



2020 NEW SCHOOL APPLICATION RECOMMENDATION REPORT FOR: PINNACLES PREP

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Report Submitted By

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INTRODUCTION

The Washington State Charter School Commission (Commission) was created in 2013, after the approval of Initiative 1240 and subsequent passage of Engrossed Second Substitute Senate Bill 6194, to serve as a statewide charter school authorizer. The eleven-member Commission is tasked with running a process to approve new charter schools, and effectively monitoring the schools it authorizes through ongoing oversight.

Mission

To authorize high quality public charter schools and provide effective oversight and transparent accountability to improve educational outcomes for at-risk students.

Values

Student-Centered
Cultural and Community Responsiveness
Excellence and Continuous Learning
Accountability/Responsibility
Transparency
Innovation

Vision

Foster innovation and ensure excellence so that every student has access to and thrives in a high-quality public school.

The Commission is committed to being culturally responsive. To that end, the Commission has adopted cultural competence definitions to support this commitment.

Cultural Inclusion

Inclusion is widely thought of as a practice of ensuring that people in organizations feel they belong, are engaged and are connected through their work to the goals and objectives of the organization. Miller and Katz (2002) present a common definition: "Inclusion is a sense of belonging: feeling respected, valued for who you are; feeling a level of supportive energy and commitment from others so that you can do your best work." Inclusion is a shift in organization culture. The process of inclusion engages each individual and makes each feel valued and essential to the success of the organization.

Individuals function at full capacity, feel more valued and are included in the organization's mission. This culture shift creates higher-performing organizations where motivation and morale soar.¹

Cultural Responsive Education Systems

Culturally responsive educational systems are grounded in the beliefs that all culturally and linguistically diverse students can excel in academic endeavors when their culture, language, heritage, and experiences are valued and used to facilitate their learning and development, and they are provided access to high quality teachers, programs, and resources.²

Cultural Competency

Cultural competence provides a set of skills that professionals need in order to improve practice to serve all students and communicate effectively with their families. These skills enable the educator to build on the cultural and language qualities that young people bring to the classroom rather than viewing those qualities as deficits.

Cultural competence allows educators to ask questions about their practice in order to successfully teach students who come from different cultural backgrounds. Developing skills in cultural competence is like learning a language, a sport or an instrument.

The learner must learn, relearn, continuously practice, and develop in an environment of constant change. Cultures and individuals are dynamic – they constantly adapt and evolve.

Cultural competence is:

- Knowing the community where the school is located
- Understanding all people have a unique world view
- Using curriculum and implementing an educational program that is respectful of and relevant to the cultures represented in its student body
- Being alert to the ways that culture affects who we are
- Places the focus of responsibility on the professional and the institution

¹ Puget Sound Educational Service District. (2014). Racial Equity Policy. (p. 7) Seattle, WA: Blanford, S.

² Leadscape, National Institute for Urban School Improvement. (2010) Culturally Responsive Coaching for Inclusive Schools. (p. 4) Tempe, AZ: Mulligan, E. M., Kozleski, E. M.

- The examination of systems, structures, policies and practices for their impact on all students and families viewing those systems as deficits.³

Focus on Quality

The New School Application solicitation and the resulting evaluation process are rigorous and demanding. The process is designed to ensure that charter school operators possess the capacity to implement sound strategies, practices, and methodologies. Successful applicants will clearly demonstrate high levels of expertise and capacity in the areas of education, charter school finance, administration, and management, as well as high expectations for excellence in professional standards and student achievement.

Autonomy and Accountability

Charter schools have broad autonomy, but not without strong accountability. Charter schools will be accountable to the Commission for meeting academic, financial, and organizational performance standards. The three areas of performance covered by the evaluation policy correspond directly with the three components of a strong charter school application and the three key areas of responsibility outlined in charter contracts.

Accountability

Evaluation of charter school performance is guided by three fundamental questions:

- Is the educational program a success?
- Is the school financially viable?
- Is the organization effective and well-run?

The answers to each of these three questions are essential to a comprehensive evaluation of charter school performance.

Charter schools are evaluated annually against standards in the following categories:

Academic Performance – Charter schools are required to make demonstrable improvements in student performance over the term of the charter. Schools are required to administer all state standardized tests and to adhere to academic standards.

Financial Performance – Schools must demonstrate the proper use of public funds, as evidenced by annual balanced budgets, sound audit reports, and conforming to generally accepted accounting practices.

Organizational Performance – A nonprofit corporation holds the charter school contract and is responsible for complying with both the terms in the contract and all applicable laws. This charter school board of directors is a public body and is required to adhere to public meeting and public records laws.

Approved charter schools will be granted a five-year charter contract. Schools unable to demonstrate academic progress or unable to comply with legal/ contractual or financial requirements may face sanctions, non-renewal, or charter revocation.

Autonomy

In exchange for rigorous accountability, charter school operators experience substantially greater authority to make decisions related to the following:

- Personnel
- School management and operations
- Finances
- Curriculum
- School day and calendar
- Education Service Provider (ESP) agreements

Evaluation Process

Commission staff manage the application evaluation process and evaluation teams that include national and local experience and expertise on the operation of successful charter schools. The Commission staff leads these teams throughout the evaluation process to produce a merit-based recommendation regarding whether to approve or deny each proposal. This report from the evaluation team is the culmination of three stages of review:

Proposal Evaluation

The evaluation team conducted individual and group assessments of the merits of the proposal based on the complete submission. In the case of experienced operators, the Commission and NACSA supplemented the evaluation team's work with due diligence to verify claims made in the proposals.

Capacity Interview

After reviewing the application and discussing the findings of their individual reviews, the evaluation team conducted an in-person assessment of the applicant team's capacity.

³ Center for Improvement of Student Learning, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction.

