



Indiana Department of Education

Dr. Katie Jenner, Secretary of Education

To: Indiana State Board of Education
From: Office of School Accountability
Date: March 15, 2024
Subject: Accreditation Petition for Little Pioneers Academy

This memorandum provides a summary of the information provided by the school in its petition for performance-based accreditation and the final recommendation from the Indiana Department of Education (Department) regarding the accreditation of Little Pioneers Academy (LPA).

Background & Demographic Information

Little Pioneers Academy currently operates in Newburgh, Indiana and currently serves students in pre-kindergarten through kindergarten. The school operates strictly in-person. The school blends Islamic teaching with Montessori and traditional instruction. Little Pioneers Academy has been in operation since August 2019.

LPA desires “to provide academic excellence in a safe, faith-based environment following Islamic values.”

LPA projects that it will enroll roughly 24 students in pre-kindergarten through kindergarten during the 2024-2025 school year. Over the next five years, the school intends to add a grade every year and increase overall enrollment to 37 students. The school plans to expand to grade five.

Operations

Facilities: Little Pioneers Academy is located in its own wing of the Islamic Center of Evansville, at 4200 Grimm Road, Newburgh, IN 47630. Its operations are independent from those of the Islamic Center. The school has been inspected annually by the state Fire Marshall and twice annually by a state consultant in accordance with licensing requirements.

The school has been found to be in compliance with all regulations. In the coming years the school plans to expand into classrooms located in the main section of the building, but they will remain an independent entity.

Tuition: Annual tuition and fees for LPA are projected to total \$3,200 for each student during its first year of accreditation. These costs include annual tuition, registration fee, summer camp, snack, and extended care. LPA indicated that it intends to participate in the Indiana Choice Scholarship program.

Staffing: Martha Alhieh is LPA’s director and kindergarten teacher. She has her Bachelor of Arts degree in history and geology, Master of Arts degree in middle eastern studies, and is in the process of obtaining her Child Development Associate credential in early childhood administration.



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The governing board is composed of stakeholders from the community and parents. They oversee the operations of the school and vote on policies, changes, and personnel decisions to ensure that the school is meeting its mission goals. There are seven board members in total.

Currently, LPA has an additional three teachers. The school plans to contract two licensed teachers to administer WIDA and plans to have a staff of 18 teachers by year five, ten of whom will have Indiana teaching licenses.

Academic Programming

Students will be instructed in the areas of English/language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, art, and music (STEM, Cooking and Library monthly). Subjects are introduced through circle time activities and workbook pages and are supported by Montessori materials and project-based learning. Math, science, and geography will be taught in both English and Arabic. LPA's curriculum follows the Indiana academic standards in mathematics, science, English/language arts, and social studies. Islamic Studies will include Qur'an memorization and recitation, Arabic language, and Ahadith. Islamic teachings in the Montessori classroom will utilize the Qur'an Blossoms curriculum.

Students are formally assessed at the beginning of the year, quarterly, and at the end of the year. Assessments are designed to determine student progress toward Indiana academic standard goals. Students are also regularly assessed informally after learning new topics. These assessments are drawn from the Amplify and McGraw-Hill curriculums.

LPA has confirmed understanding of the Indiana state assessments and which grades are required to take each assessment.

Department Recommendation

Little Pioneers Academy has been in operation for the last five school years, with their enrollment growing at a reasonable pace. In addition, Little Pioneers Academy has plans for steady reasonable growth for the future. Based on the submitted petition and accompanying materials, Little Pioneers Academy has a fair understanding of the requirements of being an Indiana performance-based accredited school. Therefore, the Department recommends granting Little Pioneers Academy provisional state performance-based accreditation as a nonpublic school in Indiana.