

**VI.E.**

**CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION  
Hartford**

**TO BE PROPOSED:  
June 5, 2013**

**RESOLVED**, That the State Board of Education, pursuant to Section 10-66bb of the Connecticut General Statutes, accepts the Commissioner's recommendation and grants approval of a state charter to Path Academy for the period July 1, 2014, through June 30, 2019, said approval granted subject to the conditions noted in the Commissioner's June 5, 2013, memorandum to the State Board of Education, and directs the Commissioner to take the necessary action.

Approved by a vote of 8:0, this fifth day of June, Two Thousand Thirteen.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

  
Stefan Pryor, Secretary  
State Board of Education

**CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION**  
**Hartford**

**TO:** State Board of Education

**FROM:** Stefan Pryor, Commissioner of Education

**SUBJECT:** Granting of a New State Charter to Path Academy

**INTRODUCTION**

Subsection (f) of Section 10-66bb of the Connecticut General Statutes requires that an application for the establishment of a state charter school be submitted to the State Board of Education for approval, and filed with the local board or regional board of education in the school district in which the charter school is to be located. The statute outlines the State Board's responsibilities: (1) application review; (2) hold a public hearing; (3) solicit and review comments on the application from the local or regional board of education for the school district where the charter school is to be located, and from local or regional boards of education that are contiguous to the district in which the school is to be located; and (4) vote on a complete application not later than 90 days after the date of receipt of the application. Also, the statute provides that the State Board of Education may condition the opening of such charter school on the school meeting certain conditions determined by the Commissioner of Education to be necessary, and may authorize the Commissioner to release the charter when the Commissioner determines such conditions are met. Charters are granted for a period of time of up to five years, and the State Board of Education may allow the applicant to delay its opening for a period of time of up to one year, in order for the applicant to fully prepare to provide appropriate instructional services.

**BACKGROUND**

On February 7, 2013, the State Board of Education requested applications for state and local charter schools. The application for Path Academy, a proposed state charter school to be located in Windham, was received on April 1, 2013.

Path Academy's mission and purpose is to re-engage the Windham region's over-age, under-credited (OU) students in education, supporting them through mastery of the critical skills necessary for success in college, career and community. Given that Windham's incidence of identified English language learner (ELL) students is the highest in the state, Path Academy has outlined a robust language acquisition approach to serving these students. The proposed school's staffing plan includes at least one full-time Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) certified instructor, with possibly more to be hired, dependent on the ELL status of enrolled students and several bilingual certified staff members. The staff will use a Scientific

Research Based Instruction (SRBI) Framework for tiered interventions for students that need additional academic supports beyond English as a second language (ESL). Path Academy is using the Framework for Effective Instruction, which employs a sheltered workshop approach and involves co-teaching as an instructional delivery method. This approach is especially effective for ELL students. Path Academy promises to provide personalized learning pathways to meet the needs of individual ELL students, and offers English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses and push-in linguistic/academic support. Path Academy also promises to retain written and verbal translation services to ensure that parents are informed and engaged in the school community. In short, the individualized focus of Path Academy is a model focusing on language acquisition for ELL students.

More generally, Path Academy intends to provide a challenging and rigorous academic program through a combination of innovative strategies. Path Academy students will be expected to move toward academic proficiency and earn credits at an accelerated pace in a personalized and data-driven learning environment. The proposed school will leverage the integration of technology through blended learning, project-based learning and extended learning time (eight hours per day, 206 days per year) to empower students to master skills and concepts aligned with the Common Core State Standards and Connecticut State Frameworks. Holistic student supports, focused youth development programs and postsecondary preparation opportunities will anchor the overall program of the school. Students will succeed in this model by following Path Academy’s core values, which are designed to put them on the PATH to success: Personal development; Achievement; Teamwork; and Humanity.

