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**Charter School Appeal – Hattie Bradley School**

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**The Background:**

Pursuant to Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-13-108, newly-formed charter schools may appeal denial by a local board of education to the State Board of Education.

Within 60 days of an appeal, the State Board hears the appeal at a public meeting before the Board or a designated representative in the school district in which the charter school sponsor applied for a charter. At that hearing, the Board or its representative reviews the decision of the local board and makes findings. “If the state board finds that the local board’s decision was contrary to the best interests of the pupils, school district or community, the state board shall remand such decision to the local board of education with written instructions for approval of the charter. The decision of the state board shall be final and not subject to appeal. The LEA, however, shall be the chartering authority.” Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-13-108(3).

On January 18, 2006, a hearing was held in Memphis at the Shelby County Schools Office to consider the Hattie Bradley Charter School’s appeal of the denial of their application by the Shelby County Board of Education. The appeal was heard by the Executive Director of the State Board of Education.

**The Recommendation:**

The Executive Director recommends that the Board affirm the decision of Shelby County Schools Board of Education to deny the application. This recommendation is based on the attached Findings and Recommendation of Dr. Nixon. Documents submitted by the local board, sponsor, and community members are also attached.

## **Attachments for HBCS Appeal**

1. Findings and Recommendation of Dr. Nixon
2. Charter School Application Review Guide
3. Letters from community members
4. Email from EdFutures regarding budget
5. Email from SCS Director of Special Education

Additional materials are available on the State Board's website:

<http://www.state.tn.us/sbe/whatsnew.html>.

**BEFORE THE TENNESSEE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION**

**2006 CHARTER SCHOOL APPEAL  
HATTIE BRADLEY CHARTER SCHOOL**

**FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATION**

Pursuant to Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-13-108, newly-created charter schools may appeal denial by a local board of education to the State Board of Education (State Board).

On January 18, 2006, a hearing was held at Shelby County Schools (SCS) in Memphis, Tennessee, to consider Hattie Bradley Charter School's (HBCS) appeal of the denial of its application by the Shelby County Schools Board of Education (SCBOE).

Based on the following procedural history and findings of fact, I believe that the decision to deny Hattie Bradley's application was not contrary to the best interests of the pupils, school district or community, and therefore recommend that the Board affirm SCBOE's decision to deny the application.

**PROCEDURAL HISTORY**

1. On December 16, 2005, the SCBOE denied Hattie Bradley's amended application, following the recommendation by the board-appointed charter school review committee.
2. HBCS appealed the decision of the SCBOE by letter dated December 22, 2005.
3. On January 18, 2006, the executive director of the State Board presided at a hearing attended by representatives of Shelby County Schools and HBCS, as well as community members.

**FINDINGS OF FACT**

1. Based on comments from HBCS representatives and members of the public, the impetus for the charter school does not seem to be based on one of the purposes of the Tennessee Public Charter School Act.

2. HBCS representatives and community members complained about overcrowding at Shelby County elementary schools, and stated that HBCS would help alleviate that overcrowding.

3. Overcrowding or disagreement with local funding of new school construction is not one of the purposes of the Act.

4. The sponsor, Dr. L. LaSimba M. Gray, Jr., engaged consultants from EdFutures, Inc., a for-profit corporation, to prepare an application for a charter school.

5. EdFutures apparently has charter schools operating in Georgia and Florida. Its website states, “In 2005 EdFutures will operate schools in California, Tennessee, Texas, Michigan and Nevada. In 2006 Louisiana and Arizona will be added.” However, as of January 2006, EdFutures does not have schools operating in any of those states. Nor have any applications been approved in those states.

