

July 28, 2014



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Contact

3635 N Williams
Portland, Oregon
97227

503.567.9820

www.kairospdx.org
info@kairospdx.org

Oregon State Board of Education
255 Capitol Street NE
Salem, OR 97310

Dear State Board of Education,

I am writing on behalf of KairosPDX Learning Academy, a public charter school sponsored by Portland Public School District, opening this fall with two Kindergarten and one First-grade classroom, serving a total of approximately 50 children. We will eventually serve 224 students per year in grades K-5. KairosPDX Learning Academy emerged in specific response to the inequities we currently see in outcomes for diverse populations and historically underserved students in Portland. Our mission is to eradicate the racial achievement gap in North Portland.

Significant to note: the Portland Public School Board unanimously approved our proposed charter school in December, 2013, with a standing ovation and many complimentary statements, including that our proposal was the best the district had ever received. The charter contract between the boards of KairosPDX and Portland Public Schools was finalized last month, and is for the period of July 1, 2014 through June 30, 2017.

We request a waiver of a provision of Oregon’s Charter School Law, ORS 338.125, which mandates that, if there are more applicants than available slots, students shall be selected for admission to the charter school through an equitable lottery. We are requesting that this requirement be waived only with regard to the children of KairosPDX Learning Academy’s board members and children of charter school employees, for the duration of our charter contract with Portland Public Schools.

KairosPDX was conceived of, created, and founded by a core team of five. We have invested thousands of volunteer hours in this labor of love over the past three years, and are prepared to continue this investment. The prospect of our own children possibly not being allowed to attend our school is a concern. Should we hire staff with children in the grades KairosPDX Learning Academy serves, we believe allowing these children to attend would enable our teachers to focus all of their energy on the school where they are both employee and parent.

We believe that this request aligns with the statutory rationale for waivers (ORS 338.025): promotes the development of programs by providers (our founding team possesses 75 years of experience in the education arena that is relevant to establishing and operating a public charter school); and enhances the equitable access by underserved families to the public education of their choice (80% of our founding team members are women of color, and several other board members are people of color).

Our outreach efforts have been – and will continue to be – targeted and strategic, consistent with our commitment to equity. We have gone to community events intentionally reaching diverse families, and partnered with our city’s CBO’s serving the students most in need.

Surveys, focus groups and info sessions were dispersed through our multiple community partners who offered established relationships with low-income families and communities of color. Through strategic outreach and partnership, KairosPDX talked with and surveyed hundreds of families expressing support for our vision of educational change.

As this initial outreach shifted to marketing for student applications, we have continued to partner with agencies who serve the communities that are most in need, conducting sessions *in* the community in partnership *with* community. KairosPDX engaged in face-to-face meetings with families interested in our program rather than simply providing an on-line form believing that these seemingly small efforts not only build the relationships essential to empowerment but also attack issues of access like those presented by allowing an online enrollment process. At each stage of development, KLA has made every effort to ensure that the families informed about KairosPDX represent the economically and educationally underserved communities of our city.

Our current enrollment reflects the students our school is designed to serve; 80% children of color and approximately 50% low-income students. Due to the strategic nature of our outreach, a lottery has not yet been necessary and we are nearly at capacity for our first year of operation.

The impact of the waiver request will be minimal to other students. We propose that the number of children effected by this waiver is not to exceed 10% of the total annual enrollment.

Thank you for your consideration. Please let me know if you need any additional information.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:

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Kaaren Heikes
Co-founder and Board Vice-Chair