

RISE CHARTER SCHOOL

Mid-Year Report

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Prepared By:

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and

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VISION

RISE Charter School will provide an environment where every student can master content knowledge, practice habits of success, and develop their character.

MISSION

RISE Charter School will inspire students to become lifelong learners with deep cognitive development enhanced by participating in relevant, innovative projects, and through practicing collaboration and accepting personal responsibility for their growth.

UNIQUE TO RISE

Bulldog Breakfast: Students play board/card games and mingle with teachers while eating breakfast.

Mentoring: Each student gets 1-1 mentoring with their mentor teacher for at least 10 minutes every two weeks.

Makerspace: Students build, craft, create, sew, 3D print, paint and learn hands on skills.

Expeditionary Friday: Field Experiences were offered such as working at Habitat for Humanity, laying sod for the school district, planting trees, gleaning and donating potatoes. These experiences have helped students learn to be empathic, persistent, and curious while potentially enabling them to be better global citizens.

Mastery/Project-Based Learning: Students must master content before they can move on. Learning takes place through doing projects which are subject relevant and apply to the concepts being taught.

Classes: Due to RISE's unique scheduling model, no core content class has more than 25 students, allowing for exceptional teaching to take place. Middle school students can select from 7 enrichment courses each semester.

Lottery Enrollment: As a charter school, enrollment in RISE is subject to a lottery with preference given to founders and employees children, Kimberly residents, and siblings of currently enrolled students. This year's lottery is currently open for applications until April 11th.

Character Skills: The Summit Curriculum is built around the 16 Habits of Success which are the social and emotional skills that enable students to be successful at both academic and non-academic pursuits. These include the skills to become a self-directed learner.

INTRODUCTION

RISE Charter School opened its doors to students from grades 4 through 8 on August 23, 2021. This day was three years in the making as the school's origins had begun with a community committee. This effort was supported heavily by the Bluum organization with the awarding of a fellowship which provided financial support to hire employees who could get the charter launched. The hours of work that were expended by the fellows and the RISE Board created the framework of the school and brought the hopes and dreams of many members of the community into reality. A charter was created, student performance standards were established, a vision and mission were developed, and the school was marketed to the community in a variety of ways.

SUCSESSES

Securing funding to open a new school was also a critical element that required a significant effort. The first application for a federal charter school grant was denied, so we sought \$244,000 of supplemental funding from the Albertson's Foundation in the form of a grant. We re-applied for the federal charter school grant and were awarded \$405,000 of funding to enhance our project-based learning curriculum. This curricular model requires a significant investment in supplies and manipulatives. These two generous grants were the first major successes that enabled us to proceed with the planned opening timeline.

Lottery applications were opened in December of 2020. By the application deadline of March 22, 2021, we had received 117 applications for the 125 available spots. After conducting the lottery, the sixth-grade class had filled all 25 seats and had a significant waitlist. Throughout the summer we continued to monitor class lists and build waitlists.

CHALLENGES

Our first hurdle came in the spring of 2021, when we began recruiting staff. We experienced first-hand the challenges presented by the nation-wide shortage of qualified teaching candidates. We received no applications for two part-time positions and had limited applicant pools for all other positions.

About six weeks into the school year, several students made the decision that RISE Charter School was not their best fit and unenrolled. At one point in October, we had 11 open seats which translated to a potential loss of \$150,000 of state-supported student funding. This was our first significant challenge after the opening of the school.

FINANCIAL HEALTH

As mentioned above, the school secured approximately \$650,000 of grant support. With that support, and careful budgeting and operational management, the school expects to have approximately \$150,000 remaining at the end of the year as a beginning reserve, which will represent a modest 35 days of cash on hand.

When the school was initially launched, the plan was to increase enrollment next year (2022-2023) by fifty (50) students, which would require the school to add both a 9th grade (current 8th-grade students matriculating up) and a 10th grade (all new students). The board of directors and management recognize that this would be difficult to do. The intention is to only add twenty-five (25) new students, rather than fifty. This reduces expected revenues by approximately \$220,000. To mitigate the impact, the school is evaluating the following changes to the original plan and budget:

- 1) Adding 2, rather than 4, new teachers, reducing costs by approximately \$110,000.
- 2) Bluum has agreed to provide back-office support at no cost, rather than charging approximately \$33,000.
- 3) RISE will be requesting that the rent payment to the school district be reduced to \$136,000 for next year, a saving of \$35,000.
- 4) Due to the significant grant support, the school has sufficient technology and materials to allow the school to reduce its technology budget from \$100,000 to \$50,000.

These changes offset the reduced state revenue; the school would be a little above break-even for next year with 150 students.

FUTURE PLANS

RISE plans to add a class of twenty-five 9th graders in the fall of 2022 and will continue to offer classes and coursework allowing for the progression to a full high school experience.

AUTHORIZER SUPPORT

- Support from the district and all staff in continuously educating all KSD staff of the benefit of having local school choice.
- Assistance from KSD to keep all seats at RISE occupied.
- Willingness by the KSD School Board to allow RISE to alter the charter moving forward to meet the academic performance standards as defined in the charter.
- KSD needs to provide RISE with their portion of the ESSER funds for RISE to be financially solvent in 2022-2023.
- KSD must communicate a clear marketing plan demonstrating how the proposed supplemental levy will impact RISE students.

