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# Pennsylvania Department of Education

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COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA  
**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**  
333 MARKET STREET  
HARRISBURG, PA 17126-0333

## **Charter Annual Report** Tuesday, October 09, 2007

**Charter School:** Russell Byers CS  
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## **SECTION I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **Organization Description**

The Russell Byers Charter School was founded in 2001 in memory of the prominent *Philadelphia Daily News* columnist Russell Byers, who was murdered in December of 1999. Russell truly believed that every child deserves a first class public education. The school is located in

Philadelphia at 1911 Arch Street and serves 400 students in grades 4K through 6. Our students come to us from 37 different neighborhoods in Philadelphia and reflect a diverse racial and economic background. Approximately 11% of our student body receives Special Education services. Eighty-three percent of the students are African American, 9% are Caucasian, 6% are Latino, and 2% are Asian. Approximately 85% of the students qualify for free or reduced lunch.

Russell Byers Charter School offers a full-day kindergarten for four and five year-old students, one of the few kindergarten programs of this kind in Pennsylvania. There are 18 students per class in our 4K program and 23 per class in grades 5K through 6. The School is located in Center City, within walking distance of many of the city's cultural treasures, including the Academy of Natural Sciences, the Franklin Institute, and the Free Library and make regular use of these facilities, as well as the entire city, in our studies. The Pennsylvania Academic Standards serve as the framework for our curriculum planning in reading, language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. Music, Art, Spanish, and Physical Education are integrated into the curriculum as well. There are computers in every classroom and a computer lab with Internet access for our students.

## **Core Purpose**

### **Mission**

The mission of the Russell Byers Charter School is to provide a rigorous education that cultivates self-assurance, love of fresh ideas, and especially, a sense of joy. The students who attend and graduate from Russell Byers will gain the academic and career skills to truly make their lives and their world better. The Russell Byers Charter School provides students *roots*, a safe environment with a rigorous academic education, through Expeditionary Learning. Our students take responsibility for their learning to become compassionate citizens and creative problem solvers. Russell Byers students develop *wings* to succeed in selective schools and embrace a love for learning.

### **Vision**

A unique feature of our school design is the use of the Expeditionary Learning Schools (ELS) model to create the Russell Byers Charter School. ELS is an innovative model based on the guiding principles of the famed outdoor educational program, Outward Bound. Russell Byers Charter School is one of 115 urban and rural schools, in the country, that are built around the five Core Practices and ten Design Principles that guide the teaching and learning in an Expeditionary Learning (ELS) school. The five Core Practices are: learning expeditions are the structure of the content curriculum; active pedagogy teaching practices; a strong, safe and inclusive school culture and character education; shared leadership and a commitment to continual school improvement; and structures to build community.

Each of these five Core Practices has a series of benchmarks that describe how fully implemented ELS schools work for students, teachers, families, school leaders, and other partners. The entire school program is evaluated each year by ELS personnel based upon these benchmarks. The results of this evaluation are used to inform professional development activities and the School Plan for the following school year.

The ten Design Principles are: The Primacy of Self-Discovery; The Having of Wonderful Ideas; The Responsibility for Learning; Empathy and Caring; Success and Failure;

Collaboration and Competition; Diversity and Inclusion; The Natural World; Solitude and Reflection; and Service and Compassion.

These Design Principles encapsulate the philosophy of education and the deep values of ELS schools. They keep the school focused on what is important and provide guidance for school personnel in their daily actions and decisions.

ELS emphasizes high achievement through inquiry based, hands-on learning, character growth, and teamwork. Students learn by doing through their participation in two 12-week “expeditions” that combine fieldwork, research, reading, writing, math, science, art, and community service around a single, compelling topic. Through community service students learn about compassion for others, good citizenship, and how they can improve their world. With ELS, students pursue their in-depth studies through a variety of experiences both inside and outside the classroom, including frequent visits to the city’s museums, theatres, libraries, and parks. The students work in teams to research their topic, interview experts, record findings and document observations using scientific drawings. Student work and learning are displayed by means of Documentation Panels, which depict the artifacts from learning experiences and drafts from process work. The Expedition culminates in a school-wide Celebration of Learning where students share their knowledge with the school community through various mediums. Final products have included museum exhibits, brochures, books, presentations and plays.

## **Shared Values**

We believe in a school that is safe, warm, and welcoming; a school that values curiosity and critical thinking; a school that challenges students to meet demanding academic standards but shows respect for diverse learning styles. By imparting these values, we foster a love of learning and give each child the knowledge, skills, and confidence needed for success. We are committed to:

Small class size to give our students invaluable individual attention

- A rigorous curriculum with a moral compass to guide students toward compassion, integrity, and good citizenship
- Explicit teaching to give students the necessary metacognitive skills that will provide life long thinking strategies
- A diverse school community to promote an acceptance of others and a richness of ideas
- Extensive, meaningful professional development to keep our teachers inspired and passionate about their important work and current in their disciplines
- Families as partners to share in the responsibility of their children’s education
- The city as a classroom to widen the student’s world
- High expectations to ensure that students reach for their full potential, develop confidence through their efforts, and take responsibility for their learning
- Accountability to our students, parents, teachers, and the community

## **Academic Standards**

During the months of June and July, the curriculum committee has worked to create Curriculum Maps in Social Studies, Science and Mathematics. All Academic Standards in 4.12 of 22 Pa. Code have been addressed and incorporated into the maps. Content topics have been identified based on the content areas listed in the PA Academic Standards.

## Strengths and Challenges

Our standardized tests data show that those students who have been exposed to the school's Expeditionary Learning School (ELS) educational program have outperformed the Philadelphia School District counterparts, particularly those who started in the 4K program, have shown substantial improvement. Our fall 2006 Terra Nova scores in Reading and Language for last year's first grade students, who had the benefit of our two-year kindergarten program, were well above School District norms.

Based on the fall 2006 Terra Nova test results, mathematics scores showed improvement. Our math thresholds for all students reached 51%. Reading results were consistent with those seen in mathematics, also reaching 51%. We plan to focus future energies on the continued improvement of mathematics and literacy instruction and to provide teachers with expanded professional development opportunities in these areas.