As a proposed Grades 9 through 12 school, Path Academy plans to bring this unique learning program to a community in need of a solution for OU students. Windham’s four-year graduation rate is only 61 percent, meaning 39 percent of students have either fallen behind or dropped out of school. OU students have struggled in traditional education models; Path Academy will enhance the educational choices for OU students by providing an alternative path to success. Students residing in the host district of Windham will receive a preference for 75 percent of available seats at Path Academy; the remaining 25 percent of available seats will be offered to students from area districts.

Our Piece of the Pie (OPP) has served as the primary support team during the planning and design process for Path Academy. OPP is a youth development agency based in Hartford that has a history of success with at-risk youth, particularly OU students. Currently, OPP works in partnership with Hartford Public Schools to operate Opportunity High School, and with Bloomfield Public Schools to run Learning Academy of Bloomfield. Path Academy plans to contract with OPP as the charter management organization (CMO) if the charter is approved. Path Academy proposes to open in July 2014, with the following growth plan:

Year	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12	Total
2014-2015	66	36	12	6	120
2015-2016	105	50	33	12	200
2016-2017	44	80	47	29	200
2017-2018	59	34	64	43	200
2018-2019	72	45	31	52	200

Path Academy seeks to be considered for the following preferences:

1. Serve high-need populations – specifically students with a history of low academic performance (over-age, under-credited students);
2. Reduction of racism, ethnic and economic isolation – Path Academy will enroll 75 percent of students from Windham and 25 percent from the 19 surrounding districts;
3. Priority School District or District with at least 75 percent racial or ethnic minority enrollment; and
4. Serving underserved geographic location – there is currently no charter school in the Windham region.

### **Path Academy Charter School Application Review Process**

*Application Review:* A team composed of Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) staff with education expertise and knowledge of charter school operation and finance reviewed the application. The application was evaluated based on the standards and review criteria detailed in the *Application Package for the Development of State and Local Charter Schools*. In the 21 sections of the application that were scored, Path Academy met expectations for the criteria in each section and, in many cases, exceeded the requirements. The review team has determined that the application demonstrated a comprehensive capability and financial viability for the operation of a successful charter school.

*Interview of School Representatives:* CSDE staff members met with representatives from Path Academy on April 28, 2013. The purpose of the meeting was to determine the applicant's commitment and capacity to establishing and operating a high-quality school. The meeting required the applicant to respond to a series of questions about aspects of the proposed school. The applicant's answers demonstrated that the Path Academy team has a strong capacity to establish and operate a high-quality school.

*Public Hearing:* Charles Jaskiewicz, III, member of the State Board of Education, and CSDE staff presided over a public hearing on Path Academy's application on May 16, 2013. The hearing was held in the City of Willimantic, Town of Windham, the district in which the proposed school is to be located. Forty people attended the public hearing; nine individuals, including parents, educators and community business representatives, spoke at the hearing. The response from the public was overwhelmingly positive.

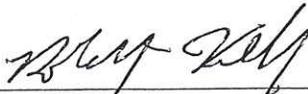
*Invitation for Written Comments:* The CSDE solicited comments from the Windham Board of Education and from the local and regional boards of education in towns contiguous to Windham, which include Chaplin, Columbia, Coventry, Franklin, Lebanon, Mansfield and Salisbury. Superintendents from Bloomfield, Hartford and Windham submitted letters supporting the application (see attached). Additional letters of support were submitted by Dr. Steven Adamowski, Special Master, Department of Education; Allon Kalisher, Regional Administrator, Department of Children and Families; Robert C. Fernandez, Director, Willimantic Center of Quinebaug Valley Community College; Mathew J. Farley, Associate Director for Community Outreach, University of Connecticut; Kimberly Silox, Director, Center for Community Engagement, Eastern Connecticut State University; and Randall Prose, President, Windham Federation of Teachers (see attached).

