SOUTHRIDGE SENIOR HIGH	D	F	D	F	D	C

In examining the data, you can see that with limited exception, the percentage of students who meet the standards in the common areas of reading, math, writing and science declines over time from at each “station” in the school process. The only exception found was the increase from middle school to high school in math standards.

As a result of school not meeting the standards as set by the FACT, school grade was affected. Again, with very little exception, the schools grade went down the further down the education line they became. On average, elementary schools serving Cutler Bay maintained an A to B grading, middle schools averaged a C rating over the recent history, while the high school of Miami Southridge has consistently graded out either as a D or F with the most recent year receiving a grade of D.

By comparison according to the 2010 FCAT results, 1,300 standard elementary and middle schools received a performance grade of A – 324 fewer than 2009; 454 schools received a B – 102 more than 2009; 458 schools received a C – 176 more than 2009; 88 schools received a D – 42 more than 2009; and 35 schools received an F – 19 more than 2009. (Aggregated high school grades are not yet available).

A February 26, 2011 report from the Florida Department of Education on education choice options by district, showed that the overall total membership of the MDCPS system was 351,383. Of that, 108,421 (or 30.8%) elected to use one of the Choice options. Of the 108,421; 35,384 (or 10.1% of the total district members) chose to attend a charter school. Within the entire state of Florida, the overall percentage of membership electing to use one of the choice options was at 26.8%.

The following is a breakdown of select schools that currently serve the Town of Cutler Bay:

Elementary Schools	PK	KG	1	2	3	4	5	Total Membership	Those Selecting a Choice Option	Percentage of Membership
Gulfstream	82	105	114	99	98	98	108	704	128	18.2%
Whispering Pines	31	91	101	117	114	120	134	708	215	30.4%
Whigham	27	126	104	86	101	100	111	655	46	7.0%
Cutler Ridge Elem.	17	118	151	178	159	135	146	904	274	30.3%
Subtotal Elementary	157	440	470	480	472	453	499	2971	663	22.3%

Middle Schools	6	7	8	Total Membership	Those Selecting a Choice Option	Percentage of Membership
Cutler Ridge MS	240	225	250	715	96	13.4%
Centennial	282	274	291	847	40	4.7%
Subtotal Middle Schools	522	499	541	1562	136	8.7%

High School	9	10	11	12	Total Membership	Those Selecting a Choice Option	Percentage of Membership
Miami Southridge	671	558	527	506	2262	1158	51.2%
Subtotal High School	671	558	527	506	2262	1158	51.2%

Overall					Total Membership	Those Selecting a Choice Option	Percentage of Membership
Major Public Schools Serving Cutler Bay					6795	1957	28.8%

As you can see from the tables above, of the major public schools that serve the Town of Cutler Bay, the high school has the highest election of using choice options. While some of the schools do have a lower percentage of choice option election, the overall picture helps to establish the size and scope of the utilization of the choice options. Overall, the utilization of the choice options of the public schools that serve the Town of Cutler of 28.8% is higher than the state utilization percentage of 26.8%.

The total membership of the select schools is 6,795. The number of members utilizing the choice options totaled 1,957. The overall enrollment numbers by grade level at the elementary level show to be relative stable around 500 members per grade. These numbers by grade are important when forecasting potential future enrollment for a charter high school.

Based on these numbers as provided by the Florida Department of Education, it shows that that there is an elementary student population large enough to pull students from to support a charter school (as well as other possible choice options). These same numbers also show a student population (and therefore parent/guardian population) that is both familiar with choice and elects to use choice options. These conditions are positive factors for a new charter school consideration.

Facilities

For the purposes of this feasibility report we focused on two sites within Cutler Bay. A site within the boundaries of the Town of Cutler Bay is necessary to be eligible for the municipal charter option. The sites for consideration were the former Bay Point Schools site and the fifth and sixth level of the Town Hall building of Cutler Bay.

These two sites required no new construction and limited remodeling and re-purposing for use as a charter school. According to the Florida School Board association, the average cost, not including the land purchase, to build an elementary school is \$20-30 million, a middle school costs \$30-45 million, and a high school costs \$50-70 million and takes 2-3 years to plan, design, and construct a school. Both the timeline and funds available for new construction were seen as not feasibility given the desire timeline and funding available to start a new charter school starting in the 2012-2013 school year. It was for this reason the two sites mention above were evaluated. Both of these sites share the characteristic of being vacant and therefore, potentially available for the purposes of a charter school site.

The former Bay Point Schools site is a 48-acre site in the southeast corner of Cutler Bay. The entire 48-acre site is essentially surrounded by a nature park on the north, east and south sides with new residential housing to the west. The last tenant of the property was Bay Point Schools, a public alternative school serving at-risk boys in a residential boarding school program. Previously this site had been one of the Army's Hawk missile sites. Overall, the site is a quiet, peaceful and spacious setting.

On the site, there are a total of six buildings, roads, gates, paved parking lot and a large flat green space available for additional activities. The site benefits from being a former school site. It boasts facilities to accommodate a large charter school with numerous possibilities. Of those buildings, one is a dedicated "garage" with large bay doors that could facilitate a shop or vocational type of schooling with little adjustment to the facility. The other buildings housed the school classes themselves on the first floor with residence spaces on the second. Depending on the type of program, these spaces could be made to accommodate a new program with limited to moderate spending.

Although vacant, the former Bay Point site availability is questionable. There is current litigation involving the site; it is not known when that litigation will end. The second hurdle for the site would be the cost of the site itself once the litigation is complete. A 48-acres site, located in a private setting with existing facilities in a newer residential neighborhood could result in a very high asking price by the seller, if in fact it would become available for sale. At this point, the cost of the site would only be speculative without further conversations with the owners of the site and real estate appraisers. The last hurdle to the site would be maintenance. If the Town would be able to acquire the 48-acre site for the charter school, the maintenance of the site would be significant and should be considered.

