

STRING THEORY SCHOOLS

1600 VINE STREET PHILADELPHIA, PA 19102
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String Theory Schools renovated the school during the summer of 2012, putting in new labs and studios, employing the same arts and science model it had been previously proven as successful. Students returned to school that fall to a bright and cheery school, smiling caring teachers & staff, and the opportunity to study the arts and sciences in addition to all of their academic classes. During the school's first winter break as the Philadelphia Charter School for the Arts & Sciences, the school held its first musical performance at the Kimmel Center. The school rented the entire Verizon hall just for itself as parents and staff stood awestruck at the accomplishments these students achieved after just a few months.

School wide proficiencies in its baseline year hovered in the thirties with some classes not having any students proficient in reading or math. The school demonstrated double-digit gains in its first two years and for the 2013 school year, it achieved a Building Level Academic Score of 67.6 making it one of the most dramatic academic turnarounds in the city of Philadelphia.

Funding for charter schools in the state of Pennsylvania is one of the biggest issues in the Commonwealth. There are various funding mechanisms in place for charters ranging from the local to state and federal level.

On July 13, 2013, the School District of Philadelphia sent letters to all charter school operators demonstrating that the per student expenditures for the previous year amounted to a calculated \$14,584.59 per student. With deductions and selected expenditures, the Non-Special Education Student per Pupil Funding to be paid for charter school students amounted to \$8,596.72. Midyear adjustments to the subsidy rate have lowered this even further. Charter schools rely upon the Commonwealth to make the difference between what SOP pays and what is reasonable.

Submitted by,

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Written Testimony Prepared for Basic Education Funding Commission

String Theory Schools' first charter opened up in 2000 as the first elementary level school in Pennsylvania to link academic performance to the arts. String Theory's educational model is unique for many reasons. It has a ninety minute longer school day than the School District of Philadelphia which allows it to offer seven extra classes on weekly basis. Students in Kindergarten through 5th grade have the opportunity to take the following additional classes: Vocal Music, Instrumental Music, Ballet, French, Creative Writing, Visual Arts, and Innovations in Science & Technology.

In 5th grade, students have the opportunity to choose one of those subjects as a major subject and spend the first two periods of every day in that major. We find that when students discover something they like or are talented in, and have the opportunity to do it everyday, it prepares their minds for learning and they are much more focused on school.

Our students have always performed very well on standardized tests and String Theory Schools has become one of the most innovative and successful schools in the city - as evidenced by its nearly five thousand student waiting list. In 2010, the School District of Philadelphia approached us about solving a programmatic need within the district. As relayed by the Charter School Office, criteria based high schools such with a focus on the arts and sciences as C.A.P.A. and Science Leadership Academy had ten times the demand as they did capacity with many schools having thousands of students on waiting lists. They indicated that String Theory was uniquely able to help the District for three very important reasons: It had curricular programs that were in high demand, it had the capacity to help place students, and if it could open centrally located schools quickly, it could reach students from every part of the city.

In 2012 String Theory Schools was asked to take over the failing District school, H.R. Edmunds, in year three of the Renaissance School Initiative. Edmunds was a failing school for many reasons, not least of which was its dangerous atmosphere. From September, 2011 to January, 2012, there had been twenty five assaults on teachers. That was a remarkable finding for a K-8 school. Many students wandered the halls during class, and the school facility had accumulated thirty years of filth and debris. The school also had a long-standing roach and rat problem. Children had attended this school in squalor conditions for many years.