6. Shelby County’s Charter School Review Team (Team) was comprised of the following individuals:

- a. Dr. Bobby Webb, Superintendent
- b. Patsy Smith, Deputy Superintendent
- c. Judy Ostner, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Accountability
- d. Richard Holden, Chief of Operations
- e. Harold Waldon, Chief Financial Officer
- f. Maura Sullivan, Coordinator of Student Information Services
- g. Lois Williams, Coordinator of Human Resources
- h. Sandra Harper, Director, Early Childhood and Elementary Education
- i. Reo Pruiett, Director, Middle and Secondary Education
- j. Jo Bellanti, Director, Special Education

- k. Kevin Jones, Director, Finance and Accounting
- l. Katie Stanton, Director, Student Services
- m. Herchal Burton, Specialist, Student Services
- n. Karen Woodard, Specialist, Testing and Accountability
- o. DeeDee Lunsford, Specialist, Counseling
- p. Thomasena Stuckett, Specialist, Science
- q. Technology Department

7. The Team awarded the revised application 36.5 points out of 100 possible points on the State Department of Education’s Application Review Guide (which rates each of the 20 legislatively required elements of the charter school application).

8. The application suffers significant deficiencies in the following areas:

- a. Definition of the mission and goals of the proposed charter school,
- b. Proposed instructional goals and methods (particularly related to serving students eligible for special education services),
- c. Evaluation of student academic achievement,
- d. Governance and
- e. Operating budget.

9. The eligible student population is small and appears to be shrinking.

10. HBCS proposed a school for grades 4-8. However, because no Shelby County Schools are failing to make adequate yearly progress (AYP), HBCS could only recruit *students* failing to make adequate progress (and without TCAP testing in grades K-2, no students could be eligible before 4<sup>th</sup> grade). Therefore, HBCS proposed to open with just 4<sup>th</sup> grade and add one grade each year.

11. The application does not clearly define the proposed school’s mission.

12. The proposed instructional goals, including standardized testing schedules, are not aligned with Tennessee assessment policies.

13. The application does not reflect an understanding of eligibility for or an understanding of the fiscal and staffing needs to provide services to eligible students under the Rehabilitation Act or the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act. The director of special

education for SCS found 33 items in the revised application that were not appropriately addressed.

14. The budget is inadequate in several areas and contains other significant errors. Transportation and special education budget items are insufficient. One item is overstated by \$1.3 million. In response to this concern, the applicant’s financial consultant stated, “Admittedly, my budget had an error in one cell. I wonder is [sic] the district ever submitted a report with any errors, however minor. If so, I wonder if the state decided they could not be a district because of that error. The budget is substantially complete and reasonable.”

15. The application contained numerous spelling and grammatical errors. In response to that concern, one of the consultants for HBCS stated at the hearing that it is nearly impossible to complete such a lengthy application without errors.

Based on the above findings of fact, I recommend the State Board of Education affirm the denial of Hattie Bradley’s application.

/ s/

/ 1/23/06 /

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Dr. Gary L. Nixon, Executive Director  
State Board of Education

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DATE

## Charter School Application Review Guide

<b>Name of Proposed Charter School:</b> <b>Hattie Bradley Charter School</b>	<b>Application Reviewer's Name:</b> <b>Shelby County Schools Application Review Team</b> (See attached list)
<b>Legal Name of Group Applying for Charter:</b> <b>New Life Leadership Foundation (NLLF)</b>	<b>Application Review Date:</b> <b>December 16, 2005</b>

**Instructions for Completing Review:** Evaluate the 20 legislatively required elements of the charter school application below. Each of the 20 elements is included in one of four categories: mission, education plan, founding group, business/operations plan. The numbers to the left of each element correspond to the number given to the element in Tennessee's charter legislation and to the number of the question in the application packet. Use the accompanying Scoring Criteria to rate the applicant on each element. The Scoring Criteria describe an "excellent," "adequate," and "inadequate" application on each element. Each element has a number of total possible points that can be awarded. An element that is inadequate in all components would receive a "0;" and, an element that is excellent in all components would receive the total possible points available. It is likely that most of the elements of each application will be scored somewhere between those two points. Half points (0.5) may be awarded as necessary. Provide additional specific and general comments as warranted.