The second site located is the Town Hall of Cutler Bay in the southwest corner Cutler Bay adjacent to the Southland Mall. The Town Hall sits next to the Florida 821 Toll and is just south of the intersection of the 821 Toll and S. Dixie Hwy.

Currently, the entire sixth and one-half of the fifth floors are vacant and could be available to a new charter school. Each floor is approximately 10,000 square feet in size resulting in approximately 15,000 available square feet for the availability of a charter school and boasts cityscape views from each of the floors. Previously, each of the floors was set up for office space. The Town Hall building design is set up around a center “core” (elevator, bathrooms, stairs) and each floor could be “opened up” for re-purposing for the school with limited to moderate cost, depending on the selected program(s) of the charter school. Currently, there are plans to re-purpose about one-half of the adjacent parking lot into a flat green space. This new green space would be approximately an acre in size and made available for the charter school at this location. Within a couple of block and visible from the Town Hall is the new South Miami-Dade Cutler Arts Center, a potential value-add program piece for a charter school located in the area.

The major hurdles that are connected with the former Bay Point Schools; pending litigation, availability, pricing, and maintenance are not shared by the Town Hall site. Conversely, the Town Hall site does not boast the same facility opportunities as the Bay Point site. Each site has its pro’s and con’s and should be weighed carefully and thoughtfully in the process.

School Operations

The municipal charter school can be operated by the Town of Cutler Bay or can be contracted out to a Charter Management Organization. The Town of Cutler Bay has chosen to release a Request for Proposals (RFP #11-07: Design, Build, Operate and Maintain a Charter School). The services within the RFP may include, but are not limited to the following:

1. Academic, facility, and operational compatibility within the school site
2. Academic design and curriculum
3. School Operations
4. Financial Management and Budgeting
5. Procurement
6. Student recruiting and marketing plan
7. Staffing/ human resources
8. Transportation
9. Food Service
10. Information Technology
11. School Maintenance
12. Grant writing

The full request for proposals from the Town of Cutler Bay: RFP #11-07 – Design, Build, Operate and Maintain Charter School is contained within the Appendix. To fully understand the potential operation, the entire RFP should be read carefully.

The RFP that the Town of Cutler Bay has put into circulation will to a large extent delegates most school level decisions. This includes program, operations, and financial management as well as other areas. Like all things, there are pro's and con's to every decision and in this case, they must be considered carefully and thoughtfully.

Charter Application and Approval Process

An individual, a group of parents or teachers, a business, or a municipality may apply for a charter. The principal, teachers, parents and/or the school advisory council at an existing public school, which has been in operation for at least two years, may submit a proposal for converting the school to a charter school. An application submitted proposing to convert an existing public school to a charter school shall demonstrate the support of at least 50 percent of the teachers employed at the school and 50 percent of the parents voting whose children are enrolled at the school. A private school, parochial school, or home education program is not eligible for charter status.

Charter schools-in-the-workplace may be established when a business provides the school facility to be used; enrolls students based upon a lottery that involves all of the children of the employees of the business; and enrolls students according to the racial/ethnic balance reflective of the community or other public schools in the same school district. Any portion of a facility used for a charter school is exempt from ad valorem taxes.

Charter schools-in-a-municipality may be established when a municipality obtains a charter school; enrolls students based upon a random lottery that involves all of the children of the residents of the municipality; and enrolls students according to the racial/ethnic balance reflective of the community or other public schools in the same school district. Any portion of the land and facility used for the school is exempt from ad valorem taxes. This is the preferred charter option for the Town of Cutler Bay. The two primary benefits for this charter option is the preference to the residence of the community as well as a much longer charter approval of up to 15 years versus the other charter approvals of 5 years.

A letter of Intent to apply for a charter school is due by July 1, 2011. Applications are due August 1, 2011 by 4:30 pm with no exception to the Miami-Dade County Public Schools, Charter School Operations at the 1450 Northeast 2nd Ave., 8th Floor, Miami, FL 33132. The required application materials include one signed original copy and one copy on CD.

The school board is authorized to sponsor a charter school in Miami-Dade County. The school board must receive and review all charter school applications. The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida shall by a majority vote approve or deny an application no later than sixty calendar days after the application is received, unless the district school board and the applicant mutually agree to temporarily postpone the vote to a specific date, at which time the district school board shall by a majority vote approve or deny the application.

A Technical Assistance Team (TAT) shall review all applications and make recommendations to the District Review Committee. The TAT shall be comprised of at least one representative from each of the

school district offices that have responsibility for an aspect of a school's operation. After review by TAT the applicant is given the opportunity to review the areas of concern within the application and make recommended changes.

Next, the District Review Committee (DRC), represented by senior staff from the district and one representative from the Diversity, Equity and Excellence Advisory Committee; two members of the United Teachers of Dade, selected by the Executive Vice President of the United Teachers of Dade; President, or designee of the County Council of PTA/PTSA; and one member of the Schools of Choice Advisory Committee reviews all applications, and by majority vote, makes a recommendation for acceptance or denial of each application to the Superintendent of Schools. At least one representative of the charter school must be available to answer questions from the DRC when the application is reviewed.

All applications will be submitted to the Sponsor by the Superintendent with a recommendation for acceptance or denial. The Sponsor will vote on all applications. The Sponsor must, by a majority vote, approve or deny each application no later than sixty calendar days after the application is received. If an application is denied, the district school board shall, within 10 calendar days, articulate in writing the specific reasons based upon good cause supporting its denial of the charter application. A charter school applicant has 30 calendar days to appeal to the State Board of Education if:

- the school board denies the charter school application; or
- the school board fails to render a decision on the charter school application by the specified time.

Subsequent to a charter school applicant filing an appeal, the Commissioner of Education shall convene a meeting of the Charter School Appeal Commission (comprised of an equal number of members representing charter schools and school districts) to study and make recommendations to the State Board of Education regarding its pending decision about the appeal. The commission shall forward its recommendation to the state board no later than 7 calendar days prior to the date on which the appeal is to be heard. The State Board of Education shall by majority vote accept or reject the decision of the district school board no later than 90 calendar days after an appeal is filed in accordance with State Board of Education rule. The district school board shall implement the decision of the State Board of Education.

