

Princeton Charter School

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To: Hon. Kimberley Harrington, Acting Commissioner of Education
From: Princeton Charter School
Date: February 21, 2017
Re: Princeton Public Schools (PPS) Memo of 2/17/2017

On February 17, 2017, Princeton Public Schools submitted a memo and an accompanying letter from a private citizen that made new arguments about the Princeton Charter School’s response memo of 2/10/2017. We do not wish to belabor every point but given the material misstatements and misrepresentations that are immediately apparent, we write this brief memo to set the record straight.

- PPS claims that the PCS lottery numbers are skewed by out of district demand. This claim is factually incorrect. We did not and do not include any out-of-district applications in these numbers. All of our numbers reflect students entered in the kindergarten lottery (or the lottery for any grade) whose families provided Princeton addresses at the time of registration. In the few instances where parents were moving to Princeton, parents were required to provide proof that a home was under construction, that they had a lease, or that they had a work arrangement that provided housing in Princeton (e.g. housing guaranteed by the Institute for Advanced Study).
- PPS claims that it should not be subject to comparisons on PARCC scores because of its high opt-out rate; this refusal rate was in response to a major campaign by Save our Schools NJ in Princeton to encourage opting-out. Instead, PPS offers its 2013-14 NJ ASK scores. Given that our expansion request is centered in the kindergarten and elementary school level, we present the relevant comparisons for these schools, which PPS failed to do:

2013-14 NJ ASK Scores

	Princeton Charter School	Littlebrook	Community Park	Johnson Park	Riverside
Peer Percentile					
Academic Achievement	97	44	70	93	53
Student Growth	81	62	49	82	63
Statewide Percentile					
Academic Achievement	100	76	78	75	64
Student Growth	91	78	68	78	64

As these NJDOE data indicate, PCS outperforms the PPS district even with the earlier NJ ASK data.

- PPS claims that PCS believes the \$900,000 reserved from an earlier PPS waiver to the 2% cap should be used to pay for the PCS expansion. We highlighted the previous waiver, along with the facts that PPS has not precluded applying for additional waivers due to the population growth and has publicly discussed the need for a bond referendum, to highlight that PPS's claims about a 2% cap are inaccurate in the recent past and prospectively.
- PPS presents enrollment data from 2009. PPS's historical enrollment numbers seem, at first glance, to be in conflict with some of the Department of Education numbers. However, we are choosing not to challenge those numbers right now. Instead, we want to reiterate that recent elementary school-aged growth in Princeton has not yet come close to stabilization given the 750+ family housing units that are still in the process of becoming occupied. The responsible time for PCS to make kindergarten its main point of entry is before PPS hires new staff and embarks on a bond referendum to build new facilities to accommodate this growth rather than after these fixed costs have been undertaken.
- PPS's claim that, over the past five years, 50 students have left Princeton Charter School to return to the district is wrong and no sourcing is provided for this data. According to our records, the correct figure is 39. Moreover, some of the children who returned to PPS had families who continued to enroll some of their children at PCS. An average attrition rate of under 8 students per year represents 2% of PCS's enrollment, and indicates that, contrary to the PPS claim, satisfaction with PCS is very high.
- Finally, PPS includes a private citizen's letter that claims Julia Sass Rubin's analysis to be "thoughtful and rigorous" and takes issue with the fact that the PCS rebuttal points out misstatements of fact that Ms. Rubin and PPS have presented to the community. It is telling that this letter does not point out any specific place where PCS was inaccurate in its corrections to Sass Rubin's public presentations. As the PCS memo of 2/10/2017 details, these misstatements constituted major errors in characterizing the demographics of the Free and Reduced lunch population in kindergarten, on cost, and on school performance.

In sum, considering all the available information, PCS's application should be approved to increase opportunities for economically disadvantaged students, to further empower parents, and reward an exceptional track record of success at PCS.