



## RISE CHARTER SCHOOL

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January 25, 2024

Dear Kimberly School Board,

RISE Charter school stakeholders and leadership would like to formally express our appreciation for the opportunity we have been given by the Kimberly School District to design a new school in our community. We have the exceptional ability to offer sports participation, transportation, nutrition programs, and other benefits to our students and their families because we are authorized and supported by the Kimberly School District.

The original charter document states that “RISE Charter School will be a 4-12 grade project based expeditionary school serving students in the Kimberly School District.” Over the two and one-half years in operation, we have learned much about the key components for successfully educating students while maintaining a solvent operation. The RISE Charter School leadership, staff, and board have spent many hours collecting and reviewing data to determine what has worked well and where do we need to improve. We have found that many of our challenges are impacted by the current model defined in the original charter which is that we will serve grades 4-12. We believe changing the model from grades 4-12 to grades K-12 would better support the goals of RISE Charter School *and* the Kimberly School District.

Achieving high levels of academic growth has been one of our top four goals since we opened our doors to students in August of 2021. Since that time, we have discovered that by opening the school at fourth grade, we lose the opportunity to teach foundational reading and math skills with our mastery-based approach to our students from the beginning of their academic career. Additionally, the 16 habits of success and behavioral expectations that we emphasize at RISE would be more powerful if taught earlier than fourth grade. We also believe that the overall long-term academic proficiency of our students would be positively impacted if we started our school in kindergarten.

A charter school is a school of choice. Our school is uniquely authorized by a public school district that also happens to be in very close proximity. This location is convenient as we share some infrastructure and resources, but also poses a challenge for enrollment because of the ease with which students can attend the alternative. By the time students have attended grades kindergarten through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade in a Kimberly School district elementary school, they have developed friendships and familiarity with the campus and the staff. Unless they have challenges or lack of success, most students (or their parents) would not have any desire to make a change.

The goal of the Kimberly School District was that RISE Charter School would take some students from each of the elementary and secondary buildings. We have also learned that most secondary students prioritize the social aspect of school and enjoy the larger population of the local high school. Enrollment for secondary grades has proven to be a challenge, in part due to this preference by many students. Although some students appreciate the small, quiet atmosphere at RISE, the numbers are not significant enough to see a visible decrease in the class sizes at Kimberly High School, in particular. In addition, the number of students on our rosters is directly linked to the financial solvency of our operation and is critical to our school's success. We believe that if we were to educate our students from kindergarten up, they may be more apt to stay at RISE during their secondary years as well and would potentially be a more stable cohort of students as they progress through the grade levels.

The current enrollment numbers throughout the Kimberly School District represent a decline in the number of young people in the community overall. However, if RISE Charter School reduced the number of students in each grade level, that decreased class size would increase teacher to student ratios. Novicoff, et.al., found that “class-size reductions, on the order of magnitude of 7-10 fewer students per class, can have significant long-term effects on student achievement and other meaningful outcomes” (2023). Other studies have corroborated the same finding that smaller class sizes are linked to improved student achievement, but also that teacher job satisfaction is positively impacted by smaller class sizes (Gouralt, 2023; Hoque, 2023).

Our formal request is that we modify the charter to include grades kindergarten through 3rd grade at RISE Charter School. We would begin serving these grades next school year, 2024-25. Please see the attached maps with sample classroom assignments and the logistics associated with the proposed changes.

Thank you again for the additional time and effort that you have spent in deliberations as our authorizer. We appreciate your consideration of this proposal that we believe will positively impact the educational success of RISE Charter School students, the students in the Kimberly School District, and the job satisfaction of teachers in both districts.

Sincerely,

Heidi Child, RISE Executive Director

Jonathan Butler, RISE Board Chairman

## CITATIONS

- Gourault, Kanon. "The Impact of Student-Teacher Ratios on Learning: Exploring the Optimal Class Size." *Education Advanced, Inc.*, 4 May 2023, [educationadvanced.com/resources/blog/the-impact-of-student-teacher-ratios-on-learning-exploring-the-optimal-class/](https://educationadvanced.com/resources/blog/the-impact-of-student-teacher-ratios-on-learning-exploring-the-optimal-class/).
- Hoque, K.E., et al. "The Factors Associated with Teachers' Job Satisfaction and Their Impacts on Students' Achievement: A Review ." *Education Advanced, Inc.*, Humanities and Social Sciences Communicator, 24 Apr. 2023, [www.nature.com/articles/s41599-023-01645-7#citeas](https://www.nature.com/articles/s41599-023-01645-7#citeas).
- Novicoff, Sarah, et al. "Class Size: What Research Says and What It Means for State Policy." *Brookings*, 27 June 2023, [www.brookings.edu/articles/class-size-what-research-says-and-what-it-means-for-state-policy/](https://www.brookings.edu/articles/class-size-what-research-says-and-what-it-means-for-state-policy/).