A charter school is statutorily required to:

- be nonsectarian in its programs, admission policies, employment practices, and operations;
- be accountable to its sponsor for its performance;

- not charge tuition and fees;
- comply with all applicable state and local health, safety, and civil rights requirements;
- not discriminate on the basis of race, national origin, sex, handicap, or marital status;
- subject itself to an annual financial audit;
- maintain all financial records that constitute its accounting system in accordance with current law;
- annually adopt and maintain an operating budget;
- provide an annual financial report and program cost report information;
- the governing body of the charter school shall exercise continuing oversight over charter school operations;
- the governing body of the charter school shall report its progress annually to its sponsor;
- not levy taxes or issue bonds secured by tax revenues; and
- provide instruction for at least the number of days required by law for other public schools, and may provide instruction for additional days.

Current law specifies that criteria be used to approve a charter based on the following:

- the charter school's mission, the students and the ages of students who will be served, and the grades that will be included in the charter;
- the focus of the charter school's curriculum, the instructional methods to be used, any distinctive instructional techniques to be employed, and identification and acquisition of appropriate technologies needed to improve educational and administrative performance which include a means for promoting safe, ethical, and appropriate uses of technology which comply with legal and professional standards;
- the charter school shall ensure that reading is a primary focus of the curriculum, and that resources are provided to identify and provide specialized instruction for students who are reading below grade level;
- the curriculum and instructional strategies for reading must be consistent with the Sunshine State Standards and grounded in scientifically based reading research;
- how the baseline student academic achievement levels and prior rates of academic progress will be established;
- the current incoming baseline standard of individual student academic achievement, the outcomes to be achieved, and the method of measurement that will be used;
- to the extent possible, how these rates of progress will be evaluated and compared with rates of progress of other closely comparable student populations;
- the methods used to identify the educational strengths and needs of students and how well educational goals and performance standards are met by students attending the charter school;
- a method for determining that a student has satisfied the requirements for high school graduation;

- a method for resolving conflicts between the governing body of the charter school and the sponsor;
- the admissions procedures and dismissal procedures, including the school's code of student conduct;
- the ways in which the school will achieve a racial/ethnic balance reflective of the community it serves or within the racial/ethnic range of other public schools in the same school district;
- the financial and administrative management of the school, including a reasonable demonstration of the professional experience or competence of those individuals or organizations applying to operate the charter school or those hired or retained to perform such professional services;
- the description of clearly delineated responsibilities and the policies and practices needed to effectively manage the charter school;
- the asset and liability projections required in the application which are incorporated into the charter and which shall be compared with information provided in the annual report of the charter school;
- a description of procedures that identify various risks and provide for a comprehensive approach to reduce the impact of losses;
- plans to ensure the safety and security of students and staff;
- plans to identify, minimize, and protect others from violent or disruptive student behavior;
- the term of the charter;
- the facilities to be used and their location;
- the qualifications to be required of the teachers and the potential strategies used to recruit, hire, train, and retain qualified staff to achieve best value;
- the governance structure of the school, including the status of the charter school as a public or private employer;
- a timetable for implementing the charter; and
- the development of alternative arrangements for current students who choose not to attend a charter school that was converted from an existing public school.

Miami-Dade County Public Schools, School Choice and Parental Options, Charter Operations Office has a very specific plan that is followed to evaluate each application on its own merit. A matrix format is followed, making sure that the experts over each of the areas mentioned above evaluates the application. A strict timeline is maintained to assure statutory time requirements are met.

The State of Florida is ranked second by the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools based on the strength of its charter law. Florida ranks third in the nation in both in the number of charter schools and in charter school enrollment (2009-2010 school year) with more than 137,000 students enrolled in 411 charter schools. Of the 411 charter schools, 71% are graded as an A or B school. The Miami-Dade

School district alone has over 90 charter schools. Municipal charters can achieve the same success as other type of charters as well. Pembroke Pines Charter High School is a municipal charter school owned and operational by the City of Pembroke Pines with 1,700 students in grades nine through twelve. Pembroke Pines recently retained an A rating from the State of Florida, surpassing the minimum score need by over 22%. Other municipal charter schools include, Palm Bay, Coral Springs, Aventura, Hialeah, Miami Shores, Cape Coral and Oakland. Creating and sustaining high performing charters schools in the state of Florida and in the MDCPS system is both possible and achievable.



Education Models

The following is a list of recommendations and questions for the Town of Cutler Bay as it considers the education model of the school. You will see in the list a cross-section of personalization, technology, active learning and value-added content programs. The design of the school program for the Town of Cutler Bay should ultimately include a strong emphasis on all four areas.

The education model that may be chosen for the Cutler Bay High School Charter will require an “all in” mentality as well as committed professionals who understand the program and seek to bring the program to its fullest potential through personalization, relationships with the students and a focus on continuous improvement. This list of recommendations that the Town of Cutler Bay may consider should be done in conjunctions with the school site selection as well as any possible future site transition. In addition, the program should be made with strong consideration to community and student populations the Town of Cutler Bay wishes to serve.

What might that look like?

Personalization will most likely come in the form of: 1) small advisory groupings to address the interests and planning for more focused learning; 2) personal learning and post-secondary plans for all students; 3) small learning communities such as academies of 100-150 students.

Technology will be enhanced by: 1) personal technology for every student with full time use and access; 2) electronic personal learning management tools; 3) Community research, computation and analysis skills related to technology.

Active learning will take many forms but will likely be seen most often in: 1) learning beyond the walls of the school facility; 2) formal and informal periodic presentation/demonstration of learning (including the arts); 3) service learning to help the community in numerous ways; 4) real world work with various agencies and businesses; 5) focused interactive projects within seminars or courses; 6) interactive technology-based programs; 7) national and international travel opportunities.

Value-added programming will be provided through: 1) selective learning enhancement, high-standard programs such as International Baccalaureate and Advanced Placement; 2) dual enrollment collaboration with colleges; 3) self-directed project-based learning; 4) on-line learning opportunities.

