



November 29, 2012

Loudoun County School Board Select Committee:

Below are the responses to the initial set of questions provided to the Loudoun Math and IT Academy on Saturday, November 24, 2012.

Questions to the LMITA Applicant (#1):

1. When can we expect to see the response to the LCPS Preliminary Staff Comments to the Applicant?

LMITA: All items in the staff report have been answered except for those comments related to curriculum. The final LMITA response to the staff's questions is in the editing stage, the curriculum section is being completed and the budget will be updated and provided to the Select Committee by no later than the December 6th meeting.

2. What is Character Education?

LMITA: Updated application, page 36: *"LMITA character education is aimed to support our students to become lifelong, independent and ethical learners. The LMITA Character Education Committee (LCEC) will develop a character education program based on the six pillars of character: Trustworthiness, Respect, Responsibility, Fairness, Caring and Citizenship. The LCEC will consist of members from parents, staff, and the administration. The character education program will be tailored around the general LMITA mission and vision. The LCEC will then determine the materials of instruction and extracurricular activities to be utilized. The extracurricular activities will include field trips, local and national community events, volunteering and service opportunities at local community organizations."*

The main character education philosophy at LMITA could be summarized as "Come to learn, Go forth to serve!" LMITA aims to prepare both academically and socially well-equipped pupils and the character education will mainly address the social aspect of our program. While our main focus will be around the well-recognized "Six Pillars of Character Education" (charactercounts.org), we also will utilize the well-known character education text book "Seven Habits of Highly Effective Teens" by Sean Covey as part of our character education program. The book comes with a workbook and provides many real life examples that support the importance of the aforementioned six pillars. Character education will be primarily integrated into the fabric of curriculum.

3. What access to the Charter School curriculum guides/scopes and sequence of instructional material will the staff of LCPS and LCSB have and when will it be available?

LMITA: LCPS and the Loudoun County School Board will have a full access to the school curriculum and list of instructional materials. The full curriculum aligned, with Virginia SOLs and common core subject requirements, will be finalized after charter approval, and will be made available to the School Board and LCPS.

4. Define, "Founding Members" within Dr. Bicak's bio. Is that a member of the governing board?

LMITA: Ali Bicak was a member of the Board that established Chesapeake Science Point Public Charter School (CSP).

5. Please identify the source of "best practices" in establishing a charter school and in charter school management. Will you follow all of them? If not, which ones?

LMITA: The initial source of the best practices of the LMITA application is Chesapeake Science Point Public Charter School (CSP), as well as other examples that are recognized by the National Charter School Alliance. LMITA aims to successfully implement all charter school best practices possible. That being said, we believe the charter's full development and identification of those best practices that are best suited for Loudoun County will be a gradual process and everything cannot be accomplished in its first year.

CSP, since its inception in 2005, consistently made the AYP, and exceeded both district and state targets every year, an uninterrupted success history recognized with a Governor's citation and several medals and awards in state and national competitions. Due to CSP's successful record, Chesapeake Lighthouse Foundation or CLF, the operator of CSP, was invited by a group of parents in Prince George's County, Md., to open a sister school, called Chesapeake Math and IT academy (CMIT), in 2011. Building upon the past experiences of CSP, CMIT made a very good start and has an excellent relationship with its local school district.

6. List the start-up businesses established by Mr. Yildirim and their date/state of incorporation

USA Marble Granite	2009	Fairfax, VA
USA Home Center	2010	Gainesville, VA
USA Cabinet Store	2011	Fairfax, VA
(new company)	first quarter of 2013	Loudoun area, VA

7. Please identify by title, date, and journal the articles published by Ms. Inetas

Articles Published by Ms. Inetas:

- I AM Modern Magazine, Flintstone Marble and Granite, 4/29/2008
<http://www.iammodern.com/flintstone-marble-and-granite.html>
- I AM Modern Magazine, Holiday Make Over, 10/27/2009
<http://www.iammodern.com/holiday-makeover.html>

- I AM Modern Magazine, A Home With Stone Does Not Need to be an Expensive Venture, Fall 2008
- Loudoun Independent, Stone Care 101, 7/2007
- Loudoun Independent, Geology of Stone Part I, 03/2008
- Loudoun Independent Geology of Stone Part II, 04/2008
- Loudoun Independent Outdoor Kitchens, 7/2007
- Loudoun Magazine featured contributor, The New Rest And Relaxation Room by Therese P. Howe, Fall 2011

Business Honors:

- 2008 Retail Business of the Year Flintstone Marble and Granite, LLC –Loudoun County Chamber of Commerce
- 2008-2010 Finalist for Overall Business of the Year Flintstone Marble and Granite, LLC- Loudoun County Chamber of Commerce
- 2008 Best New Business- Best of Loudoun Poll – Leesburg Today
- 2011 Best Pick Reports Sky Marble and Granite, Inc.
- 2012 Best Countertop Company-Sky Marble and Granite, Inc. I AM Modern Best of the Suburbs Poll

8. For how many years was Mr. Fatih Kandil a middle school teacher? Please provide references at the school in which he was employed.

