



Memo

To: Patricia Roe, Board Chair of Flanner House Elementary

From: Brandon Brown, Director of Charter Schools

Date: August 18, 2014

Re: Implications of IDOE Testing Security Investigation & Ongoing Performance Concerns

Purpose

On August 18, 2014, the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) will present its findings related to two investigations of Flanner House Elementary School's administration of ISTEP+ for the 2013 and 2014 testing sessions. This memo provides an overview of the ramifications of the IDOE's investigation, details ongoing and serious concerns with Flanner House Elementary's performance, and outlines the immediate implications on the future operations of the school.

Background

Flanner House Elementary (FHE) was awarded a charter by the Mayor of Indianapolis in 2002 (see original Charter Agreement, attached), and the school's charter was renewed in 2009 (see Charter Renewal, attached). There have been a variety of significant concerns with FHE's performance subsequent to the charter renewal. These concerns are delineated in the following sections.

After ongoing review by OEI staff, including nearly 50 meetings or conversations during the past two years alone, it has become clear that FHE has demonstrated serious and significant deficiencies related to its Charter Agreement. Each year, OEI staff and/or teams of outside experts complete a comprehensive charter assessment, conduct monthly meetings with school administration, attend board meetings, analyze financial and academic data, and conduct and review periodic site visits by external evaluators. Based on evidence from these activities, FHE has consistently failed to meet performance standards established in Section 16.4 of the charter agreement.

Specifically, FHE has failed to meet performance standards in the areas of academics, finance, governance, and operations.

Academics

- FHE has failed to meet standard on indicators 1.1 (Is the school's academic performance meeting state expectations, as measured by Indiana's accountability system?) and 1.2 (Are students making substantial and adequate gains over time, as measured using the Indiana Growth Model?) for the entire term of the current charter.
- The most recent performance data from the 2011-2012 school year demonstrates low overall proficiency, as just 53.2% of students across all grades were proficient on ISTEP+.
- This triggered a required "School Improvement Plan" from OEI for the 2012-2013 school year, in which FHE outlined three academic goals for which it would be held accountable.
- Due to the testing security concerns detailed later in this memo, FHE has been unable to demonstrate that it met the goals and improvements required by its October 2012 School Improvement Plan.
- Results on the ISTEP+ for the 2012-2013 school year showed an abnormal increase in proficiency rates, which triggered OEI to submit a Testing Irregularity Report to IDOE and perform a subsequent review.
- During the 2013-2014 ISTEP+ test administration, an FHE teacher reported a potential testing security breach, resulting in another review of testing procedures by OEI.
- These reports culminated in IDOE investigations of FHE's 2013 and 2014 ISTEP+ test administrations, both of which found clear violations of testing procedures established by the Indiana Department of Education.

Finance



- FHE has failed to receive a financial audit for the 2012-2013 school year, meaning the school has been out of compliance with both state statute and OEI regulations for several months.
- For the 2012-2013 school year, FHE failed to meet its charter enrollment target of 220 for both the September and February counts.
- As most recently reported, enrollment was at 176 students for Fall 2014 for a target of 220.
- In August 2014, FHE failed to meet staff payroll without the use of a credit line.

Governance

- On OEI's Performance Framework, FHE received a "Does Not Meet Standard" or "Approaching Standard" for school leader and board leadership for the past two years.
- The school leader has not developed the skill set necessary to execute school improvement strategies or demonstrate sufficient oversight of academic and instructional programs.
- OEI has not received a board-issued school leader evaluation for the past two school years, which is especially concerning due to the failure of the school leader to "Meet Standard" on the performance framework for the past two years.
- The board has achieved quorum in just over 50% of scheduled board meetings in the last three years.
- A number of board members have been found to be disengaged, most clearly evidenced by sporadic and/or lack of attendance at meetings.
- The board also has had significant turnover and difficulty recruiting new members to fill vacancies.
- Per page 47 of the charter renewal, "The board will request that staff and parents evaluate their performance at least once a year through surveys distributed to families as part of the overall assessment process, and separate confidential surveys distributed to all staff members(both teaching and non-instructional)". Through meeting minutes and OEI meeting attendance, there is no evidence that this has occurred during the past two years.

Operations

- Over the past two years, FHE's landlord, Flanner House, Inc. (FHI), has made several complaints about FHE and has threatened to evict the school from the building.
- The situation required OEI to intervene in July 2013 by mediating a resolution between the organizations, just weeks before a new school year began.
- OEI has expressed concerns on multiple occasions over the safety of the FHE facility.
- A consistent lack of staff members present at the front desk has allowed entrance to the building without check-in procedures.
- The administrative team lacks the experience to effectively support the school leader in other school areas (management, human resources, discipline, operations, etc.), as evidenced by late and inaccurate submission of reports (to both OEI and the IDOE), parent and staff complaints, and through conversations with OEI staff.
- Over the past two years, FHE has been late in submitting over 75% of required compliance documentation, often submitting documents over a month after the deadline.
- Most recently, FHE failed to submit an important special education report to the IDOE and was unresponsive for several weeks when asked to submit the report after the deadline.

Implications & Immediate Next Steps

Flanner House Elementary School's performance has been such that the Office of Education Innovation has grounds to revoke its charter pursuant to the Charter Agreement.

OEI requires that the Flanner House Elementary Board of Directors take swift action in response to these deficiencies on **Wednesday, August 20, 2014**. OEI will then respond in a manner consistent with the severity of the deficiencies noted in this memo weighed against the appropriateness of the board's response.