

**DETERMINATION AND FINDING
FOR A SOURCE PROCUREMENT**

AGENCY: District of Columbia Public Schools
Office of the Chief of Schools
CAPTION: Management Operations and Instructional Program Consulting Services
for Stanton Elementary School
PROPOSED CONTRACTOR: **Scholar Academies, Inc.**
CONTRACT NO. GAGA-2015-C-0064

FINDINGS

1. AUTHORIZATION:

D.C. Code 2-354.04 and 27 DCMR, Section 1304 and 1701.

2. MINIMUM NEED:

The District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS), Office of the Chief of Schools (COS), has an immediate need to procure the services of Scholar Academies, Inc. to support the school turnaround initiative at Stanton Elementary School for SY15-16.

3. ESTIMATED COST:

The estimated cost is \$500,000 (October 1, 2015 through September 30, 2016).

4. FACTS WHICH JUSTIFY A SOLE SOURCE PROCUREMENT:

The District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) Office of the Chief of Schools seeks to sustain the academic gains we have seen at the Stanton Elementary School through the strategic support and management that Scholar Academies, Inc. has provided over the last several years. The District of Columbia Public Schools (Stanton Elementary School), and Scholar Academies, Inc. have been in partnership since the 2010-2011 school year when Stanton was identified as the second lowest performing elementary school in the District. With the support of Scholar Academies, Inc., Stanton Elementary School has seen exceptional gains in students' achievement in literacy, math, and non-academic component.

In the last five years, the partnership between Scholar Academies, Inc. and DCPS' Stanton Elementary School has yielded a number of concrete improvements. We have outlined some of Scholar Academies, Inc.'s successes below:

- Overall improvement in academic performance: Stanton ES was the first elementary school in Washington, DC to make a dramatic categorical climb from Priority to Developing based on the Office of State Superintendent of Education (OSSE)'s Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Waiver classification. The ESEA classifications are Priority (the lowest performance), Focus, Developing, Rising, and Reward (the highest performance).

- Academic growth for students in tested grades: Over the last five years, the number of Stanton ES students scoring proficient on the District of Columbia Comprehensive Assessment System (DC CAS) grew by 15% in English Language Arts (ELA) and 30% in Math.
- Dramatic enrollment improvements: Since the 2010-2011 school year, the enrollment has grown from ~380 to ~580 students. Scholar Academies, Inc. and Stanton ES navigated a thoughtful, inclusive consolidation plan to serve students from DCPS' Winston Education Campus.
- Strong family outreach: With increased rates of family engagement and investment, Stanton ES regularly conducts home visits for more than 50% of our students' families each summer/fall and has one of the top participation rates at tri-annual Academic Parent-Teacher Teams events.
- Strong leadership and teacher performance: Consistent increases in Effective and Highly Effective DCPS IMPACT evaluation ratings for teachers and leaders and four Rubenstein award recipients since 2012, which is awarded to select DCPS teachers who are recognized for being Highly Effective under our DCPS IMPACT system.

For the 2015-2016 school year, the Office of the Chief of Schools is choosing to sustain the gains that we have made over the past five years. Therefore, the Office of the Chief of Schools recommends continuing services with the Management Operations and Instructional Program Consulting Services from Scholar Academies, Inc.

Background and History

Scholar Academies, Inc. was selected to serve as the school turnaround partner for Stanton ES in May 2010. The leaders of the Office of School Turnaround selected Scholar Academies, Inc. to lead the significant transformation work at Stanton ES. At the time, Stanton ES was the second lowest performing elementary school in Washington, DC. The school had a history of severe incidents, disinvestment from the community, poor attendance rates, declining enrollment, and significant academic gaps.

In order to achieve the results from SY2011-2015, Scholar Academies, Inc. relied on research-based, proven practices such as an extended school day, deep family engagement approach, robust academic leadership team, dedicated coaching and professional development for teachers and staff, and a turnaround specific instructional model. All of these elements have led to the positive changes for Stanton ES students and staff.

Scholar Academies, Inc. Landscape

The Scholar Academies, Inc. instructional model is designed with turnaround at the center. They have a strong, consistent approach to school culture, targeted interventions, and effective instructional practices to drive learning in ELA and Math. Their Framework for Academic Excellence (FAE) structures their instructional design, implementation, and accountability framework. Being a part of the Scholar Academies, Inc. family gives our staff and teachers access to their Framework for Academic Excellence, aligned resources, coaching and development.

Importantly, all Scholar Academies principals receive intensive coaching and management support from an Executive Director or Managing Director of School Leadership. The combination of FAE, coaching, and weekly management ensures that their results are tailored and consistent. Finally, Scholar Academies, Inc. provides significant behind-the-scenes support and leadership to school-based team members in the areas of Finance, HR, Recruitment, Operations, Compliance, among many others.

Charter Management Organization Market Survey

In the review of Charter Management Organizations (CMOs), research was completed on five organizations. Five vendors were deemed as potential candidates and were further considered in a market survey:

1. Scholar Academies, Inc.
2. Mastery Charter Schools
3. Lead Public Schools
4. Aspire Public Schools
5. Democracy Prep Public Schools

The research included the following criteria:

1. **School Culture:** School culture is an important foundation for supporting academic achievement for all students, and it is necessary for the Charter Management Organization partnering with Stanton ES to have a strong strategy to focus on school culture.
2. **Common Instructional Standards and Expectations for Teachers:** In order to achieve excellence in instruction, it is vital that schools have expectations and instructional standards for teachers.
3. **Family and Community Engagement:** It has become apparent that family and community engagement is critical to the success of school turnaround projects. Therefore, it is necessary for any Charter Management Organization partnering with Stanton ES to have the capacity to support this effort.
4. **Experience Working in Washington, DC:** To understand the needs of the population served by a Charter Management Organization, it is preferable for the selected organization to have prior experience with turnaround projects in Washington, DC.
5. **Grade Levels:** In selecting the appropriate Charter Management Organization to partner with Stanton ES in its school turnaround efforts, it is preferable to select an organization that has expertise with lower grade levels.

In addition, the adverse impact of not utilizing Scholars Academies would include:

- Disrupting the continuity of services for the new school year (SY15-16);
- Ending the continuity of services and academic improvements that impact over 600 students; and
- Immediate change of curriculum focus and services that would directly impact and affect over 600 District of Columbia Public Schools students.

Therefore, the Office of the Chief of Schools believes that Scholar Academies, Inc.'s history working with DCPS, experience in school turnaround, and the suite of FAE related services described above makes them uniquely qualified as a partner for Stanton ES. Over the past five years, we have seen significant improvements in almost all core areas of school operations and have built a powerful, positive relationship with DC Public Schools.

In light of the above findings it appears a sole source award to Scholar Academies, Inc. is in the best interest of the DCPS, Office of the Chief of Schools program and would be the most efficient and cost-effective procurement method.

CERTIFICATION BY THE OFFICE OF OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME PROGRAMS:

I hereby certify that the above findings are correct and the anticipated cost to DCPS is fair and reasonable.

Date

John Davis
Chief of Schools

CERTIFICATION AND DETERMINATION

Based on the above certified findings in accordance cited authority, I hereby determine that it is not feasible or practical to invoke the competitive bidding process under Section 402 or 403 of the District of Columbia Procurement Practices Reform Act of 2010 (D.C. Law 18-371; DC Code 2-354.04 and 27 DCMR 1304 and 1701.

Date

Deputy Chief Procurement Officer