LMITA: Mr. Kandil taught as a middle school teacher for five years as follows.

1999 – 2000	Brooklyn Amity School	Brooklyn, NY
2000 – 2002	Chicago Math & Science Academy	Chicago, IL
2002 – 2005	Wisconsin Career Academy	Milwaukee, WI

9. How long has each “founding member” been a member of the Loudoun Community? How long have they been associated with LCPS, or had children in LCPS schools?

LMITA:

Ali Gokce has been a Loudoun resident since July of 2005. He has a fourth grader at Countryside Elementary, and a sixth grader at River Bend Middle School

Ali Bicak is not a member of the Loudoun community.

Fatih Kandil has been a Loudoun resident for the past two years. His children attended Hutchison Elementary School, kindergarten and second grades in the 2011 – 2012 school year. However, after the way he has been attacked during the public sessions and in social media related to this charter school application, he did not feel comfortable exposing his children to

any potential hostile actions at school and he had his both children enrolled at a private school. Mr. Kandil hopes to have his children return to LCPS if LMITA is approved.

Sinan Yildirim lived in Loudoun from 2006 to 2011. He was a Loudoun resident when the LMITA initiative was just starting. He is planning to move back to Loudoun in 2013 related to a new business he is about to establish. He is married with a child who is not school age yet.

Mustafa Sahin has been a member of the Loudoun community for more than two and a half years. He has two children who are not school age yet.

Sharon Inetas has been a member of the Loudoun community for seven years and had one child in LCPS. She has been a native of Northern Virginia for 55 years with one daughter pursuing her PhD.

Nataliya Blyznyuk and her family moved to Loudoun in October 2007. She has three children. Her oldest child went to Cedar Lane Elementary School. She received an unsolicited job offer from a company in Washington State, which she accepted and moved out of Loudoun in July 2012. While she still supports LMITA, she will be happy to vacate her board seat to a Loudoun resident at the appropriate time.

10. How can you provide Spanish, French, German, and Latin instruction with a total of 10 teachers?

LMITA: We cannot and we did not mean to offer them concurrently. Those will be the choices we will have on the table; we will decide which direction to go based on feedback from all the members of LMITA community, including students, parents, community members and LCPS. Eventually, we will begin with one foreign language only. Along the way, when the number of students increases, we will be able to hire more staff and offer more options. Once we reach the full capacity of grades 6-12, we will be able to offer more choices to our students.

11. Please make available Appendix C for review of all select committee members.

LMITA: We have the surveys scanned in an 18Mb PDF file. We can provide them to the select committee in the media of their choice.

12. Who are “volunteer teachers”? What kind of authority/position do they hold?

LMITA: Updated application, pg. 20: *“Involvement of parents will start with the registration of the students to LMITA. All school administrators and **volunteer teachers** will visit the parents of enrolled students at home to brief them on the academic and disciplinary expectations.”*

There will be some offerings at LMITA, like visiting the families of the enrolled students that will be provided to strengthen teacher-parent cooperation which is not necessarily among a

teachers' standard responsibilities. These tasks will be performed on a voluntary basis by teachers.

13. What is the "decision making level" at LMITA?

LMITA: The governing board will oversee the overall operation of the school via its monthly meetings; however, day-to-day operations will be delegated to the school principal. The principal will follow the LMITA Board policies while abiding the applicable LCPS policies.

Currently, all board members communicate by email regularly to coordinate their efforts. Should a disagreement arise, decisions will be made based on a majority vote of the board members.

14. Please list all support expected to be received by LCPS , including duration, full time equivalents, reimbursement by LMITA, and certification/qualifications required.

LMITA: At this stage, it is very difficult to create a precise and detailed list of services to be sought from LCPS given many variables remain. The primary area of need will be services for special education, ELL and potentially, services for gifted students, which will be finalized once the LMITA student body forms. Food will be contracted to properly licensed vendors. Some personnel service support might be needed in the case that the School Board wants LMITA teachers to be LCPS employees. Services that will be needed will become clearer as we receive feedback from you and during the negotiation process. In any case, any services provided to LMITA by LCPS will be provided on a cost-neutral basis to LCPS.

15. Please list all additional external support to be received by LMITA, including state and federal funding,

LMITA: We will apply for federal start-up and charter school implementation grants. LMITA applied but was not awarded 2012 Charter School Grant. Below is the evaluation of the three reviewers. It is clear that we lost most points due to the absence of a charter contract. Our initial research has shown that if we had applied with a charter contract in our hands, we would have received all possible points shown in the last row. Also with a contract, we will be able to strengthen our personnel, which will yield even higher points.

Twenty schools were awarded the grant in 2012 and the allocated funds are listed at <http://tinyurl.com/8o5k7en>.

