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ILLINOIS STATE CHARTER SCHOOL COMMISSION ISSUES CHARTER APPROVAL DECISIONS
Approves Two New Charter Schools and Denies One Application

March 19, 2013 (Chicago) – The Illinois State Charter School Commission (“Commission”) today approved two new charter schools to open in Chicago in 2013. Operated by Concept Schools, the schools will open as K-8 schools and add a grade each year to reach grades K-12 by 2017. The Commission also denied another applicant, Pathways in Education, citing concerns with proposed governance and management structure.

“Unfortunately, we still have many Illinois students who are not graduating with the knowledge they need to be successful in college or in a career,” said Greg Richmond, chair of the Commission. “We believe that these two schools will help more children graduate and succeed in life.”

The Commission was established in 2011 to evaluate proposals for new charter schools that are denied by local school districts and subsequently appealed to the state. It is comprised of educators, business people and education advocates from cities throughout Illinois, including Peoria, Rockford, Crete, DeKalb and Chicago. Of the 11 appeals to the Commission thus far, the decision announced today marks its first approvals of proposals denied by a local school district.

Two applicants appealed recent decisions by the Chicago Public Schools denying them a charter: Pathways in Education and Concept Schools. Concept Schools, which currently runs the Chicago Math and Science Academy and the Quest Charter School in Peoria, submitted an application for a school in McKinley Park and one in the Lincoln Square neighborhood.

The Commission is required to review appeals as if they are new applications, without giving deference to findings or conclusions of the local school district or information previously provided by the charter applicant. Instead, the Commission conducts its own significant due diligence on each appeal, putting together an evaluation team to review legal compliance, academic capacity, financial and governance information, and more from each applicant.

“These recommendations are the result of extensive review and a thorough analysis by our experienced evaluation team,” said Jeanne Nowaczewski, executive director of the Commission. “The Commission’s decisions today are consistent with its mission of fostering only excellent charter schools. I am confident these will be the right decisions for the children of Chicago.”

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