We are pleased that our mathematics scores did improve as a result of purchasing the Harcourt Brace Mathematics program and through our focus on improving computational and problem solving skills. The school will continue stressing basic computation and problem-solving skills as well as provide consistent staff development in best practices for mathematics instruction. The school is aligning mathematics instruction with PA State Standards.

The school is also taking steps to improve the quality of science instruction. Materials were purchased for the 2006-2007 school year and we have hired a science and technology coordinator to help develop a science curriculum that is aligned with state standards and optimizes our use of the science materials.

### ANNUAL MEASURABLE GOALS 2006-2007

| Annual Measurable Goal                                | Strategies/<br>Interventions   | Performance Indicators  | Results/Progress   |
|---|--|---|--|
| 45% proficient or above in math on PSSA (AYP goal)    | Small group instruction for students weak in math, teaching assistants work 1 on 1 with students, pull-out instruction for additional support, use of <a href="http://www.studyisland.com">www.studyisland.com</a> .             | Periodic assessment to determine areas of strength and weakness | PSSA test results: 50.8% overall and 51.5% for relevant subgroup — AYP target met  |
| 54% proficient or above in reading on PSSA (AYP goal) | Small group instruction for students weak in reading, teaching assistants work 1 on 1 with students, pull-out instruction for additional support, Literacy Specialist works with teachers to plan improvement strategies, use of | Periodic assessment to determine areas of strength and weakness | PSSA test results: 49.7% overall, 50.9% for relevant subgroup — AYP target met because of the use of a confidence interval |

|   |  |   |   |
|---|--|---|---|
|   | <a href="http://www.studyisland.com">www.studyisland.com</a> , and Wilson Reading tutoring   |   |   |
| 95% participation rate in PSSA assessment (AYP goal)  | Memos sent home to parents prior to testing, make-up schedule for absent students  | Attendance and participation rates  | Over the past two years, the participation rate was 100% overall and 100% for relevant subgroup           |
| Improvement in attendance in grades K-6, up to 95% (AYP goal)                               | Daily monitoring, parental contact, attendance policy, Board action for those who exceed attendance policy limits  | School attendance records   | Attendance for the 2006-07 school year was 96.21%   |
| 70% of students will score at or above grade level on the Internal Reading Assessment       | Small group instruction for students weak in reading, teaching assistants work 1 on 1 with students, pull-out instruction for additional support, Literacy Specialist works with teachers to plan improvement strategies | Periodic assessment to determine areas of strength and weakness                                       | Overall (5K — grade 6), 71% of students were at or above grade level on the Internal Reading Assessment   |
| 45% of third grade students will score at the Mastery level or above on the Terra Nova test | Small group instruction, 1 on 1 teaching, pull-out instruction, Literacy Specialist works with teachers to plan improvement strategies   | Periodic assessment to determine areas of strength and weakness                                       | As of October, 2006, 52% of third grade students scored at proficiency on the Spring 2005 Terra Nova test |
| On a parent survey, 90% of parents will rate RBCS as meeting or exceeding expectations      | Day-to-day efforts of staff, quick response to parental concerns, involve parents in the life of the school, scheduling of events that draw parents into the school  | Tabulation of survey results  | This goal was not measured  |
| 65% of parents will achieve 30 hours of volunteer service                                   | Enlist the assistance of the HSA, provide and publicize volunteer opportunities, periodic reminders to parents in Weekly Family Bulletin   | Tabulation of Volunteer Service Records   | 30% of parents achieved 30 hours of volunteer service   |
| RBCS will receive a “3” rating (1-5 scale) in each of the 20 evaluated ELOB categories      | Ongoing in-service planned by the ELS School Designer and the staff  | Ratings by ELS School Designer, teacher and administrative feedback on Implementation Review document | School received ratings of 2 or 3 in each of the evaluated categories                                     |

## SECTION II. STRATEGIC IMPROVEMENT PLANNING

## Strategic Planning Process

The School has begun a Strategic Planning Process, with the help of a facilitator engaged by the Board of Trustees, to guide the administrative team and staff through the process. A Strategic Planning Committee of thirteen faculty, staff, administrators and board members were convened to undertake the process and create the first draft of the Strategic Plan. Included in the plan are the following areas:

Improve curriculum alignment and create Curriculum Maps that include Pennsylvania State Standards

- Provide accelerated learning opportunities for students
- Create more academic learning time during school year
- Align school schedules to meet the needs of all students
- Improve services provided for Special Education students
- Provide professional development to improve teacher performance
- Create a community of learners in a supportive environment
- Strategic and consistent implementation of Expeditionary Learning

The first draft of the Strategic Plan will be completed by August 10, 2007 and will be submitted to the Board of Trustees for approval in late August, 2007.

## Strategic Planning Committee

| Name                | Affiliation           | Membership Category                 | Appointed By   |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------|
| Akosua Watts        | RBCS                  | Elementary School Teacher           | Administration |
| Anna Hadgis         | RBCS                  | Administrator                       | Administration |
| Elvira Zuazo-Legido | RBCS                  | Ed Specialist - School Psychologist | Administration |
| Holly Chapman       | RBCS                  | Elementary School Teacher           | Administration |
| Krista Yutzy-Burkey | RBCS                  | Elementary School Teacher           | Administration |
| Laurada Byers       | Byerschool Foundation | Board Member                        | Administration |
| Nicole Cartagena    | RBCS                  | Elementary School Teacher           | Administration |
| Rebecca Levenberg   | RBCS                  | Special Education Representative    | Administration |
| Salome Thomas-EL    | RBCS                  | Administrator                       | Administration |
| Sarah Wing          | RBCS                  | Elementary School Teacher           | Administration |
| Shelly Simms Reed   | FIS Group             | Board Member                        | Administration |
| Thomas Harris       | RBCS                  | Administrator                       | Administration |
| William Fitzgerald  | RBCS                  | Elementary School Teacher           | Administration |

## Goals, Strategies and Activities

### SECTION III. QUALITY OF SCHOOL DESIGN

## **Rigorous Instructional Program**

The curriculum model around which the Russell Byers Charter School is designed is Expeditionary Learning Schools (ELS), which is a nationally-recognized school reform model to strengthen school communities and programs. ELS schools focus on creating school partnerships with parents, significant teacher involvement in school governance, and the development of challenging expeditions that integrate all areas of the curriculum. In addition, RBCS uses Harcourt Trophies in all grades 4K through 6 to guide literacy instruction while implementing Reading Workshop/Writing Workshop. We use the Harcourt-Brace Math series to address the computation and problem solving mathematical needs of our students. The literacy and mathematics programs were chosen because of their close alignment with state and local standards, as well as their richness of content, high expectations, and developmentally-appropriate practices.