These features will require an active and informed community prepared to contribute their expertise, involvement and resources to help create a truly responsive learning model. First and foremost, the community will need to supply a facility that will serve as the gathering place for young people in the most open and interactive fashion; a place that is as inviting to the community as it is interesting and stimulating to students. Second, the community will have to be prepared to step into the learning process as active participants, mentors and facilitators of learning activities. The Town of Cutler Bay has talented residents and a retired population that could be tapped as community experts and mentors. And third, there may be a need for some additional resources beyond the funds that will be provided by

Miami-Dade County to support value-added and extra-curricular activities. Partnerships with University of Miami and Florida International University should be explored.

Today's learning involves a complex web of accountability, funding, community and parent involvement, and teaching. The type, size and place of this school will depend upon the interest, involvement and support of the Town of Cutler Bay residents, City Council and the MDCPS. We sincerely acknowledge the community effort so far and look for even greater future support.

The recommendations are in no particular order and are meant to be a working list requiring further study leading to local decisions to place in the larger plan.

Personalized Learning

The hallmark of top high school education programs is the degree to which a school can be personalized or customized, giving both students and parents a variety of options from which to choose. This personalization can come from the curriculum, pedagogy, technology, physical space, and/or the amount of time allowed for personal interaction with staff and other students. Examples of personalized learning include having a student advisory program, Personal Learning Program (PLP) for each student, personal work space, one-to-one tutoring and parent-student-advisor communication.

This could be achieved in the design of a new Cutler Bay High School if personalized learning is integrated with other features. Existing programs have shown this model allows for a higher percentage of the funding going directly to students. This will not be a feasible option however if it is placed in a conventional program.

Community-Based Learning Programs

The Town of Cutler Bay is blessed with many resources and there is a definite interest in making those resources available to the new high school. The expectation is that the world is a place to learn and if the program is designed as such, students will be using community amenities as a part of their learning program. An extensive volunteer and mentor program could also be a part of the learning program. The school could forge several valuable partnerships with both private and public entities to enhance learning opportunities for students. Depending on the design of the learning program, this could be a distinguishing feature of Cutler Bay Charter High School, one that becomes a true value-added feature. Various partnerships, real world learning experiences and use of community organizations, facilities, businesses and parks would be entirely feasible at little extra cost, if only they are integrated with other features.

Emphasis on 21st Century Skills

What does it truly mean to become an educated person? The emphasis on 21st century skills is a must if students are going to be able to navigate in this new age of technology and communication. The Cutler Bay Charter High School would be remiss if it did not pay close attention to these skills and develop programs that allow students to learn these skills - decision making, learning responsibility, networking, communication, technology and critical thinking to name a few.

Shared Facilities

The most feasible facility plan would be one that includes a central school but also allows for flexible use of other community facilities, such as government agencies, the Town Hall and spaces dedicated to other organizations. Other facilities that might be useful are the public library, state park, marina, the new city park and athletic fields, the South Miami-Dade Cultural Arts Center and any natural resource sanctuaries nearby.

It is also important to note that some facilities can be used on a very temporary basis, for example a week long seminar may be held off campus. Sharing facilities does not mean full time use or lease and one should be cautious not to over-use available facilities. In the long run, the multi-flexi-facility idea should be an important part of the learning program and learning space plan. This notion of shared facilities would compliment the learning program and community involvement.

Extra/Intra-Curricular Activities

A number of people indicated an interest in extra-curricular programs for students (sports, arts, drama, academic teams such as speech, etc.), although not all felt it was a necessary “deal breaker” to prevent a Cutler Bay Charter High School. We recommend a combination of activities both competitive with other schools and the ‘club’ varieties. The key is the level of involvement by students (one of the best predictors of post-high school success). Some of these activities should be for credit toward graduation as well (intra-curricular), especially those that involve interdisciplinary learning and leadership development. Such activities may be community-based with a focus on small teams and individual activities. Cutler Bay Charter High School might also pair with other schools for larger group activities. The level and type of activities chosen will come with a price and this may require raising additional funds, especially for large team sports. Most traditional high school programs cost from 5-7% of the general fund budget so this will have to be well thought out before implementing.

Student Centered Project-Based Learning

Project-based learning (PBL) has developed to an extent that it is now feasible in terms of meeting standard outcomes while maintaining financial integrity. At the core of innovation, the cost per student is 10-20% less than in traditional settings. PBL allows students to follow their interested and excel at their own pace. It also means more personalization and customization and supports service learning, which benefits the entire community. There are several professional development providers and models that are successful and well recognized around the country. The most flexible and personalized schools are using some form of PBL in their learning program. We think Cutler Bay should include PBL in their program and recruit and train staff to implement the best features of PBL. Depending upon the size of actual enrollment, it might also be the most economically feasible model.

Enhanced Learning Programs (IB, AP, Dual Enrollment, etc.)

Such programs as Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate and Dual Enrollment could be considered to some degree. All have advantages and disadvantages but all carry some post secondary

attraction and esteem. Done right, the programs will lead to greater individualization, higher expectations, a focus on college preparation, online learning opportunities and potential accreditation benefits.

The difficulty here will be financial feasibility as there may be an addition or change to the program that would make it less efficient. Dual enrollment seems to be entirely feasible, while IB may depend on school size, IB cost and acceptance, and AP may depend on program design. In any case we think they should all be considered for inclusion in the program design.

Parent and Community Involvement

There is no substitute for quality parent involvement. It is not only a high priority but also weighs in on the school design priorities. Parents want a school where they can be highly involved and influential in the learning program of their children, as well as helpful to the school overall. This in itself will make the Cutler Bay Charter High School more successful than many other schools. The high level of involvement will also have a positive influence on the young people in general, limiting harmful behaviors, creating greater community pride and supporting activities that enhance community-building across generations. This type of involvement is feasible and will enhance local resources and contribute to overall support and success, with definite potential for additional resources.

