



class size matters

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Comments on the proposed KED charter school in District 2

KED will be managed by Kunskapsskolan, a for-profit Educational Management Organization (EMO) that runs a chain of charters in Sweden. Although SUNY has twelve more for-profit charters it can legally authorize under the old cap, it would be far better not to authorize any more, given the intent of the legislature to ban this practice in the future.

Moreover, there are specific problems indicated in the KED application that should give concern to any parent or education advocate, concerned with transparency, accountability, and educational quality.

Weak board and potential conflicts of interest:

Few of the proposed board members have any significant educational background, or at least that can be discerned, given that many of the resumes have huge areas blacked out.

There are also issues suggesting potential conflicts of interest: Here is the answer of one potential board member to this question:

Full name: Hashim-T O. Bello (with most of his resume blacked out including relevant experience)

10. Please indicate whether you or your spouse knows anyone who is doing, or plans to do, business with the charter school (whether as an individual or as a director, officer, employee or agent of an entity). If so, indicate and describe the precise nature of your relationship and the nature of the business that such person or entity is transacting or will be transacting with the school.

Yes, I do. (no further explanation)

11. Please indicate if you, your spouse or other immediate family members anticipate conducting, or are conducting, any business with the school. If so, please indicate the precise nature of the business that is being or will be conducted.

Peg do (no further explanation)

12. If the school contracts with an educational service provider (a management company, whether for-profit or not-for-profit), please indicate whether you or your spouse know any employees, officers, owners, directors or agents of that provider. If the answer is in the affirmative, please describe any such relationship.

I / we do not know any such persons. Yes, (no further explanation)¹

Even more troubling is the fact that Henry E. Gooss, another proposed board member, is formerly President of Investor Growth Capital, currently a senior adviser to Investor AB, a venture capital firm. In the original application he noted that Investor AB partially owns the for-profit EMO, Kungskapskolan, contracted to operate the school.

Not applicable because the school does not contact with a management company or charter management organization.

I / we do not know any such persons.

Yes, **KUNGSKAPSSKOLAN AB is partially owned by my employer, Investor AB**

3. If the school contracts with an educational service provider, please indicate whether you, your spouse or other immediate family members have a direct or indirect ownership, employment, contractual or management interest in the provider. For any interest indicated, please provide a detailed description. N/A. I / we have no such interest, Yes,

According to the NY Charter Association's reading of the new charter law, "**charter schools may no longerhire for-profit entities in which board members or employees have a substantial interest.**"²

As Greg Richmond, president and chief executive officer of the [National Association of Charter School Authorizers](#), writes in Education Week,

"Members of a charter school governing board should not be employees of the management organization running their school, nor should they be compensated for their service or selected by the management organization."³

According to the SUNY Charter Institute, "SUNY has never permitted school trustees to be affiliated with for-profit management companies."⁴

Yet it is clear that Gooss, as the president of the venture capital fund that owns Kungskapskolan AB, would fit in that category.

Mr. Gooss' entire resume and curriculum vita is also blacked out, for reasons that are not apparent.

Lack of evidence of effectiveness of program

Attachment 12c of the application is supposed to show evidence of effectiveness of program. In it, the following statements are made:

In this section we highlight research showing that following:

¹ <http://www.newyorkcharters.org/pdf/ApplicationsSummer2010/May2010AppCycle/KEDManhattanRedacted.pdf>

² http://nyccharterschools.org/storage/documents/Guide_to_new_charter_law_-_19_July_2010.pdf

³ http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2010/07/14/36richmond_ep.h29.html

⁴ <http://www.newyorkcharters.org/documents/PublicComments.pdf>

1) The Kunskapsskolan Education concept has been highly effective in raising student achievement levels in the Kunskapsskolan schools in Sweden, even when risk indicators are accounted for. ⁵

Yet there is no evidence of this effectiveness offered, and the graphs that purport to show exceptional record of achievement in Sweden (on pg. 76-78) are unreadable.

