

Prairie Crossing Charter School

**Charter Proposal
July 4, 1998**

*The prairie speaks of freedom –
earth and sky meet on the far
horizon with nothing to
intercept the vision from
the infinite.*

*Renowned poets have
grown out of the prairie,
and more are on the way...*

Jens Jensen

**On The Cover - Burr oaks stand as sentinels in
the fields near Prairie Crossing Charter School**

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Executive Summary: Parents As Partners In Public Education

The Prairie Crossing Charter School has been carefully planned over a period of two years by a group of parents and central Lake County residents to take advantage of the new Illinois Charter Schools Law. It plans to offer elementary school children an excellent educational program centered around environmental science, basic learning skills and civic responsibility.

As a new public school, it will broaden the educational choices available to families in the Woodland and Fremont School Districts. It will enable them to take advantage of the distinctive facilities - both natural and built - within Prairie Crossing, a conservation community in Grayslake. 350 acres of native prairies, lakes, and a working organic farm with animals will offer students a unique range of experiences.

An additional distinguishing feature of the school will be its small size. The school will serve a target population of up to 330 children in kindergarten through eighth grade when it reaches capacity. This feature alone distinguishes it from the existing public-school choices of parents in the two

elementary school districts it is proposing to serve. Compared to a target population of 330 students served by Prairie Crossing, the Fremont School District elementary population is projected to grow to over 1,800 students while the Woodland School District elementary population is projected to grow to over 10,000 students in the years ahead.

Many leading educators across the country today feel that small schools provide the most effective setting for learning. Small schools ensure optimal individual attention for each student. They also make it possible for teachers, administrators and children to know everyone in the school community; no one is a stranger and all understand their interdependence. The Prairie Crossing Charter School will be such a school.

Physical planning for the school is proceeding along two tracks. Startup facilities and a site for expansion have been identified. The historic Wright Schoolhouse from the immediate area has been moved to the site and modernized. It is available to the school for startup use for up to 80 children beginning in August of 1999. For the longer term, design work is underway to construct an entirely new school building on a nearby site which has been committed to the Prairie Crossing Charter School Board subject to satisfaction

of certain conditions. Playing fields and athletic facilities are near both sites, as are opportunities for nature study in the 2500-acre Liberty Prairie Reserve adjacent to Prairie Crossing. There is some possibility that the new school building can be ready for occupancy by the beginning of the 1999 school year, in which case classes will begin there. There is also a possibility that, due to regulatory constraints, renovations to the Wright Schoolhouse may best support 40 - 60 students, in which case Prairie Crossing Charter School may open in 1999 with not fewer than 40 students.

Financial planning confirms the feasibility of this program. Construction of a new building may be funded by a long-term lease supported by revenues set aside for this purpose as part of the base tuition payable under the Illinois Charter Schools Law. Although operations will be funded at the per capita levels of expenditures at Fremont and Woodland, efficiencies achieved by operating under the Charter Schools Law will help underwrite facility costs as well as operations.

Students will be admitted in accordance with state statute. An annual application process will be announced and publicly advertised. Should eligible applications exceed planned spaces, successful applicants will be selected by lottery.

The proposed school is located in the Prairie Crossing community, which lies within school districts 50 and 79. The Prairie Crossing Charter School will not be restricted to or reserved for residents of the development; it will be open to all children in the two districts. Special measures will be taken to foster diversity among applicants through publicizing the school's availability.

Ultimately, the school will operate in a facility constructed expressly for the charter school on land which can be leased to Prairie Crossing Charter School by Prairie Holdings Corporation. A \$2.5 million dollar facility, representing the first school in Illinois to be constructed as a charter school, is currently in the design stage. Annual lease costs are included in the school's financial plan. Upon grant of the Prairie Crossing charter, construction could commence so the school would be ready for occupancy as school begins in the Fall of 1999. Sports and recreational facilities within the Prairie Crossing development, as well as a stable, farm, gardens, and an extensive adjacent environmental preserve will be part of the school's unique campus. These charter school facilities, in part established through private enterprise, will reduce the growing tax burden on area residents.

Central Lake County school populations are rapidly growing. School construction can barely keep pace with demand. The student populations of some elementary schools currently range into the thousands. There is at present no sign of this trend slowing or reversing. By District 50's own projection, a kindergartner entering in the fall of this year will graduate from facilities serving in excess of 10,000 students.

Contemporary educational research has amply demonstrated that smaller schools serve the needs of many students better than very large schools. For some families, the notion of sending young children into schools with a population of thousands, or several hundreds, of students is overwhelming. There is a risk that students, especially those with special learning needs or difficulties, can be lost in the shuffle, no matter how good the large school may be.

Parents need more options for their children's education. Small schools, with focused or specialized curricula, frequently prove to be as good as or better than large schools in meeting the needs of many children. Most importantly, they offer choices for families within the local public school system.

Prairie Crossing Charter School will be a deliberately small school. We believe this

will create a setting for innovative, personalized instruction, efficient management, and a highly focused, experienced - based curriculum. The logistics of a small student population reduce the difficulties and costs inherent in programming, maintenance, discipline, and governance. The savings can be rolled into enriched programming and learning technologies.

Taking advantage of the physical setting of the school, a special focus on earth and environmental sciences will be embedded in the curriculum, and will be utilized to encourage high levels of student engagement and achievement. The school will make use of the campus farm, gardens, animals and nature preserve to observe and examine natural phenomena in developmentally appropriate lessons and units.

In the school's highly integrated curriculum, mathematics, science, and language arts will be heavily infused with nature experiences--such as measurement of growing things, precipitation, etc. Community service will be a fundamental component of the life of the school, related to stewardship of the environment and responsibility to fellow students. Parents will be deeply involved in the daily activity of the children in and around the school, providing ample support

to teachers and supplying many of the essential functions of the school.

The overarching goal of the Prairie Crossing Charter School founders is to create a public education option for area families. This school is not being proposed to disparage existing schools, but to expand the choices available. With its small size and curricular focus, this school may be just right for some families, and not for others. While it will be able to offer consistent daily experiences that big schools cannot provide, it will not be all things to all people. In fact, with planned space available for just 3% of the total K-8 population spread across the two districts, Prairie Crossing Charter School represents a discerning choice for parents, and no significant threat to local district operations or finances.

