Application Preliminary Evaluation Packet

For each section, please rate the response then explain your rating by specifying strengths and weaknesses in the space provided. Where applicable, you should elaborate on concerns by specifying additional information you would request or follow-up questions that you have.

Each section presents key characteristics of an “excellent” response. In general, the following definitions should guide your ratings.

- **Inadequate:** The response either fails to entirely address the selection criteria or addresses some of the criteria; yet the responses lack adequate detail and/or raise substantial concerns about the applicant’s preparation for and ability to start or operate a charter school successfully.

- **Average:** The response indicates solid preparation and grasp of key issues. It contains some of the characteristics of an excellent response although additional support or information may be needed in places.

- **Excellent:** The response demonstrates a thorough understanding of key issues and the ability to start a charter school successfully. It addresses the topic with clear, specific and accurate information that reflects thorough preparation.

Subcommittee Signatures

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>Jennie Adams</td>
<td><strong>May 17, 2012</strong></td>
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<td>John Betterton</td>
<td><strong>May 17, 2012</strong></td>
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<td>Kwan Graham</td>
<td><strong>May 17, 2012</strong></td>
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<td>Richard Hooker</td>
<td><strong>May 17, 2012</strong></td>
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<td>Paul Norcross</td>
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A. Mission Statement and Purpose for Existence
An excellent mission statement will have the following characteristics:
- Clear, focused and compelling
- Likely to improve education outcomes
- Expressing clear guiding purposes
- Identifying priorities that meet the six legislated purposes of the NC charter school law
- Specific and measurable performance objectives, over time, outlining the school's achievement goals
- Evidence of strong community support and stated need for the school.

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Mission Statement:
Strengths

The need for the proposed school is strong. Good breakdown of feeder schools.

They have talked to a lot of community people and organizations.

Because they were a private school, they have established a presence in the community.

They have a 10 year history of successful operation as a private school and have still given a commitment to serving minority students and closing achievement gaps for their targeted student population.

Their table of purposes is aligned with their mission statement.

They support what they discuss.

Concerns and Additional Questions

Note: Cover letter is missing a signature.

B. Governance
An excellent application will demonstrate the following characteristics related to the Governance and Management plan:
- Proposed board members will contribute the wide range of experience and expertise that will be needed to oversee a successful charter school such as education, management, financial planning, law, and community outreach (including the attachment of their one page resumes)
- Clear description of selection and removal procedures, term limits, meeting schedules, and powers and duties of board members (including a conflict of interest policy)
- Organizational goals and performance measures to chart
- Clear distinction between the roles and responsibilities of the board members, school administrators, and EMO staff (if applicable)
- Copy of the EMO management agreement (if applicable) and how the charter school board of directors will retain ultimate responsibility for the school
- Details explaining how the board evaluated the selected EMO as compared to others and how this nonprofit board will annually evaluate this relationship against measurable objectives

School Name: StudentFirst Academy
Provide evidence that the proposed EMO has a history of academic and financial successes
Plan for meaningful involvement of parents and community members in the governance of the school
Organizational plan, with a chart, that clearly outlines roles and responsibilities for implementing the school program successfully as well as a description of entities identified on the provided chart.
Inclusion of the organizational articles of incorporation, by laws, and conflict of interest policies that reveal clear understanding of charter school governance
Clear description of the enrollment policy including which, if any, statutorily allowed enrollment preferences the school proposes to offer
Explanation of criteria for enrollment decisions and the lottery process to be used
Clear procedures for withdrawals and transfers from the school that will support an orderly transition for exiting students or a clear plan for developing such procedures

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**Governance and Operation:**

**Strengths**
The board members are strong and bring a lot to the table.  
Pgs. 29 - 39

**Concerns and Additional Questions**

Note: The Advisory Council and DPI do not belong on the organizational chart.  These need to be removed.  
Pg. 26

Concern was expressed that meeting places can be in a variety of places.  These locations need to be accessible to parents.  
Pg. 42, Section 10A

They must give notice of all meetings and be sure to post it.  Review Open Meeting Laws.  
Pg. 42

The board does not want to delegate the powers of the board to two individuals.  
Pg. 46 - Section 10

What does the word “Member” of corporation mean?  Please clarify terminology.  Are these board members?  
Article 7, section 2

These by-laws do not fit the structure of a charter school.  Applicants need to take a serious look at all of their by-laws.  
Pg. 48 “Inspection Rights”

Section 3:  Needs to conform with the law.  
Pg. 49

Distribution of assets does not match charter school law.  
Pg. 49 – XII

Applicants say the provisions of the Articles of Incorporation can override their by-laws.  They need to clarify this.  Why would you create something that could be in conflict?  Please rewrite to avoid this conflict.