## RECOMMENDATION WITH CONDITIONS

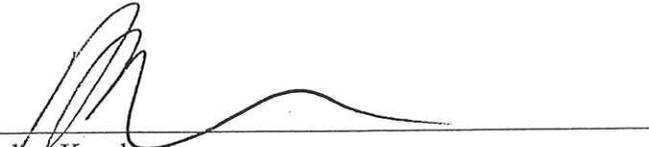
I recommend approval of Path Academy for a state charter spanning a five-year period, July 1, 2014, through June 30, 2019. Path Academy is being recommended as a new state charter school whose mission, purpose and specialized focus is to provide a model focusing on language acquisition for students identified as ELLs. The recommendation is based on the aggregate evaluation of the application process, considering the following key elements: (1) the quality of the proposed program as measured against the criteria contained in the charter school application, including preference sought; (2) the substantive issues surrounding the overall feasibility and reasonableness of the application in terms of the likelihood of the opening and continued operation of a successful school; and (3) the degree of public support for the proposal. This approval is granted subject to the following conditions:

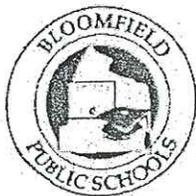
1. Receipt of funding from the General Assembly, which must be in addition to funding received for expansion of existing charter schools.
2. Receipt of documentation relating to facility requirements including safety, liability and insurance certifications.
3. Receipt of documentation relating to incorporation status and identification of governing board members.
4. A signed management contract with OPP for services provided, including a fee structure, which shall be submitted and approved by the Commissioner of Education prior to the school opening; and
5. Reflecting its mission, purpose and specialized focus, Path Academy will give preference to OU and ELL students in order to provide the Windham region with a high-quality option for language acquisition.
6. Submission of a memorandum underscoring how the mission, purpose and specialized focus of Path Academy provides a model for language acquisition for ELL students, and emphasizing how Path Academy will work with the CSDE on an ongoing basis to serve its ELL students.

Prepared by: \_\_\_\_\_

  
Robert Kelly  
Charter School Program Manager

Approved by: \_\_\_\_\_

  
Debra Kurshan  
Chief Turnaround Officer



# Bloomfield Public Schools

Dr. James Thompson, Jr., Ed.D.  
SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Christopher G. Leone  
CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER / DIRECTOR  
OF MAGNET SCHOOLS

Ellen J. Stoltz, Ph.D.  
CHIEF ACADEMIC OFFICER

March 18, 2013

To Whom It May Concern:

As Superintendent of Bloomfield Public Schools, I am writing to support the proposed state charter school, Path Academy, which will target over-age, under-credited youth in the greater Windham region.

In 2012, Bloomfield Public Schools, in partnership with Our Piece of the Pie, Inc. (OPP), created the Learning Academy of Bloomfield to target over-age, under-credit youth. Since opening the Learning Academy, I have seen the impact of the Pathways to Success model first-hand and the difference it can make in a student's life.

Based on OPP's work in Bloomfield, I am confident that Path Academy would help struggling students in the greater Windham region succeed. The proposed charter high school would provide students with a high quality alternative educational setting in which to find success. Sustained by innovative instructional methods and whole-student supports, these at-risk youth would be given the tools to master the academic and non-academic skills critical to success in and beyond high school.

All of our students deserve an opportunity to achieve success and become productive members of the community. The Path Academy will provide support to students throughout high school and on to postsecondary success.

Thank you for your consideration of this proposal.

Sincerely,

  
James Thompson, Ed.D.  
Superintendent  
Bloomfield Public Schools



Dr. Christina M. Kishimoto  
Superintendent

March 26, 2013

Stephan Pryor, Commissioner of Education  
CT State Department of Education  
165 Capitol Avenue  
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Commissioner Pryor:

As Superintendent of Hartford Public Schools, I am writing to support Our Piece of the Pie, Inc.'s proposal to establish a state charter school, Path Academy, which will target over-age, under-credited youth in the greater Windham region.

In 2009, Hartford Public Schools created a partnership school with Our Piece of the Pie, Inc. (OPP) to target over-age, under-credit youth. Since opening Opportunity High School (OHS), I have seen the impact of the Pathways to Success model first-hand and the difference it can make in a student's life.