2) The demographics of the U.K. student population that Kunskapsskolan is designing the new public Academies for, shows that they are willing to devote the time, resources, and cultural flexibility necessary for the program to be successful with a diverse set of learners.... In 2010, Kunskapsskolan will be taking over some of the lowest performing schools in the UK, proving that they are committed to planning for the academic success of students no matter where they come from or what kind of educational level they attained before entering these Kunskapsskolan schools...

Here and elsewhere in the application, it appears that this program has been designed for the UK, not for New York City, and/or they simply copied boilerplate language for their UK proposal and plunked it in the document: That they may be “planning for the academic success” of low-performing students in the UK does not indicate that they will necessarily achieve this, either in the UK or in New York.

Moreover, there is no comparison offered of the demographics of the proposed student population in Sweden with that of either the UK or New York and no convincing statement that the curriculum they will provide will be designed to reach New York City children.

Siting

KED has not committed to find a site separate from the already overcrowded schools facilities in District 2, which should be a huge issue for all who are concerned about the conditions in our schools.

We have seen what has happened in the past when new schools have been formed in D2 and elsewhere, and forced into our buildings, causing the loss of valuable programs and squeezing students in existing schools, causing them to increase in class size and/or lose art, science, gyms, and/or other critical spaces.

Lack of community support

According to the SUNY charter school Institute, **“As clearly defined in the quoted portions of the Act, a prospective applicant must demonstrate “support from the school district in which the school will be located.”** ⁶ I see no evidence of such community support in the application, except for a few signatures on a petition, some of them from people who do not even reside in the district.

In Attachment 26, which is supposed to show include evidence of community support, the applicant writes:

⁵ <http://www.newyorkcharters.org/pdf/ApplicationsSummer2010/May2010AppCycle/KEDManhattanRedacted.pdf>, p. 75.

⁶ <http://www.newyorkcharters.org/documents/PublicComments.pdf>

This community's healthy skepticism doesn't preclude it from being convinced about innovative options for it's [sic] children, but they take time. Once all of their questions and concerns are answered in the forums of their choosing, they become intensely loyal, and that is what we are confident will happen with KMCS.⁷

District 2 has many successful middle schools of long standing; what our children need is more space and new buildings in order to alleviate existing and worsening overcrowding.

What they do not need is yet another experimental school, designed to make a profit, whose insertion into existing school buildings will eat up more classroom space and create yet more overcrowding.

Online learning

Finally, schools that operate through online or virtual learning have a very controversial track record; and uncertain results. According to the one meta-analysis that has been done, it showed no significant positive effects for K-12 students. The analysis concluded: "*Few rigorous research studies of the effectiveness of online learning for K–12 students have been published.*"⁸

Also, where are the results of the other District 2 middle school, Quest to Learn, which is based on online learning? Wouldn't it be better to wait and see what the results have been for this school and/or KED's schools in the UK, as well as a more detailed analysis of the relevance of these results to this proposed school?

Do we really want to encourage more experiments on our students? Even though the DOE is rushing to expand online learning in NYC schools, because of potential cost savings and in order to artificially boost graduation rates, we should not be blindly following their example, without more proof of its efficacy and ability to serve our children well, as part of a quality education.⁹

⁷ <http://www.newyorkcharters.org/pdf/ApplicationsSummer2010/May2010AppCycle/KEDManhattanRedacted.pdf>, p. 131.

⁸ <http://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/tech/evidence-based-practices/finalreport.pdf>

⁹ For the uncertain results of online learning and credit recovery in NYC schools, see <http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2010/07/14/36credit-2.h29.html>
<http://gothamschools.org/2009/06/10/credit-recovery-joel-kleins-race-to-the-bottom/>
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/vadim-lavrusik/a-race-for-diplomas-befor_b_589157.html
<http://thebrooklynink.com/2010/06/29/12558-tilden-high-school-offering-students-last-chance-to-graduate/>
http://www.nypost.com/p/news/local/brooklyn/student_graduates_qKSEek0SoPXTJBjV1Sc0M
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<http://chaz11.blogspot.com/2010/06/does-new-idea-for-credit-recovery-two.html>