PA Standards are at the core of all aspects of curriculum planning and instruction. Teachers begin with the standards when outlining the expectations for what students at their grade level will master during Learning Expeditions. Using the State Standards as a guide, grade level teams of teachers thoughtfully and consistently plan Learning Expeditions that address each standard. Teachers develop learning targets that translate the standards addressed through the expedition into student-friendly language, and revisit the learning targets during reflection, critique and assessment. All learning experiences, fieldwork and expert encounters are chosen and structured to address the learning targets as dictated by the PA Standards.

### **How is the curriculum organized to meet the developmental and academic needs of students?**

Because RBCS is an ELOB school, extensive emphasis is placed on collaboration. Students are organized into “crews” (small groups) that bring together students with varying skills and abilities so that each can contribute, develop skills and learn. The model we use is that each of us has something to offer, each of us has a job to do, and we all have a responsibility to make sure everyone succeeds. Teachers assess students and create groups according to need and developmental stages. We use whole and small group instruction in reading and math, as well as daily math and literacy centers so students can practice essential skills. Depending on the teacher’s instructional purpose, sometimes these small groups are heterogeneous and sometimes they are homogeneous. At other times, whole class instruction and/or individual instruction is used. We also use a variety of materials and resources across the curriculum. We strive to ensure that every grade-level team has a teaching assistant. One of their major responsibilities is to know our students well and differentiate instruction so that attention may be given to meeting the developmental and academic needs of each student. Special education teachers work with some students in the regular classroom and help teachers to broaden their skills to be more inclusive of diverse learners. They also work with “pull-out” students to provide individualized instruction in order to meet IEP goals. When a child is found to be significantly behind, cross-grade teaching (going to another classroom for instruction in that one area) may be provided or limited pull-out instruction by a special education teacher may be provided.

How does the charter school promote in-depth and inquiry-based teaching and learning?

ELS is an inquiry-based curriculum model. Each Expedition is an inquiry based study, designed by teachers, incorporating significant use of small-group and independent research, fieldwork, expert presentations, student-generated service projects and presentations of final products. Expeditions provide students with cross-curricular connections while focusing in-depth on a larger single compelling topic. The goal is to plan expeditions that are rich enough to engage each student and that are focused enough so that the learning can be in-depth.

RBCS has a constructivist philosophy about learning. Our belief is that children are constantly creating knowledge based upon their observations and experiences. Therefore, from the beginning of their school experience, students are making things, reading books, writing for a real purpose, and having many opportunities to exercise choice within an expedition based upon the questions and schema they bring to that topic.

**What strategies does the school use to accelerate academic skill development, content knowledge and learning strategies of students who enroll performing significantly below standards in literacy and mathematics skills?**

Students who are performing below standards in literacy and mathematics are supported with additional tutoring before, during and after school. A tutor trained in Wilson Reading, engaged students in small group instruction, twice a week for one hour, from March through June, 2007. In addition, all students who need additional support and scaffolding, participated in the Russell Byers Saturday School Program during the months of January through March, 2007. Students who were identified at the end of the academic year as needing support and extensions of learning during the summer months, have participated in the Russell Byers Charter Summer Program from July 9 to August 2, 2007. The Summer Program runs Monday to Thursday, from 8:30 AM to 12:30 PM.

We have a CSAP (Comprehensive Student Assistance Process) to identify students who need additional support. This approach provides an on-going team of support staff who work together with classroom teachers and parents to design strategies to assist students in their academic endeavors. The process provides an opportunity for teachers to discuss needs of specific students who may be exhibiting learning and/or behavioral difficulties that may be impeding their progress in the general education program. CSAP also affords teachers the opportunity to collaborate with other professionals to identify and verify specific learning and behavioral concerns about students. The process focuses on the development of interventions that can be realistically and successfully implemented in the regular education classroom to address and correct academic or behavioral difficulties prior to or in lieu of a student's identification as a student with special needs. Interventions that are developed as part of the CSAP process may be sufficient to support the student successfully in the regular education classroom, or the team may recommend the completion of a multidisciplinary evaluation if the team determines that all regular education resources have been exhausted and found to be unsuccessful. The process includes bringing parents in to learn about what might be interfering with their child's learning and brainstorming ways the school and the home can support the child.

Because the school's educational design is centered on cooperatively implemented learning expeditions, RBCS has adopted an inclusion model of special education. As much as possible, students with special needs are included with their peers in the regular classroom setting with the support of itinerant and pull-out services. A staff of three special education teachers provides student services and staff support in working with special needs students.

The school utilizes a number of strategies to accelerate academic skill development and content knowledge. Such strategies include differentiated instruction as well as reading, language arts, and mathematics pull-out support in small groups. In addition, we provide after school or before school tutoring and/or mentoring services for students needing additional support. Literacy skills are assessed three times a year and the results of these assessments are used to group students homogeneously and heterogeneously for instruction. In mathematics, students are likewise grouped homogeneously and heterogeneously for instruction and a spiraling curriculum is utilized to reinforce subject matter skills and content knowledge

**What types of teaching strategies are used to actively engage students in the learning process?**

Following are some of the strategies utilized by the teachers at RBCS to actively engage students in the learning process:

Small group, whole group, and individualized instruction

- Authentic learning experiences
- Student choice
- Inquiry-based learning
- Cooperative/collaborative activities
- Kinesthetic hands-on experiences/use of manipulatives
- Whole group meetings
- Active learning protocols such as jigsaw, gallery walks, tea parties and conversation cafe
- Guiding questions for inquiry studies
- Choice time to explore new experiences and different activities
- Peer interaction
- Games, books, songs, chants, and movement to reinforce skills
- Community building through morning meetings and shared school-wide rituals
- Fieldwork in the community
- Shared and guided reading
- Workshop Model
- Reader's Theater
- Literature Circles
- Discussion and debriefing activities
- Peer Critique and Feedback
- Self Critique and Reflection
- Rubrics and Learning Targets
- Instruction that builds on prior knowledge

## **English Language Learners**

Russell Byers Charter School has identified four English Language Learners (ELL). A designated ELL consults with the child's regular classroom teacher and with the child's family in order to determine the appropriate course of instructional support. These students are being serviced twice a week for an hour each day.