Based on OPP's work in Hartford, I am confident that OPP is ready to take on an expanded role across the State and that Path Academy would help struggling students in the greater Windham region succeed. The proposed charter high school would provide students with a high-quality alternative educational setting in which to find success. Sustained by innovative instructional methods and whole-student supports, these at-risk youth would be given the tools to master the academic and non-academic skills critical to success in and beyond high school.

All of our students deserve an opportunity to achieve success and become productive members of the community. The Path Academy will provide this, supporting students through high school and on to postsecondary success.

Thank you for your consideration of this proposal.

Sincerely,

Dr. Christina M. Kishimoto,  
Superintendent

*Murphy A. Sewall, PhD*  
Chair of the Board of Education

*Ana V. Ortiz*  
Superintendent of Schools



**Superintendent's Office**

322 Prospect Street  
Willimantic, CT 06226  
(860) 465-2310 Fax (860) 465-2311  
aortiz@windham.k12.ct.us

March 18, 2013

To Whom It May Concern:

On behalf of the Board of Education for Windham Public Schools, I write this letter in support of the proposal to open a state charter school serving over-age, under-credited high school students in Windham, CT.

Windham Public Schools have struggled for many years. Fighting significant barriers to student success that rival those seen in Connecticut's major urban areas, including the state's highest incidence of English Language Learners, Windham's cohort graduation rate hovers only around 60%. The district must find a way to provide innovative solutions to fit the needs of all students, in order to raise the graduation rate and help our youth achieve academic success.

The proposed state charter high school will offer a solution to the Windham region's most in-need and at-risk students. The school's founding members will bring a wealth of expertise in working with at-risk and over-age, under-credited students. Through a unique school model that integrates proven instructional methods with holistic student supports, we are confident that the proposed school will help our community's struggling youth find success.

We appreciate your attention to this matter, and remain optimistic that this school will be able to carry forward a collaboration with Windham Public Schools.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ana V. Ortiz".

Ana V. Ortiz  
Superintendent of Schools



STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



Steven J. Adamowski, PhD  
Special Master

March 22, 2013

Ms. Debra Kurshan  
Chief Turnaround Officer  
Connecticut State Department of Education  
165 Capitol Avenue, Room 249  
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Ms. Kurshan,

As Special Master of the Windham Public Schools, I am writing to express my full support of the proposal to open a state charter school serving over-age, under-credited high school students in Windham, CT.

Windham Public Schools is in the midst of a system-wide school transformation, aimed at addressing our district's low graduation rate. As a part of the portfolio of school options to ensure the success of all students, the proposed state charter high school would allow us to offer an appropriate learning environment for our over-age, under-credited students. These students are the most difficult to engage in a traditional school setting, but will succeed if given the right supports tailored to their individual needs.

The proposed school will offer these students a unique learning environment, infused with positive youth development principles and personalized to support the success of each individual student. Founding members have brought a great deal of knowledge and expertise in working with these young people to the school model, in addition to including nationally recognized instructional methods that have proven to increase student achievement.

The Windham school district has already built a collaboration with the school's founding members over the course of the application process. This has allowed us to ensure that the school will fit the needs of our specific student population. I am confident that this model will address the needs of some of Windham's most at-risk students. Please accept this letter as my full endorsement of this proposal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steven Adamowski".

Dr. Steven Adamowski  
Special Master



Joette Katz  
Commissioner

**DEPARTMENT of CHILDREN and FAMILIES**  
*Making a Difference for Children, Families and Communities*



Dannel P. Malloy  
Governor

February 27, 2013

Our Piece of the Pie  
20-28 Sargeant Street  
Hartford, CT 06105  
Attn: Hector Rivera

To Whom it May Concern:

As Regional Administrator for Region 3 of the Connecticut Department of Children & Families, I write in full support of Our Piece of the Pie's® (OPP's) proposal to open a state charter school serving over-age, under-credited high school students in Windham, CT.

