



INDIANA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

To: Indiana State Board of Education Members

Date: March 8, 2017

RE: Seven Oaks Classical Academy Waiver Request per IC 20-24-6-5

Recommendation: Approve the Seven Oaks Classical Academy Waiver Request.

Seven Oaks Classical Academy ("Seven Oaks") is seeking approval of a waiver regarding the qualifications for individuals that teach full time in charter schools. The Indiana State Board of Education ("Board") is required to review such waivers pursuant to IC 20-24-6-5, which states:

(a) At least **ninety percent (90%)** of the individuals who teach full time in a charter school must either:

(1) hold a license to teach in a public school in Indiana under IC 20-28-5;

or

(2) be in the process of obtaining a license to teach in a public school in Indiana under the transition to teaching program established by IC 20-28-4-2;

unless the charter school requests and the state board approves a waiver for a lower percentage.

(b) An individual who does not qualify under subsection (a) may teach full time in a charter school if the individual meets one (1) of the following criteria:

(1) The individual is in the process of obtaining a license to teach in a charter school in Indiana under IC 20-28-5-16.

(2) The individual holds at least a bachelor's degree with a grade point average of at least three (3.0) on a four (4.0) point scale from an accredited postsecondary educational institution in the content or related area in which the individual teaches.

Individuals qualifying under this subsection **may not exceed ten percent (10%)** of the full time teaching staff **unless the charter school requests and the state board approves a waiver for a higher percentage.**

Pursuant to guidance provided by the Indiana Department of Education, individuals that receive a charter school license under IC 20-28-5-16 are not included in the 90% limit for fully licensed staff referenced in IC 20-24-6-5(a). Instead, those individuals shall be included in the 10% limit referenced in IC 20-24-6-5(b). However, charter schools may file a waiver with the Board requesting that the school's full time teachers, which qualify to teach in charter schools under IC 20-24-6-5(b), may exceed more than 10% of the school's full time teachers.

Seven Oaks has submitted a waiver request that highlights the schools unique culture, curriculum, and qualifications of its staff, many of which qualify to teach at the school under IC 20-24-6-5(b). Pursuant to the waiver request, Seven Oaks is requesting the limit of full time teachers that qualify under IC 20-24-6-5(b) be adjusted from 10% to 50%.

After reviewing Seven Oaks waiver request it is recommended that the Board approve the request for the 2016-17 and 2017-18 school years. If necessary, the school may submit another request after the expiration of this waiver.



February 28, 2017

Dear State Board of Education,

Seven Oaks Classical School is currently in its first year of operation, serving 165 students in grades K-8. We have 16 full-time and 2 part-time teachers. Of these, 6 full-time teachers and 1 part-time teacher have completed or nearly completed a standard teacher licensure program, license renewal, or transition to teaching program. Three more are eligible to pursue an advanced degree permit. The rest were hired on the understanding that they would qualify for a charter license, and that charter licenses count toward the 90% who must be certified or in the process of obtaining certification under I.C. 20-28-5-16. Shortly before the start of school, we discovered that the IDOE interprets the law in a way that counts charter licenses in the 10%. The Licensing Office gave our uncertified teachers emergency permits for this year so that we could open, but made clear that those teachers would need to make progress toward a more permanent form of licensure in order to continue teaching. We currently have 250 students enrolled for next year, a 50% increase over this year. As we hire to accommodate this growth, it would be helpful to know how much flexibility we have. Foremost on our mind is the question of whether we will be able to retain the excellent teachers we already have. Under I.C. 20-28-5-16, 10% of a charter school's full-time teachers may remain uncertified "unless the charter school requests and the state board approves a waiver for a higher percentage." Given the prevailing understanding of charter licenses, we are writing now to request an increase to 50% of those who may remain uncertified. Given Seven Oaks Classical School's philosophy of education and curriculum, we believe this change would grant us the flexibility to better serve our students. Attached is the resolution outlining the reasoning of Seven Oaks Classical School's Board of Directors and authorizing submission of this request.