Children for whom English is a second language and who are exhibiting difficulties in both their native language and English may be eligible for special education support. Determining if there is a delay in the native language may require the services of a translator and/or interpreter. An interpreter or translator may also be needed for family conferences, and all legal documents may need to be provided to the family in the family's native language.

## **Graduation Requirements**

Russell Byers Charter School is a 4K — 6 school. This section of the Annual Report does not apply.

### Special Education

At present, there were 48 students with IEPs who attend the school. There are two full-time special education teachers, and one full-time education coordinator/teacher, on staff. The range of services provided to students with special needs includes special instruction in reading, writing, and math, support in content areas, counseling and behavioral support provided by a part-time psychologist and speech therapy and occupational therapy provided by outside contractors. The special education coordinator attends all IEP meetings and serves as an ongoing resource to classroom teachers to plan and implement appropriate curriculum for each student and to identify strategies to use to accomplish IEP goals. IEPs are developed in accordance with IDEA requirements. IEP teams for each student include at least one parent/guardian, the student (if developmentally appropriate), the regular and special education teachers, the special education coordinator, and the principal or assistant principal as appropriate. Other specialists, including the speech therapist, occupational therapist, and psychologist, serve on the team when appropriate. The special education teachers, with guidance from the special education coordinator, are responsible for writing and monitoring the implementation of IEPs. The special education coordinator monitors all IEPs, Evaluation Reports, and NOREPs for compliance with state and federal guidelines. The school contracts with outside agencies, approved private schools (APS), and alternative special education settings (ASES) for those services needed by the students that cannot be provided by the school.

### Special Education Program Profile - Chart I

| Teacher             | FTE  | Type of class or support     | Location | # of Students | Other Information  |
|---------------------|------|------------------------------|----------|---------------|--|
| Rebecca Levenberg   | 1.00 | Learning Support             | RBCS     | 20            | Includes 6 students who receive services at APS or ASES. Includes both itinerant and resource support. |
| Rebecca Chase       | 1.00 | Learning Support             | RBCS     | 14            | Includes both itinerant and resource support. Also manages 6 students with 504 plans.                  |
| Geno Aloï           | 1.00 | Learning Support             | RBCS     | 14            | Includes both itinerant and resource support.  |
| Elvira Zuazo-Legido | 1.00 | Behavior/counseling services | RBCS     | 10            | Provides behavior and counseling support to regular and special ed students.                           |

### Special Education Program Profile - Chart II

| Organization         | FTE  | Type of class or support    | Location             | # of Students | Other Information |
|----------------------|------|-----------------------------|----------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| Wordsworth Academy   | 1.00 | Full-time emotional support | Wordsworth Academy   | 3             | Operates as APS   |
| Martin Luther School | 1.00 | Full-time emotional support | Martin Luther School | 1             | Operates as APS   |
| Academy in Manyunk   | 1.00 | Full-time learning support  | Academy in Manayunk  | 2             | Operates as ASES  |

### Special Education Program Profile - Chart III

| Title            | Location | FTE |
|------------------|----------|-----|
| Paraprofessional | RBCS     | .25 |

### Special Education Program Profile - Chart IV

| IU, Public Agency, Organization, or Individual | Title/Service             | Amount of Time Per Week |
|--|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| C. Sherretta -- Therapy Solutions              | Speech/Language Therapist | 14 hours/week           |
| J. Barnes -- Therapy Solutions                 | Occupational Therapist    | 8 hours/week            |
| J. Rottinger -- Therapy Solutions              | Speech/Language Therapist | 4 hours/week            |

## SECTION IV. ACCOUNTABILITY

### Student Assessment - Primary

| Test/Classification | K  | 1  | 2  | 3   | 4   | 5   |
|---------------------|----|----|----|-----|-----|-----|
| PSSA                | No | No | No | Yes | No  | No  |
| PSSA                | No | No | No | No  | Yes | No  |
| PSSA                | No | No | No | No  | No  | Yes |

### Student Assessment - Secondary

| Test/Classification | 6   | 7  | 8  | 9  | 10 | 11 | 12 |
|---------------------|-----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| PSSA                | Yes | No | No | No | No | No | No |

### Student Assessment

Our spring 2007 PSSA scores for Reading and Mathematics improved sufficiently to allow us to make AYP in both areas.

The spring 2007 PSSA test results in mathematics showed improvement from our baseline year in 2005 from 51.4 to a 2007 PPI of 78.1, exceeding our 2007 target of 62.2%. Reading results were consistent with those seen in mathematics. We improved on our baseline score of 60.0 to a 2007 PPI of 76.7, exceeding the 2007 target of 68.8. Our mathematics scores met AYP requirements with 50.8% of all students at the proficient or advanced level. Our Reading scores met AYP through the use of a confidence interval with 49.7% of all of our students scoring at the proficient or advance level.

We are pleased that our reading scores did improve as a result of purchasing the Harcourt Trophies program and through our focus on improving comprehension and decoding skills. The school will continue stressing phonemic awareness and phonics as well as provide consistent staff development in best practices for literacy instruction.

## Teacher Evaluation

### a. Main features of the teacher evaluation plan

The principal conducts both formal and informal classroom observations. Each formal observation is followed by a conference during which the lesson is discussed, feedback is provided, and suggestions for improvement, where appropriate, are made. (First year teachers are observed more frequently than experienced teachers.) A written observation report, including commendations and recommendations, is provided after each formal observation. Feedback from informal observations is usually provided through a written note from the principal or through informal conversation with the teacher. Teachers are formally observed and evaluated at least two times a year.