<http://www.k12.wa.us/CISL/EliminatingtheGaps/CulturalCompetence/default.aspx>

Evaluation Team Ratings

The evaluation team members each produced independent, ratings and comments regarding whether to recommend the proposal for approval or denial.

Commission staff collated the team ratings into an overall recommendation report to approve or deny each application based on its merits as outlined in the rubric. The authority and responsibility to decide whether to approve or deny each application rests with the members of the Commission.

Recommendation Report Contents

This recommendation report includes the following:

Proposal Overview

Basic information about the proposed school as presented in the application.

Recommendation

An overall rating regarding whether the proposal meets the criteria for approval.

Evaluation

Analysis of the proposal based on four primary areas of plan development and the capacity of the applicant team to execute the plan as presented:

Educational Program Plan and Capacity

- School Overview
- Family and Community Engagement
- School Culture and Climate
- Student Recruitment and Enrollment
- Program Overview
- Curriculum and Instructional Design
- Student Performance Standards
- High School Graduation Requirements (if applicable)
- Supplemental Programming
- School Calendar and Schedule
- Special populations and at-risk students
- Student Discipline Policy and Plan
- Educational Program Capacity.

Organizational Plan and Capacity

- Legal Status and Governing Documents
- Board Members and Governance
- Organization Structure
- Advisory bodies
- Grievance/Complaint Process
- District Partnerships
- Education Service Providers (ESP) and Other partnerships

- Staffing plans, Hiring, Management, and Evaluation
- Professional Development
- Performance Framework
- Facilities
- Transportation, Safety, and Food Service
- Operations Plan and Capacity

Financial Plan and Capacity

- Financial Plan
- Financial Management Capacity

Existing Operators (if applicable)

- Track record of academic success
- Organizational soundness
- Plans for network growth

Rating Characteristics

Evaluation teams assess each application against the published evaluation rubric. In general, the following definitions guide evaluator ratings:

Exceeds

Clear and complete responses to all prompts. Consistently detailed, comprehensive explanations provided, including specific evidence that shows robust preparation. Presents a clear, explicit picture of how the school expects to operate. When applicable, responses connect cohesively to other sections of the program. When applicable, the information/evidence demonstrates a high degree of capacity to implement the proposed program.

Meets

Clear and complete responses to all prompts. Sufficient explanations provided, including evidence that shows preparation. Presents a clear picture of how the school expects to operate. When applicable, responses connect to other sections of the program. When applicable, the information/evidence provided demonstrates capacity to implement the proposed program.

Partially Meets

Clear and complete response to some but not all prompts. The response provides partial explanations and lacks meaningful detail or requires additional information in one or more key areas. When applicable, responses provide limited connections to other sections. When applicable, the information/evidence provided demonstrates some/limited capacity to implement the proposed program.

Does Not Meet

Unclear and/or incomplete responses to most prompts. The response provides insufficient details to most prompts. Responses lack connections to related sections. Responses demonstrate lack of preparation and/or raises substantial concerns about the applicant's understanding of, or ability to, implement an effective plan.

APPLICATION OVERVIEW

Applicant Name

Jill Fineis, Rick Wray, and Sara Rolfs

Proposed School Name

Pinnacles Prep

Proposed Location

Wenatchee

Board Members

Rick Wray – Board Chair
Sara Rolfs – Secretary
Tyler McGee - Treasurer
Karen Rutherford
Karla Soto Mullins
Flora Fernandez
Tod Treat

Proposed School Leader

Jill Fineis

Enrollment Projections

Academic Year	Planned Enrollment	Maximum Enrollment	Grades Served
2021/2022	100	120	Grades 6-7
2022/2023	170	180	Grades 6-8
2023/2024	240	240	Grades 6-9
2024/2025	300	300	Grades 6-10
2025/2026	360	360	Grades 6-11

Mission, Vision, Values

Mission: We exist to cultivate curious, confident, and self-directed students who lead and succeed in college, their careers, and their communities.

Vision: Our graduates will be leaders in driving our Valley’s future forward with the knowledge, skills, and mindsets needed to make it a thriving economic, scientific, and artistic hub for the 21st century.

The school culture will reflect values summarized by “EPIC”:

- Equity: We practice equity: We develop the empathy needed to champion equity for all. We embed equity into every aspect of our school community.
 - Perseverance: We persevere: We develop the perseverance it takes to tackle rigorous academic,
-

social, and personal challenges. We know perseverance leads to resilience and resilience leads to confidence and empowerment.

- Inquiry: We are curious: We have a strong desire to learn and ask good questions about issues that have relevance because they spark learning. Inquiry creates ideas that lead to innovation and problem-solving.
- Collaboration: We collaborate: We are stronger together—student and teachers, teachers and family, and school and community. Through true collaboration, we can develop the vision and voice necessary to lead the changes we want to see in our school, community, and world.

Long Term Goals

Goal 1: Pinnacles Prep creates and sustains a diverse culture that is equitable and inclusive of all stakeholders, as evidenced by a community-created playbook with key performance indicators.

Goal 2: Pinnacles Prep supports all students to have the option of attending a rigorous post-secondary option, and 100% of graduates will be accepted into at least one college.

Goal 3: Pinnacles Prep will hire a high-quality staff that is diverse and mission-aligned and stays with the school for at least three years in order to teach and mentor students.

Goal 4: Pinnacles Prep maintains a diverse board of trustees who represent the demographic target population of our school with at least 50% identifying as Latinx.

Education Program Terms

Program Term 1: Integrated Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Practices

Program Term 2: Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) Supports

Program Term 3: Place-Based Education (PBE)

Educational Model/Instructional Design

Pinnacles Prep, at capacity, is designed to serve 420 students in grades 6-12 in the Wenatchee Valley, and it prioritizes students who are living in poverty, receiving English-language learner supports, identify as Latinx, and are receiving special education services, as well as others who are systemically left behind. The school intends to provide the culturally responsive, rigorous, and supportive academic environment students need to become active participants in their own education and community, closing the opportunity and leadership gap for these students through the program elements listed above.