Charter schools are intended to offer innovative choices in education. Our innovation is a classical curriculum and pedagogy. The chief factor in our success or failure will be the teachers we hire. We would like the freedom to seek out and retain teachers who agree with the school's philosophy of education and who have the knowledge and skills to teach the curriculum.

The heart of our curriculum is an integrated, content-rich core. Our students learn to read using an intensive phonics program. They hear and read great works of literature in their entirety, they memorize and recite poetry, they learn cursive, and they write papers. By the time our students complete middle school, they will have studied every major civilization in recorded human history, and they will have taken five years of Latin. Meanwhile, they will have received continuous instruction since Kindergarten in Art and Music, including history, theory, and performance. As we launch our high school next year, our intended core includes courses that are not typically taught at other schools: e.g., Logic, Classical Rhetoric, and Moral Philosophy. In the maths and sciences, our instruction includes not only facts and problem-solving techniques, but an exploration of the historical and philosophical context in which key developments occurred.

Most education programs today prepare teachers for a career in conventional public schools. They are not intended to prepare teachers for a classical charter school that prizes content knowledge, memorization, and direct instruction. It is unfair to expect a graduate from a regular teacher preparation program to teach Latin or Formal Logic or Moral Philosophy. Having received no instruction in these subjects, they nevertheless would be evaluated on the basis of their skill in teaching these subjects to their students. A 50% waiver would allow us to hire and keep more teachers with the requisite background knowledge and expertise.

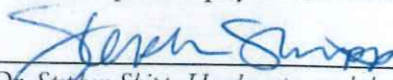
When we hired our inaugural faculty, it was with the understanding that charter licenses would count in the 90%. We hired a gentleman with a Ph.D. in American History to teach middle school history. We hired a woman who is most of the way through her doctoral work in Classics teaching Latin (though she knows Greek even better!). Our middle school literature teacher taught for three years at a charter school of a similar model in New Mexico before earning an M.A. in the Humanities in a great books program at St. John's College. Our math teacher was a math major, and our science teacher was a science major. None has a teaching license in hand; all are teaching on an emergency permit.

Even in the upper elementary school, the best candidates for our curriculum and methodology ended up coming to the position from an unconventional background. Our third grade teacher earned a BA from Hanover, became licensed to teach at the secondary level through a T2T program, then became an elementary reading specialist before joining us. Our fourth grade teacher graduated with a BA in English and French and spent several years as a school librarian, reading coach, and then an educational consultant. Besides serving as the homeroom teacher for 4th grade, she teaches French to our 4th and 5th graders. Our fifth grade teacher competed in the math olympics in high school and knows eight languages. All three of these individuals has excelled in the classroom, but none of them has an elementary teaching certificate. All three have been told by the Licensing Office that they must undertake a T2T program.

We appreciate the fact that Indiana has created alternative pathways to certification. However, a T2T program would place a substantial burden on our ability to hire and retain teachers who are well-equipped to teach our curriculum. Most T2T programs require between 21 and 24 credit hours at an average rate of roughly \$500 per credit. Our teachers can ill-afford the expense; nor can they take time from their day-to-day teaching duties without impact on the quality of their instruction.

The number of classical charter schools is growing, and they are competing for teachers who are philosophically and educationally aligned with their curriculum and philosophy of education. Most of this growth has been in states that have exempted teachers from the normal rules for teacher certification. Without a waiver, Seven Oaks Classical School will be at a competitive disadvantage in attracting experienced teachers who are well-suited to our model of education. More immediately, we will be in danger of losing some the best teachers we currently have.

In requesting a waiver, we do not mean to diminish the importance of having teachers trained in instructional methods and materials, child development, or classroom management. On the contrary, our aim in seeking the waiver is to attract and retain highly qualified and experienced teachers who share our philosophy of education and who are well-equipped to teach our curriculum.