**Our goal was to highlight material from the document to provide a rationale for recommendation. This is not an exhaustive list.**

### MISSION

Question Number & Element	Possible Points	Points Awarded	Comments
<b>1. Statement defining the mission and goals of the proposed charter school</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>3</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•The Mission is not clearly defined and it is redundant. The statement alludes to meeting state and Shelby County standards; however, no specific plan is evident.</li> <li>•The need for the school and targeted population rationale is flawed and based on incorrect data.</li> <li>•Shelby County Schools does not have overcrowded classrooms. SCS meets all state mandates and compliance issues regarding class size.</li> <li>•There is inconsistency throughout document as to grade structure for the Charter School.</li> </ul>

## EDUCATION PLAN

Question Number & Element	Possible Points	Points Awarded	Comments
<p><b>2 .Proposed instructional goals and methods for the school</b></p> <p><b>Special Education---</b></p>	<p><b>2 0</b></p>	<p><b>5</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Excessive testing schedule and assessment instruments are not aligned with Tennessee assessment policies and practices.</li> <li>•The process for identifying focused instructional strategies and resources for implementation, such as technology, textbooks, and supplemental materials are incomplete.</li> <li>•The curriculum as described still does not meet minimum rules and regulations.</li> <li>•Programs, assessments, and services for subgroups of NCLB and Special Education including ESL, Gifted, Homebound, Homeless and At-risk students lack clarity.</li> <li>•Grade structure must be limited to AYP requirement.</li> <li>•"At risk", "Hot List" and "Intensive Care" students are redundant labels since all students are performing below standard and expectations.</li> <li>•Still unclear who will conduct special education assessments.</li> <li>•Contract details for related services are not included.</li> <li>•Partial continuum of service is present; still no plans for students who need full day, special class, or other intensive services and placements.</li> <li>•No evidence of research-based strategies or materials (such as multisensory reading).</li> <li>•Section titled "Education for Children with Special Needs" on page 19 largely addresses concerns other than those stated. Students with special needs are not addressed until the end of page 20. The application states that a Special Education Coordinator will be employed, then states that enrollment may not justify such a position and the needs of children will be met by either a part-time Special Education Coordinator or the principal and a teacher sharing such duties. This seems insufficient to meet student needs, which frequently change throughout the year. It is unclear what number of such students would justify a full-time Special Education Coordinator or who would decide.</li> <li>•The applicant appears to have a lack of understanding of what constitutes eligibility for Section 504 or the process for determining if a student is eligible.</li> <li>•The applicant appears to have a lack of understanding of what constitutes eligibility for special education services under IDEA and state guidelines or the process for determining if a student is eligible.</li> <li>•There is no plan for providing services to gifted students.</li> <li>•There is no plan to locate and identify gifted students or recognition of state eligibility standards for gifted eligibility.</li> <li>•There is no mention of the procedural safeguards and requirements for the discipline of students with disabilities, nor is there a plan to provide services during possible suspensions and expulsions of such students.</li> <li>•The plan calls for development of the special education program during the first trimester. Federal and state law require immediate implementation of IEPs with no provision for such a delay.</li> <li>•The IEP process includes a step called "Preevaluation" This term is not defined and could cause a delay in evaluation which is in conflict with state and federal law.</li> <li>•There is no mention of the required timelines for referral, evaluation, and placement.</li> <li>•Assistive technology is mentioned, but there is no budget for the purchase of any needed devices, materials, or evaluations.</li> <li>•No evidence of a means to conduct a special education census for state and federal reporting; amended application calls for purchasing equipment and connectivity "if needed" and participating in SCS training, which may not be available.</li> <li>•There does not seem to be sufficient staff to complete required reporting in a timely and accurate manner</li> <li>•No evidence of services for gifted students other than by a classroom teacher who may or may not be qualified.</li> <li>•No recognition of needed employment standards for teachers of the gifted.</li> <li>•Job description for the Special Education Coordinator is overly broad.</li> <li>•Job description for the Special Education Coordinator includes "counseling" which is outside the realm of the qualifications.</li> <li>•Transportation for special education students may be required, but the budgeted amount is not sufficient nor is there any evidence of a contract with a qualified vendor to provide such services.</li> <li>•The transportation budget is presumed to be for special education students although it is not explained. The budgeted figure would provide approximately \$84 a day which is insufficient.</li> <li>•Budget for Special Education services is not sufficiently developed, nor are budgeted expenditures adequate to meet student needs.</li> <li>•Budget does not reflect any revenue from federal special funds (IDEA).</li> <li>•There is no budget information indicating how federal funds from IDEA would be spent.</li> <li>•There are no teachers budgeted under the 71200 series.</li> <li>•There is a line item for \$20,000 under "other contracted services" in 71200, which is not defined.</li> <li>•The Special Education Coordinator position is not shown in the 72220 series.</li> <li>•The budget for health services (72120 series) would be sufficient for a part-time person approximately 2 days per week. This is not sufficient to provide for students with common ongoing needs such as diabetes.</li> <li>•The total special education budget is \$20,000 which is not sufficient.</li> <li>•A School Support Team is included, but their role is unclear and possibly in violation of state and federal law (i.e., this team cannot "establish an IEP or 504 plan").</li> <li>•Several references to staff development which are not funded in the budget.</li> <li>•Key policies listed on page 46 do not include IDEA or the Tennessee Minimum Rules and Regulations.</li> </ul>

