

# Orleans Parish School Board



## **2017 Charter School RFA Independent Evaluation Report Type 1 Charter Application for: Audubon Schools- Gentilly**

**Submitted by: French and  
Montessori Education, Inc.**

Thibodeaux  
& Walden  
Consulting

## Introduction

The Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB) 2017 Charter School Request for Application process sought proposals from highly qualified applicants to open new schools to provide high-quality educational settings to the students and families of Orleans Parish. Charter applicants are evaluated against the following criteria, as described in the OPSB Charter School Performance Framework:

*Academic Performance* – Is the proposed academic program likely to be successful?

*Organizational Performance* – Is the organization likely to be effective and well run?

*Financial Performance* – Is the proposed school likely to be financially viable?

*Evidence of Capacity* – Does the applicant team demonstrate the necessary combination of skills, competencies, and experiences to execute the plan set forth in the proposal?

In total, a high quality application will demonstrate evidence that the team has the capacity needed in all key areas in order to open and operate a charter school that improves academic outcomes for students.

## Ratings

For each measure an application receives one of four ratings:

*Meets Standard* - The response reflects a thorough understanding of key issues.

*Approaches Standard* - The response meets the criteria in many respects, but lacks detail and/or requires additional information in one or more areas.

*Does Not Meet Standard* - The response meets the criteria in some respects but has substantial gaps in a number of areas.

*Falls Far Below Standard*- The response is wholly undeveloped or significantly incomplete and raises substantial concerns about the viability of the plan or the applicant’s ability to carry it out.

## Proposal Overview

### Mission

Audubon Schools-Gentilly will be a world class learning institution that grooms the next generation of global citizens. We develop, educate and cultivate the students who create the future and change the world. The mission of the school is to provide a culturally rich education utilizing the French and Montessori pedagogies.

### Enrollment Projections

Grade Level	Number of Students					
	Year 1 2018	Year 2 2019	Year 3 2020	Year 4 2021	Year 5 2022	Capacity 2024
<b>Pre-K</b>	70	70	70	70	70	70
<b>K</b>	40	40	40	40	40	40
<b>1</b>	40	40	40	40	40	40
<b>2</b>	40	40	40	40	40	40
<b>3</b>		35	35	35	35	35
<b>4</b>			40	40	35	35

<b>5</b>				35	35	35
<b>6</b>					35	35
<b>7</b>						40
<b>8</b>						40
<b>PLANNED</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>265</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>335</b>	<b>430</b>
<b>MAXIMUM</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>265</b>	<b>305</b>	<b>340</b>	<b>450</b>

### Team Member Information

<b>Full Name</b>	<b>Current Job Title and Employment</b>	<b>Position with Proposed School</b>
<b>Latoye A. Brown</b>	CEO/Principal, Audubon Schools	CEO/Principal, Audubon Schools
<b>Justin Anderson</b>	Director of Finance/CFO, FAME, Inc.	Director of Finance/CFO, FAME, Inc.
<b>Adrienne Collopy</b>	Assistant Principal, Audubon Schools	Assistant Principal, Audubon Schools
<b>Alisa Dupre</b>	Director Operations, FAME, Inc.	Director Operations, FAME, Inc.
<b>Erica A. Murray</b>	Board Member, FAME, Inc.	Board Member, FAME, Inc.

### Board Member Information

Byron Lilly, Derek Bardell, Erica Murray, Javier Jalice, Calvin Tregre, Dorcas Omojola, Eva Alito, Omar Mason

### Independent Evaluation Team Members

Millard House, Carolyn Trice, Abby Farber

## Executive Summary

The recommendation of the independent evaluators is that OPSB approve the application for Audubon Schools-Gentilly submitted by French and Montessori Education, Inc. (FAME) The applicant team submitted a strong application and met the standards in most categories.

The applicant shared that it has a slow growth approach to serve nearly 1,300 students on three campuses by 2020. The plan included outreach in different areas of New Orleans to determine interest and need for a non-traditional education throughout Orleans Parish. In preparation for opening its first replication facility, the CEO, Director of Finance and Director of Operations plan to work with a replication committee that has been established by the board. The committee will consist of board members, parents, teachers, the CEO, Director of Finance and Director of Operations. The evaluator team believed this type of collaboration and inclusion would set the stage for a smart and strong growth plan.