Selection Criteria	Maximum	Reader 1	Reader 2	Reader 3
Quality of Curriculum	15	13	12	12
Assisting Disadvantaged Students	3	3	3	3
Assessing Achievement	15	12	13	12
Community Support	8	7	8	8
Parental and Community Involvement	3	2	3	3
Quality of the Personnel	22	18	14	16
Quality of the Management Plan	16	13	12	13
Charter or Performance Contract	15	0	7	10
Degree of Flexibility	3	2	2	1
Total	100	70	74	78
Total with a charter contract	100	85	82	83

16. Please list all waivers required from the School Board by LMITA, including state and federal mandates.

LMITA: LMITA will request waivers including, but not limited to the following:

- I) Mandatory uniform policy
- II) Offering courses to advanced students in early grade levels such as Algebra I for 6th graders or Algebra II, Pre-Calc, Spanish I, Biology 9, JAVA, English 9, and Spanish II during the middle school years for high school credits.
- III) Waivers that may be needed related to the school building: facilities will be completed in three phases and it will not have all the necessary components in its first year, i.e. a stand-alone gymnasium.
- IV) Transportation service responsibility.
- V) Recognition of IT track classes as credit classes
- VI) Special permission for LMITA students so that they can join LMITA instead of their home schools.
- VII) Permission for LMITA students to participate in team sports in their home schools.

17. How will LMITA further screen gifted students? With what means and with what professional degrees/certifications?

LMITA: LMITA will work closely with LCPS Curriculum and Instruction - Gifted Education Office to make sure that our future students showing high performance capability academically and intellectually are correctly identified as “gifted” and their highly unique and specialized needs are fully met in our nurturing school environment. Students who were in the FUTURA program at the elementary school will be treated as gifted as they start LMITA. LMITA will adhere to LCPS requirements related to the referral and identification criteria for gifted and talented students. LMITA will establish a Gifted & Talented Committee Review Team to be comprised of an Administrator, “gifted” teacher, classroom teachers, and special educators where applicable. This committee will meet to review nominations and pertinent data to determine the continuation of the screening process for identification.

18. LMITA program does not appear to be a gifted curriculum please explain the discrepancy.

LMITA: Currently, our entire curriculum is preliminary. \$25,000 has been allocated for curriculum development in the pre-operational budget, including development of a GT curriculum. Guidelines for our GT program are outlined on pages 62-64 in the updated application. In general, as opposed to regular and honor tracks in the public schools, we would like to have multiple *tracks* – for lack of a better word– for our students at LMITA to ensure that no student capacity is wasted. Ultimately, gifted students will have many opportunities in the form of higher grade level courses, AP courses, dual enrollment courses, IT certifications, science projects\Olympiads, math competitions, etc.

19. The public lottery will be performed by an independent means not connected to LMITA, correct?

LMITA: The lottery will be conducted by LMITA, which is a nationwide norm for charter schools. We will follow LCPS staff's recommendation to have it recorded, in addition to having representatives of LCPS, a public notary, parents and the students at the event. Please note that LMITA board is not opposed to having the lottery performed by independent third party contractor.

20. Why can one lottery not be used for enrollment and the waiting list?

LMITA: There will be only one lottery for both the enrollment and the waiting list.

21. Who are representatives of "the community sponsors"?

LMITA: Updated application, Pgs. 3 and 82 *"As defined in § 22.1-212.6 of the Code of Virginia, LMITA will be administered and managed by a management committee, hereinafter called the Governing Board, composed of parents of students enrolled in the school, teachers and administrators working in the school, and representatives of the **community sponsors**."*

Typically these will be individuals from the Loudoun community other than teachers and parents with kids at LMITA, who provide critical services to LMITA in the form of PR, fundraising, social and professional networking, etc.

22. Why are there no parents on the initial Governing Board, and only one once LMITA is in operation?

LMITA: Dr. Ali Gokce is an LCPS parent and chairman of the LMITA Governing Board. We will expand the board to include more parents on the board once the charter is granted.

23. What does LMITA mean by “classroom experience”? Does this mean as a licensed teacher?

LMITA: On page 91 in the updated application, it is clearly stated that only teachers who hold a valid Virginia license with appropriate endorsement will be hired. “Minimum of two years of classroom experience” means “minimum two years of teaching experience”.

24. The school agrees to disclose the qualifications of its “full time teachers” including degrees, etc. Are there plans for par time teachers? Substitutes? And what certifications will they require?

LMITA: Being a public school to be embedded in the LCPS system, LMITA will adopt the same guidelines for part-time and substitutes as LCPS schools as far as their qualifications are concerned. LMITA will disclose certifications of all teaching staff (full-time / part-time) to LCPS.

25. How does LMITA plan to support an average of 9 Special Education students (18 for two grades), both in self-contained and cross-category classes, with only 1 Special Education teacher?

LMITA: At LMITA, we will offer level 1 and 2 services to special education students at a minimum. That was our initial projection based on accommodating special education students in a general classroom setting with special education services on a regularly scheduled or intermittent basis. Based on the actual student body, we might end up contracting LCPS services initially and then hire additional special education staff. Please note that, LMITA might not be able meet the needs of students with severe disabilities in cases of low incidence of student populations. We would like to further discuss the special education issue with the School Board and LCPS staff to reach a memorandum of understanding to address the best ways to address these and related issues.

26. Will LMITA cover full retirement benefits?

LMITA: Yes