



May 5, 2017

Dr. Henderson Lewis
Superintendent
Orleans Parish School Board
3520 General DeGaulle Drive
New Orleans, LA 70114

Dear Dr. Lewis:

We appreciate the opportunity to respond to the Independent Evaluation Report for Audubon Schools Gentilly Charter School Application. We would like to clarify two points raised within the report to ensure that the evaluation team has the most complete picture of Audubon Schools Gentilly.

Clarification # 1-Academic Model: Intervention Models

“the application lacked some details concerning academic intervention methods” (p.7)

“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” (p. 8)

Response

Montessori is an academic model that is structured in a manner where students progress through the curriculum at their own pace. As stated in the application,

The ability to allow students to work at their own pace through each learning cycle is a hallmark of the Audubon model. Rather than a prescribed schedule where students all learn the same thing at the same time in the same way, the Audubon model allows students to receive lessons in an array of learning configurations based on what they need, regardless of their grade placement. (Proposal Narrative p.5)

For the typical student, this individualized approach to teaching and learning is a built in intervention that teachers employ for students. When students are lagging behind their peers, this presents an opportunity for them to receive small group instruction and even one on one instruction if needed, all within the regular classroom environment. This typically addresses concerns which are more content based in nature and not symptomatic of more foundational gaps in knowledge or learning/cognitive difficulties.

When students present concerns which are suggestive of issues beyond not understanding a few lessons or taking more time to catch on to new learning, the teacher will then engage in the Response to Intervention (RtI) process. This process was described in the Measurement and

Remediation portion of the proposal narrative (see below, excerpted from Proposal Narrative p.13). The process consists of:

- **Universal Screenings for all Students.** Students in grades Pre-K(4) through 8th grade will be screened in Reading and Math at the beginning of each school year and then benchmarked in January and April using the Renaissance Learning STAR Assessments. The results of these assessments will be reviewed by the Intervention Team consisting of the School Leader or Lead Teacher, Reading Interventionist, Math Interventionist, Classroom Teacher and SPED Teacher. Students scoring “In Need of Intervention” or below will have an individualized intervention plan created based on the intensity of their need. The intervention plan will include both in-class and external interventions (as needed) and progress monitoring every 2 weeks. A meeting is then scheduled between the teacher and parent to discuss the results of the screener, share the intervention plan and develop a plan for interventions that can be supported in the home.
- **High Quality, Tiered Classroom Instruction.** The Montessori classroom environment provides an attractive and engaging venue that invites students to explore and inquire which leads to learning. In addition to the environment, each classroom will be led by a Montessori and LA Certified teacher and supported by a Bi-Lingual Co-Teacher. These structure will allow teachers to provide small group, differentiated lessons to students on their instructional level throughout the day. It will also allow the teachers to implement classroom level interventions based on the plans developed from the universal screeners and other classroom observations that have been made. The School Leader and Lead Teacher will make frequent observations of each classroom and provide feedback and support to teachers based upon these observations.
- **Ongoing Assessment.** Observation and anecdotal records are the primary assessment tools in the Montessori classroom. In addition to these tools, teachers will also maintain a portfolio of student work products which demonstrate student mastery. During weekly collaborative meetings and Intervention Team check-ins, this portfolio will provide evidence to document student progress or lack thereof towards mastering content. It will then be used to make adjustments to student intervention plans or instructional delivery based on the need. When it becomes available, teachers will also utilize LEAP data to assist in making intervention decisions.
- **Parent Involvement.** Parents play a crucial part in the intervention process. At Audubon Gentilly, teachers will meet with parents of students in need of intervention following the administration of the Universal Screener. The purpose of this meeting is to share the results of the screener with parents, the proposed intervention(s) that will be implemented, who will deliver the intervention, how frequently it will be delivered and what type of progress can be expected from the intervention. The meeting will also touch on what possible next steps are for the child as a result of intervention (stop, continue, change or move forward with further evaluation) and also what the parent can do at home to support the intervention. During the meeting, the teacher will also ask the parent to share any concerns they may have regarding the plan and then address or make changes to the plan as is appropriate.

This is a high level description of the process that is used to provide intervention to students. At Audubon Schools Gentilly, the teacher works as a part of the intervention team. Below is a more specific description of the role of the teacher in the intervention process.

Tier I: Universal Screenings

1. Everyone is screened and parents are notified of screening results.
2. Teachers identify students who have areas of concern; speak with parents and intervention team to develop an intervention plan which includes the identification of target skills.
3. Teachers provide differentiated instruction in target skills during a 2 week increment with weekly progress monitoring. Parents receive weekly reports.
4. At the end of 2 weeks, teacher evaluates to see if intervention is working
 - a. If student is showing adequate progress towards goal, continue intervention
 - b. If student is not showing adequate progress towards goal, change intervention and return to start of Step 3
 - i. This cycle continues a minimum of 3 times (6 weeks)
5. If student does not show adequate progress towards goal after 3 rounds (6 weeks) of varying interventions, a 300R (Students Assistance Team Referral) is completed for student.
6. Intervention continues to be administered until a meeting is held with the RtI team.