To provide academic excellence and to compensate for any past learning challenges students may have experienced in their previous schooling, the program calls for accelerated and individually supported learning.

Key features include:

- Competence-based education;
- A model of comprehensive, integrated multi-tiered systems of support;
- Extended learning time amounting to 253.75 hours more in middle school and 143 hours more in high schools than are required by state law;
- Individualized learning plans;

- Daily one-on-one mentoring and weekly connection with families;
- An additional intervention and extension period called “PEAK” that is designed to target specific skills gaps and individual student needs;
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) practices incorporating innovative structures that have been successful elsewhere, developed by an inclusive DEI study team patterned after Seattle Public Schools’ Racial Equity Team Model;
- A model of socio-emotional learning, the Compass Model, that has a record of gap-closing results; and
- A daily block for place-based education, with a model rooted in the Teton Science Schools’ (TSS) model

Anticipated Student Population

Pinnacles Prep expects to serve a majority of students identified as “at-risk.” In South Wenatchee 82% of families are low-income, and half of the district’s Title I schools are located, and 49% of the district’s English-language learners (ELL) reside, in the area. Based on the school’s proposed location, community engagement, targeted recruitment, and a proposed weighted student lottery, the applicants project a student population that includes:

Free and Reduced Price Lunch Eligible	Students with Disabilities	English Language Learners	Highly Capable	Migrant	Latinx*
60%	13%	20%	5%	15%	60%

* OSPI Report Card data uses the classification of “Hispanic/Latino of any race(s),” however, the applicants used the term “Latinx” throughout the application and it will therefore be used in this report.

RECOMMENDATION

Pinnacles Prep

APPROVE

Application Strengths Summary

- The proposal clearly shows that it was developed to meet identified community needs based on ample and inclusive community input.
- The program is impressively designed for meeting the academic and developmental needs of students deemed at-risk.
- The school establishes high expectations for its students with detailed, well-designed, well-planned supports to make those expectation attainable.
- The plans for ongoing community engagement, inclusion, cultural humility and sensitivity, and representation reflect the founders' sincerity, sophistication, and self-awareness in designing a school to serve traditionally marginalized youth and their families.
- The founding team is of high capacity and experience and inspires confidence in their commitment as well as their capability.
- The proposal envisions many high capacity strategic partners, many of which already have entered into tentative arrangement with the school.
- The school has secured a contingent lease of a suitable, well-located, and well-maintained facility.

Application Weaknesses Summary

- The board could benefit from members with legal experience and form outside legal counsel.
- There are several inconsistencies regarding the delivery of special education services and the staffing model may be insufficient depending on the percentage of students with disabilities who enroll and the severity of their needs.
- While the applicant has an excellent opportunity by locating at an already established community center facility, managing the build-out, both logistically and financially may be challenging for a new and growing school.
- The decision initially not to offer much supplemental programming through the school itself is well explained and community-grounded, but there may be opportunities when planning options with third parties to ensure that this approach does not forgo important opportunities for accelerated learning.

EDUCATIONAL PLAN AND CAPACITY

Pinnacles Prep

MEETS

Summary

Pinnacles Prep, at capacity, is designed to serve 420 students in Grades 6-12 in the Wenatchee Valley. The applicant proposes a school that meets mandate of the charter school law by “priorit[izing] students who are living in poverty, receiving English-language learner supports, are receiving special education services, and others who are systemically left behind and not currently being prepared to serve as future leaders in the community” (pg. 10). One of the school’s goals states that, “Pinnacles Prep supports all students to have the option of attending a rigorous post-secondary option, and 100% of graduates will be accepted into at least one college (pg. 15).

The educational program at Pinnacles Prep results from extensive community input that commenced before the idea of establishing a charter school was conceived. The planning and design process included hundreds of meetings and planning sessions with members of the community the school will serve. Each meeting and planning session were promoted and held in Spanish as well as English which is further evidence of the founding group’s commitment to developing an educational program that is responsive to the community’s needs. The program features:

- High expectations, with high school graduation requirements above state minimums;
- Core courses aligned with Washington State K-12 Learning Standards and electives on topics such as the arts, health and wellness, computer science, career and technical education (CTE), independent studies, and foreign language, with a particular focus on STEM, which was identified by the community as being the most important;
- Competency Based Education (CBE) requiring students to demonstrate proficiency on standards or competencies to move to the next level of content, and Standards-Based Reporting Systems and rubrics collaboratively created in order to define proficiency (While the school will use a competency-based grading system, the applicants are not proposing to use a competency-based *crediting* system which would require the State Board of Education to grant a waiver);
- Culturally responsive pedagogy and blended learning structures put student needs at the forefront of the instructional environment by organizing the classroom environment based on formative assessment data;
- Extended learning opportunities, including significantly more instructional hours in both middle and high school than are required by state law;
- Heterogeneous grouping of students;
- Differentiated learning, including small-group instruction, individualized instruction, personalized learning, peer tutoring, real world application, and computer-adaptive interventions;
- A tiered system of interventions for students who are identified as needing additional supports and an intervention/extension learning block outside of regular coursework called Personalized Elevation of Academic Knowledge (PEAK) that is targeted specifically to each student’s current

- needs;
- Daily individual mentoring of every student;
 - Use of volunteer guest teachers and tutors to provide additional support to students;
 - Regular check-in with families and annual home visits, as well as weekly Monday morning Community Meeting and Advisory time;
 - Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS), implemented within a tiered intervention format, with daily feedback to each student from mentors; and
 - Middle school looping of teachers through grades 6, 7, and 8.