### b. Individuals responsible for staff evaluation

The Principal and Vice Principal are responsible for teacher evaluation.

## SECTION V. GOVERNANCE REQUIREMENTS

### Leadership Changes

A new CEO/principal was appointed on July 1, 2006.

At the end of the 2006-07 school year, one board member resigned and one board member was appointed.

### Board of Trustees

| Name of Trustee                      | Office (if any)              |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Rev. George W. Bur                   | St. Joseph's University      |
| Judge Felipe Restrepo                | U.S. Court House             |
| Shelly Simms Reed                    | FIS Group                    |
| Barbara Bravo                        |                              |
| Stephen Prichard                     | Janney Montgomery Scott      |
| Kym Shegog-Ramsey                    | The Goddard School           |
| Laurada Byers                        | Byerschool Foundation        |
| Dr. Alison Byers, ex officio         |                              |
| Jack Adler, ex officio               |                              |
| W. Russell G. Byers, Jr., ex officio | Laurel Ridge Mgt.            |
| Ruth Schneeberg                      | Russell Byers Charter School |
| Clay von Seldeneck                   | Snyder & Company             |
| Devra Jamison                        | USPS                         |

## **Professional Development (Governance)**

During the 2006-07 academic year, the Board hired a strategic planning consultant to look at the school and to look at the operations of the board. The Board will be expanded to 15 people. We will be introducing new committees during the 2007-08 academic year.

## **Coordination of the Governance and Management of the School**

The bylaws make provision for a seven-member Board of Trustees which may be expanded to include 15 members. The Board includes educators, business persons, social service providers, and parents. The principal serves in an advisory capacity and submits regular reports to the Board. With the exception of the parent representative, who serves a one-year term, Board members serve three-year renewable terms. In addition, a faculty representative, elected by the faculty, has been added to the Board to serve a one-year term in an *ex-officio*, non-voting capacity.

The Board sets policy for the school and works with the principal, who is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the school, to develop and use analytical tools that help to regularly measure the academic and non-academic performance of the school. At each Board meeting the principal presents a statistical snapshot of the school, reporting on student progress and school programs.

The Board meets at least eight times each year to address both long-term and immediate issues affecting the school. Board meetings are advertised in accordance with the law and all stakeholders are encouraged to attend Board meetings. Board meetings are tape-recorded and minutes of previous meetings are reviewed and approved at each meeting.

The principal and the Board Chairperson meet each week to discuss matters of importance to the operation of the school. The Board Chairperson and the principal attend Home and School Association meetings at which time they share information about Board and school issues. At these meetings, parents are encouraged to share their thoughts and concerns about the school and the decisions of the Board.

The principal and/or assigned school representatives attend all called meetings of the School District of Philadelphia (SDP) for charter schools. We have been in contact with various offices of the SDP to assist us in providing answers and suggestions in addressing various issues that arise during the course of the year. All required reports have been submitted.

## **Community and Parent Engagement**

Parents are encouraged to participate in all aspects of school life, including governance. A parent serves a one-year term as a voting member of the Board of Trustees.

The Home and School Association is involved in soliciting parent input on major decisions which is then carefully considered by the Board in its decision-making process. This past year the HSA held a number of fundraising activities and donated \$1000 to a parent group responsible for organizing the sixth grade graduating ceremony. Fundraising efforts from previous years resulted in the purchase of a portable stage and digital cameras.

Parents and community members are encouraged to attend Board meetings and to submit items for the agenda. They have the opportunity to address the Board during the public comment section of each public meeting. Parents and community members are also included on various school committees, including the Strategic Planning Committee which will be formed in the near future to develop a long-range plan for the school.

Each family is requested to donate 30 hours of volunteer service to the school. This opportunity may be met in a wide variety of ways including preparing classroom materials at home, accompanying a class on ELOB fieldwork, serving on school committees, contacting community resources, and working with the Home and School Association. Parent volunteers sometimes assist teachers on field trips. Currently, several community members visit classrooms on a weekly basis to share their expertise with students and teachers. Each class also has parent representatives that assist the classroom teacher with the coordination and organization of the class and grade-level events. Parents serving as class representatives have automatic membership in the Home and School Association and are given full credit for 30 hours of volunteer service.

Parents have been instrumental in establishing and leading a parent resource network through the Center City Parenting Center. The network trains parents to provide parenting workshops on a range of topics, including nutrition, homework help, and other topics designed to improve the quality of life of families. Parents who have attended this training serve as guides when community members and prospective families visit the school.

Various activities are held throughout the school year to showcase the work of students. Parents and community members are invited to attend these displays, performances, and demonstrations. This past year a survey was conducted to measure parent satisfaction. Data from this survey will be compiled and analyzed and used to set goals for improving the school.

Twice a year, there are school-wide Celebrations of Learning that include both evening programs and programs during the school day. Parents and community members are invited into the school to enjoy student performances, displays of student work, student presentations of the work on their expeditions, and other demonstrations of student learning. This two-day activity includes the entire school community — students, teachers, parents, and Board members.

There is a very active Big Brothers/Big Sisters program at RBCS. More than 50 community members volunteer their time to meet with students at the school. These Big Brothers/Big Sisters help students with their school work, play games such as chess and scrabble, or just talk with their young charges. We are working continuously to increase the number of community volunteers involved in this highly successful program.

City Year, an AmeriCorps volunteer program, also provides services to the school. Through City Year, high school graduates work within the school community assisting teachers and students during the day. Corps members provide additional service to the community by running an after school program that combines academics and service learning and organizing events such as the school bake sale and the basketball tournament.

## **SECTION VI. FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **Major fund-raising activities**

**The school conducts fundraising through the Byerschool Foundation. Similar fundraising is planned for the current school year.**

### **Fiscal Solvency Policies**

**The Board of Trustees has adopted financial policies and procedures which include the topics - budgeting, accounting practices, procurement, contracts, internal control, cash management, grants management, time and attendance, contracted services, etc.**

The school's budget, adopted in accordance with the timetable prescribed by the Commonwealth, serves as a blue print for financial decision making during the fiscal year. The budget provides for the educational, building and administrative needs of the school community and also includes a reserve for contingencies. All purchases and personnel decisions are reviewed for budgetary funds available prior to the issuance of a contract or purchase order.