Prairie Crossing Charter School represents a serious effort by local citizens to address issues of educational choice within the suburban public education system. The founders of the school are committed to refine and improve the program for the school as it prepares to open in 1999. They have retained the Small Schools Workshop at the University of Illinois at Chicago for assistance in preparation of their plans and this proposal. They are consulting regularly with Philip Hunsberger, an accomplished school administrator with 25 years'

experience in the Illinois elementary school system who was recognized in 1994 as National Distinguished Principal of the Year for Illinois by the National Association of Elementary School Principals. The founders have organized an Advisory Board which includes among its members the former Dean of the Harvard School of Education and distinguished area legislators representing community views. In this vein, they hope for dialogue and constructive engagement from local school authorities and the Illinois State Board of Education as the process continues.

In light of Decision No. 98-1 of the State Board of Education, In the Matter of the Proposal to Establish the Thomas Jefferson School, and the Recommendations and Findings it accepts, this proposal is submitted with the expectation that as the Founders' work continues in the future, it will be possible to further analyze and define certain charter conditions. These include the lease or acquisition of a suitable school facility on the sites established herein meeting all legal requirements and an updated budget for school operations based on the school's final projected enrollment for the first year of operation. Both conditions are to be met not less than thirty days prior to opening the school.

Charter Provisions

Section 27A-7 of the Charter Schools Law requires that proposals to establish charter schools respond to enumerated criteria. The Prairie Crossing Charter School responses to these criteria are as follows:

1. Name:

The school shall be known as the Prairie Crossing Charter School (the School). The name is being changed from “Prairie Commons” to “Prairie Crossing” Charter School to minimize confusion evident in review of the 1997 iteration of the proposal.

2. Student Body

& Admissions:

In its first year of operation, the School will either be comprised of grades kindergarten through 6 operating in a new building (see financial plan - scenario A) or operate as a multi-class kindergarten and multi-age grade 1/2 in the Wright Schoolhouse if the new building is not ready for occupancy (see financial plan - scenario B). The School will add grades in successive years of operation to ultimately comprise grades K-8. Opening with a maximum population of 240 students under scenario A or minimum of 40 students under scenario B, the School will

grow in either instance to approximately 330 students by the end of the first charter.

It is important to note that student population targets set forth in the financial plan are subject to market forces, unlike traditional public schools. They are to be viewed as projections (excepting the minimum and maximum previously stated which remain fixed at 40 and 330 respectively) and are subject to change. Admissions goals are as follows:

- A. Maintain a non-exclusive, non-discriminatory admissions program.
- B. Achieve a student population generally reflective of the larger population, including at-risk children and children with mild to moderate special needs.
- C. Facilitate planning for the charter school and local districts by projecting future enrollments and ascertaining parental decisions as soon as practicable.
- D. Guarantee that children who have enrolled in the charter school have access to planned space in future grades as they progress.
- E. Facilitate priority admissions for siblings of enrolled students.

F. Comply with applicable state and federal laws .

The founders of the school are committed to seeking a student body that is diverse. While the founders believe it is crucial to sustain support of the community which will host the School by insuring that children who live near the school are eligible to apply for admission, under no circumstances will Prairie Crossing residents be guaranteed, or offered preference for, admission. Should planned spaces exceed applicants from Districts 50 and 79, students will be accepted for admission from other districts upon payment of the base tuition by the parent or legal guardian.

The commitment of the Prairie Crossing Charter School to a diverse student population extends to providing for the inclusive education of at-risk children and those whose special needs are compatible with the school's focus and evolving resources. The school will be able to serve a number of students who are at risk of failing to achieve their potential in large-scale educational environments. The individual attention and hands-on approach to learning that the charter school will employ has been demonstrated to be particularly effective for children with certain special behavioral or cognitive needs. Children with physical challenges may also

be mainstreamed within Prairie Crossing to the extent practicable, with every reasonable accommodation made to effectuate their admission and progress.

Should a parent with a child whose special needs are beyond the capability of the school pursue admission following an individualized consultation (which will be afforded to every child, not just "special needs" children) the Prairie Crossing Charter School will work with the Special Education District of Lake County (SEDOL) and local districts to provide for such needs.

An introductory meeting with SEDOL indicates that a number of creative programs of mutual benefit could be developed between the agency and the school. An introductory meeting with National Louis University, meanwhile, has indicated that special needs diagnostic services may be secured via contract with university staff.

After grant of the charter by the local district or otherwise secured contractual agreement between Prairie Crossing Charter School and the local district (and excepting any diagnostic or educational services independently secured by Prairie Crossing) services for special needs students remain the responsibility of the originating local district, as the local districts are accountable for such services pursuant to

state and federal law. Pursuant to section 27A-11 of the Charter Schools Law which permits contracts between a charter school and local district, Prairie Crossing Charter School will underwrite such service provision through an annual contribution to the local districts of the per-capita special needs local costs. The per-capita special needs local cost will be determined by dividing total local district special needs expenditures by the total enrollment of all district students. In exchange for special needs services provided by the district, the charter school will annually reimburse the originating local district the sum of this per-capita special needs local cost multiplied by the charter school average daily attendance. The per-capita special needs local cost will be determined annually as mutually agreed by Prairie Crossing, the local districts, and charter authority, if different. Proceeding in this manner will permit a pooling of risk of mutual benefit to the charter school and local districts while facilitating the broadest choice possible for special needs students.

In the event of issuance of a charter upon appeal by the Illinois State Board of Education, Prairie Crossing will submit a proposed contract to the local districts in accordance with the preceding paragraph to secure special needs services in exchange for the per-capita special needs local costs. Failing local district approval of this

contract, Prairie Crossing will endeavor to secure special needs services from alternate entities as approved by the charter authority and in accordance with all applicable laws. All categorical funds for special needs students enrolled in Prairie Crossing will be reserved for the sole use of the charter school, with no reimbursement of per-capita special needs local costs to the originating districts. Proceeding in this manner will retain special needs student choice while providing Prairie Crossing Charter School with sufficient autonomy to provide special needs services to the best of its independent ability.