According to the application, Pinnacles Prep believes it can close the opportunity and leadership gap through the following three educational program terms for its students through:

1. Integrated Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Practices (DEI) that will be compiled in a DEI Playbook developed by an inclusive DEI Study Team and incorporated throughout the school's program;
2. Social-Emotional Learning Supports using the Valor Compass model, a comprehensive human development curriculum that will be delivered through weekly circle discussions and reinforced in individual mentoring and weekly coordinating meetings of a Student Study team; and
3. Place-Based Education (PBE), an immersive learning experience that places students in local heritage, cultures, landscapes, opportunities, and experiences and uses these as a foundation for the study of subjects across the curriculum and is based on the model of one of the school's partners, Teton Science Schools.

During the Capacity Interview, the applicants were asked about, what appeared to be a lack of social studies curriculum in the application. The team explained how its immersive PBE model incorporates the use of social studies and civics through the study of local, relevant, and challenging projects. Given the school's commitment to prepare students to be future community leaders, it will be important to develop a robust vision for the social studies and civics curriculum and instruction.

The applicants anticipate drawing students from the Wenatchee and Eastmont school districts, as well as 15% from private schools. They have already implemented extensive outreach to, and inclusion of, the communities the school will serve, and they have well-developed plans for targeted recruiting. The applicants indicated that they would work with the Commission to establish a weighted lottery preference favoring at-risk students though no specifics were provided aside from a preference for students of full-time staff.

Students will have Individualized Learning Plan that serves as an "educational roadmap...as they record and track achievement of goals and competencies" (pg. 25). The program will exceed Washington State Learning Standards by including Valor Collegiate Compass Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Standards that reinforce DEI practices and Teton Science Schools' Place Network (TSSPN) Competencies, 21st century skills for engaging in the community and graduating prepared to meaningfully participate in our community and world. In order to be promoted to the next grade level, students need to show proficiency in 80% of the identified priority standards, but the applicants demonstrate sensitivity to the perils of retention and will utilize multiple avenues to avoid this.

Pinnacles Prep will use “diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments and administer all state-required assessments,” as well as the ELPA21 for English-language learners and Curriculum Associates i-Ready Assessments to pinpoint students’ strengths and knowledge gaps in math and English Language Arts (pg. 106). Teachers will “examine weekly formative assessment data to know whether students are making progress toward learning targets” (pg. 108).

The applicant described how they will use their MTSS system to address the needs of all students, including students with disabilities. However, it will be important for the team to anticipate and plan for the possibility of students enrolling with moderate to severe disabilities. If Pinnacles Prep enrollment estimate of 13% students with disabilities is low, or the needs of the students that enroll are particularly severe, the current staffing model may need to be adjusted to meet student needs. The applicant recognized this in the Capacity Interview and stated they would make the necessary staffing changes.

The school leadership team brings extensive experience that inspires confidence in their ability to implement their model successfully. The three current leaders, all fellows in Washington State Charter Schools Association (WA Charters) School Leadership Design Fellowship.

- Rick Wray, co-founder and current founding board chair. Mr. Wray has extensive leadership experience as evidenced by founding and serving as “executive director for three educational organizations: Higher Ground Learning, Spy Hop Productions, and SHIFT Workshops” (pg. 73). These programs have served over 25,000 diverse youth.
- Sara Rolfs, co-founder and board secretary. Ms. Rolfs experience includes initiating “STEAM push-ins at Wenatchee School District’s elementary schools, co-founding the, K-Art Program bringing art instruction to all Kindergarteners in two districts,” launching “Every Kid At the PAC (EKAP) program for local performing arts center,” and co-creating “the *Kids in the Forest* and the local *SnowSchool* programs that promote outdoor, place-based learning about forest health, wildfire ecology and snow science” (pg. 73).
- Jill Fineis, founding principal. Ms. Fineis brings “nearly 20 years of education experience” and is “deeply steeped in the sciences” (pg. 73). She is a “graduate of Teton Science Schools’ Graduate Program in Place-Based Education” and has “11 years of experience differentiating science instruction for students with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) through teaching and instructional coaching” (pg. 73). Ms. Fineis possesses a Washington state principal credential and did her “principal internship experience was in Wenatchee School District’s WestSide High School, which is an alternative learning environment with high Latinx and low-income population” (pg. 73).

Overall, the applicant has provided a plan for a strong educational program that was developed alongside the community to meet the specific needs of students and families in the community. The plans for recruitment to “at-risk” students are solid and the plan to support those student needs is robust. The applicant team brings deep and complementary educational experience and capacity that is needed to bring a high-quality charter public school to fruition.