Question Number & Element	Possible Points	Points Awarded	Comments
<b>3. Plan for evaluating student academic achievement and procedures for remedial action</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>5</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Promotion of students is not clear or consistent with best practices.</li> <li>•"On grade level" target time frame varies throughout document.</li> <li>•Academic measures as criteria for employment and bonuses are in conflict with value-added mandates.</li> </ul>

Question Number & Element	Possible Points	Points Awarded	Comments
<b>10. Code of behavior and discipline</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Suspensions and expulsions must meet state law.</li> <li>•Alternative education not included.</li> <li>•Make-up work during suspensions/expulsions should be addressed.</li> </ul>

### FOUNDING GROUP

Question Number & Element	Possible Points	Points Awarded	Comments
<b>8 .Members of the governing body</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>5</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•There is a lack of clarity as to who is responsible for establishing operational policies and who is responsible for implementation of policies; i.e., the specific role and authority of the School Administrator, Education Program Director, New Life Leadership Foundation, and Hattie Bradley Charter School Board.</li> </ul>
<b>AND</b>			
<b>13. Sponsors</b>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Sponsors' roles and responsibilities seem unclear throughout the document.</li> </ul>

Question Number & Element	Possible Points	Points Awarded	Comments
<b>7 .Governance and operations rules and policies</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•This section is very difficult to read and comprehend. It causes these concerns: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Board meetings are not frequent enough to monitor an effective program.</li> <li>• Organizational chart should have correct spellings and reflect positions described in document.</li> <li>• It is difficult to determine the roles of the different groups.</li> <li>• Because of the difficulty of reading, as it is written, it does not appear to meet the provision of TCA 49-13-106 and provide quality options for students.</li> </ul> </li> <li>•EMO services must be reviewed and approved by Shelby County prior to acceptance of any agreement.</li> <li>•Policies required by TCA must be developed.</li> </ul>

## BUSINESS / OPERATIONS PLAN

Question Number & Element	Possible Points	Points Awarded	Comments
4. Operating Budget	10	4	Budget revision does not reflect or adequately explain these items: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Before and after school program</li> <li>•Medical leave</li> <li>•Performance pay</li> <li>•Instructional equipment</li> <li>•Public relations material</li> <li>•Salary and fringe benefits for all personnel</li> <li>•Life insurance plans and employee assistance benefits</li> <li>•Adequate personnel</li> <li>•Unemployment costs</li> <li>•Travel expenses</li> <li>•Special education program</li> <li>•3% reserve budget</li> <li>•Library resources</li> <li>•Administrative assistants</li> <li>•Details for contracted services</li> <li>•Background checks</li> <li>•Staff development</li> <li>•Census report</li> <li>•Fee waivers</li> <li>•ELL</li> <li>•Parent Information system</li> <li>•Textbooks</li> <li>•Transportation</li> <li>•Umbrella coverage</li> <li>•Assistive technology</li> <li>•Homebound services</li> <li>•Provision for alternative school</li> <li>•Technology equipment, materials, services</li> <li>•Summer school</li> <li>•Testing and assessments</li> <li>•Nutrition Program</li> <li>•Training needs</li> </ul>

