



NINEVEH-HENSLEY-JACKSON UNITED SCHOOL CORPORATION

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Indian Creek Schools

June 29, 2017

John Snethen, Executive Director/General Counsel
Indiana State Board of Education
143 W. Market St., Suite 500
Indianapolis, IN 46204

Dear Mr. Snethen,

As Superintendent of the Nineveh-Jackson-Hensley United School Corporation (also known as Indian Creek Schools), I am writing on behalf of our school board to notify the Indiana State Board of Education of our intent to seek Charter School Authority as permitted by Indiana Code 20-24-2.2-1.2(b).

Over the last several months, our School Board has engaged in several stakeholder conversations regarding the benefits of authorizing a charter school with an emphasis on agribusiness and virtual education. These collaborative conversations have included meetings with our local teachers association, administration, Board, and community, and our corporation has also consulted and sought the advice of subject matter experts familiar with charter authorization, agribusiness, and virtual education.

On June 13, 2017, our Board approved the enclosed application that I am formally submitting to the Indiana State Board of Education for approval. We believe our application addresses all required provisions required by law, and as listed on the SBOE website, for school corporations seeking Charter School Authority. This includes a signed statement of assurances located on the final page of our application. We greatly appreciated the technical assistance of SBOE counsel, Timothy Schultz, who provided technical assistance to us in our district's initial inquiry into this process.

Thank you in advance for your review of our application. It would be most helpful if you could reply with both the process and timeline associated with the Board's review and possible decision. As you review our application, we believe you'll find a well-articulated vision for using school district charter authorization to create innovative pathways to new learning opportunities for students.

With appreciation,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Timothy Edsell".

Dr. Timothy Edsell

Cc: Dr. Jennifer McCormick, Superintendent of Public Instruction, Chair (SBOE)
Timothy Schultz, Legal Counsel (SBOE)



Governing Body Charter Authority - Registration
Nineveh-Hensley-Jackson United School Corporation

May 9, 2017

An Application to the Indiana State Board of Education

802 South Indian Creek Drive
Trafalgar, Indiana 46181

p. 317-878-2100

www.indiancreekschools.com
Dr. Tim Edsell, Superintendent

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Notice of Intent

In accordance with Indiana Code (IC) 20-24-2.2-1.2(b), the Nineveh-Hensley-Jackson United School Corporation Board of School Trustees seeks to register with the Indiana State Board of Education for charter authority within the attendance area of the Corporation. The Board of School Trustees authorizes the Superintendent of Schools to submit written notification of the Corporation's intent to serve as a charter authorizer (in accordance with IC 20-24). In addition to written notification, the Board of School Trustees further authorizes the Superintendent of Schools to submit to the Indiana State Board of Education responses to the following:

- An explanation of the governing body's strategic vision for chartering.
- An explanation of the governing body's budget and personnel capacity and commitment to execute the duties of quality charter authorizing in accordance with IC 20-24.
- An explanation of how the governing body will solicit charter school applicants in accordance with IC 20-24-3.
- A description or outline of the performance framework the governing body will use to guide the establishment of a charter contract and for the oversight and evaluation of charter schools, consistent with this article.
- A draft of the governing body's renewal, revocation, and nonrenewal processes, consistent with IC 20-24.
- A statement of assurance that the governing body commits to serving as a charter authorizer in fulfillment of the expectations, spirit, and intent of this article, and that the governing body will fully adopt standards of quality charter school authorizing in accordance with IC 20-24-2.2-1.5

Strategic Vision for Chartering

The Nineveh-Hensley-Jackson United School Corporation desires to be an innovative leader in providing educational opportunities for students, as well as, being responsive to the needs of the local community. The demography of the Corporation consists of large rural areas interspersed with pockets of small communities and a few well developed towns. The local community is seeking to respond to three emerging trends: (1) an aging farming constituency, (2) the integration of farming methods with emerging technologies, and (3) the growing number of farms being shuttered or lying dormant. Rather than viewing these trends as potential challenges, the Corporation has embraced a strategic vision to design and deliver a premiere agricultural education

program for students. Students interested in learning the science, business, and technology of plant and animal production will gain critical competencies through relevant and rigorous agriculture-based courses (including those offered through virtual learning environments), field experiences, and internships. Students will be encouraged to develop their own unique talents and explore their interests in a broad range of agricultural career pathways. Moreover, the Board of School Trustees seeks to be instrumental in working with community leaders to develop and influence the creation of a K-12 agribusiness school to be located within the boundaries of the school corporation.