In either of the preceding instances, the provision of special needs services at any given point in time over the term of the charter will be in accord with the evolving state of federal and state regulations as they may apply to education of special needs students within charter schools in general and Prairie Crossing in particular. This charter may be amended by mutual agreement of the charter authority and Prairie Crossing, from time to time, to accommodate such regulatory revisions.

Whether jointly with SEDOL, National Louis University, a local district or other entity, Prairie Crossing Charter School is committed to meet the needs of at-risk and special needs students. Should the parents

of any such child pursue entry into the charter school, their child will not be denied admission on the basis of special needs.

3. Description Of The Physical Plant

The School will be located in the Prairie Crossing community, a residential development located in the triangle formed by Routes 120, 137 and 45 in Grayslake, Lake County, Illinois. Portions of the Prairie Crossing development are located in Woodland Elementary District #50 and portions in Fremont Elementary District #79. Accordingly, this proposal anticipates a charter for the School be certified for both districts. At present, children who literally live next door to each other are bused several miles in opposite directions to distant schools.

The School will ultimately operate within a facility constructed expressly for the charter school in accordance with all applicable codes and regulations. Included within the appendix is a preliminary program study for the charter school prepared by Legat Architects. The conceptual design is a 25,500 square foot school on a 6.8 acre parcel of land. Final design, release of bid documents and financing will be completed

as the charter proceeds through review and implementation.

The financial plan for Prairie Crossing Charter School includes market rate lease payments for a “turn-key” school constructed and financed by a third party to be ready for occupancy in the Fall of 1999. Financing options which reduce facility cost through direct Prairie Crossing Charter School construction of facilities will be investigated as the charter proceeds through review. As a practical matter, such options are best finalized following charter approval.

In addition to the new school, supporting facilities at Prairie Crossing can be made available for the use of the charter school for educational and recreational programs including a working organic farm with children’s garden, hiking and riding trails, wetlands, stables and pens with small farm animals, bird nesting area, lake and beach, Village Green outdoor meeting and play area, playground with climbing equipment, tennis courts, basketball courts and soccer and baseball fields.

Immediately adjacent to the Prairie Crossing community and safely accessible via a pedestrian underpass lies 2,500 acres of open space known as the Liberty Prairie Reserve (see appendix). In addition, the Lake County Forest Preserve District offers

thousands more acres of Lake County flora and fauna available for exploration and instruction.

4. Mission Statement

The Prairie Crossing Charter School will provide a nurturing and stimulating environment that maximizes individualized education and learning by doing. The curriculum will have traditional subjects at its core with an integrated approach that will include an overarching emphasis on developing responsible citizens and environmental stewards for the 21st century.

A main aim of the school is to utilize innovative teaching methods and a unique setting to foster in its students a genuine sense of belonging, enthusiasm and self-confidence, based on measurable achievement and performance against high, rigorous standards, as well as on contributions to the community. Teachers will partner with parents and students to develop creative ways to encourage learning, as well as to measure student progress.

The Prairie Crossing Charter School is founded on the guiding principles of the Prairie Crossing community, which is a new community dedicated to responsible citizenship and environmental stewardship. The School will place a high value on

healthy living, community participation, environmental enhancement and respect for diversity. The Prairie Crossing Charter School will emphasize the natural and human history of central Lake County and the integration of aesthetic principles into everyday life.

The School will encourage the participation of the entire family in the education process and emphasize the importance of a pledge to life-long learning. With a strong commitment to providing an educational setting that will benefit children at all points of the ability spectrum, the School will encourage cooperation and a strong sense of community while fostering respect for racial, ethnic, and economic diversity.

All students inherit the exciting opportunity as well as the great responsibility of shaping our future. The Prairie Crossing Charter School believes that well-educated, socially aware and personally responsible children will create a better society for us all because they will continue to be contributing, caring citizens as adults. Empowered to be leaders well into the next century, Prairie Crossing students will subtly but profoundly come to appreciate a very special place, the natural landscape of their youth.

5. Goals, Objectives, Pupil Performance Standards:

We Imagine A School...

The Prairie Crossing Charter School's primary objective is excellence in education. Our approach to fostering and attaining excellence emphasizes hands-on learning, strong community, and a challenging, innovative and standards-based curriculum.

We imagine a school where...

Children and teachers are guided by the cycles of growth, rainfall, migration, and sunshine as they learn about the natural world...

Caring for and observing animals and learning about their life cycles is part of daily life and work...

Children learn firsthand where food comes from, not from a trip to the supermarket, but from the fields...

Sharing responsibility is learned by making and maintaining a garden, providing food for school families and for the needy...

Every child is known well by the teachers, and his or her gifts, talents and special needs are recognized and addressed...

The teachers have the freedom to shape day to day activities based on learning opportunities and teachable moments, as well as on a set of rigorous academic standards...

The school day and year are driven by curiosity, and a commitment to learning, rather than by mandates or the bell.

Prairie Crossing Charter School will be a school which promotes civic responsibility through deeds and activities, and which embraces the life sciences beginning with the early grades. In a small school these goals are attainable. Children will work together in small groups with their teachers, and will have the maximum opportunity for exploration of the natural environment.

The founders believe a few basic questions underlie all education. These include: *What is worth knowing? How may I best understand?* Our educational program is premised on empowering children to seek the answers to these questions. Young people acquire strong values, and wisdom, not through lecture and rote, but by experience, analysis and reflection.

In order to provide students with diverse opportunities for learning, this school will take full advantage of its physical surroundings as a living laboratory.

Scientific experimentation, measurement, data collection and analysis will be taught through authentic activities involving growth, nature observation, crops, and weather cycles.

A strong program in the arts and humanities will be closely aligned to the science curriculum. Children will learn, through study, collection of oral history, and through the group and individual reading of children's literature, about the life and work of pioneers, and about agricultural life on the plains. The arts, songs and handiwork of Native Americans, settlers and farmers will be part of the history curriculum.

The students will learn about conservation, and the meanings of zoological classifications will become real to them through observation of domesticated animals and species native to central Lake County.

The new school, together with the existing Wright Schoolhouse and Byron Colby Barn at Prairie Crossing are well situated for this kind of a learning community. Their flexible space carries a sense of regional history. But with contemporary technology, computers, and Internet access, the Prairie Crossing Charter School schoolhouse will possess information access equal to much larger and more elaborate facilities.