**C. Education Program**

An excellent proposal will demonstrate the following qualities related to the Educational Program:
- Alignment between the school’s mission and its goals, objectives and standards

School Name:  StudentFirst Academy
• Goals and objectives that are clear, specific, measurable, ambitious and attainable
• Performance standards aligned with the goals as well as state and federal requirements
• The curriculum framework is clearly presented, aligned with the school’s mission, and provides an appropriate level of detail for the objectives, content, and skills for each subject and for all grades the school will serve.
• Details about the type of learning environment, class size, and teaching methods
• The curriculum is supported by research and by applicant experience.
• A clear outline of how the school will monitor the implementation of the curriculum. The plan identifies a timeline, a lead contact, action steps, and how this information will be used in facilitating professional development.
• The school day and school calendar are structured in ways that align with the educational program.
• A convincing plan for ongoing curriculum development (e.g., revision of standards and benchmarks, improvement of curriculum alignment, and assessment development) is included.
• Details in how the school will involve parents and community within the educational program.
• Describe how students that are not performing at expected levels – whether at-risk or gifted – will receive additional assistance to ensure continued student growth.
• Listing of any co-curricular or extra-curricular programs that are planned and how the applicant proposes to fund and deliver them.
• Evidence that school staff will receive focused professional development to implement the school mission and instructional methodologies.
• Provide, if a private school conversion, details about the academic success of that school as well as the rationale for wanting to become a public entity.

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<tr>
<td>1-8 students per class in K-2 is commendable as are the other class sizes listed.</td>
<td>Pg. 85</td>
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<tr>
<td>The cultural arts addition is great.</td>
<td>Pg. 91</td>
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<td>Their extended day is commendable.</td>
<td>Pg. 92</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reference to brain science is also good.</td>
<td>Pgs. 95-97</td>
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<tr>
<td>Their physical fitness program is great.</td>
<td>Pgs. 103-108</td>
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<td>They have very strong committees.</td>
<td>Pg. 109</td>
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<td>They use more than one assessment.</td>
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**Education Plan:**

**Strengths**

- Be consistent with terminology, i.e. PTA and PTO
- The applicants need to follow state licensure regulations.

**Concerns and Additional Questions**

**D. Special Education**

An excellent application will have the following characteristics regarding the plan for Serving Students with Special Needs:

School Name: StudentFirst Academy
• Realistic plan to identify and meet the learning needs of at-risk students, students with disabilities, gifted/talented students, and English language learners
• Timeline, lead contact, and intervention process with specific action steps for meeting learning needs of students with special needs
• Plans for serving special populations align with the overall curriculum, instructional approaches, and the school mission

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**Concerns and Additional Questions**

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**E. Student Conduct and Discipline**

An excellent application will include:
• Policies for addressing expulsion, suspension and education of expelled or suspended students that provide adequately for the safety of students and staff; provide due process for students; serve the best interests of the school’s students; and create a positive environment for learning.
• Included in this plan is a description of the process for disciplining students with disabilities.
• A process for parental appeal of disciplinary decisions through a grievance procedure.
• Sample handbooks and policies already discussed by the applicant group.

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<td>Student Conduct and Discipline:</td>
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**Concerns and Additional Questions**

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<td>Pg. 113, II - Policy statement</td>
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**F. Projected Staff**

An excellent application will include:
• A description of the process that will be used to advertise for, select, and employ school leadership, instructional staff, and other employees.

School Name: StudentFirst Academy
- An explanation of the relationship that will exist between the charter school and its employees. If partnering with an EMO, a clear description of their role, if any, in the hiring/firing process.
- Qualifications and job descriptions are clearly explained; and should the applicant have already identified individuals for specific positions, resumes are provided for review.
- A plan for the development, mentorship, retention, and regular evaluation of staff that is manageable and is clearly linked to the school’s mission and educational program, including a timeline, a lead contact, and specific action steps.
- A collection of employment policies OR clear plan for timely development of such policies that will include staff grievance procedures and employment/dismissal protocols.
- Details on how the charter school will regularly evaluate its instructional and administrative staff.