Budget & Personnel Capacity, Commitment

The Nineveh-Hensley-Jackson United School Corporation is well situated to accept the responsibility for executing the duties of a quality charter authorizer as required under IC 20-24. The Corporation's current school leadership team and governing body has the capacity, as well as, the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to provide meaningful oversight as a charter authorizer. Moreover, the Corporation's Board of School Trustees is prepared to commit the necessary human and fiscal resources required to achieve its strategic vision of expanding student access to high quality educational opportunities, including those associated with the agribusiness industry. Primary oversight of any charter school authorized will be managed by the Assistant Superintendent of Schools with secondary support from the Corporation's principals, subject and pedagogical experts, and third-party, expert consultants.

In anticipation of seeking Governing Body Charter Authority from the Indiana State Board of Education, the Corporation engaged in extensive research of charter authorizing activities and hired expert consultants to evaluate the Corporation's capacity and readiness. Moreover, the Corporation contacted another rural Indiana school district who presently authorizes a virtual charter school. This contact has resulted in an ongoing dialogue, allowing the Nineveh-Hensley-Jackson United School Corporation to gain critical insight into the challenges as well as the benefits of authorizing a charter school within its attendance boundaries.

Solicitation of Charter School Applicants

It is the intention of the Nineveh-Hensley-Jackson United School Corporation to charter a school that aligns with the Corporation's strategic vision to provide a premiere agricultural education program for students. In soliciting charter school applicants, the Corporation will first look to potential organizers who currently have a local

representation and are heavily invested in the community. Additionally, the Corporation will reach out to national organizations, such as Future Farmers of America (FFA), who have established relationships within the agribusiness industry and who can help the Corporation in communicating its desire to authorize a charter school with a strong curricular focus in agribusiness.

The Corporation understands that responsible oversight of a charter school begins with the selection process. As such, the principles and standards for quality charter school authorizing developed by the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) will guide the Corporation's development of a comprehensive application process that: (1) includes clear application questions and guidance; (2) follows fair, transparent procedures and rigorous criteria; and (3) grants a charter only to an applicant who demonstrates strong capacity to establish and operate a quality charter school.

The solicitation of charter school applicants will appear on the Corporation's official website and will stipulate that required components prescribed at IC 20-24-3-4 be thoroughly addressed within the organizer's application.

Performance Framework

The Nineveh-Hensley-Jackson United School Corporation has sought help from third party consultants, with expertise in evaluating educational programs, to make recommendations in the design of a Performance Framework (i.e., to guide the establishment of a charter contract and for the oversight and evaluation of charter schools). Utilizing research-based criteria within a descriptive rubric, the Corporation's Performance Framework will require authorized schools to submit evidence of effectiveness in four critical dimensions of school performance: academics, systems/operations, personalization of learning, and governance.

The development of a charter contract and the oversight and evaluation of authorized schools will include the following key steps:

1. Evaluation of all charter school applications and annual performance reviews to substantiate performance levels (of academic quality and school efficacy);
2. Evaluation of applicant capacity through in-person interviews; and
3. Solicitation of stakeholder testimony through a public hearing.

The Performance Framework's evaluation process is designed as a two-part diagnostic review using both a self-study (conducted by the school's organizers) and an external review conducted by an expert team (provided by the Corporation, or authorizer). Both the self-study and external review utilize descriptive criteria (associated with the four quadrants of the Performance Framework) to reach a determination about academic quality and school efficacy. Evidence to support determinations and findings will be gathered through:

- Documentation review
- Stakeholder interviews
- Critical systems review
- Data analysis
- Stakeholder surveys

Based on the findings of the school organizers' self-study and the Corporation's external review, improvement priorities for the school will be mutually developed and implemented. The Corporation, as the school's authorizer, will provide ongoing support and will monitor the school's progress toward continuous improvement.