Pedagogic Principles

The pedagogic principles guiding the School are straightforward:

- The school espouses a constructivist approach to learning in which children find and make meaning from what they experience. The classroom stretches far beyond its walls, with field-based studies a year-round feature.
- Learning the value of community service will begin in the earliest grades. It is here that a foundation is established for altruism, social awareness and respect for diversity.
- A constructivist approach will encourage inquiry and the pursuit of answers, as well as the retention of concepts, skills and information learned through activity.
- Questioning and guided model-building will be major learning strategies. Under the umbrella of constructivism, problem-based learning poses questions, analyzes problems from multiple viewpoints, and supports critical thinking and decision-making for children.
- Learning in groups is an important principle of the School. It promotes the

growth of leadership, consideration for others, and independent planning and research by students. It provides a setting in which children must resolve differences and arrive at a common approach to a task or problem. However, the School will seek a balance between group and individual work and will recognize the variances in the learning paces and styles of students, valuing solitary discovery and reflection as critical to a child's development.

- Adults will model the behaviors we seek to encourage in students, including setting goals for personal achievement and for the School community as a whole. Respect will be reflected in every aspect of school life, from the ways in which we address each other to the ways in which learning plans are personalized to reflect the interests of individual children.

- Interdisciplinary units will be developed by teachers drawing upon the natural resources and human resources available to the School. A variety of activities will help students to learn and understand concepts and to gain skills. Customized assessments will accompany each unit or block of the curriculum to ensure student mastery.

- The school will encourage high standards for student responsibility and will

recognize and reward excellence; the School will require regular, structured homework and long term projects, and will provide support and training for students in study, organizational and research skills.

Academic Goals &

Assessments

This section will delineate measurable areas of academic, social and emotional growth. It will explain how this growth will be assessed. Areas for growth will include:

- Mathematics
- Science
- Language Arts
- Social Studies
- Communication
- Self-direction and Goal-setting
- Citizenship

Environmental Stewardship

Civic Responsibility

- Healthy Living & Physical Education

- Artistic Expression

- Multicultural & Second Language (Spanish) Learning

Academic Content & Skills

Students will apply core concepts from mathematics, science, language arts and social studies to authentic situations and applications. Writing and reading will be central to all activities and content areas.

Students will learn to:

- use mathematical skills and processes to express information and solve problems;
- use scientific knowledge and processes to ask and answer questions about the world;
- recognize how historical events can shape the present;
- apply geographic information and skills to the study of the United States and other cultures and civilizations, and to understanding the interdependence of environmental elements;
- use reading and writing skills to seek information and knowledge, and to express their ideas.

Academic achievement will be measured through:

- state and nationally normed standardized tests at appropriate grade levels;
- customized, criterion-referenced tests designed by or selected by teachers, administered frequently to check student mastery of material;

- group and individual student performances and projects;
- individual portfolios and essays to demonstrate growth and mastery.

Communication

Students will become effective communicators, using speech, writing, performance and technology.

Students will learn to:

- express ideas clearly;
- communicate with diverse audiences;
- communicate in a variety of ways;
- communicate for a variety of purposes.

Communications abilities will be measured through:

- IGAP writing assessment;
- Group and individual projects appropriate to grade level and age, including but not limited to: individual speeches and oral presentations, publication of a school newspaper or literary magazine, and participation in extramural events including Illinois Young Authors and district oratory events.

Self-Direction & Goal-Setting

The School will foster in its students a genuine sense of belonging, enthusiasm, and self-confidence. Students will be self-directed, engaged learners who:

- set and meet personal and academic goals;

- demonstrate responsible behaviors, self-control and leadership, including the ability to resolve conflicts;
- experiment, question, find alternate approaches to old and new problems.

Student self-direction and goal-setting will be measured through:

- identification of personal areas of interest and completion and sharing or presentation of projects based on those interests, including a graduation project in the School's upper cycle;
- students will rate themselves for effort, inventiveness, group skills and improvement upon completion of projects, thematic units, and year-end;
- teachers will record anecdotal and narrative progress notes to be shared with children and parents.

Citizenship

(A) Environmental Stewardship:

Students will be able to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of their immediate environment and the forces that impact it. They will be able to apply concepts relating to:

- native plant and animal life
- recycling
- energy conservation
- organic farming/gardening
- environmental pollution
- prairie, wetland and woodland

preservation/restoration

- interdependency within and between ecosystems

Environmental Stewardship will be measured through:

- student participation in year-round environmental activities, including recycling projects, prairie and wetland conservation projects, gardening; field observation and recognition of plant and animal species and habitats;
- student design of service projects which address the preservation, protection, or other improvement of school environment;
- student journaling, sketching, photographing and other chronicling of observation of natural life. Students will produce products which give evidence of awareness of natural cycles, changes and factors affecting the environment.

(B) Civic Responsibility:

Students will be active, contributing members of their local and global community. They will learn to:

- make judgments and decisions about community issues, giving full consideration to parties and interests involved;
- use speech and writing to explore and debate issues relating to community life and citizenship;
- seek information from a variety of sources and media;

- read and think critically, distinguish between fact and opinion;
- develop commitment to ideals of equity, social justice, and community;
- work successfully as a group member;
- understand and apply basic principles of negotiation and conflict resolution;
- demonstrate respect for and appreciation of individual differences;
- actively contribute to the well-being of the school community.

Social awareness will be measured through:

- active participation in an annual group project in environmental or community service; the annual project will include a planning process, goal-setting, impact statement, and report to the community. Students will conduct self-evaluation and peer evaluation of their participation;
- school-wide absence of serious conflict (fighting) and other behaviors requiring adult intervention/mediation;
- development of and adherence to a school code of conduct which emphasizes cooperation, nonviolence, fairness and mutual respect and responsibility

Healthy Living & Physical Education

Students will develop healthy habits, learn about and apply basic health concepts in their own lives:

- Nutrition

- Physical fitness and recreation
- Emotional / physical health (including avoidance of self destructive behaviors and substances).