Technology-Infused Program

Schools without ample technology today are like schools without pencils a hundred years ago. The tools of the age are absolutely necessary. Cutler Bay should be a model for 21st century technology. This will enhance the personalization and customization of the learning program and create a greater efficiency in overall operation. We anticipate some online learning, an individual learning management system (including personal learning plans and post-high school plans), readily accessible computers for all students, and higher levels of communication between home and school. All three of these components are still relatively new to high school education. Depending upon the program design and use of technology, this may require some additional funding.

Interest and Career Based Academies

Because of the uniqueness of the potential of the former Bay Point Schools site, we would recommend possible 'academies' that would essentially be small learning communities (of no more than 150 students). This will depend on the number of students who enroll during the first 3-5 years of the school and the level of interest by students, parents and the community. We anticipate that Cutler Bay Charter High School will evolve into possibly three or four academies with distinctive features, innovations and characteristics. Academies will allow for greater thematic focus for staff and community (such as environment, business, art, world culture, language) and will allow students to follow their interests. For example, one might be a math/science/IB/dual enrollment academy and another, a project-based/hands-on/arts-focused/community-based program. The feasibility of these academies will depend greatly upon good planning, enrollment levels, program design and a highly qualified and committed staff.

Social and Cultural

During our discovery process, we found overwhelming support for educational options and educational improvement in and around the Town of Cutler Bay. This support was not limited by interest groups, age groups or the varied constituencies involved.

A municipal charter that is community focused and community based will strengthen the community. A school located in Cutler Bay will also keep students and guardians from driving to other towns and thus add potential benefit, both socially and economically from the Town of Cutler Bay.

While there is an abundance of research on the economic impact for communities losing their high schools, there is very little official research regarding what happens to a community when it adds a high school. Generally, the conditions under which a community adds a high school, the economics of that community are already heading in a positive direction or a community has already lost a high school and knows the impact, therefore little research is needed as anecdotal evidence is already available. It is reasonable to assume that to a degree, the Town of Cutler Bay will benefit from the addition of a local high school within its boundaries, both socially and economically.

The perception of school choice, including charter schools, has changed over the past number of years and will continue to change. Below is an excerpt from the feasibility study EdVisions worked on with Fielding Nair for the Village of Key Biscayne to help demonstrate the possibilities and social change that is already happening:

*A prestigious example of a new paradigm public school that has received a tremendous amount of positive press is **School of Environmental Studies (SES)** in Apple Valley, Minnesota. SES is known for its innovative, interdisciplinary, and experiential curriculum. Thematic Studies, also referred to as “House”, combines English, environmental science, and social studies into a three-hour long daily class which is team-taught. These courses are connected by broad themes related to essential understanding of the environment and related issues. As students work to gain understanding of the themes, they complete projects and assignments that lead to relevant, real world assessment of their progress. SES also offers many strong elective courses including chemistry, physics, art, photography, video/multi media, Spanish, French, German, and mathematics.*

Every trimester each student enrolls in an Intensive Theme course. During the seven-day intensive theme time period all other courses are discontinued allowing SES students to study one subject in-depth. Some Intensive Theme course are also Field Experiences to such locales as

South Africa, New Zealand, Boundary Waters of Minnesota, Costa Rica, France, Spain, Yucatan Peninsula, Curacao, Belize, Scotland, France, Florida, Alaska, Iceland, Australia, Glacier Park, and the American South West.

Once at SES, some students may take a small number of courses at their home high school (usually music). Although SES has many activities, students may also elect to participate in athletics and activities at their home high school. SES maintains strong partnerships with many private and non-profit organizations. Many joint projects exist throughout the year between SES and the Minnesota Zoo whose campus is adjacent to the school. Zoo staff help teach some SES courses. SES partners often provide excellent volunteer, research, and internship opportunities for our students.

In 1999 SES received, in a ceremony at the White House, the U.S. Department of Education's prestigious "New American High School Award". The award recognized SES's outstanding work in preparing students for college, its high graduation rate, its many successful partnerships, and its community oriented focus.

The participatory nature of the school creates many opportunities for community members to understand each other. Opportunities include the all-school Socratic Seminars, overnight camping in the fall, winter and spring, and an annual Earth Day celebration. For a community that places such high importance on quality education, the relationship between 21st century learning skills and college acceptance is of prime concern. The model we're recommending does not preclude high scores; it is not an either/or situation. A reality is that there exists an increasing move in the college community to find more well-rounded students.

What Are Colleges Looking For?

A recent article in Newsweek identified a number of reasons why top medical schools value students with more diverse backgrounds. "Even as breakthroughs in science and advances in technology make the practice of medicine increasingly complex, medical educators are looking beyond biology and chemistry majors in the search for more well-rounded students who can be molded into caring and analytic doctors. "More humanities students have been applying in recent years, and medical schools like them," says Gwen Garrison, assistant vice president for medical-school services and studies at the Association of American Medical Colleges. "The schools are looking for a kind of compassion and potential doctoring ability. This makes many social-science and humanities students particularly well qualified."

The number of science majors applying to medical school has been steady for the past decade—about 65 percent of applicants major in biology or another physical science. What's changing is who gets in. When Gail Morrison, who runs admissions at the University of Pennsylvania School

of Medicine, sorts through the school's 6,500 yearly applicants, she is not looking for students who spent their undergraduate years hunched over biology and physics textbooks. "It doesn't make you a better doctor to know how fast a mass falls from a tree," she says. Approximately 40 percent of the students that U-Penn accepts to its medical school now come from non-science backgrounds. That number has been rising steadily over the past 20 years. "They've got to be happy and have a life outside of medicine," says Morrison, "otherwise they'll get overwhelmed. We need whole people."

In 1999, a national survey of first-year medical students found that 58 percent took a social-science class for personal interest. In last year's entering class, the number was more than 70 percent. Humanities students also fare better on the MCAT, the standardized test for medical-school admissions. Among the 2006 applicants to medical school, humanities majors outscored biology majors in all categories."