Educational Plan and Capacity: Analysis and Evaluator Comments

Strengths

- The proposal is aligned with -- and based upon -- pre-existing community priorities and planning, including three community reports by the city of Wenatchee, the Wenatchee School District, and a grass-roots regional organization (Our Valley, Our Future) (pg. 11). The design of the proposed school reflects input from hundreds of community members resulting from over 253 meetings over a two year period (pg. 16 and Attachment 3).
- The application addresses disaggregated achievement gaps and acknowledges and addresses the need for accelerated learning and for addressing non-academic barriers to learning in an at-risk population (pg. 12).
- The mission, vision, and goals are ambitious and compelling, particularly the goal that all students will have the option of attending a rigorous post-secondary school and 100% of graduates will be accepted into at least one college (pg. 15).
- The applicants' community engagement in developing and publicizing the proposal have been culturally and linguistically inclusive, including translation of materials, contracting of a bilingual outreach worker, use of bilingual volunteers, and a Family and Community Engagement Committee with 13 members, 8 of whom are Latinx (pg. 27, Attachment 3). They have ensured cultural inclusion by impressively engaging members of, and organizations serving, at-risk populations in the development of the proposal (pg. 28). Plans for continued outreach include advisory bodies of both students and parents and annual surveys (p29).
- Plans for ongoing family engagement not only set high aspirations but are sensitive to the barriers facing families (Sections 4-6).
- Over 200 families already have expressed interest in enrolling (Attachment 3). The school will hold family events, home visits, and late hours to ensure enrollment materials are obtained & in support of families (Attachment 4).
- The three essential design elements -- 1) Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion; 2) Social-Emotional Learning Supports, and 3) Place-Based Education -- are coherent, well supported by research and evidence of success elsewhere, and aligned to mission and vision, with cultural responsiveness, for addressing equity considerations for the student population to be served (pgs. 30-45, Attachment 6).
- Grade level looping ensures students and teachers are able to build strong relationships critical to the middle school years (pgs. 27, 42).
- The applicants provide a detailed explanation, with strong examples, of a learning environment and curricula that in their model of competency-based education and individualized learning are aligned to the mission and vision and demonstrate cultural responsiveness (Sections 3-6, Attachment 6).
- The curricular choices are explained, both for meeting state standards and for cultural responsiveness). The proposed outcomes are appropriately rigorous in recognition that the pace of learning for students who are behind must be accelerated (pgs. 36-39, 42).

- Multiple strategies are in place to promote student retention including compass circles (pgs. 12, 15, 20, 21, 31-32), the ability of mentors to report issues (pgs. 13, 19, 26), the use of a Student Study Team to review concerns and generate interventions appropriate to the situation (pg. 26), the involvement of the student to develop an Individualized learning plan (pgs. 21, 26, 43), and grade level instruction within the same cohort with middle school looping of teachers to build community and foster vertical alignment of the curriculum (pgs. 26, 42).
- Graduation requirements exceed the number of credits required by Washington state by 5 credits (Attachment 7). Two additional credits must be earned in core content coursework (math and science) and three additional credits in electives (pgs. 51-52).
- To prepare all students for the opportunity to succeed in postsecondary education, the plan contemplates accelerated and extended learning opportunities to overcome academic deficits and obviate the need for remedial learning in college (pg. 52). It includes a college counseling course for all students with students developing individual plans for post-secondary choices (pg. 52).
- Each student will develop a summer plan with his or her mentor (pg. 53). Both Individualized Learning Plans and engagement with families will address supplemental programming (pg. 54).
- The percentage of students representing subgroups including students with disabilities, ELL students, students from low income families, and underrepresented racial/ethnic groups will match or exceed the percentages reported by area districts (pg. 55).
- Plans for meeting the needs of student subgroups are detailed and specific. All students will receive universal screening using i-Ready to identify at risk students early. Multi-tiered Systems of Support are explicitly mapped out for all tiers and different subgroups and are related to the educational program and school design (pgs. 56-59).
- Plan provides for identification of special needs, with precautions against misidentification (pg. 60).
- Annual, daily, and weekly schedules are clear and detailed, with provision for individual assistance through an extension period (PEAK) and for accelerated learning for students who are behind academically (pgs. 68-69, Attachments 8-9).
- Despite some cautions noted under Weaknesses, the applicants' overall approach to tiered student discipline acknowledges the equity and efficacy considerations of serving a diverse, at-risk population, including keen awareness of disproportionality (pgs. 71-72, Attachment 10).
- The applicant team brings a range and depth of experience, not only in school leadership but in the startup and significant funding of educational organizations (pgs. 73-75). Three have been fellows in the WA Charters School Leadership Design Fellowship (pg. 73). They have strong professional and personal ties to, and knowledge of, not only the community generally but the school system in particular (pgs. 74-75). Two board members are Hispanic and bilingual, with ties to community organizations (pgs. 27, 74).
- Plans for recruitment of the family and community development coordinator and director of finance and operations are clear and detailed (pgs. 76-77).

Weaknesses

- The applicant did not indicate or specify in Section 4 or in the Enrollment Plan what their weighted enrollment preferences would be, aside from the sibling preference (pg. 13 and Attachment 4).
- Several community services are mentioned, but more detail is needed to explain how a system of wrap-around services will be created, as opposed to simply referring a student to a particular agency or organization (pgs. 19, 93).
- The expectation that 15% of students at a school designed to serve at-risk students will come from private schools is not explained (pg. 12).
- The plans for special education mention, but do not differentiate among, mild, moderate, and severe disabilities (pgs. 55-56). Contingency planning should be made for staffing and support if the school enrolls students with moderate or severe disabilities.
- The implementation of the tiered system of special education supports indicates that 6-8 weeks will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of Tier II interventions (pg. 61). In many cases, waiting this long without documented improvement can lead to increased academic or behavioral problems.
- The application states, “within our general education classes, external supports will be utilized within an inclusion model at all grade levels to ensure students’ needs are being met in the least restrictive environment (LRE). Students needing additional support will have access to interventions during PEAK time, which are staffed by special education and English-language learner specialist[s]” (pg. 55). This appears inconsistent with a later statement, “Tier 3 supports are intensive and specifically determined by a student’s Individual Education Program (IEP). Supports and services outlined by the IEP team can be implemented at any point during the school day, including during PEAK time” leading to confusion about when 1:1/pull-out services will take place for students whose IEPs require those types of interventions (pg. 61).
- Draft language in the discipline policy includes infractions such as [a lack of] “verbal respect,” “appropriate volume,” and “eye-rolling.” Subjective offenses like these often lead to discipline being administered in an unequal or disproportional way, particularly for students of color. Given the school’s commitment to DEI, it may be useful to reevaluate the offenses that could lead to student being removed from the classroom (Attachment 10).