Healthy habits and fitness will be measured through:

- Participation in daily physical exercise, team sports or other physical activity;
- Regular school-wide measurement using the Presidential Commission standards on youth fitness;
- Participation in role plays and small group discussions to provide peer support of healthy lifestyles and avoidance of negative behaviors (smoking, drug and alcohol abuse).

Artistic Expression

Students will gain exposure to, experience in, and ability to express themselves in a variety of art forms.

Students will learn to:

- recognize and appreciate various styles and genres of art, including literary, performing and visual arts;
- experience, enjoy and participate in various performing arts.

Learning in the arts will be measured by:

- student participation in artmaking activities related to curriculum, emphasizing development of observational skills;

- student participation in school performances, including the creation of plays related to curriculum, as well as to performance of classical and multicultural works;
- students will learn and perform songs, dances and poetry related to the curricular themes and topics;
- students will publish a newspaper or literary magazine;
- student work collected in portfolios;
- student products displayed in the school.

MultiCultural Learning

Prairie Crossing students will be exposed to and acquire an appreciation for the peoples of the United States and the world, through learning history, current events, the arts and a second language.

Students will be able to:

- maintain fluency in their first (home) language and become fluent in English if it is their second language;
- begin speaking and reading in a second language (Spanish);
- understand and appreciate the role of the native peoples of the prairie and Great Plains;
- understand and appreciate the differences between cultures as reflected in the arts and literature.

Student learning will be measured by:

- participation in group and individual projects and research that reflect learning about other cultures, including Native American and those of other countries;
- participation in student exchanges via the Internet, correspondence with children and schools in other lands;
- student reading and reporting on literature in diverse genres and national cultures;
- demonstration of beginning mastery of conversational Spanish as measured by age-appropriate means: dialogues and simple songs in early grades, criterion-referenced tests of vocabulary, and by eighth-grade competency examination for high school language credit.

Information Accessing & Processing

Prairie Crossing students will learn how to seek and find information using libraries, computers, and other tools.

Students will learn to:

- locate information;
- make inferences and interpret information from varied sources and media;
- collect, graph, and interpret data and simple statistics.

Student ability to access and process information will be measured through:

- participation in research across curriculum which require use of reference texts, etc.

- participation in group and individual field research which requires noting, charting, measurement, graphing, and analyzing findings (such as plant growth and animal outputs);
- participation in group discussions critically analyzing current world events, using newspapers, TV news coverage;
- performance on standardized tests which require processing of given information.

Problem Solving

Although problem-solving is a skill which will stretch across all content areas, it will be consciously embedded and structured in the learning process. All Prairie Crossing activities will pose problems seeking solutions.

Students will:

- gain an understanding of complexity, look at problems with empathy for others affected;
- build problem-solving models;
- consider and select a strategy to solve a given problem;
- use a variety of reasoning strategies;
- analyze information and arrive at conclusions.

Growth in problem-solving will be measured by:

- performance on state and nationally normed standardized tests;

- participation in group projects by class, targeting practical problems requiring research, analysis and consideration of alternative approaches.

6. Conversion Of Existing School:

Not Applicable

7. Educational Program:

Prairie Crossing Charter School is founded upon these core values:

- Strong sense of place and community;
- Healthy living;
- Environmental protection and enhancement;
- Commitment to lifelong learning and high achievement.

To instill these values and meet these goals, the school will:

- keep class sizes small (typical class size 20 students);
- keep the school size small (maximum 330);
- provide high levels of experience-based learning;
- use the community and outdoor environment as classroom;

- promote group learning as well as individual achievement.

Core academic subjects will be taught through highly integrated thematic units, and will include practical experience and visual or performing arts components. Units will be oriented to seasonal and other cyclical topics, and will include in every topic opportunities for group and individual work and pursuit of individual questions.

Students will examine the ecology and history of the land and people of the area, learn about animals and plants through personal observation and experience, and will use the community's resources as a living laboratory. The Prairie Crossing gardens, stable, prairie and wetland preserves will foster extensive field experiences even for the youngest children. The Liberty Prairie Reserve and Lake County Forest Preserves, as well as area public institutions and civic organizations will provide additional settings for exploration.

The school will be equipped with current information technologies, including computers with Internet access. Technology will be used to communicate with students in other schools, especially those who share an interest in the environment and earth studies. In addition, the school will acquire video technology to

enable students to film, narrate, and edit documentaries of their projects, experiments, and performances.

The school will be organized as a choice between a series of multi-age or "looped" classrooms, partly for reasons of pedagogic philosophy and partly for reasons of economy. A single teacher, at times assisted by parent volunteers or paid teaching assistants, may teach two grades (above kindergarten) in a multi-age class or the same class of children for two years in a "looped" class.

Multi-age classrooms will provide a setting in which:

- older children will help younger children;
- teachers will have to look closely at each child's level and group children according to accomplishment rather than chronological age;
- children will receive a greater challenge, working to higher expectations, encouraging each other.

Looped classrooms will provide a setting in which:

- children will be provided with a greater sense of belonging and continuity;
- teachers will better understand each individual child;
- teachers will be able to expand their curricular skills across two grades;

- the School will have teachers experienced in teaching two grades.

The choice between looped or multi-age approach to education will be discussed with each parent upon admission. Parental choice will be accommodated to the greatest extent possible in a school of Prairie Crossing's size. Functionally, class size will be maintained near the goal of not more than 20 per class by a typical total of 60 students (or a multiple thereof) across adjacent grades. For example, grades 1 and 2 will have a target count of 60 total students. This would accommodate two looped classes (one class of 20 first graders and one class of 20 second graders) and one multi-age class (of 20 first and second graders combined). Proceeding in this manner provides *choice within the charter school itself*, just as the Prairie Crossing Charter School provides choice within the local districts.

Parental Involvement In Educational Program

The parental role in achieving the Prairie Crossing vision is critical. Parents will have a significant role in the day-to-day instructional program, contributing special talents and skills. They will support the teachers and augment the program. They will provide coaching, tutoring, and management assistance, including help with the maintenance of the physical plant.

Parents have collaborated in the crafting of this educational vision and plan, and will play a key role in the interviewing and hiring of teaching staff. Parents will collaborate with the teachers in the creation of the academic and other school goals.