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**Projected Staff:**

**Strengths**

**Page Reference**

**Concerns and Additional Questions**

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<tr>
<td>Pay to Learn coordinator is a part time position.</td>
<td>Pg. 168</td>
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<td>What is the relationship with the Community Center and the school? Is the Community director the PE teacher? Please clarify this position.</td>
<td>Pgs. 213 and 283</td>
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<td>Instructional vs. non-instructional staff is over half non-instructional. The sub-committee just noted that this is a different weighting than is normally seen in a charter school.</td>
<td>Pg. 233</td>
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**G. Enrollment and Business Plan**

An excellent proposal will present a Business Plan with the following characteristics:
- Budget assumptions and financial planning based on realistic revenue and expenditure projections for five years based on minimum enrollment needed for solvency as well as at 100% enrollment
- Spending priorities that align with the school’s mission, curriculum, and plans for management, professional development, and growth
- Maintenance of a small, contingency reserve
- Budget format as prescribed by the application that reveals realistic cash flow projection for the first year of operation including a plan for funding cash flow shortfalls
- Sound financial management systems
- Adequate and reasonable plan to manage start-up costs
- Description of how the school will conduct an annual audit of the financial (including the name and contact information for auditing firm) and programmatic operations
- Details on how the school plans to market itself to ensure equal access by all students
- Results of any surveys or demographic studies performed by the applicant to create this proposal.
- Dates, times, or locations of meetings held to talk about this proposal with members of the public to ascertain the level of public interest in the proposed charter school
- An evaluation of the impact this charter school would have on nearby public schools
- Provided information about how the school proposes to comply with the statute to mirror the diversity of the local education agency after its first year of operation
- Definitive policies and procedures for recruiting, registering, and admitting students that reflect the racial composition of the school district or targeted school population.

School Name:  StudentFirst Academy

6
**Enrollment and Business Plan: Strengths**

**Concerns and Additional Questions**

All Mecklenburg County students are eligible to attend. This must be changed to specify that all students domiciled in NC are eligible to attend.

Admission requirements may NOT restrict enrollment. This part needs to be changed.

Budget has an estimate of only 5% EC students. This is very low based on state averages.

Noted that there is no money allocated for computers until the second year.

This shows a negative number for the 3rd year. Please explain. This would put the school operating in the red.

The applicants list a finance director but the budget does not account for this position. This needs clarification.

No financial auditor listed but it does say they will do this.

Under investment policy, this can only apply to private funds not public school funds.

**H. Insurance and Transportation**

An excellent application will provide

- Adequate assurance that the school will meet applicable insurance requirements.
- Statement regarding whether the school plans to provide transportation for its pupils and, if so,
- Clear description of how the school plans to meet the transportation needs of its pupils
- Viable plan specifically addressing transportation needs of low-income and academically low-achieving students that is also reflected in the proposed budget

**School Name:** StudentFirst Academy
There is no budget allocation for transportation even though the applicants say they will provide cabs and run buses. Is this what you mean with the line item saying student travel? The budget must be consistent with the transportation plan.

I. Facilities and Equipment
An excellent Facility plan will have the following characteristics:
If a facility has been identified --
- Designation of the proposed facility
- Evidence that the facility will be appropriate for the educational program of the school and adequate for the projected student enrollment
- Adequate reflection of the costs associated with the proposed facility in the budget, including rent, utilities, and maintenance
- Assurance that the proposed facility will be in compliance with applicable building codes, health and safety laws, and with the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
- A sound plan to identify needed renovations as well as the funds and a timeline for the completion of those renovations
- Contingency plans should this facility not be completed in time for the school to open as planned.

If a facility has not yet been identified –
- Description of anticipated facilities needs including evidence that the facility will be appropriate for the educational program of the school and adequate for the projected student enrollment
- Inclusion of costs associated with the anticipated facilities needs in the budget, including rent, utilities, and maintenance
- Evidence to indicate that facilities-related budget assumptions are realistic based on anticipated location, size, etc.
- Assurance that the proposed location will be in compliance with applicable building codes, health and safety laws, and with the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
- Plan for finding a location, including a proposed schedule for doing so
- Contingency plans should this facility not be completed in time for the school to open as planned

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Facility and Equipment: Strengths
It sounds like a wonderful building and site at a great price.
This appears to be a very cooperative arrangement with the local school system.

J. Health and Safety Requirements
An excellent health and safety plan will contain:

School Name: StudentFirst Academy
- Descriptions of the health and safety procedures that ensure compliance with state and federal laws or requirements such as fire and safety regulations, diabetes care plans, and student immunizations.
- Details concerning the school’s crisis plan and dealing with bloodborne pathogens and/or hazardous chemicals.
- Evidence that the school will provide students in grades 9-12 with information on the state’s safe surrender laws and how they will notify parents of the availability of various vaccines at the beginning of each year.
- Explanation, if applicable, how the school will comply with food inspections within their cafeteria or food distribution process.

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### Health and Safety Requirements:

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### Concerns and Additional Questions

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## OVERALL ASSESSMENT

Would you, as a subcommittee, recommend an interview for this application? Remember that a subcommittee is not a quorum of the whole Council and has no authority to bind the Council to a particular recommendation. This rubric, and the following recommendation, is simply a starting point for Council deliberations regarding which applicants to invite back for an interview.

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If the recommendation is “no,” provide comments in the appropriate section detailing the reason(s) for not recommending an interview.

### Summary Comments

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