The leadership team was highly experienced and shared a common school vision and culture, which was demonstrated not only in the application, but also during the capacity interview, when all members of the team demonstrated their ability to speak to all elements of the school's curriculum and operations. The operations team, comprised of a Director of Operations and a Director of Finance, were also very experienced team members.

Over the course of the last 10 years, the organization has been able to overcome different associated risk that came along with opening and maintaining their current school. A slight concern from the evaluator team

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was if the applicant’s past performance results would be sustainable given the proposed school would be a part of OneApp. Participation in OneApp would introduce a new operational element, as different types of students, compared to the student population that attend the current school, could enroll in the new school. As a completely open enrollment school, the applicant may very well face some new challenges ahead.

Overall, the current school has a strong performance record as it has consistently achieved an “A” rating from the Louisiana Department of Education (LDE). The evaluation team feels confident recommending that FAME’s application be approved.

## Summary of Ratings

Section	Rating
Academic Plan	APPROACHES
Organizational Plan	MEETS
Finance Plan	MEETS
Evidence of Capacity	MEETS

## Final Recommendation

**Approve**

## Academic Model

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*A strong Educational Program Design is coherent overall and aligned internally with the school’s mission and vision, Organizational Plan, and Financial Plan.*

ACADEMIC MODEL			
<input type="checkbox"/> Meets the Standard	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Approaches the Standard	<input type="checkbox"/> Does Not Meet the Standard	<input type="checkbox"/> Falls Far Below the Standard
<p>COMMENTS: The academic model approached the standard because while the overall mission and vision were well-presented and compelling, the application lacked some details concerning academic intervention methods.</p> <p>The application outlined a very clear and concise mission and vision that has been previously executed in FAME’s current school. The applicant was able to thoroughly articulate how the school would embrace culture, creativity and community - three core values that form the framework by which adults and students will interact. The school would also seek input from stakeholders to develop additional values that would be aligned with the school’s mission.</p> <p>The applicant proposed to use the existing Montessori curriculum with the addition of to-be-created French language immersion curriculum. The school’s child-centered approach would embrace Montessori principles that include morning and afternoon work cycles, a well-prepared environment and independent learning for all students. The evaluator team believed the curriculum plan was thoughtful and clearly described throughout the application process.</p> <p>The proposed curriculum, in addition to specified Montessori materials, would utilize textbooks and materials that are aligned to the Common Core. The applicant did outline a process to recruit instructional staff through the American Montessori Society and CODOFIL. Additionally, the school would provide professional development (PD) opportunities to all teachers, in addition to having instructional leaders, to facilitate knowledge sharing during a weekly school meeting. The evaluator team believed the outlined</p>			

approach to PD was a key aspect to be able to operationalize the mission and vision of the school.

The application also explained how ongoing assessments would be used to measure student growth and success. The Star Assessment will be the assessment tool that will be utilized in grades Pre-K through 4. Plans were also in place to use the McGraw Hill developing skills assessment twice a year. The evaluator team did believe the absence of detailed descriptions of the methods or practices teachers would implement to perform academic interventions was a weakness of the overall plan.

Finally, the applicant has scheduled time to further develop their instructional plan in the fall of 2017, but the fact that the applicant has not yet selected the materials for the French language curriculum was also a slight concern for the evaluator team.

## Organizational Plan

*A strong Organizational Plan is coherent overall and aligned internally with the school's mission and vision, Education Program, and Financial Plan.*

ORGANIZATIONAL PLAN			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Meets the Standard	<input type="checkbox"/> Approaches the Standard	<input type="checkbox"/> Does Not Meet the Standard	<input type="checkbox"/> Falls Far Below the Standard
<p>COMMENTS: The organizational plan met the standard because the applicant presented a relatively strong plan supported by an experienced leadership team and board.</p> <p>Both the school leader and board chair have served in leadership positions where they had to engage in creative problem solving, setting and meeting goals, and establishing meaningful relationships with other organizations. During the capacity interview, the CEO/principal came across as extremely knowledgeable in all aspects of the school and articulated details about the</p>			

academic model and the finance plan.