Parents of Prairie Crossing students are envisioned to pledge a fixed number of hours per year to school activities (with accommodations made for low income or otherwise challenged families). In addition, frequent two-way communication between school and home will be a hallmark of the School--whether to call attention to student problems or to student progress.

Parents will be a crucial element in the success of the school's field experience plan. In order to work safely in the wetland environment, for example, an ample number of adults must be present. Ventures into the workplaces of adults, and into cities and towns to take advantage of cultural and other resources, would not be possible without the active planning and participation by parents. Family education nights, a school newsletter, carpooling, and extramural and sports activities will require active family support.

**The Environmental Focus:
“Earth Literacy”**

The Prairie Crossing Charter School will employ environmental science as its unifying theme. Lessons will be based upon sound scientific principles and the best educational practices of hands-on learning. The school year will be divided into thematic or topic units in which the entire school will participate. The units will be planned in detail by the teaching staff in consultation with parents. Throughout these units, elements of all core content areas will be taught. Each unit will include internal assessments to measure student learning, including tests, student presentations or performances, and students’ self-assessments.

In creating and implementing its environmental sciences focus, Prairie Crossing educators will be guided by the Draft Voluntary National Standards for Environmental Education, so as to ensure that instruction is credible, reliable, objective and factually based. Focal areas of study will include conservation, plant and animal life, stewardship and civic responsibility, interdependence and natural balance, pollution, health and fitness. The School will strive to produce students and families who are *earth-literate*.

Prairie Crossing students will participate in school-wide celebrations of the four seasons, study changes in climate and weather, work in the community gardens, and take trips to observe other environmental and cultural resources. Their celebrations, trips, and projects will embody ample writing and reading, computational and creative arts activities.

Older students will conduct an ongoing environmental inventory and/or geologic survey of the immediate region surrounding the school, including soil, rock, and geologic features, animal homes and other animal evidence, plants, the built environment, utilities, historic artifacts and markers, safety hazards, and more. Students will learn the history of the local community through research including interviewing (oral histories) and videography.

Four unique features of Prairie Crossing Charter School make these plans both feasible and manageable: 1) the small size of classes and groups; 2) the flexibility of the School’s schedule; 3) the extraordinary level of parent assistance, and finally, 4) outstanding access to the natural surroundings.

To further describe the educational program, the following have been included

within the appendix:

- **Sample Environmental Lessons / Activities**
- **Educational Program: A Day In The Life of Prairie Crossing Charter School**
- **Academic Overview By Grade Levels**

School Year / Days / Hours

The Prairie Crossing Charter School calendar is as follows for the 99 / 00 school year:

School Opens	8/23/99
Labor Day Observance	9/6/99
Columbus Day Observance	10/11/99
Thanksgiving	11/25, 26/99
Holiday Break Begins	12/23/99
School Resumes	1/4/00
MLK Jr. B-Day Observance	1/17/00
Lincoln's B-day Observance	2/11/00
Spring Break Begins	4/3/00
School Resumes	4/10/00
Earth Day Observance	4/26/00
Memorial Day Observance	4/29/00
School Closes	6/14/00

The calendar above results in 192 days of instruction for the academic year. Academic calendars in future years will range from 185 to 195 days of instruction. Prairie Crossing

reserves the right to modify the academic calendar, including starting and ending dates, to accommodate emergencies and circumstances beyond its control with the advance consent of the charter authority, so long as a minimum 185 day academic year is maintained.

The school will be open from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. each day. The typical instructional day will begin at 8:15 a.m. and end at 3:45 p.m., resulting in a typical 7.5 hour day. Morning kindergarten sessions will begin at 8:00 a.m. and end at 12:15 p.m.. Afternoon kindergarten sessions will begin at 12:30 p.m. and end at 4:45 p.m..

8. Assessment, Evaluation & Corrective Action

The relatively high degree of freedom enjoyed by charter schools is balanced by considerable accountability. Prairie Crossing teachers will be free of certain regulations and constraint; however, they will hold themselves to high performance standards. The School community, its Board of Directors, and the chartering authority will closely monitor student performance and achievement. The School will provide annual reports to the community and will

hold public events (student performances) at which the community will have an opportunity to see and hear what and how the School is doing.

Specific assessments in the core content areas are delineated in the section entitled Learning Goals and Assessments. For each content area, internal assessment activities, including unit tests, will be selected by teachers. Since the School will be largely teacher-directed, it would be premature to designate in this proposal specific assessment events for each grade level, just as it would be premature to create the daily or weekly lesson plans in the absence of the actual teachers who will implement them. Their creative insights and energies will be integral to the process.

Therefore, this proposal confines its assessment prescriptions to general, measurable indicators of student learning which will be applicable for all grade levels across the school. In addition, all students above grade 1 will sit for IGAPs at appropriate grade levels and for nationally normed standardized tests as used by the local districts. Prairie Crossing Charter School fully expects the community to hold it to a high standard, and certainly to a standard equal to that of the local districts.

Prairie Crossing will receive ongoing technical review and assistance with self-evaluation by the Small Schools Workshop of the University of Illinois at Chicago. This external review will help to identify areas for improvement and to plan interventions if needed. The Small Schools Workshop provides assistance with faculty team-building, long range planning and curriculum design.

9. Financial Plan:

To be a success, the Prairie Crossing Charter School must both promote academic excellence in a special setting and have its operation based on sound fiscal policies. Accordingly, the financial plan for the school has been carefully drafted to both achieve educational goals and place it on a solid financial footing. As set forth in the financial plan, Prairie Crossing will grow at a prudent pace while minimizing class size in accordance with budgetary constraints. At the same time, Prairie Crossing Charter School will accumulate capital reserves reflective of the underlying financial viability of the endeavor. In keeping with the mission of Prairie Crossing, these reserves may be utilized as a source of investment income, saved for unforeseen circumstances, dedicated to facility use or appropriated for educational enhancements.

It is imperative to note that although the financial plan has been carefully crafted and represents the best efforts of the Prairie Crossing Charter School planning committee to date, it is by no means a static document. Revisions over the course of charter review and annually through the duration of the charters are expected, and welcomed.