While not every student will go on to take the MCAT or become a doctor, we believe as we also observed in our conversation with the City Council and Charter Advisory Committee that every child should have the chance to succeed. That every child should have the opportunity to be great at who they are and what they want to become. This can only happen through a personalized program which is much more available to students through choice options, such as a charter school.

Financial

Due to the unknowns associated with the Bay Point site at this time, including but not limited to; date of availability, cost of acquisition or leasing, and ongoing maintenance of the large site, we can not estimate the financial feasibility of that site with any certainty. This does not eliminate the for Bay Point School site as a future site for a charter school in Cutler Bay, but it does not seem feasible as a location for the first start-up years. The financial modeling we elected to look at for feasibility was based on the site availability at the Town Hall and then transferring to a larger site (possibly the former Bay Point Schools site) in the future.

Enrollment is the basis for all school funding and formulas. We analyzed the current enrollment of the major public schools serving Cutler Bay (see Market section) and forecasted out a likely scenario that fit the size of the space available in the Town Hall that also address some concerns of when children switch schools as wells as how that enrollment projects into the future.

Cutler Bay Charter School Enrollment Projection	<i>Year 1</i>		<i>Year 2</i>		<i>Year 3</i>		<i>Year 4</i>		<i>Year 5</i>	
	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015*	2015-2016	2016-2017				
6	-	50	50	100	100	100				
7	-	50	50	50	100	100				
8	-	50	50	50	50	100				
9	-	50	50	50	50	50				
10	-		50	50	50	50				
11	-			50	50	50				
12	-				50	50				
Total Student Population	-	200	250	350	450	500				
Student Population Growth			25%	40%	29%	11%				

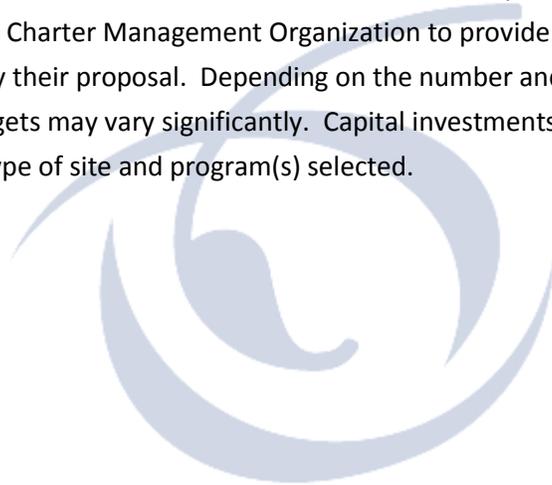
*Transfer into new school site

The above enrollment projection starts with a charter school offering grades 6-9th the first year and expanding by one grade level every year thereafter. Sixth grade is a natural transition for schooling in the schools that currently serve Cutler Bay and uses that to the advantage of its enrollment as well as for consideration of the students. The school size of 200 and 250 in the first two years is the size needed to

accommodate the Town Hall space for the first two years of operation while the Bay Point site and other options are further explored. Additionally, the growth model for addition students is also a controlled growth that will allow for adding students and staff while the existing students and staff do not become overwhelmed with a large incoming wave of new students and staff that may disrupt or compromise the integrity of the program.

The enrollment projection for the first two years is about 10% of the membership population per grade for the schools that serve Cutler Bay. This is well below the number of residents who currently utilize choice options in Cutler Bay (currently at 28.8%). It is reasonable to assume that a high performing charter school in Cutler Bay under these conditions is more restricted by space rather than demand.

The following is a basic and generic operational revenue and expense budget based on the above forecasted enrollment. It is not meant for operational use but only for demonstration purpose to show the ability to operate a school based on enrollment size. Furthermore, the requirements of the Cutler Bay RFP 11-07 require each Charter Management Organization to provide the program and financial projections that accompany their proposal. Depending on the number and types of respondents to the RFP, the forecasts and budgets may vary significantly. Capital investments are not listed as they can vary significantly based on type of site and program(s) selected.



Proposed Charter School

Five-Year Budget

	Pre-Opening Year 2011-12	First Year 2012-13 Grades 6-9	Second Year 2013-14 Grades 6-10	Third Year 2014-15 Grades 6-11	Fourth Year 2015-16 Grades 6-12	Fifth Year 2016-17 Grades 6-12
Projected Enrollment		200	250	350	450	500

1. REVENUES						
Carry-over from previous period	0	66,208	116,073	43,801	31,964	85,037
Per Pupil Payments	0	1,155,632	1,444,542	2,022,359	2,600,153	2,889,063
Other Grants	0	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000
Federal Planning and Implementation	200,000	150,000	0	0	0	0
Total Revenues	200,000	1,381,840	1,570,615	2,076,160	2,642,117	2,984,100
2. EXPENDITURES						
A. Human Resources						
Principal	0	85,000	87,000	88,000	91,000	96,000
Assistant Principal/Office Manager	45,000	75,000	77,000	79,000	80,000	83,000
Full time Teacher Salaries (20:1 Student:Teacher)	0	10 @ 45,000 450,000	15 @ 47,700 596,250	15 @ 51,000 892,500	15 @ 53,596 1,205,910	25 @ 56,811 1,420,275
Administrative Assistant	0	30,000	31,000	32,000	33,000	34,000
School Counselor	0	50,000	51,000	52,000	53,000	54,000
Payroll Taxes (est.)	3,443	52,785	64,432	87,478	111,913	129,077
Benefits (22%)	9,900	151,800	185,295	251,570	321,840	371,201
Consultants Salaries	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000
Professional Development	5,000	5,000	10,000	15,000	20,000	25,000
Substitute Teachers	0	15,000	15,000	15,000	15,000	15,000
Board Development	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000
Tutors	0	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000
Total Human Resources	71,343	932,585	1,134,977	1,530,548	1,949,663	2,245,552
B. Facility						
Rent	0	10,000	20,000	30,000	40,000	50,000
Renovation / Construction expansion of ATC	0	0	0	0	0	0
Debt Service	0	0	0	0	0	0
Utilities (Partnering in cost with VU and PU)	0	20,400	20,400	35,000	40,000	45,000
Maintenance	0	0	0	10,000	15,000	20,000
Total Facility	0	30,400	40,400	75,000	95,000	115,000