The interview also provided an opportunity for a board member to exhibit the existing strong capacity of the board and how passionate, knowledgeable and cohesive the team is. In addition to the applicant already having a diverse and experienced board in place, board roles and responsibilities were clearly described in the application. Additionally, various committees that board members are already assigned were outlined to be Academic Excellence, Governance, Development, Facilities, Organization Development and Legal committees. The existence of the experienced board, led the evaluator team to have a high level of confidence that the board will be able to ensure the good financial health and high performance expectations of the proposed school.

Although staffing for the second school has not begun, thorough job descriptions and qualifications were presented and were aligned to the mission and vision of the proposed school. The applicant also outlined a methodical approach to staff recruitment and retention and a well-developed professional development plan for instructional staff was also described.

Although partnerships have been established between the current school and several organizations, the applicant shared that these relationships have not yet been formalized for the proposed school. Though the school does not currently have mission critical partners, they have developed meaningful relationships with Teaching Responsible Earth Education (TREE), Xavier University's Confucius Institute and FC Nola Soccer League and clear expectations have been set forth to ensure that these partners understand how to support the mission and vision of the school.

Finally, the team presented an extremely comprehensive and thoughtful start up plan and timeline. Specific dates and expectations of all the necessary items that will be expected of a successful start up organization were detailed and included fundraising, financial processes, and their approach to human resources. Policies and procedures have been developed

and were operationally sound and the proposed school’s facility plans were also well-thought out. During the interview process, the applicant shared that they have done extensive research and already started to communicate with OPSB about possible facilities based on upcoming school closings. It was also very clear that there was a strong level of real estate experience and capacity on the board to help navigate that facility search.

## Finance Plan

*A strong Financial Plan is coherent overall and aligned internally with the school’s mission and vision, Educational Program, and Organizational Plan.*

FINANCE PLAN			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Meets the Standard	<input type="checkbox"/> Approaches the Standard	<input type="checkbox"/> Does Not Meet the Standard	<input type="checkbox"/> Falls Far Below the Standard
<p>COMMENTS: The financial plan met the standard because the budget and overall financial oversight and management plans were well-developed and aligned to the academic model and organizational plan.</p> <p>The applicant demonstrated very strong financial leadership with an experienced Director of Finance, who was also a CPA. The Director of Finance, who took over financial operations and brought them in-house in 2016, drove the changes which resulted in the school being taken off a probationary status by the state, as well as receiving a clean audit in less than one year of his joining the team. The financial policies and procedures presented were in alignment with GAAP principles and other regulations.</p> <p>The presented budget was balanced and was developed using conservative revenue assumptions and incorporated expense assumptions based on the existing school. The applicant also explained their approach as to not be dependent on philanthropic funding, rather to use any additional grant funds to “provide additional resources and activities that further the mission</p>			

of the school.” The evaluator team deemed that approach to be in accordance with charter school finance best practices.

In getting further insight into how the applicant would manage any unexpected budget shortages, the applicant explained that if necessary, it would either reduce expenses, seek private philanthropy, or that FAME itself would provide a no-cost loan to the school.

## Evidence of Capacity

*Evidence of Capacity indicates the ability of school founders to execute on the school’s mission and vision, Educational Program, Organizational Plan, and Financial Plan.*

EVIDENCE OF CAPACITY			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Meets the Standard	<input type="checkbox"/> Approaches the Standard	<input type="checkbox"/> Does Not Meet the Standard	<input type="checkbox"/> Falls Far Below the Standard
<p>COMMENTS: The evidence of capacity met the standard because the team demonstrated significant capacity to open and operate the school in both the application and the capacity interview.</p> <p>The fact that the current FAME school received an “A” rating from LDE in both the 2013-14 and 2014-15 school years, gave the evaluator team proven evidence that supported the applicant’s likelihood of being able to replicate positive results for the students who would attend the new school.</p> <p>The evaluator team deemed the applicant to have substantial capacity based on how they were able to clearly articulate their academic model and how the leadership team has proven their ability to overcome and learned from past operational challenges. The applicant’s ability to course correct past issues with their financial management showed resilience and demonstrated the competency of the school’s management team and school board to work</p>			

together to solve problems. Additionally, the application included a comprehensive narrative to describe key operational components, such as financial management and governance for the new school.