The business office provides interim financial reporting for the board of trustees and CEO on a monthly basis. The business manager meets with the school administrative team regularly and attends all board and finance committee meetings. Through careful monitoring of expenditures and revenues the school is able to assure that all expenditure and revenue categories remain within budget.

### **Accounting System**

The accounting system is Quickbooks and is loaded with the State Chart of Accounts. Transactions are posted by the Controller's office staffed by experienced school business administrators. A trial balance, statement of revenue and expenditures and a statement of disbursements are prepared monthly. Reports are generated in compliance with State requirements

### **Preliminary Statements of Revenues, Expenditures & Fund Balances - Attachments**

- PRELIMINARY STATEMENTS OF REVENUES, EXPENDITURES & FUND BALANCES
- Audit 2006

### **Audit Firm, Date of Last Audit, Auditor's Opinion, and Any Findings Resulting From the Audit**

The school's auditing firm is Yampolsky Mandeloff Silver Ryan. The last audit is dated October 13, 2006 for fiscal year 2005-2006 and has a clean unqualified opinion with no findings. It is impossible to submit an audit for 2006-2007 by August 1, 2007.

### **Citations and follow-up actions for any State Audit Report**

The school has completed its seventh year of operation and has not been audited by the State Comptrollers Office.

## **SECTION VII. FACILITY RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **Acquisition of Facilities, Furniture, Fixtures, and Equipment During the Last Fiscal Year**

Russell Byers Charter School leases a facility at 1911 Arch St. All furniture and equipment was purchased after obtaining quotations from various vendors

### **Future Facility Plans and Other Capital Needs**

The Byerschool Foundation, which owns and leases the building to the school, recently re-financed existing debt and borrowed additional funds to renovate bathrooms and the lower level of the building. Because of favorable interest rates and an extended payment term, the new debt service cost will remain at approximately the same level. Therefore, the

rent charged to the school is not expected to change. These renovations are expected to be completed within the next 12 months.

## **SECTION VIII. HEALTH AND SAFETY RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **Compliance With Health and Safety Requirements and Maintenance of Health and Immunizations Records for Students**

RBCS has complied with all health and safety requirements. The City of Philadelphia Department of Licenses and Inspection has issued a Certificate of Occupancy for the school building. Fire drills and other safety drills are conducted throughout the year. Staff training regarding how to respond to emergency situations is a part of the school's comprehensive Emergency Management Plan which addresses various types of emergencies including inclement weather, community emergencies (e.g., gas leak, chemical spill, etc.), national/state emergency (e.g., September 11<sup>th</sup>), bomb threat, fire/explosion, and an intruder in the building. This plan was developed to familiarize staff and students with different situations that may occur and to provide guidelines for responding to a crisis situation. Such preparation and practice can minimize problems arising during a crisis. The major objectives of the plan are to save lives, give aid to victims, and protect property. As part of the Emergency Management Plan, building evacuation routes were modified, resulting in a quicker and more effective evacuation of the school during fire drills.

All exterior doors are kept locked during the school day and visitors are received through the front door only. A buzzer system for the front door enables the receptionist, who has a clear and unobstructed view of the entrance-way, to easily control entry to the building. Walkie-talkies are used for communication purposes as necessary. In March, a full time security officer was hired to patrol the building and offer increased surveillance. Our school also has a number of video cameras that record images from various locations within the building.

RBCS has a full-time school nurse. Student health records are reviewed and every effort is made to keep them up-to-date. Written guidelines for administering medication to students are published in the Student/Parent Handbook. Emergency contact information is maintained for all students.

### **Current School Insurance Coverage Policies and Programs**

Current school insurance coverage policies and programs include the following: Personal Choice: Keystone Health Plan; Workers' Compensation; General Liability; Corporate Officers Errors and Omissions, and contents insurance, wage continuation, and life insurance.

## **SECTION IX. ADMINISTRATIVE NEEDS**

### **Quality of Teaching and Other Staff**

For the 2006-2007 school year, there were a total of 39 professional employees (as defined by the Pennsylvania Department of Education). Of that number, 34 employees were in certified positions and 5 in non-certified positions. Thirteen of all professional employees were new staff members, five of whom worked as early childhood or elementary teachers. Twenty-six staff members returned from the 2004-2005 school year. The certified positions include 26 teachers, a part-time Literacy Specialist, a school nurse, a part-time psychologist, two part-time therapists,

and the school principal. Non-certified positions include 14 teaching assistants, the assistant to the principal, a registrar, and one full and one part-time administrative assistant.

Staff retention has been high. During the 2001-02 school year, the only member of the professional staff who began the school year but did not complete it was the assistant principal, who resigned in March, 2002.

In September, 2002, two staff members did not return: one teacher changed professions and the special education coordinator relocated. During the 2002-03 school year, one teacher did not complete the year due to relocation.

In September, 2003, three staff members did not return: one teacher went on maternity leave, another teacher left due to family reasons, and one teacher's contract was not renewed.

In September, 2004, five staff members did not return: Two teachers relocated, two part-time nurses did not return because the school nurse became a full-time position and neither of them wanted to work full-time, and one part-time special education teacher returned to graduate school.

At the end of the 2004-05 school year, three teachers chose not to return to RBCS. One individual moved from the area and two accepted teaching positions elsewhere. The School Registrar also resigned. Two part-time positions were eliminated due to budgetary reasons.

At the end of the 2005-06 school year, seven teachers chose not to return to RBCS. Two individuals moved from the area, two accepted teaching positions elsewhere and two retired. Six positions were not renewed, of which three were for certification issues and one was eliminated due to budgetary reasons.

At the end of the 2006-07 school year, two teachers and the school nurse chose not to return to RBCS.