Question Number & Element	Possible Points	Points Awarded	Comments
5. Audit method	1	.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Address tax return (Form 990) and other compliance audit requirements.</li> <li>•Include fraud-reporting requirements by the State.</li> </ul>

Question Number & Element	Possible Points	Points Awarded	Comments
6. Timetable	3	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Calendar does not provide enough lead time for effective implementation of all that is required to open a new school.</li> <li>•The calendar and schedules contain errors.</li> <li>•Daily instructional minutes are inaccurate.</li> </ul>

Question Number & Element	Possible Points	Points Awarded	Comments
9 .Admissions policies	2	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Residency requirements are not consistent with Shelby County Schools.</li> <li>•Health (physical) requirements do not meet state law.</li> <li>•Promotion policies are not educationally sound.</li> <li>•Grade levels inconsistent throughout document.</li> </ul>

Question Number & Element	Possible Points	Points Awarded	Comments
11. Health and safety compliance	2	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•The School Safety and Disaster Plan still need to be developed.</li> <li>•Inadequate funding/equipment for health and safety issues.</li> <li>•Contract distribution timeline is inconsistent.</li> <li>•Unclear as to whom the Principal reports.</li> </ul>
AND			
19.Transportation			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Transportation plan is not fully developed and budget is insufficient.</li> </ul>

Question Number & Element	Possible Points	Points Awarded	Comments
12. Employee Qualifications	2	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Plan for evaluation of teachers must meet state guidelines.</li> <li>•The qualification of teachers must be revisited. Staffing should address the needs of the students. Staffing must include key people with certification in specific areas such as Special Education. Highly qualified status of teachers must be addressed in this document.</li> <li>•Roles of Operations Manager and Program Director need clarity.</li> <li>•Merit pay for performance must be addressed with clear goals and attainable objectives for the teachers to reach this status.</li> <li>•Performance categories listed as a part of the evaluation process are not consistent with FEPA and are highly subjective.</li> <li>•No documented plan for employment of personnel to provide related services for special education population (Occupational/Physical Therapists, Speech/Language Therapists).</li> <li>•Salary schedules should be revisited to ensure adequacy and equity.</li> </ul>
14. Funds, Purchasing, and Travel Procedures	1	.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Ensure that in-state collateral (of excess deposits over FDIC limit) is utilized.</li> <li>•Define mileage and meal reimbursement rates.</li> </ul>

Question Number & Element	Possible Points	Points Awarded	Comments
15. Management /Administrative Plan	5	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•The organizational chart is confusing and does not reflect all positions identified in the narrative.</li> <li>•Principal's direct supervision does not match organizational chart.</li> <li>•The support provided by New Life Leadership Foundation is unclear.</li> </ul>

Question Number & Element	Possible Points	Points Awarded	Comments
16. Proposed By-Laws	1	0	•Bylaws still lack clarity as to roles and responsibilities and need to be in compliance with Public Charter School Board requirements.

Question Number & Element	Possible Points	Points Awarded	Comments
17. Assurance of liability	1	.5	•Addressed throughout the document as being inadequate or incomplete.

Question Number & Element	Possible Points	Points Awarded	Comments
18. Insurance Coverage	1	.5	•Identify an appropriate retirement plan for non-teaching staff. •Unsure if umbrella coverage added - did not provide quotes of policy premiums.

