ILLINOIS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING
June 16-17, 2003

TO: Illinois State Board of Education

FROM: Robert E. Schiller, Superintendent
Lynne Haeffele Curry, Director
Respicio Vazquez, General Counsel


Materials: Superintendent’s Recommendation (under separate cover)

Purpose of Agenda Item

The Board will discuss the request by Thomas Jefferson Charter School to renew their existing charter for an additional five years.

Expected Outcome(s) of Agenda Item

The Board will vote on whether to renew the charter for the requested term, to renew it for less than the requested term, or not renew it.

Background Information

In February of 1998, the Thomas Jefferson Charter School Foundation (Foundation) submitted a charter school proposal to School District 59 (School District), seeking to establish the Thomas Jefferson Charter School (Thomas Jefferson) under the Illinois Charter Schools Law. This was the third charter school proposal submitted to the school district. It was this third charter school proposal that, upon the Foundation’s appeal to the Illinois State Board of Education (State Board), was granted and became the first charter school with the State Board as the chartering entity. The School District appealed the State Board’s decision in the circuit court of Cook County. The circuit court affirmed the decision of the State Board. When the School District appealed the circuit court’s decision, the Illinois Appellate Court affirmed the decision of the State Board.

Thomas Jefferson opened its doors to residents of the School District for the 1999-2000 school year. Currently, there are 77 students at Thomas Jefferson. In 2001-2002, the student population was 45.2% Asian, 27.4% White, 19.2% Black, and 8.2% Hispanic. This school year, the proportions have shifted to approximately 77% Asian/Pacific Islander. Class sizes range from 8-19 students. All the teachers at the school have teaching certificates. Five teachers have taught at Thomas Jefferson since its inception.
Pros and Cons of Various Actions

If this charter is renewed, the Thomas Jefferson Charter School will continue to operate as a public school under the terms of the renewal charter. Parents in School District will have the option of choosing a public school that is different from ones offered by the School District. General State Aid, and possibly other financial resources, will be deducted from payments to School District provided directly to Thomas Jefferson.

If this charter is not renewed, Thomas Jefferson Charter School will no longer be able to operate or serve students in the School District. The current students will be required to transfer into the School District or enroll in a private school. The School District will once again become responsible for meeting the needs of students who attended the charter school, and will retain full funding for those students.

Either decision by the School Board is subject to further judicial review.

Superintendent’s Recommendation

Please see attachment.

Next Steps

If the charter is renewed, the Board should authorize the Superintendent to so inform the school and the district and to negotiate the final terms of the charter agreement (which may reflect a lesser rate of reimbursement than the school requested).

If the charter is not renewed, the Board should authorize the Superintendent to so inform the school and the district.