Region 3 provides services for children and families in 58 towns in eastern Connecticut. We are committed to ensuring that all children and youth served by our Department will grow up happy and healthy, and will experience success in and out of school. A critical piece of achieving this goal is availability of educational settings that fit all student needs, supporting them through a successful school experience. We seek to realize this goal by partnering with local education agencies to guarantee coordination and a joint focus on student success. OPP's innovative charter school will help us to reach this goal, by working to give the Windham region's struggling high school students a chance to succeed, and become productive members of our community.

OPP has proven that their methods of re-engaging young people are successful, and the Department of Children & Families has enjoyed a positive working relationship with them for many years. I appreciate your attention to this charter school proposal, and hope that you will see that it fills a critical need in eastern Connecticut.

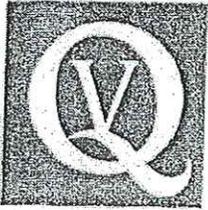
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Allon Kalisher'.

**Allon Kalisher, MSW**

Regional Administrator | DCF Region 3  
Norwich | Willimantic | Middletown  
322 Main Street | Willimantic, CT 06226  
tel: (860) 456-6653 | fax: 860-450-2088

**STATE OF CONNECTICUT**  
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# QUINEBAUG VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

*Learners First*

WILLIMANTIC CENTER  
729 MAIN STREET • WILLIMANTIC, CT 06226  
WWW.QVCC.COMMNET.EDU

February 28, 2013

PHONE (860) 423-1824  
FAX (860) 423-4625

Robert C. Fernandez  
Director, Willimantic Center  
Quinebaug Valley Community College  
729 Main Street  
Willimantic, CT 06226

To Whom It May Concern:

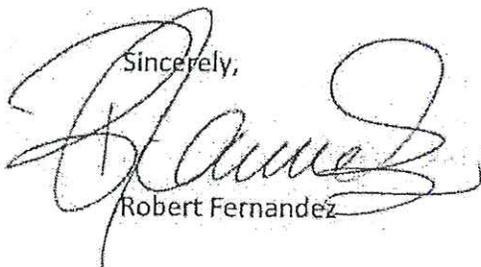
On behalf of Quinebaug Valley Community College's Willimantic Center, I would like to express my support for Our Piece of the Pie's® (OPP's) proposal to open a state charter school serving over-age, under-credited high school students in Windham, CT.

The Willimantic Center of Quinebaug Valley Community College (QVCC) is focused on providing high quality post-secondary education and training to Willimantic-area residents. From degrees and certificates to specific job training courses, the Willimantic Center of QVCC seeks to help community residents succeed in their post-secondary ventures and become productive members of our local community. Partnering with OPP's charter school will allow QVCC to help ensure that every regional student is not only afforded the opportunity to succeed in high school, but graduates prepared for post-secondary success.

Our Piece of the Pie (OPP) has clearly demonstrated success in working with over-age, under-credited youth, including in school settings. I am confident that this experience, coupled with their impressive and innovative school model, will allow them to reach disengaged students in the Windham area. QVCC intends to support OPP's efforts in Windham by providing experiential learning and early college experience opportunities for students at the charter school.

Thank you for your consideration of OPP's proposal. We strongly believe that their presence in Windham is crucial, and hope that you will agree.

Sincerely,



Robert Fernandez

A Member of the Connecticut Community College System  
*An Equal Opportunity Employer*



University of Connecticut  
*Division of Student Affairs*

Department of  
Student Activities

Community Outreach

March 25, 2013

Commissioner Stefan Pryor  
CT Department of Education  
165 Capitol Avenue  
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Commission Pryor:

On behalf of the University of Connecticut (UConn) Office of Community Outreach, I am writing this letter of support for Our Piece of the Pie's® (OPP's) proposal to open a state charter school serving over-age, under-credited high school students in Windham, CT.