Tier II: Small Group Support (no more than 6 students per group)

1. There are two methods of entry to this Tier
 - a. Universal screening (students who score on the Red level)
 - b. RtI team placement
2. Teachers contact parents to revise or create intervention plan.
 - a. Intervention plan should consist of the following components:
 - i. Identified skill to target
 - ii. Research based intervention (chosen from list of recommended interventions)
 - iii. Time period (minimum 60 minutes per week, for at least 6 weeks), parent should be notified of progress at least once every six weeks)
 - iv. Person responsible
 - v. Baseline data (either universal screening data or pre-test)
 - vi. Target or Goal (set using the aimline method)
3. Benchmark is re-administered to student
4. Teacher and RtI team reconvene to evaluate student progress.
 - a. If significant progress is made, intervention continues until goal is met or next benchmark period
 - b. If significant progress is not made, student is referred for Tier III services
5. SAT team meeting is held to decide if student progresses to Tier III or remains in Tier II

Tier III: Individual Support

1. There are two methods of entry to the Tier
 - a. Referral from RtI team
 - b. IEP Data Gathering/Evaluation Process
2. RtI team works with teacher and parent to create intervention plan

Levels of Intervention (Universal Screenings)

Urgent Intervention (Red Band) → move to Tier II with interventionist level support

Intervention (Yellow Band) → remains in Tier I with class level intervention

On Watch (Blue) → remains in Tier I with support and extra practice

On Level (Green) → remains in Tier I with differentiated instruction to support achievement

Essentially, the teacher utilizes the Benchmark Assessments to determine areas of concern for students. The teacher then designs and implements an intervention plan created using one of the adopted programs (i.e. Renaissance Learning STAR Reading) for the student with assistance and input from the Intervention Team and parent. The intervention plan is a targeted skill approach to addressing foundational skill deficiencies. For example, if the Universal Screener showed that a student had a weakness in Reading, the teacher would then access the students Instructional Planning report to determine which foundational reading skills were most important to address for intervention and also the order in which the skills should be addressed. The teacher would then plan short mini-lessons on the targeted skill(s) which would be delivered to the student based on the agreed upon frequency and number of minutes. The teacher would administer a progress monitoring assessment to the student at least once per week utilizing the goal that was set during the planning of the intervention as a guide as to how effective the intervention is for the student. The teacher would then review the progress monitoring data and use the above guidelines to determine whether to continue the intervention or change the intervention based on student performance.

In Tier I, the teacher delivers intervention through regular differentiated instruction. In a Montessori classroom, this may mean that instruction is given to a large group, a small group or one on one depending on the needs of the students in the class. In Tier II, the teacher creates instruction that specifically addresses the needs of those students who are still having difficulties even with differentiated instruction in Tier I. This instruction will be delivered to small groups of no more than 6 students at a time either within the classroom or through a pullout. It may also be delivered by the classroom teacher or an Interventionist. The decision of place and personnel is made based on several factors such as total number of students in need of services, skill addressed through intervention, and the grade level of students being serviced. It will always be our goal to maximize our ability to service students, so this flexibility is necessary. Tier III is almost always intensive intervention delivered by a designated Interventionist. In rare situations where the classroom teacher has a specialized training or background, the classroom teacher may provide Tier III support.

Clarification #2-Academic Model: Selection of Materials

“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” (p.8)

Response

As we shared in the application, one of the norms that we embrace which shapes our interactions with peers is that of collaboration (Proposal Narrative p.19). We have found that our best ideas and processes are shaped when we include the people who are on the front line of implementation in the decision making process. This is why we utilize a collaborative curriculum adoption process for new adoptions when there are more than one acceptable alternative. When we adopt a new textbook or curriculum, we utilize the following steps:

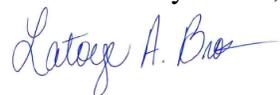
1. Senior Administration and instructional leadership (from new and existing sites) research available and reputable materials that are aligned with our school mission and pedagogy. A list of acceptable choices is created.
2. Samples of materials from the compiled list of acceptable choices are ordered for review by lead teachers.
3. Lead teachers are given samples of materials to review and a checklist of questions to help them rate the samples and make a recommendation for adoption.
4. Recommendations are reviewed by the Senior Administration and instructional leadership (from new and existing sites) for consensus. Additional discussions with teachers may be warranted if consensus cannot be reached.
5. The Senior Administration reviews all information and makes a final decision regarding adoption.

At this time, we have compiled research on possible French Language curriculums but have not yet chosen a curriculum because we want the school leader and instructional coach of Audubon Gentilly to be a part of that process. When hiring has been completed for those two key positions, finalizing curriculum will be a priority of their pre-opening duties. We anticipate that hiring of both of these positions will be concluded by Spring 2018 which will give us ample time to adopt a French Language curriculum and order the corresponding materials for implementation in Fall 2018.

Conclusion

We hope that the information presented above has clarified some of the questions which were not clearly answered in our application or capacity interview. We are excited about the possibility of replicating our current programming and hope that the recommendation of the Independent Evaluators will be accepted so that we can provide a unique educational experience to more children of this great city.

Educationally Yours,



Latoye A. Brown

CEO/Principal