Multi-District Appeal Withdrawn

In the last 90 days, the Commission received and processed a multi-district appeal filed by Urban Prep Academies (UPA). UPA runs three single gender charter high schools in Chicago District 299, and in July filed a charter school proposal to run a middle-school/high school for boys in District 205 and ten adjoining elementary districts in Illinois. The Commission received nine appeals in October. Commission staff assembled an evaluation team with experts in single gender schools, curriculum and instruction, governance, and finance. Commission staff and the evaluation team conducted two days of charter school interviews: both the applicant and each district were interviewed by the evaluation team. A week after the interview, UPA chose to withdraw its nine appeals from the Commission. The case permitted the Commission to investigate new processes for multi-district appeals and to learn more about another area of Illinois in Chicago's southern suburbs.

Frequently Asked Questions about the Commission

How many appeals has the Commission decided and what have been their outcomes?
From Nov. 2011 to present, the Commission processed 38 appeals from districts throughout Illinois. Of those appeals, 35 were withdrawn, one was denied, and two were granted.

How is the Commission funded?
The Illinois Charter School Law explicitly provides that the Commission should “operate with dedicated resources and staff qualified to execute the day-to-day responsibilities of charter school authorizing” and provides that the Commission may seek funding to support its work in two ways: by assessing an administrative fee to the schools it authorizes and by seeking philanthropic donations. The assessment of an administrative fee is a common practice among charter school authorizers (see Section 27A-7.5). Illinois law follows national best practices in holding that: “The Commission may charge a charter school it authorizes a fee, not to exceed 3% of the revenue provided to the school, to cover the cost of undertaking the ongoing administrative responsibilities of the eligible chartering authority.” Currently, the Commission charges a 2.5% fee to the 4 schools for which it serves as authorizer. The law also provides that the Commission is authorized to “receive and expend gifts, grants and donations.” Over 50% of the Commission’s $600,000 FY14 budget is comprised of revenue from fees; the remainder is from start-up grants received from foundations. To date, no state funding has ever been appropriated to the Commission from general revenue funds.

How are Commissioners appointed and are they paid for their work?
The nine Commissioners are volunteers. Commissioners are nominated to serve by the Governor and are appointed by the State Board of Education. Terms are for four years.

Upcoming Commission Meetings
Tuesday, Feb. 18 from 3 - 6pm, Southland College Prep, 4601 Sauk Trail, Richton Park, IL 60471