ORGANIZATIONAL PLAN AND CAPACITY

Pinnacles Prep

MEETS

Summary

The leadership staff is identified as three key positions: Principal, Director of Finance and Operations, and a Dean of Students and Culture. In Year 1 the school will “contract with a consultant Chief Financial Officer, with Joule Growth Partners, who will provide strategic partnership, long-term financial forecasting and financial community development” (pg. 85). The school will work with several mission-aligned partners for curriculum, assessment, instructional and wrap around services, including the North Central Regional Education Service District.

The founding board of directors includes a “Family and Community Engagement (FACE) Committee and the Facility Acquisition and Design Committee” (pg. 79). The Board will partner with BoardOnTrack for resources on board duties and goal tracking and will use a school data dashboard to inform its governance. They have sound plans to transition from a founding to a governing board, and the board plans to be composed of at least 50% Latinx members, which aligns to the projected student demographics. The applicant understands the need to recruit board members with legal and/or financial management experience.

Three advisory groups, a Student Advisory Council, Parent Advisory Council, and DEI Study Team, consisting of students, parents, community members, and faculty, will provide essential input to both staff and the board. The applicants have identified an excellent network of potential community partners and have relatively well-developed plans already in place with several, including:

- Washington State Charter School Association’s True Measure Collaborative;
- North Central Educational Services District (NCESD);
- Teton Science Schools’ Place Network;
- City of Wenatchee Parks and Recreation;
- North Central Washington Regional Library; and
- Columbia Valley Community Health (CVCH).

The applicants have worked hard to establish good relationships with local school districts and keep them informed. They and the Wenatchee School District (WSD) have had a successful experience as co-lead partners on an action item from the communities Our Valley, Our Future (OVOF) strategic plan titled *Community Conversation on Educational Quality and Equity*, and WSD Superintendent Dr. Paul Gordon has expressed interest in being directly involved in the conversation moving forward.

The staffing plan is appropriately phased and calls for teacher-student ratios of between 1:11 and 1:19. Recruitment and hiring of faculty will be through an inclusive process that features “ample time [for the candidate] to prepare for the interview by receiving critical mission-aligned questions ahead of time;”

“group problem-solving and collaboration opportunities during the interview in order to see a more holistic skill set;” “teaching a lesson,” with the opportunity to ask the school for what he or she needs ahead of the demonstration (pg. 98). f Community stakeholders are invited to “observe candidates’ lessons and serve on interview panels” (pgs. 97-98). The applicants stress the importance of teacher retention and identify, and connect to the proposed school program, important research-based factors in the retention both of highly effective teachers generally and of teachers of color in particular.

Evaluation of the principal will be tied to annually identified whole school performance goals and based on the Association for Washington School Principals (AWSP) Leadership Framework for Principal Evaluation. The applicant may want to customize this framework so that it attends to the unique needs of a single-site charter school operator as opposed to a district principal. Teacher evaluations will be based on the Marzano Teacher Evaluation Framework (MTEF).

Professional development plans call for each “faculty member at Pinnacles Prep [to create] a Professional Growth Plan (PGP) with the principal at the beginning of the school year” with “three SMARTER (Specific, Measurable, Actionable, Relevant, Time-bound, and Equitable) goals” (pg. 102). A four-week pre-opening Summer Staff Institute and three-week institutes in subsequent years will orient faculty to the school’s culture and systems. Weekly Monday morning staff sessions of 90 minutes will be “centered on schoolwide priorities of DEI, SEL, and PBE” (pg. 102).

Pinnacles Prep has a draft lease, contingent upon the Commission’s approval of its application, for the Community Center in the South Wenatchee neighborhood, “currently a community center operated by the City of Wenatchee in the heart of the neighborhood that the school has been designed to serve” (pg. 110).

The school “will partner with the North Central Regional Library to provide library services to students and their families through weekly book mobile visits, rotating mobile book carts, and access to online e-book collections” (pg. 111). The school has signed a “draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the City of Wenatchee Parks and Recreation Department giving the school permission to use the park’s outdoor recreation spaces” at the recently renovated Kiwanis Methow Park directly across the street from the school facility (pg. 111).

According to the application, “The campus is currently on a LINK Transit line (local public transportation) and has a stop right in front of the main building on the community center campus. Pinnacles Prep plans to provide LINK Transit bus passes to provide needed transportation” and is exploring contracting a private transportation company if necessary (pg. 113.).

Overall, the applicant team brings a depth and diversity of experience that will lend itself to the challenges that many new charter schools face. The board will need to recruit board members to round out the desired competencies of a strong charter school board. The proposed partnerships with well-regarded educational and community organizations are wise and clearly respond to the needs and desires of the community. Pinnacles prep has proposed and organizational plan that is strong, coherent, and mission-aligned