Within this cooperative framework for advancing the education of our children through the unique opportunity the Prairie Crossing Charter School represents, the following budgetary highlights are offered for review.

Financial Plan Emphases

The financial plan is outlined in spreadsheet form in the appendix. The financial plan strives to be:

Revenue Neutral

The establishment of Prairie Crossing will not have a detrimental effect on local taxpayers. To the contrary, the use of facilities underwritten by private enterprise, the commitment to limit per-capita tuition transfer revenue to parity with local districts and the opportunity to demonstrate more efficient operations permitted by the Charter Schools Law all bode well for local district residents. The intent of the General Assembly as set forth in the Charter Schools

Law is that funding “shall neither be a financial incentive nor a financial disincentive to the establishment of a charter school”. The establishment of Prairie Crossing on the basis of parity with local district per capita tuition, combined with contractual adjustments for special needs costs, insures this goal will be met.

This goal will be met despite the very real challenges faced by the charter school which could justify an increase in per capita tuition transfers, at least in the short term, to a level above 100%. Prairie Crossing Charter School will be a new, small, high quality public school in a contemporary financial environment where such schools are exceedingly rare. The typical suburban public school is well established, with significant assets. Prairie Crossing, literally, needs everything a school needs. The typical suburban school trades on economies of scale while, at the same time, trying to personalize instruction. Prairie Crossing has no economies of scale, and will not pursue such economies at the expense of personal attention to our students. The typical suburban school operates in an environment where student achievement and parental choice is constantly balanced against resource constraints. As a school of choice, Prairie Crossing will only exist if student achievement meets parental expectations, irrespective of resource constraints.

For the preceding reasons, Prairie Crossing Charter School could legitimately request an increase in the per capita tuition funding over the 100% level as permitted by law. The founders of Prairie Crossing Charter School are not doing so as a matter of public policy. We recognize the responsibility of operating within the public trust and the significant opportunities the Charter Schools Law provides to infuse public education with a new spirit of innovation and efficiency. The same public funds will be sought to educate a child at Prairie Crossing that would be allocated to that same child at a local district school.

Over the long term, the Prairie Crossing Charter School will alleviate local district revenue requirements by reducing facility and transportation costs. In districts with burgeoning enrollments and, in one case, severely constricted bonding authority, leveraging of private capital is a dramatic opportunity. The physical assets within the Prairie Crossing community, underwritten by private enterprise, now stand ready to be utilized by a public endeavor. While exact numbers regarding district savings through the use of these assets are impossible to calculate, the savings are of considerable magnitude, equal to what would otherwise be tax-payer funded facilities for up to 330 students. Transportation savings are of similar import.

By limiting the size of our school, limiting per capita tuition to parity with local districts, leveraging facilities provided by private enterprise and reducing the growing transportation burden on the local districts, the Prairie Crossing Charter School has made a serious effort to structure its operation so it will not perceptibly alter Woodland and Fremont's fiscal positions. The total projected impact of our operation on local district annual budgets ranges from tenths of one percent to not more than four percent over the term of the charter.

Conservative

To address the myriad variables associated with starting a new school, the Prairie Crossing financial plan is built upon a stable foundation. The Prairie Crossing financial plan is purposefully conservative, reflective in many cases of worst practicable case scenarios.

As evidence of the Prairie Crossing Charter School founders' concern that the school rest on a solid financial footing, the financial plan exceeds the reporting requirements of the enabling legislation by a wide margin. Rather than simply outlining the financial program of the first five year charter, the financial plan includes projections over a 10 year planning horizon. Careful to create a school which may

operate well into the future, the financial plan is conservative at every opportunity.

This underlying conservative nature is perhaps most evident in the revenue projections, which are solely reliant on a cautious projection of per capita tuition based funds and one identified grant source. The projections are based on an 80% / 20% mix of students from the Woodland and Fremont districts respectively, which is reflective of the actual percentage of district students in the combined, dual district boundaries. Importantly, planning for four out of five students to attend Prairie Crossing from the Woodland district affirms the charter school will have adequate resources given the typical 50% disparity in per capita expenditures between the (reduced expenditures) of the Woodland district in comparison to the Fremont district. Such a focus was undertaken to assure that the School would be solvent even in the most dire situations, so long as pragmatic student population targets are met.

As a practical matter, revenue sources for the Prairie Crossing Charter School will be much more diverse. Fundraising efforts ranging from bake sales to corporate alliances will assuredly add to the revenue stream. Local, state and federal grants will be aggressively pursued when they align with the School's mission and will be used

to supplement more traditional funding. An existing grant program created expressly for the purpose of underwriting charter school startup costs will be applied for immediately following charter certification. Categorical revenue will be transferred to the School along with the students such funds are designated for. Inter-governmental revenue and profit centers within or associated with Prairie Crossing Charter School (such as a federally funded pre-school or a for profit summer program) will place the school in a stronger financial position than the initial projections indicate.

The actual operations of the school should also create opportunities for strengthening the fiscal position of the Prairie Crossing Charter School. Investment income resulting from (again, conservatively) projected capital reserves is not budgeted as a revenue source, though indeed such revenue enhancements will be a reality. The value of parental volunteer work is not incorporated directly into the bottom line, even though such work is envisioned to be a very real asset of Prairie Crossing. Debt service is not diminished over the term of the first charter in the spreadsheet, even though capital reserves may mitigate the amount of debt required. In fact, the amount of debt required is over-estimated as one fourth of annual expenditures, while in reality the debt would be secured as needed.

Lease payments for facilities have been conservatively projected over the duration of the financial plan. While such lease payments have not yet been fixed for the new school (as permitted by statute) the central point remains valid; the Prairie Crossing Charter School financial plan is a conservative document. Allowing for the necessary flexibility inherent in such a start-up operation, and combining realistic expenditure projections managed as each successive year's budget unfolds with almost pessimistic revenue forecasts will result in a charter school with the financial wherewithal to achieve its educational goals.