Question Number & Element	Possible Points	Points Awarded	Comments
20. Financial health and stability	1	.5	•Revenue source and funding assurances for start up costs should be explained. •Charter school needs to provide copy of IRS letter on final ruling of 501(c)(3) status. •At page 1 of budget, total State Education Funds budgeted for Year 5 is mathematically inaccurate or overstated by \$1.3 million for a projected enrollment of 231. •Year 1 is budgeted for an enrollment of 100. Cost per pupil used for budget development may be overstated. •Budget should address Tennessee Career Ladder dollars.

<i>Total Points</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>36.5</i>	
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*Acceptance of the Bylaws, Charter, EMO Materials (Contract, Financial Reports, Track Record, etc.) all of the items listed above, and those that might occur in the future are contingent upon the approval of the Shelby County Board of Education.*

Sandra.Gray@state.tn.us, Director of Charter Schools and Choice



**BARBARA COOPER**  
STATE REPRESENTATIVE

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# House of Representatives State of Tennessee

NASHVILLE

ASSISTANT MAJORITY WHIP

**MEMBERS OF COMMITTEES**  
EDUCATION  
HIGHER EDUCATION SUBCOMMITTEE  
GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS  
SECRETARY  
TOURISM CAUCUS

September 29, 2005

Shelby County Board of Education Commissioners  
Dr. Bobby Webb Superintendent  
160 N. Hollywood Street  
Memphis, Tennessee 38112

Dear Dr. Webb:

Rev. LaSimba Gray, Pastor and Administrator, New Sardis Baptist Church, 7739 E. Holmes Road has applied for Charter School status. Rev. Gray has the capabilities for instituting a high achieving school for children within the Shelby County School District.

Presently, some schools have portable buildings due to over crowded conditions. Reducing the teacher-pupil ratio is one of the major factors considered toward the prevention of "high Priority" schools. The Hattie Bradley Charter School will provide a choice for parents whose children are failing and experiencing difficulty with learning and achieving academic proficiency. The alternative will provide an environment conducive to learning and academic achievement.

Therefore, I am recommending that the Hattie Bradley Charter School application be approved because the kindergarten through grade five program will exemplify quality with a rigorous academic core and high standards. Moreover, teachers will engage students in challenging assignments and leaders will build a professional relationship with parents to address individual career and educational goals for their children.

I applaud Dr. Webb and commend the Board of Education for diligence in maintaining high standards in pupil performance and teacher-parent professionalism for Shelby County Schools.

Finally, the Hattie Bradley School program will be an asset for Southeast Shelby County. The school will relieve the burden of over crowdedness but more importantly, eligible children will be afforded effective practices in terms of local and state policies.

Rev. Gray serves as a model and mentor for youth and provides counseling and guidance for families. The Hattie Bradley Charter School will continue to promote high quality education for the Shelby County School District.

Thanks for your consideration for approval.

Respectfully,

Barbara Cooper  
State Representative

BC/tlh

**86th LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT  
SHELBY COUNTY**



## SHELBY COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

2523 LAMAR AVENUE • MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE 38114

**CLEO C. KIRK**

*Commissioner  
District 3, Position 2*

September 28, 2005

Dr. Bobby Webb  
Superintendent, Shelby County Schools  
160 S. Hollywood  
Memphis, Tennessee 38112

**RE: Hattie Bradley Charter School**

Dear Dr. Webb:

I am pleased to write this letter of support for the application of the New Sardis Baptist Church and Dr. L. LaSimba M. Gray, Jr., in their efforts to develop a Charter School in Shelby County.

As you well know, our Shelby County School System is in dire need of class rooms to accommodate our rapid growth in the Southeastern Corridor. New Sardis is presently operating a "Three Star" Day Care without financial support of the State. The students of the Southeast Corridor will benefit greatly from the dedicated staff of New Sardis Baptist Church and the "Hattie Bradley Charter School.

All considerations tendered their application will be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dr. Cleo C. Kirk".

