

**BALTIMORE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

**DATE:** November 5, 2013

**TO:** **BOARD OF EDUCATION**

**FROM:** S. Dallas Dance, Superintendent

**SUBJECT:** **RECOMMENDATION ON IMAGINE DISCOVERY PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL**

**ORIGINATOR:** Catherine Allie, Assistant Superintendent, Elementary Schools, Zone 1

**RESOURCE PERSON(S):** None

**RECOMMENDATION**

To recommend to the Board of Education that the charter for Imagine Discovery Public Charter School not be renewed.

To request Board approval to negotiate a lease for a brief extension which will allow for the current student population to remain intact and allow for Baltimore County Public Schools to operate the school at its current location.

\*\*\*\*\*

Appendix I – Executive Summary on Imagine Discovery Public Charter School

BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING  
November 5, 2013

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In January 2008, the Baltimore County Board of Education (Board) approved the Imagine Discovery Public Charter School (IDPCS) Agreement for a period of four years. IDPCS opened in August 2008, with grades kindergarten to fourth grade. Each year, the school added an additional grade level until it included grades kindergarten through eighth grade during school year 2012-2013.

In October 2011, the charter school applied for an extension of the charter for another four years. The application was received past the designated deadline. The Board allowed the application to go forward, even though it was not received within the timeline. In November 2012, the Board approved the charter agreement of January 2008, to be extended until the end of the 2013-2014 school year. The determination of whether the Board will extend the agreement for four additional years beyond the 2013-2014 school year is contingent upon the attainment of specified criteria as indicated by the initial and end-of-year evaluation.

In March 2013, a report was given to the Board with the results of the joint mid-year evaluation. A summary of that report, which is attached, includes the following:

- The students (Grades 3 through 5) of IDPCS Fall MAP reading scores are below those of Baltimore County Public Schools (BCPS) students.
- The students (Grades 3 through 5) of IDPCS Fall MAP mathematics scores are below those of BCPS students.
- The students (Grades 6 through 7) of IDPCS School Fall MAP reading scores are below those of BCPS students; whereas, Grade 8 students in the charter are slightly above those of BCPS students.
- The students (Grades 6 through 8) of IDPCS Fall MAP mathematics scores are below those of BCPS students.
- On the Stanford Achievement Test reading and mathematics results, IDPCS students Grades 1 through 7 fall below the national norm. BCPS does not administer the SAT-10; therefore, comparisons to BCPS cannot be made.

In August 2013, the Board received the results of the third party evaluation, which was performed by Westat. A summary of that report, which is attached, includes the following:

- From school year 2010 through 2013, elementary IDPCS student achievement in MSA reading and math were lower than the same grade levels in the Southwest area elementary schools and the IDPCS feeder schools.
- From school year 2010 through 2013, elementary IDPCS student achievement in MSA science was lower than the same grade levels in the Southwest area elementary schools and comparable in the IDPCS feeder schools.

- From school year 2010 through 2013, middle IDPCS student achievement in MSA reading and math were lower than the same grade levels in the Southwest area elementary schools and the IDPCS feeder schools.
- For school year 2012-2013, middle IDPCS student achievement in MSA science was higher than the same grade levels in the Southwest area elementary schools and in the IDPCS feeder schools.

Every school in BCPS is required to have procedures in place to identify students who may be in need of special education services. In its report, Westat found that IDPCS has a lower proportion of special education students compared to other schools in the Southwest area. Westat purposes that one possible reason for this difference is that IDPCS may not be taking adequate measures to identify students who may benefit from special education services, as is required and is done in every BCPS school. The measures to identify students include implementation of procedures for teachers to identify and document potential students who may benefit from special education services.

The end-of-year evaluation found that for school year 2012-2013, IDPCS did not provide gifted and talented (GT) services to students. The school also does not currently have procedures in place to identify students for GT services.

The data for two major assessments, MAP and the SAT-10, were only available for IDPCS. SAT-10 is the assessment used in some Imagine schools throughout the country. However, comparison data among the schools are not available according to the executive vice president of Imagine Discovery.

Prior to the completion of the evaluation by Westat, concerns continued over the school's leadership. Not wanting to wait until the evaluation was complete to address the concerns, the superintendent recommended to the Board to replace the current principal with Ms. Cathy Thomas. Ms. Thomas was appointed by the Board in May 2013. Since Ms. Thomas has assumed the leadership role at IDPCS, the following positive steps have been taken:

- A GT identification process has been developed.
- A pre-Algebra GT course has been implemented and students are accelerated to the next level upon demonstrating grade level performance.
- A Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports Program has been implemented to improve student behavior.
- Safety measures for student arrival and dismissal have been improved.
- School-based professional development has been provided in group instruction, writing objectives, and lesson planning.

Under the leadership of Ms. Thomas, changes have been made at IDPCS to raise the bar for students and close the achievement gap between IDPCS students and other BCPS schools in the Southwest area.