The Office of Community Outreach engages UConn students in service activities that enhance the quality of life of others in the greater community. We accomplish our work through strategic partnerships with high quality organizations. Community Outreach has strong collaborations with agencies in the Town of Windham and especially with those that service youth. Last year, Community Outreach students contributed over 6,000 hours organizing and implementing youth development programs throughout Windham.

We are committing to support OPP's work by:

1. Coordinating volunteers who are interested in working with the youth in Windham
2. Advertising and promoting educational, social & health initiatives in Windham at the University of Connecticut among its faculty, staff and students

We look forward to working with OPP in its effort to work with youth that normally do not receive proper educational and support services. We share OPP's commitment to youth development and education, and we strongly believe that Windham area students stand only to benefit from OPP's experience in this field.

Please contact me, if you have additional question or concerns.

Sincerely,

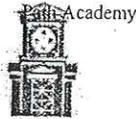
Matthew J. Farley  
Associate Director for Community Outreach

*An Equal Opportunity Employer*

2110 Hillside Road Unit 3008  
Storrs, Connecticut 06269-3008

Telephone: (860) 486-1165  
Facsimile: (860) 486-8821  
[www.volunteer.uconn.edu](http://www.volunteer.uconn.edu)

*One Division. Multiple Services. Students First.*



## EASTERN CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY

83 WINDHAM STREET • WILLIMANTIC, CONNECTICUT 06226 • 860-465-5000

February 20, 2013

To Whom It May Concern:

As Director of the Center for Community Engagement at Eastern Connecticut State University (ECSU), I am writing in support of Our Piece of the Pie's® (OPP's) proposal to open a state charter school serving over-age, under-credited high school students in Windham, CT.

The Center for Community Engagement works to create sustainable, effective, and productive relationships with community partners to benefit students, faculty, and the community. Partnering with OPP's innovative charter school will provide ECSU students and faculty with unique volunteer opportunities, in addition to bolstering the strength of the charter school to help struggling students achieve success within and beyond high school. With more students graduating from high school prepared for post-secondary success, our community will receive the many benefits brought by an influx of more productive community members.

Our Piece of the Pie (OPP) has proven success in using their methods to work with disengaged youth. By bringing these methods, along with a unique and engaging academic model, to Windham, we are confident that they can help our community to reduce the achievement gap and increase the number of students successfully exiting high school prepared for post-secondary success. The Center for Community Engagement intends to support OPP's work in Windham by engaging the ECSU community in providing experiential learning and early college experience opportunities for students at the charter school. In addition, we expect to work with members of the ECSU community on fulfilling volunteer needs at the school.

We fully support OPP's proposal, and hope that they will be given the opportunity to bring their expertise to our community.

Sincerely,

Kimberly Silcox

Director, Center for Community Engagement

(860) 465-4426

silcoxk@easternct.edu

Dear Commissioner,

Please accept this letter on behalf of the Windham Federation of Teachers (WFT) in support of the application of Our Piece of the Pie, Inc. (OPP) to establish a charter school in Windham focusing on the needs of over-aged and under-credited students. Our discussions with OPP, which have taken place over the past several months, have been wide-ranging. We have been impressed by OPP's plans and programs that are specially designed for this seriously under-served group and go beyond traditional classroom support. We have been more impressed with the commitment of OPP to serving the needs of students who need it the most. Unfortunately, at this time, the town of Windham cannot financially provide these services and a partnership with OPP can assist us in serving the needs of these struggling students.

WFT has good lines of communication open with OPP. We hope to be able to continue to work with OPP through the establishment of an excellent teaching staff that is a sub-chapter of the Windham Federation of Teachers. We support Our Piece of the Pie's proposal and urge you to grant OPP's application to establish a charter school in Windham to serve the needs of these children. There is a great need for such services in our area. These over-aged and under-credited students need special programs in order to achieve and the OPP organization is committed to this specific type of student.

Sincerely,



Randall Prose

WFT President