Organizational Plan and Capacity: Analysis and Evaluator Comments

Strengths

- Three culturally inclusive and well-conceived advisory bodies planned: Student Advisory Council (SAC), Parent Advisory Council (PAC), and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Study Team. (pg. 87.)
- The collaboration with the Wenatchee School District on a Community Conversation on Educational Quality and Equity could foreshadow not only ongoing collaboration but the kind of impact beyond its own program that this school could have on the larger public education system; the Wenatchee superintendent as expressed interest in continuing the conversation (pg. 90, Attachment 18). The applicants document consistent outreach to local districts (Attachment 18). The relationship with the ESD is already well-defined and in the early stages of being formalized (Attachment 20).
- The applicants have initiated or secured relationships with a range of high-capacity partners that appears well selected to support the school's needs and advance its mission (pgs. 19, 91-92). Contracted services through North Central ESD will include participation in the STEM cooperative, back office support, special education services, nursing, technology support, and federal program services (pg. 90, Attachment 20). Over 12 organizations have committed to partner with the school for place-based education (pg. 92, Attachments 3 and 20).
- Faculty recruitment plans are sound given the potential challenges of finding diverse teachers with proven track record of closing achievement gaps to transfer to a new school (pgs. 95-98). Plans for selection of faculty members are inclusive, detailed, and well thought-out for finding teachers and well suited for the school's mission (pg. 98).
- The plans for retention of high-performing teachers are thoroughly grounded in research into retention of minority teachers and of highly effective teachers (pgs. 98-100).
- The professional development (PD) plans are robust and well-researched to equip teachers for success in serving at-risk youth. Each teacher will have a professional growth plan and weekly observations (Attachment 23). A detailed four-week teacher orientation is planned to prepare teachers in the school's program elements and culturally (pg. 22, Attachment 23).
- Performance goals are appropriately ambitious, but attainable (Attachment 24).
- Assessment plans are detailed and comprehensive, and they and school practices like weekly and quarterly data meetings are designed to facilitate individualized monitoring of student progress (pg. 107-109). The board itself will be data oriented in this regard, reviewing disaggregated data throughout the school year on the performance management dashboard (p79-81, 108, Attachment 16).
- The facilities needs of the school are well mapped out and the facility is appropriate (pg. 110-12). The \$2,500 monthly rent is reasonable (Attachment 25).
- The school and areas of residence it will serve are well served by public transportation, and the applicants are planning with local transportation authorities, as well as doing contingency planning for contracted services (pgs. 111-113).

- Safety plans are well developed, with policies from WSSDA (pgs. 113-114).
- The start-up plan (Attachment 27) is thorough, and the applicant team brings ample experience both in the launch of educational programs and the dimensions of organizational and facilities acquisition (pgs. 9, Attachment 25).

Weaknesses

- Governance plans could be strengthened by explicit acknowledgement of the board's role as the party to the charter contract and its responsibility for the contract's fulfillment (pgs. 80-81).
- The Conflict of Interest (not just the Ethics Policy) policy should provide for recusal to avoid real or perceived conflict. The statement should include a set of standard questions and a dollar value for acceptable gifts/entertainment (Attachment. 16).
- The proposal for the parent advisory council could be strengthened with guidelines to ensure that parents of students in subgroups will be represented in its membership. In addition, one parent per grade may be too small in the school's early years and unwieldy in later years (pg. 87).
- The DEI Study Team is described as being focused solely on racial equity, as opposed to equity for all students and subgroups (pg. 87). It also seems very small for its importance.
- The grievance policy could use some more work. In some cultures, direct confrontation between conflicting parties is not possible, necessitating alternative processes (pgs. 88-89). 30 days for resolution of a dispute may be too long in some instances. The policy, or at least planning, should contemplate when legal counsel or an outside investigator may be retained. There may be no appropriate state agency for following up on a complaint past the board, and the Commission is not a default recourse for complainants where no legal or charter contract violation by the school is being asserted. The school's policy cannot dictate whether a state agency shall intervene in what the school deems an internal matter. Confidentiality of complaints cannot always be guaranteed.
- The organizational goal should separate students' feeling safe and feeling included, given the importance of both (Attachment 24).
- The target for the Passion Project goal is 95% completion, which does not align to the fact that all students are required to complete a Passion Project (pg. 37).

FINANCIAL PLAN AND CAPACITY

Pinnacles Prep

MEETS

Summary

According to the applicant, policies and procedures for financial planning will be finalized by the board, led by its finance committee, in collaboration with the principal, the director of finance and operations (DFO), and NWESD as the back-office service provider (pg. 119). The DFO will be the third employee hired by the school and will begin working immediately, in the first quarter of the planning year (pg. 119). The DFO will monitor the budget (actuals vs budget), cash flow, and any other relevant financial information and consult with the principal and board treasurer monthly (pg. 119). As an additional layer of financial support, Pinnacles Prep will utilize consulting CFO support from Joule Growth Partners (pg. 126).

Financial policies and procedures will be adopted in accordance with the charter contract and the School District Accounting Manual (SDAM). In addition, Pinnacles Prep will look to the Washington State School Directors Association (WSSDA) for examples of model policies and procedures. As regular practice, the board will:

- Review and approve the budget in a public meeting;
- Review quarterly financial reports including budget vs. actuals and balance in a public meeting;
- Review and approve the independent audit in a public meeting;
- Review and approve the 990 in a public meeting.

The contingency planning for possible revenue shortfalls or unanticipated expenses could have been more detailed.

The founding team has the capacity to ensure the fiscal health of the school:

- “Rick Wray has founded and served as executive director of three separate K-12 organizations with annual operating budgets of up to \$1.5 million. He has worn multiple hats and also often served as chief financial officer and director of development” (pg. 125). He has raised over \$15 million in facilities and program funding.
- “Sara Rolfs has ample experience in creating budgets for a variety of projects...and has been a successful grant writer for over a decade” (pg. 125).
- Jill Fineis, as “science coordinator for Wenatchee School District...[and] managed the K-12 budget for the science and STEM programs. “The science budgets coded for specific uses per OSPI regulations and annual budget reviews” (pg. 125).
- The current board members include one who is a CPA and one who is a former bank lending officer and elected official with budgetary and financial responsibilities. (pg. 125-126.)

Overall, the financial plan and proposed budget are sound.

Financial Plan and Capacity: Analysis and Evaluator Comments

Strengths

- Financial policies will be developed using WSSDA models (pg. 119).
- The Director of Finance and Operations and staff will be assisted by a back-office provider (North Central ESD) and a consultant (Joule Growth Partners) to establish streamlined accounting systems that align with state reporting platforms (Attachment 12).
- The budget is complete and based on sound assumptions (Attachment 28). The allocations of administrative and instructional salaries represent reasonable percentages and improve as the school moves from the first year of operation (38% administrative) to the fifth year of operation (21% administrative).
- The federal Charter Schools Program Grant via the Washington State Charter Schools Association. The grant provides \$200,000 during the planning year and the potential for up to \$1.3 million for the first four years of operation (Attachment 31).
- The founding team has individual and collective skill sets for implementing the financial plan, including one member with experience developing financial plans for three nonprofit organizations, one with experience writing grant applications for state and private foundation funding, and two with budget experience in business and government. One member has experience raising approximately \$15 million in charitable funds from individual, corporate, foundations and government resource. (pgs. 125-126.)

