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To: <shannon.scully@andoverma.us >
Subject: Fw: Fusion Memo
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Attachments: Fusion.JBoutline+ TES.docx

FYI

From: Joel Blumstein
Sent: Wednesday, April 3, 2019 11:40 AM
To: Sandra Trach
Cc: cat@lyonsandrogers.com; Tracey Spruce
Subject: Re: Fusion Memo

Sandy,

Following up on my earlier message, I'm attaching the suggestions of Tracey and me for revisions to your Fusion memo. I know this is a lot but we really think it is worth the time to make your memo as strong as possible so as to best support your recommendation. It will help persuade any doubting members of the SC of the soundness of your recommendation and will show the community the thoroughness of your analysis. It also will put us in the best possible position if our decision is subject to judicial review.

I am available any time this afternoon and Tracey is available after 2:00 if you want to discuss.

Joel

From: Joel Blumstein
Sent: Wednesday, April 3, 2019 10:51 AM
To: Sandra Trach
Cc: cat@lyonsandrogers.com; Tracey Spruce
Subject: Fusion Memo

Hi Sandy,

Do you have any time this afternoon? I'd like to give you some feedback from Tracey and me on your Fusion memo. I could either come over to your office or we could do it by phone.

Cat: if you're available to join us by phone, that would be great.

Joel

- A. Of the 11 criteria established by DESE for approval of a private school, I have determined, based on my best professional judgment, that Fusion fails to satisfy the following criteria:

Criterion 2: Physical Plant/Safety

- Focus on lack of nursing coverage
- Why is the presence of a nurse necessary to ensure student safety?
- If there are laws/regulations requiring a certain level of nursing support, identify them (even if they only apply to public schools, they appear to be relevant to assessing efficiency of education, i.e., if student can't receive meds at school or if student unexpectedly requires non-emergency medical attention, education may be interrupted by absence of nurse on campus; may not always be possible to schedule classes around student medical needs)

Criterion 3: Curriculum

- Focus on substance of what is offered, rather than student learning time, in this criterion
- Discuss each area where Fusion requirements are less than AHS requirements: math; science? (will Fusion-Andover offer lab courses? If they didn't provide information to answer this question, highlight as a gap in information); PE; Arts/Digital. Lots of good info in 3/5/19 memo that should be incorporated here
- Need more explanation of why Fusion's curriculum isn't thorough. In other words, need explanation, evidence and examples to support this conclusory statement:

Fusion reports that their curriculum is designed to meet a variety of state standards. They report that content has been organized to match common pacing, while also incorporating state specific standards and frameworks. In reviewing Fusion's unit plans for middle school and high school courses, it seems unlikely that a student could meet the breadth and depth of the curricular requirements (i.e. enduring understandings, essential questions, student abilities, performance tasks including labs, textbook reading and final exams) within the programmatic instructional time as outlined by Fusion.

- The phrase "it seems unlikely" is tentative. If the conclusion is that it won't, we should say that, and explain WHY. The parenthetical may offer some of the WHY, but more detail is needed. Explanation of WHY for each (or most) of the subject areas would strengthen this conclusion.

Criterion 8: Student Services

- Focus on lack of nurse; 504/ADA compliance; lack of non-discrimination policy

Criterion 10: Student Learning Time

- Focus on quantitative comparison between APS/State learning time requirements and Fusion requirements (20.833 hours vs 119 hours for full credit course)
- Discuss concern that Fusion includes time in Homework Café in time on learning totals; make clear that APS students also have homework and so can't just add Fusion's Homework Café as part of learning time and then compare to APS in-class learning time (include actual instructional hours/week for full-time student at Fusion vs APS)
- Also include more qualitative analysis that, even accepting that 1:1 teaching can be more efficient than 25:1 teaching, Fusion does not allow adequate time to get through full-course material. This is the case for advanced students, no less for struggling students. [need reasoned explanation for why 1:1 model doesn't make up for reduced instructional time]

- Other private schools don't necessarily meet 990 hours standard; explain why Fusion's failure to do so raises concern
- To make these points, consider including a chart comparing weekly instructional time Fusion vs APS, total instructional time per course, and total instructional time per school year
- Need examples to explain "vastly different" conclusion (last paragraph before "application materials" section). Consider including a chart listing core courses for AHS graduation vs Fusion and explanation of Mass Core requirements, with details and examples of how Fusion's coursework doesn't meet this standard
 - In the first memo, some of this is outlined, but it's not entirely clear to the reader why Fusion is insufficient (e.g., why isn't Fusion's social studies curriculum equal? 2 credits of social studies plus ½ credit each of economics and gov't seem relatively equivalent on their face; similar re: health courses)

B. In addition, despite numerous requests for information, I am unable to conclude that Fusion satisfies the following criteria due to the lack of adequate documentation:

Criterion 5: School Staff

- Focus on request for data on teacher turnover and failure to produce such data and so can not conclude that instruction will be thorough and efficient
- Note absence of information re: whether teachers are required to have subject matter expertise in subject they teach (i.e., if teacher with background in music required to teach chemistry or pre-calculus, difficult to conclude instruction under those circumstances would be thorough or efficient).
- Note absence of information re: how much preparation time teachers are given/paid for. Adequate prep time impacts teachers' ability to be thorough and efficient. Include comparative information about prep time for APS teachers.
- Note absence of information re: availability of professional development and support for teachers (including whether they're paid for such time). Include comparative information about PD and departmental/programmatic support for APS teachers.
- Note absence of information re: compensation structure for teachers (salary vs hourly; guaranteed vs fluctuating hours; confirm teachers are paid for all hours worked). Include comparative information about APS teacher compensation.
- Note absence of information re: employment relationship (Employee at-will? Employee under contract? Independent contractor?).
- Note absence of information re: teacher performance evaluation and how Fusion determines effectiveness of teaching. Include comparative information about APS teacher evaluation.

Criterion 6: Administration

- Focus on failure of Fusion to produce staff, student and parent handbooks that communicate school policies

Criterion 9: Financial Support

- Focus on failure of Fusion to provide evidence of financial solvency and resources to sustain the educational program and documentation of legal status

C. Recommendation

- Based on the above analysis, I recommend disapproval of Fusion's application