	Pre-Opening Year 2011-12	First Year 2012-13 Grades 6-9	Second Year 2013-14 Grades 6-10	Third Year 2014-15 Grades 6-11	Fourth Year 2015-16 Grades 6-12	Fifth Year 2016-17 Grades 6-12
Projected Enrollment		200	250	350	450	500

2. EXPENDITURES - CONTINUED						
C. Materials / Supplies / Equipment						
Textbooks	0	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000
Assessments @ \$10	0	2,000	2,500	3,500	4,500	5,000
Instructional Equipment/Supplies	0	5,000	6,000	7,000	8,000	9,000
Classroom Technology	4,300	29,200	29,200	29,200	29,200	29,200
Office Technology	3,600	9,000	6,000	6,000	7,000	7,000
Instructional Software	0	7,000	13,300	18,900	24,300	29,500
Office Software	3,500	20,000	20,000	20,000	20,000	20,000
Library	0	6,000	6,000	6,000	6,000	6,000
Office Furniture	6,750	12,000	9,000	9,000	10,500	10,500
Classroom Furniture	0	21,000	21,000	21,000	21,000	21,000
Administrative Supplies	4,000	5,000	6,000	7,000	8,000	9,000
Copying and Reproduction	5,000	12,800	15,320	17,560	24,720	26,800
Postage and Shipping	2,400	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000
Telephone / Fax Lines	2,400	2,400	2,400	6,000	6,000	6,000
Internet Access	0	12,000	12,000	12,000	12,000	12,000
Total Materials / Supplies / Equipment	31,950	158,400	163,720	178,160	196,220	206,000
D. Additional Costs						
District Fee (5%)		57,782	72,227	101,118	130,008	144,453
Contracted Services	0	5,000	10,000	15,000	20,000	25,000
Insurance	400	14,400	14,400	30,400	30,400	30,400
Marketing (video - web site- brochure) / Develop	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000
Legal Expenses	9,600	9,600	9,600	9,600	9,600	9,600
Accounting / Audit	15,500	24,500	26,600	30,000	33,000	35,000
Transportation Bus passes	0	23,100	43,890	62,370	80,190	97,350
Field Trips	0	5,000	6,000	7,000	8,000	9,000
Food Service (assumed as a net-zero category)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total Additional Costs	30,500	144,382	187,717	260,488	316,198	355,803

TOTAL REVENUES	200,000	1,381,840	1,570,615	2,076,160	2,642,117	2,984,100
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	133,793	1,265,767	1,526,814	2,044,196	2,557,080	2,922,355
BALANCE	66,208	116,073	43,801	31,964	85,037	61,744

Additional Considerations

School choice and more specifically charter schools, have historically been closely associated with the political process. While school choice has made gains over the past number of years and continues to do so (even today as evidenced by Florida Governor Rick Scott's signing of five school-choice bills into law), it should be an item of consideration on how the political process may or may not influence the establishment, sustainability and longevity of the charter school.

With regard to sustainability and longevity, Florida law requires that schools be "graded". These grades on schools play a large part on the public perception of the quality of education at those schools. While a higher graded school may provide better education or opportunities than another school with a lower grade, it does not guarantee it. A new charter school in the Town of Cutler Bay should be focused on the students needs first while being cognizant of the public perception. Stakeholders from top to bottom should shoulder the responsibility together and every effort should be taken to ensure that the charter school becomes and maintains its status as a high performing charter school as defined by the state.

When selecting and contracting with a Charter Management Organization (CMO) to design, build, operate and maintain a charter school, it should be understood that the CMO serves the Town of Cutler Bay and the students. While engaging a CMO for charter school services delegates the day-to-day duties and possibly the overall strategic plan for the school, it in no way delegates the total and absolute responsibility of the Town of Cutler Bay to maintain the status and quality of the charter school. This must not be underestimated. In the event that the Town engages a CMO, the City will still have to remain actively engaged to ensure the school is serving the Town and students as intended and to a high performing status.

While not an immediate feasibility concern, it should be considered that a municipal charter is just that, municipality based. Even if established in the most supportive of City Councils, elections of City Officials and possible turnover of key city staff positions will occur during the lifetime of a municipal charter and therefore may have an material impact on the future of the potential school.

Major Findings and Recommendations

The purpose of this feasibility study was to determine to the best of our ability the feasibility of a Charter High School in Cutler Bay, Florida. Below are our major findings as they relate to the feasibility of establishing a charter school in the Town of Cutler Bay.

Community Desire

The community of Cutler Bay has demonstrated through this process and through the number of families who already elect one of the Choice Options that there is a strong desire for educational options. In addition to the family level decisions of choosing a choice program, there is a community desire evidenced by both a strong and active Charter Advisory Committee, Education Compact Committee and City Council involved in the education conversation. While the motivations of the individual members of these active groups may differ, the overarching connection is that all of them desire better education for the children and subsequently future of Cutler Bay Florida.

Our recommendation is that Cutler Bay continues to foster any and all conversations that lead to improvement of the education systems and opportunities that serve the children and families of Cutler Bay. This includes the Chartering Committee, Educational Compact, as well as other opportunities that occur within the community.

Community Need

There are a number of ways to define “need” when it relates to education of young people. Some define a need as to have an option other than an “F” rated high school. Others will interpret need from a “safe school” standpoint, and still others will define it as whether the right types of programs are or are not being offered. We found all of these “needs” as well as others including transportation, small learning environments, special learning disabilities, etc. Need in most cases can be relative to a person’s perspective. Independent of the type or perspective, we believe that overall, the Town of Cutler Bay is in agreement that its needs are currently not being met to at an acceptable level, regardless of the definition of need . This is evidenced by the numbers of families using a Choice option. The public schools that serve Cutler Bay experience a higher than state average election to use one of the Choice Options. Cutler Bay, a Town of approximately 42,000 residents does not have a high school within its boundaries. As defined by the State grading scale of schools, the longer a resident of Cutler Bay stays in public school, the worse their educational opportunities become. This, along with other factors contribute to a number of students who do not even finish high school, thus removing even the possibilities of going on to post-secondary options, including college.