Renewal, Revocation, Non-Renewals

Renewal

The authority to operate a charter school is granted through a limited-term, renewable contract. Contract renewal is not automatic – it must be earned through strong academic results and operational effectiveness. The Corporation's Performance Framework is the primary instrument for making determinations regarding renewal of the charter. Renewal of the charter is based on the school's ability to score a satisfactory rating as measured by descriptive criteria within the Performance Framework and through documented progress made to address previously identified improvement priorities.

At the time a satisfactory rating is achieved, the school will submit a charter renewal application to the Nineveh-Hensley-Jackson Board of School Trustees. Assuming both the authorizer and organizer are in agreement, the Board will renew the charter.

Revocation & Non-Renewal

Protecting the interests of students and their families is a primary responsibility of the charter authorizer. This includes ensuring that students are receiving the educational services promised. Failure to do so, as evidenced by the failure to achieve satisfactory ratings through the Performance Framework, will result in non-renewal of the charter. Serious concerns about the charter's financial, operational, or academic viability may trigger a revocation of the charter at any time during the charter contract. Such action would result from truly egregious circumstances such as fiscal mismanagement, the inability to deliver educational content, organizational incompetence, or non-compliance. In either case, the process for closure remains the same.

Closure Process

The following is an overview of specific actions (associated with the closure process) the Nineveh-Hensley-Jackson Board of School Trustees would take should a decision be made to revoke or non-renew a charter:

- Establish Transition Team and Assign Roles, Action Items, and Responsibilities
- Issue Initial Closure Notification Letter: Parents & School
- Issue Initial Closure Notification Letter: IDOE, SBOE
- Issue a Press Release
- Secure Student Records
- Secure Financial Records
- Create Contact Lists of Parents and Staff
- Convene Parent & Staff Meetings
- Establish Use of Remaining Funds
- Maintenance of Location and Communication
- Issue Parent/Guardian Closure Transition Letter
- Issue Staff/Faculty Closure Transition Letter
- Issue Agency Notifications
- Issue Notification of Employees and Benefit Providers
- Issue Notification of Management Company/Organization and Termination of Contract
- Issue Notification to Vendors, Creditors, Debtors
- Disposition of Records
- Issue Final Report Cards and Student Records Notice
- Transfer of Student Records
- Complete Final Audit
- Complete Inventory & Disposition of Property
- Issue List of Creditors and Debtors

Statement of Assurances

The authorizer agrees to comply with all of the following provisions:

1. A resolution, motion, or other formalized evidence of a formal decision has been adopted by the governing body of the Nineveh-Hensley-Jackson United School Corporation (hereinafter referred to as "Authorizer"), which demonstrates the intent of the school corporation to register as an authorizer with the Indiana State Board of Education ("Board").
2. Authorizer shall operate in compliance with all applicable federal and state laws, including Indiana Charter Schools Law as described in all relevant sections of IC 20-24.
3. Authorizer will participate in all data reporting, assessment, and evaluation activities as required under Indiana law.
4. Authorizer will ensure that any charter schools that it authorizes will comply with all provisions of the Non regulatory Guidance - Public Charter Schools Program of the U.S. Department of Education, as well as with applicable Indiana law. See also relevant sections of IC 20-24.
5. Authorizer will ensure that any charter schools that it authorizes shall ensure that a student's records, and, if applicable, a student's individualized education program as defined at 20 U.S.C. 1401(14) of the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*, will follow the student, in accordance with applicable federal and state law.
6. Authorizer, as well as any charter schools that it authorizes, will comply with all applicable provisions of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 ("ESSA")*.
7. Authorizer will indemnify and hold harmless the Board, the State of Indiana, all school corporations providing funds to any charter schools that it authorizes (if applicable), and their officers, directors, agents and employees, and any successors and assigns from any and all liability, cause of action, or other injury or damage in any way relating to the Authorizer or its charter schools.
8. Authorizer understands that the Board may revoke its authorizer status if the Board deems that the Authorizer is not fulfilling its legal and operational responsibilities outlined in Indiana law.

Signature from Authorized Representative of the Governing Body, School Corporation Applicant

I, the undersigned, am an authorized representative of the Governing Body, School Corporation applicant and do hereby certify that the information submitted in this application is accurate and true to the best of my knowledge and belief. In addition, I do hereby certify to the assurances contained above.



Dr. Timothy Edsell, Superintendent

6-14-17

Date