## Student Enrollment

### ENROLLMENT HISTORY 2006-07

| Grade | Number of Students Initially Enrolled | Number of Students Dropped | Number of Students Added | Number of Students Who Completed 2006-07 Who Are Enrolled to Return in September |
|-------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| 4K    | 40                                    | 1                          | 2                        | 37   |
| 5K    | 46                                    | 1                          | 0                        | 42   |
| 1     | 46                                    | 2                          | 2                        | 44   |
| 2     | 69                                    | 0                          | 1                        | 70   |
| 3     | 68                                    | 0                          | 2                        | 66   |
| 4     | 45                                    | 0                          | 0                        | 42   |
| 5     | 43                                    | 2                          | 0                        | 37   |
| 6     | 42                                    | 0                          | 0                        | graduated  |

Of the 396 students who completed the 2006-07 school year, 338 are currently enrolled to return in August and 41 graduated in June. Our retention rate for this school year is 94%.

Nineteen students will not be returning in August. Of that number, 9 were accepted in private or parochial schools, 5 moved outside of Philadelphia County, 2 went to neighborhood schools and 3 were expelled for lateness.

**b. Enrollment trends including student turnover and retention data**

| Year    | Actual Enrollment Sept./June | Wait List | Students Retained | Withdrawals |
|---------|------------------------------|-----------|-------------------|-------------|
| 2001-02 | 146/138                      | 256       | 0                 | 16          |
| 2002-03 | 218/200                      | 425       | 5                 | 20          |
| 2003-04 | 298/279                      | 550       | 5                 | 22          |
| 2004-05 | 341/330                      | 530       | 0                 | 45          |
| 2005-06 | 403/400                      | 355       | 1                 | 36          |
| 2006-07 | 399/396                      | 334       | 2                 | 19          |

The school's first facility at 2100 Spring Garden Street was too small to accommodate our opening projection of 200 students in grades 4K-3. We therefore opened with 146 students in grades 4K-2. In 2002-03, as the school expanded to include grades 4K-3, we remained under-enrolled by approximately the number of students in one grade. In 2003, after moving into our current building at 1911 Arch Street, a strategic decision was made to double the kindergarten enrollment rather than add a grade of new students at the top of the grade configuration. Because of the uniqueness of the ELOB design, we felt that our students would have a better chance of success if they were introduced to the model as early in their schooling as possible. We began the 2003-04 school year over-enrolled (298 students), but ended the year with 279 students, one under our original projection of 280 students.

From the beginning, RBCS has received applications far in excess of the number of spaces to be filled. In the first two years, the ratio of applicants to available spaces was approximately 4:1; in the past two years, the ratio has been approximately 7:1.

Most student withdrawals happen for one of three reasons. One is that families move out of the city or further away from the school. The second is that parents conclude, often after consultation with school officials, that their child is not yet developmentally prepared to attend five year-old kindergarten (5K), the grade level at which most withdrawals occur. Finally, some families withdraw their child because he or she is facing expulsion proceedings.

The school does not believe that retention is the best policy for encouraging the success of its students. We believe that early intervention — as early as 4K — is the key to ensuring that students achieve success and perform on grade level. The Board passed a policy stating that if, after a careful assessment of a 4K student who is struggling in the first few weeks of school, the student is not emotionally or academically ready for school, we will intervene. In consultation with the student's parents, he/she will be asked to leave RBCS for one year. However, we will hold that student's spot and he/she may return to the school the following year in 5K — better prepared to succeed from the beginning.

Five students were asked to repeat a grade in each of the last two years — 2002-03 and 2003-04. Students in grades 4K — 2 who have demonstrated high levels of immaturity and/or consistently poor academic performance occasionally profit from another year in the same grade level. Students who perform particularly poorly on Terra Nova and/or PSSA tests are occasionally required to repeat 3<sup>rd</sup> grade as well, after attending a summer school program. Decisions regarding retention are made only after a series of meetings with the child's parents and after intervention strategies have been exhausted. There were no students retained at the end of the 2004-05; one student retained at the end of the 2005-06 and one student retained in the 2006-07 school year.

## **Transportation**

Students in grades 1-6 ride the school bus provided by the SDP. Students in 4K and 5K arrive by public transportation, with their parents, or are dropped off by carpool. A small number of students are transported by vans operated by day care programs. The school bus transportation service provided to RBCS is quite adequate and is operating with few problems.

## **Food Service Program**

Students in grades 1-6 ride the school bus provided by the SDP. Students in 4K and 5K arrive by public transportation, with their parents, or are dropped off by carpool. A small number of students are transported by vans operated by day care programs. The school bus transportation service provided to RBCS is quite adequate and is operating with few problems.

## **Student Conduct**

### **a. Expectations for student behavior and discipline.**

The school's Peace Program is designed to promote a safe and peaceful environment so that students can thrive and learn. It is based on a proactive and consistent approach toward student conduct in order to promote a respectful and healthy learning environment that engages all partners (parents, staff, community, and Board of Trustees) in a collaborative effort. While conflicts in the classroom and on the playground will always arise, resolving them peacefully is the school's highest priority. Violence in any form is not tolerated in the school community, and students are carefully educated about how to use nonviolent means to express their concerns, get appropriate help, and resolve disputes.

The entire staff works toward the common goal of instilling in students self-discipline and a respect for the rights of others. The school also depends on family support in promoting and maintaining the Peace Program, which is described in the Parent/Student Handbook that is given to every parent and student. It includes the following elements:

#### The Program's Philosophy

- Student Expectations
- School Disciplinary Guidelines

- Discipline Guidelines for Student Misconduct
- Sexual Harassment Policy
- Expulsion Guidelines
- Attendance and Punctuality Policy
- School Uniform Policy

Discipline guidelines are based on three levels of increasingly more serious types of behavior with corresponding consequences of increasing seriousness depending on the nature and/or frequency of a student's conduct. It also includes several preventive steps to help correct a situation before it becomes a serious discipline problem. The three levels are described below:

Level I: These are first offenses which will result in the teacher contacting the parent directly, explaining the situation, and asking the parent to reiterate the school's and parent's expectations to the child. Any behavior that is deemed serious by the school administration (excessive physical aggression, being uncontrollable or threatening a teacher or peer) may result in immediate suspension for a period of one to ten days. If the student is suspended, a reinstatement meeting that includes the child and parents is held with the school administration before the student may return to school.