We found that there is a need for improvement of the educational systems and options for the residents of Cutler Bay. Any opinions to the contrary or conversations to explain away the need would be a perspective we do not share.

Community Direction

We found in our process as described in our Community Desire section a number of moving parts with the overarching goal of improvement of the education of Cutler Bay children, but moving different directions with little communication between the efforts. With varying degrees of self-defined success, each group has done what it feels is best and is moving forward as best it can. This has resulted in an unfocused energy around education in Cutler Bay that could produce less desirable outcomes for the community than could otherwise be achieved with a focused and connected effort. More specifically to the Charter School effort, while the effort to establish a charter school is alive and well, the specifics of what that school would look like in terms of programming is not well established or defined.

Our recommendation is twofold. First, we believe as stated in the community desire section, that any and all efforts should be continued to be explored. Any improvements in the educational systems and programs serving the residents of Cutler Bay will benefit all stakeholders involved. These efforts should be interconnected to each other to allow for greater return of efforts for all groups involved. Communication should be fostered between all parties to allow for a cohesive effort of educational change for the residents of Cutler Bay. Second, we believe that the Chartering effort should undergo an inclusive community planning phase that includes defining the program needs and desires of the community. This process would help determine the program components and priorities of the Cutler Bay community as a whole. Ultimately, a process that includes the entire community will result in a better school for the community because it is built on the community's input as a cornerstone.

Charter Schools

The State of Florida is ranked second by the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools based on the strength of its charter law. Florida ranks third in the nation both in the number of charter schools and in charter school enrollment (2009-2010 school year) with more than 137,000 students enrolled in 411 charter schools. Of the 411 charter schools, 71% are graded as an A or B school. The Miami-Dade School district alone has over 90 charter schools. Municipal charters can achieve the same success as other types of charters. Pembroke Pines Charter High School is a municipal charter school owned and operational by the City of Pembroke Pines with 1,700 students in grades nine through twelve. Pembroke Pines recently retained its A rating from the State of Florida, surpassing the minimum score need by over 22%. Other municipal charter schools include Palm Bay, Coral Springs, Aventura, Hialeah, Miami Shores, Cape Coral and Oakland. Creating and sustaining high performing charter schools in the state of Florida and in the MDCPS system is both possible and achievable.

Our recommendation is that the Town of Cutler Bay continues its planning and preparation for a Municipal Charter School within its boundaries. While there are no guarantees for approval of any given charter application, we do not believe Cutler Bay should suspend, delay or reduce its efforts.

Market and Financial Feasibility

We found that there is both a strong desire for educational options in Cutler Bay as well as a strong need. Both are essential in the establishment of a charter school, but to sustain a charter school you must have a market and financial stability. We found there to be a sustainable market for a Charter School in Cutler Bay under the right conditions, including strong community support and leadership. Leadership from parents, community members, elected officials, city staff and the future charter management organization hired to run the school.

We believe that in Cutler Bay exists a critical mass large enough to support a new charter high school with the potential to grow as large as facilities will allow and programming will support. We also believe that it is financially viable. The two largest expenses to starting a charter school are facilities and staffing. Cutler Bay has a favorable situation to use the vacant space in the Town Hall building to start a Charter School while planning to expand. Staffing make up the largest expenditure of any public high school. In a Charter School, this is a variable expense that can be adjusted base on enrollment. Budgeting and forecasting will be a critical piece of the City Council's evaluation of a charter management organization for the new school.

Our recommendation is that while starting in the Town Hall with a smaller enrollment might not be ideal for some community members, it is sustainably and capable of being a high performing charter school. In fact, it may be an ideal "soft" start to establish a charter school.

Application & Approval

Establishing a charter school may take many different roads, each one different than the next. One thing that they all do share is the application. The Miami-Dade County Public School Charter Operations Office uses the standard State application for interested parties in applying for a charter school. While there is no guarantee of approval when applying for a charter school to the MDCPS, they do approve charter schools on an annual basis. This is evidenced by the fact that MDCPS has 91 of the 411 charter school in the State of Florida. This however should not be mistaken for a display of ease of approval.

It is our belief that a charter application by the Town of Cutler Bay in 2011 for opening in the 2012-2013 school year is possible, but not likely. It is possible that the Town of Cutler Bay may appeal a denial. This appeal will increase the chances of obtaining a charter, but we believe that the overall chances for an approval in 2011 including the appeal process is unlikely.

We recommend that inclusive community planning and ongoing communication with MDCPS take place over the next year that will result in a less rushed and fully developed application. We believe that this will substantially increase Cutler Bay's chances of obtaining a municipal charter, but will not guarantee it.

Summary Conclusion and Recommendation

In conclusion, we feel strongly that there is a desire, a need and a commitment in the community of Cutler Bay for better educational systems and options for the residents of the town. We also believe that there is a market for a charter school to make a school financially viable and has the possibility to grow to the size of 1,000 students if done under the favorable conditions. Lastly, it is our opinion that obtaining an approval from MDCPS is feasible, but not likely for the 2011 application for a 2012 opening. It is also our opinion that a year-long inclusive planning process for an application in 2012 would substantially increase chances for approval of a charter school application.

Getting approval of a charter is difficult, starting a charter school is difficult, sustaining and maintaining a high performing charter school is difficult. The process will never get easy, it will always take a committed community and committed leaders to make it happen. In addition to being difficult, the process will be full of rejection, from other community members not believing in it, to not being approved by the MDCPS. Our final recommendation is that the Town of Cutler Bay not be deterred by the hurdles that lay ahead in establishing a municipal charter school, but continue the effort and to do it for the community that is here today and the one you want it to be tomorrow.

Appendix

Request for Proposals # 11-07: *Design, Build, Operate and Maintain Charter School*