DR. CLEO C. KIRK, Commissioner  
Chairman of the Budget and Finance Committee  
Shelby County Board of Commissioners

CCK: cln



## COURT OF CRIMINAL APPEALS

STATE OF TENNESSEE

CHAMBERS OF  
J. C. McLIN  
JUDGE

WHITE STATION TOWER, SUITE 1400  
5050 POPLAR AVENUE  
MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE 38157  
(901) 685-1270 • FAX: (901) 537-2998

September 29, 2005

Dr. Bobby Webb, Superintendent  
Shelby County School Board  
160 So. Hollywood Street  
Memphis, TN 38112

Re: New Sardis Baptist Church Charter School Application

Dear Dr. Webb:

This letter is being written on behalf of the New Sardis Baptist Church, under the leadership of Dr. L. LaSimba M. Gray, Jr., who is dedicated and respected in the fields of religion and education.

It has come to my attention and I am pleased to know that New Sardis is making application to have a much needed charter school on their church campus. Due to the tremendous growth of the community and the incapacity for the county school system to handle the vast number of students migrating to the area, it will certainly be a much needed and appreciated asset to the southeast corridor of this community.

Needless to say, Dr. Gray and the New Sardis Baptist Church has my support as well as my endorsement in this endeavor. I am always available if any additional information is needed.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J.C. McLin", is written over the typed name. The signature is stylized with a large loop at the beginning and a long tail.

Judge J.C. McLin

**From Gerard F. Consuegra, Ph.D., EdFutures, Education Program Director**

>>> <Gfconsuegra@aol.com> 01/19/06 1:23 PM >>>

Mr. Haglund,

See attached and below are some comments from Mr. Scott, our controller.

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From Mr. Scott

A couple of points, if it matters.

Admittedly, my budget had an error in one cell. I wonder if the district ever submitted a report with any errors, however minor. If so, I wonder if the state decided they could not be a district because of that error. The budget is substantially complete and reasonable.

Also, it is impossible to produce a budget with any precision, because so much depends on the personality of the school, which in turn depends greatly on student demographics and the principal's approach to the education process. This budget is for an "average school", which is a rare breed indeed. Further, the individual foibles of a small school tend to be more pronounced than in a large school, due to the smaller student population tending to be less homogenous and allowing for the greater impact of the principal.

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Again, copies of support letters are coming from Dr. Gray via US mail.

Gerard F. Consuegra, Ph.D.

Education Program Director

EdFutures, Inc.

678-485-6081

**From Jo Bellanti, SCS Director of Special Education**

>>> Jo Bellanti <jbellanti@scsk12.org> 01/20/06 9:02 AM >>>

At the conclusion of the Charter School Appeal Meeting held in Shelby County earlier this week, Dr. Nixon stated that comments would be accepted until Friday, January 20. I would like to take this opportunity to comment on the application by Dr. LaSimba Gray and EdFutures for the establishment of the Hattie Bradley Charter School.

I am the Director of Special Education for Shelby County schools, and one of the members of the committee which extensively reviewed the application for the Hattie Bradley Charter School. I also had the opportunity to meet with Dr. Conseuga and Dr. Gray at their request to discuss my conclusions.

At the hearing with Dr. Nixon, Dr. Conseuga spoke on behalf of the applicant and made statements that were misleading and misrepresentative of his conversation with me. Dr. Conseuga implied that the only concerns from a special education standpoint were materials and the provision of technology for census reporting.

While those were indeed two areas of concern, they were not at all the only two areas, nor even the most important of the areas of need that I had identified in my review of the initial and then later the revised charter school applications.

There were 33 items that I identified as needing to be addressed in the area of special education. Some of these certainly were more problematic than others, and it is possible that the applicants indeed could have had a plan to address some or all of these items, as Dr. Conseuga indicated to me. However, they were not addressed in the application, nor were they addressed in our conversation. Therefore, I must stand by my original conclusion that this applicant is not ready to establish a charter school which would maintain the standards of excellence we expect for our Shelby County students.

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Jo Bellanti, Director of Special Education  
Shelby County Schools  
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