Weaknesses

- The contingency plans for funding shortfalls are underdeveloped. (Attachment 29).
- The Year 2 net income drops to about \$56K, but rebounds in Year 3 to \$545K (Attachment 28).
- While the applicant teams brings sophistication and experience in facilities financing, the terms for the \$3.5 million loan in Year 3 for facilities build-out will require monitoring (Attachment 28).

EXISTING OPERATORS

Pinnacles Prep

NOT APPLICABLE



EVALUATION TEAM BIOGRAPHIES

Tom Hutton, Team Lead

Tom is a Honolulu-based independent educational consultant and the Interim Executive Director of the Education Law Association, a national association of attorneys, professors, administrators, students, teachers, students, public officials, and other stakeholders with a professional or personal interest in the law of P-20 education. He is the former Executive Director of the Hawaii State Public Charter School Commission, where he led the reconstitution of that state's charter school system under new legislation. He has been both a participant and a coach in the Leaders Program of the National Association of Charter School Administrators. Prior to that Tom had a career as a school lawyer, both in-house with the National School Boards Association and then with the Seattle law firm of Patterson Buchanan Fobes Leitch and Kalzer. Tom also was a co-founder, with a group of fellow law students, of Thurgood Marshall Academy, a law-themed charter high school in Washington, DC, and he currently serves on the governing board of Wai'ālae Elementary Public Charter School in Honolulu. He earned his B.A. at Connecticut College, a graduate certificate in Public Administration from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, and his J.D. from Georgetown University Law Center.

Gayle Burnett, Evaluator

Gayle Burnett has been leading and facilitating courageous conversations regarding diversity, race, and equity for much of her lifetime. She is the co-author of *Peace in Everyday Relationships* (Hunter House Publishers, 2003), a fellow alum of Harvard's Strategic Data Project, and a certified Gallup Strengths Coach. Gayle's career choices have been diverse. She was as an assistant vice president and analyst for a Wall Street clearinghouse bank in the international markets of Singapore, Australia and London, a past partner and principal of Inter-Change Consultants, from 1990 to the 2004, she worked with a wide array of diversity and leadership clients, including Ernst & Young, Lucent Technologies, AT&T and the NCAA. More recently, Gayle served the Atlanta Public Schools by developing leadership programming, providing research and analysis to senior leaders, and supporting and facilitating the development of innovative learning environments in several capacities, including the Executive Director of the Office of Innovation. Finally, she worked with The Rensselaerville Institute as the Special Projects Guru & Interim President, supporting that organization's transition of leadership while maintaining excellence in performance. Gayle holds an MA in Economics from the City University of New York.

Kaaren Heikes, Evaluator

Kaaren Heikes is an education and government affairs leader currently based in Olympia. Kaaren has taught middle and high school both in the Pacific Northwest and in Indonesia, served as a building and regional administrator, state-wide consultant, non-profit founder, and state-level government affairs professional in both Oregon and Washington. Kaaren founded and directed an Oregon charter school association, designed and launched many public charter schools in rural, suburban and urban areas, and worked with many charter authorizers to evaluate proposed and operating charter schools. Kaaren co-founded and co-led KairosPDX, a nonprofit designed to eradicate the racial opportunity and achievement gaps for children of color in Portland, Oregon; core elements include a K-5 charter school

and early learning programs, as well as professional development and policy advocacy related to culturally responsive education and systems transformation. Kaaren spent the past three years as Director of Policy and Partnerships for the WA State Board of Education, during which time she served as a Commissioner on the Washington State Charter School Commission. She earned her B.A. and teaching credential at Central Washington University, her M.S. in Education Policy, Foundations, and Administration and her K-12 administrative credential at Portland State University.

Elisabeth Krimbill, San Antonio, TX

Elisabeth Krimbill is an Assistant Professor of Education Leadership at Texas A&M University-San Antonio. Her research focuses on School Law, Leadership, Early Childhood Education, and Ethics. She is a former elementary school principal in San Antonio in a school dedicated to excellence, creativity, and educational choice. Prior to moving into administration, Elisabeth taught middle school math and science. Additionally, she taught Algebra, Geometry, and American History in an Adolescent Program in a Montessori School. She is Montessori trained at the primary, lower elementary, upper elementary, and adolescent program levels. Elisabeth earned her doctorate in Education Leadership and Policy Studies at the University of Texas at San Antonio, a masters' degree in Educational Leadership from Lamar University in Houston, a masters' degree in Elementary Education from the University of Missouri-St. Louis, and a bachelor's degree in Education from St. Cloud State University in Minnesota. In addition to her work in education, Elisabeth volunteers with several community organizations including the Science Mill, Transplants for Children, and Up Partnership.

William Sharpton, Evaluator

William Sharpton, Professor Emeritus of Special Education at the University of New Orleans, holds a Doctor of Philosophy in Special Education from Georgia State University. Prior to retirement, Dr. Sharpton directed the teacher education program in special education with an emphasis on serving students with severe disabilities. While Associate Dean of the College of Education and Human Development, the University of New Orleans established a network of charter schools in New Orleans following the conversion of the city school district to a charter school model in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. Dr. Sharpton has served as a consultant for several state departments of education and local districts as well as the National Center for Special Education in Charter Schools. He has also served as a team member for the State University of New York System to review applications to establish charter schools in New York City.