Level II: A second offense will result in the teacher calling home to set up a conference with the school administration, the teacher, the parent, and the child. The school's expectations for students will be reviewed at this meeting and a plan will be created by all parties to help the child behave appropriately in school. The plan may include a Student Behavior Monitoring Chart or the parent may be asked to "shadow" (follow the child) for a school day to learn exactly what is expected of the student. Any behavior that is deemed serious by the school administration may result in a child being suspended for one to ten days. If a student is suspended, a reinstatement meeting that includes the child and parents is held with the school administration before the student may return to school.

Level III: These are repeated offenses that impede the learning process of the student and class or offenses that are considered extremely serious (fighting, vandalism, verbal or sexual harassment, uncontrollable behavior, etc.). The student will immediately be referred to the school administration and will be suspended for one to ten days. A reinstatement meeting that includes the child and parents will be held with the school administration before the child is allowed to return to school.

No student is suspended without notice being given to the parents of the reason for which the child is being suspended. For suspensions that are longer than three days (extremely rare at RBCS), parents are advised of their right of due process. A suspended student may make up all missed work and is not allowed on school grounds or to attend any school-related function during the period of suspension.

After three suspensions for extremely violent behavior, the school will recommend that the child be expelled from school. Parents receive a written notice that the principal intends to recommend expulsion to the Board at its next scheduled meeting. Parents are advised of their right of due process to appear before the Board to appeal the principal's recommendation. They also have the right to bring any witnesses they wish to testify and to be represented by legal counsel.

#### **b. Number of suspensions and expulsions by student.**

52 students were involved in 69 suspension incidents.



# CHARTER SCHOOL ANNUAL REPORT SUMMARY DATA

## Charter School Annual Report Summary Data 2007 - 2008

**Name of School:** Russell Byers CS

**Date of Local Chartering School Board/PDE Approval:** February 21, 2001

**Length of Charter:** Five Years **Opening Date:** 9/17/2001

**Grade Level:** 4K - 6th Grade **Hours of Operation:** 8:00 AM - 3:30 PM

**Percentage of Certified Staff:** 92% **Total Instructional Staff:** 25

**Student/ Teacher Ratio:** 15 to 1 **Student Waiting List:** 334

**Attendance Rate/Percentage:** 96.21%

**Enrollment:** 406 **Per Pupil Subsidy:** \$7,248 for regular ed, \$15,346 for special ed

### Student Profile

**American Indian/Alaskan Native:** 0  
**Asian/Pacific Islander:** 10  
**Black (Non-Hispanic):** 349  
**Hispanic:** 20  
**White (Non-Hispanic):** 10  
**Multicultural:** 0

**Percentage of Students from Low Income Families Eligible for a Free or Reduced Lunch:** 85%

**Provide the Total Unduplicated Number of Students Receiving Special Services (Excluding Gifted) as of Previous December:** 42

| Number of:                 | K (AM) | K (PM) | K (FTIME) | ELEM | MIDDLE | SEC. | TOTAL |
|----------------------------|--------|--------|-----------|------|--------|------|-------|
| <b>Instructional Days</b>  | 0      | 0      | 179       | 179  | 0      | 0    | 179   |
| <b>Instructional Hours</b> | 0      | 0      | 5.30      | 400  | 0      | 0    | 5.30  |

## **ASSURANCE FOR THE OPERATION OF CHARTER SCHOOL SERVICES AND PROGRAMS**

**School Year: 2007**

The Russell Byers CS within Philadelphia IU 26 assures that the charter school will comply with the requirements of 22 PA Code Chapter 711 and with the policies and procedures of Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE). PDE will specify, in writing, policies and procedures to be followed. Requests for any deviations from these regulations, policies, and procedures must be made in writing to PDE. The charter school assures:

1. There are a full range of services, programs and alternative placements available for placement and implementation of the special education programs in the charter school.
2. The charter school has adopted a "child find" system to locate, identify and evaluate children who are thought to be a child with a disability eligible for special education residing within the charter school's jurisdiction. "Child find" data is collected, maintained, and used in decision-making. Child find process and procedures are evaluated for effectiveness. The charter school implements mechanisms to disseminate child find information to the public, organizations, agencies, and individuals on at least an annual basis.
3. The charter school has adopted policies and procedures that assure that students with disabilities are included in general education programs and extracurricular and non-academic programs and activities to the maximum extent appropriate in accordance with an Individualized Education Program.
4. The charter school will comply with the PA Department of Education annual report requirements including special education information.
5. The charter school follows the state and federal guidelines for participation of students with disabilities in state and charter school-wide assessments including the determination of participation, the need for accommodations, and the methods of assessing students for whom regular assessment is not appropriate.
6. The charter school assures the Pennsylvania Department of Education that funds received through participation in the medical assistance reimbursement program, ACCESS, will be used to enhance or expand the current level of services and programs provided to students with disabilities in this local education agency.

**This assurance must be signed by the Board President and the Chief Executive Officer for the charter school to operate services and programs.**

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**Board President**

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**Date**

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**Chief Executive Officer**

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**Date**

**2007 - 2008 Annual Report for Pennsylvania Charter Schools**

**Verify that all DATA reports to PDE are complete**

**YES** \_\_\_\_\_ **NO** \_\_\_\_\_

**SIGNATURE PAGE**

*Identify the charter school's Chief Executive Officer.*

**Name** Salome Thomas-EL

**Title** CEO/Principal

**Phone** 215-972-1700

**Fax** 215-972-1701

**E-mail** stomas-el@byersschool.org

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*Signature of the Chief Executive Officer and Date*

*Identify the charter school's President of the Board of Trustees.*

**Name** Laurada Byers

**Title** Chair of the Board of Trustees

**Phone** 215-772-1777

**Fax** 215-772-3045

**E-mail** lbyers@byersschool.org

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*Signature of the President of the Board of Trustees and Date*

*Identify the charter school's Special Education Contact Person.*

**Name** Salome Thomas-EL

**Title** CEO

**Phone** 215-972-1700

**Fax** 215-972-1701

**E-mail** stomas-el@byersschool.org

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*Signature of the Special Education Contact Person and Date*