Dr. Stephen Shipp, Headmaster, on behalf of the Board of Directors,
Seven Oaks Classical School

2/28/17

Date

**RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS
OF SEVEN OAKS CLASSICAL SCHOOL, INC. REGARDING
AUTHORITY TO SEEK WAIVER UNDER I.C. 20-24-6-5(b)(2)**

WHEREAS, the Board of Directors of Seven Oaks Classical School is charged with the responsibility of seeking out and hiring the most qualified teachers available in the marketplace to encourage, excite and educate its students; and

WHEREAS, credible data has shown that a substantial pool of prospective educators with advanced degrees in areas other than education and with substantial real-life experience are available who have not sought, nor received, teacher certification from the State of Indiana or elsewhere and who are not inclined to do so; and

WHEREAS, credible data has shown that only five percent of those colleges currently preparing elementary teachers for classroom instruction can ensure that their graduating teachers have a "good" grasp of the science, history, geography and literature subject areas they will one day teach; and

WHEREAS, the legislation as enacted by the Indiana General Assembly enabling the formation of charter school programs in the state encouraged (and does encourage) innovation in curriculum development, instructional training and teacher hiring; and

WHEREAS, Seven Oaks Classical School is at a competitive disadvantage with respect to other classical charter schools, especially those in other states with less-demanding certification laws, in the hiring of highly qualified teachers who are particularly adept in teaching certain subject area concentrations in a manner consistent with the philosophy, content, and pedagogy demanded by an innovative classical curriculum; and

WHEREAS, I.C. 20-24-6-5 currently requires that charter schools, such as Seven Oaks Classical School, have a pool of teachers which is comprised of 90% certified educators and 10% uncertified educators unless a waiver of this requirement is granted by the State Department of Education upon a submitted and considered application; and

WHEREAS, I.C. 20-24-6-5 (b) should be liberally construed so to allow a charter school, such as Seven Oaks Classical School, to hire the best instructors available in the state or elsewhere, regardless as to whether they are certified or uncertified, to provide high quality educational services to their students. Had this not been the Indiana General Assembly's intent, the law as enacted would not have contained a procedure to allow an interested charter school, such as Seven Oaks Classical School, to seek a waiver from the State Department of Education to hire a percentage of non-certified teachers greater than 10%. The law as enacted could have merely required that all charter school teachers be certified or be in the process of seeking an instructional license under I.C. 20-28-5-16; and

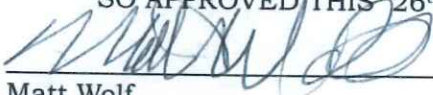
WHEREAS, a number of those teachers at Seven Oaks Classical School who are uncertified but who have the requisite knowledge and skills and who desire to continue to teach can ill-afford to pay the expense of obtaining a license under I.C. 20-28-5-16 and cannot take time away from their day-to-day teaching duties to complete the required coursework without the quality of their teaching suffering.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE SEVEN OAKS CLASSICAL SCHOOL:

1. That the Headmaster of Seven Oaks Classical School, Dr. Stephen L. Shipp, and the President of the Board of Directors of Seven Oaks Classical School, Matt Wolf, be, and hereby are, authorized to seek a waiver from the State Board of Education allowing fifty percent (50%) of the full-time teaching staff at Seven Oaks Classical School to be uncertified (as per the requirements of I.C. 20-24-6-5(b)(2)). This percentage of the teaching staff shall nonetheless comply with the minimum education requirements of the above-referenced section (i.e., each instructor must hold at least a bachelor's degree with a grade point average of at least three (3.0) on a four (4.0) point scale from an accredited postsecondary educational institution in the content or related area in which the individual teaches).

2. That the Headmaster of Seven Oaks Classical School is encouraged by the Board of Directors to hire qualified elementary school teachers who have received a robust baccalaureate education in the liberal arts and sciences and at least three (3) years of relevant pre-hiring experience and to hire middle and upper school teachers who have at least a Master's Degree in their concentration area and at least three (3) years of relevant pre-hiring experience.

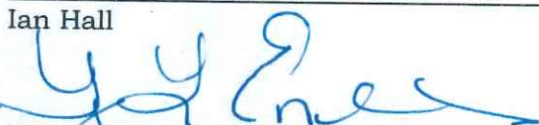
SO APPROVED THIS 26th day of January, 2017.




Matt Wolf



Lindsey Weaver

Ian Hall


Terry English



Jazzmin Vegeler