Fund transfers in accordance with state statute will be accomplished three times annually. The first payment to the charter school will follow within 30 days of receipt of Prairie Crossing's first semester enrollment report. This report will reflect enrollment at the School on its tenth day of the first semester, which will be multiplied by the last reported per-capita tuition or projected per-capita expenditures of the originating district for the fiscal year, whichever is greater, to determine the first payment. The second payment to the charter school will follow within 30 days of receipt of Prairie Crossing's second semester enrollment report. This report will reflect enrollment at the School on its tenth day of the second semester, which will be

multiplied by the last reported per-capita tuition or projected per-capita expenditures of the originating district for the fiscal year, whichever is greater, to determine the second payment.

The third fund transfer will follow within 30 days of the close of the charter school / local district fiscal year. This transfer will reflect adjustments to preceding fiscal year receipts of the charter school. These adjustments may include payment for special needs services (see Section 2), adjustment of charter school revenue to reflect average daily attendance (as opposed to charter school enrollment reported on the tenth day of the first and second semester) and / or a supplemental payment to, or credit from, the charter school based on the actual total expenditures of the preceding fiscal year by the originating districts, divided by the average daily attendance of non-charter schools within the district.

All payments and credits will include categorical funds as required by law. Payment for contractual services may deviate from the preceding fund transfer schedule, by mutual agreement of Prairie Crossing and the local district.

Prairie Crossing Charter School will have a Financial Statement Audit and Financial and Administrative Procedures Controls

Review performed annually at its expense by an outside independent auditor retained by Prairie Crossing and reasonably acceptable to the charter authority. These audits shall be made available to the charter authority upon completion.

10. Governance & Operation:

Charter schools are operated as nonprofit corporations under state law. A copy of the Articles of Incorporation for the Prairie Commons Charter School, which have been filed with the Illinois Secretary of State, and Bylaws for the School have been drafted (see appendix). The corporation currently has three directors, Miriam J. Frank, Victoria Post Ranney, and Craig Malin. After the grant of the School's charter, the Board of Directors will be increased to five members, and will be empowered to execute the terms of the charter, hire personnel, and otherwise oversee preparations for opening in 1999.

As the school is opened, the Board will be expanded to seven with four members of the prior Board staying on for the remaining term of the charter, two Board members being elected by parents of enrolled students, and one at-large member being appointed

by the Board. Terms will be staggered to ensure a balance of continuity and fresh perspective. The Prairie Crossing Charter School Advisory Board, comprised of national, regional and local education experts and community leaders has been formed and will continue to act as a resource to the Board of Directors.

The School envisions that its teachers, in partnership with parents, will be largely responsible for developing the content and direction for the school within the parameters of the curriculum outlined in this proposal. The School's teachers will be strongly encouraged to work as a team and time during the school day will be provided for planning and team meetings. Master teachers will assist with coordination of curriculum, facilitation of professional dialogue on instruction delivery, organization and training of parent volunteers and acting as liaisons to the community.

Parents will be crucial to the School's operations. Upon application to the school, each family will be asked to volunteer a specific amount of time per semester to school activities. A variety of volunteer opportunities will be developed, to provide means by which the educational process will genuinely benefit from the participation of the parent-partners. Such opportunities will

include, but not be limited to, car-pooling, assistance in the classroom, fund-raising, tutoring work with special needs children, office support, guest art, language or business presentations, and the like.

Finally, the support of the larger community will be sought to enhance the educational opportunities at the school. A number of Prairie Crossing residents who will not have children at the school have already provided assistance; moreover, corporate sponsorship and partnerships with local and area educational institutions for research, evaluations and assistance are being explored.

11. Employee Relations:

Staff will be employees of the non-profit corporation created expressly for the purpose of operating the school. As such, they will be employed pursuant to policies which will be adopted by the Prairie Crossing Charter School Board of Directors. These policies will conform to all applicable laws and, overall, be designed to create and maintain a collegial, child-centered environment at the school. For example, school support responsibilities will be shared by the entire staff, with stipends for particular activities (custodianship, transportation, athletic and arts coaching, etc.) to be mutually determined. As another example of the collegial approach, the typical demarcation

between administration and teaching staff will be purposely blurred. The school administrator will have classroom responsibilities. Teaching staff, in return, will share in the responsibilities of setting direction and undertaking activities typically reserved for administration.

Personnel policies will thus mirror the integrated approach to curriculum at the school. Part of this approach is philosophically based, part financially based. It is important for the students of the school to witness the flexible, team-based approach to work that will serve as a guide to their successful academic and professional lives well into the future. On the financial side, small schools require considerable staff flexibility to achieve their goals in a milieu that cannot support the growing specialization of academia. Moreover, staff salaries are in part premised on trading a somewhat impersonalized (if better compensated) work place for a setting which facilitates personal and professional self actualization.

At Prairie Crossing, planning is a team effort, where each member contributes. As the founders envision it, our faculty will be small enough that its members can gather face to face in a single classroom--where there is no anonymity or exclusion, and where each voice can be heard.

In the proposed school, teachers will set the day-to-day agenda, guided by the school's academic standards and objectives facilitated by the master teachers. They will work together to shape units which make sense in the year cycle, which address student interests, and which integrate the arts, literature, history and mathematics. Teachers in our school will have a good deal of power over their own teaching. They will make decisions as a team about how best to pull together the diverse strands of curriculum into a reasonably seamless fabric.

Prairie Crossing teachers will also help each other to be the best that they can be, through regularly scheduled peer coaching. They will observe each other's work and question it, make suggestions for its improvement, and learn from one another. The financial plan includes funds for two "master teachers" to support the general teaching staff through regularly scheduled professional development opportunities including peer observation. In a charter school, the flexibility of time makes this an attainable and reasonable goal.

Funds are reserved in the budget to improve teacher expertise through participation in professional meetings and courses, including those educational organizations which specialize in environmental science and experiential instruction.

The recruitment of staff will begin as soon as practicable, with the recruitment of the school administrator underway as of the date of this proposal. The primary goal of the recruitment process will be to assemble a diverse and talented team to operate the school and achieve the mission of the charter school, i.e. environmental integration, constructivist approach, experiential learning, second language and looping / multi-age grouping.

As provided by the Charter Schools Law, teachers may or may not be certified. They may or may not form a collective bargaining unit. They may or may not come from local districts (Prairie Crossing would be amenable to hosting such teachers on a rotating basis or potentially hiring them on a permanent basis). The establishment of the charter does not seek to take sides on the certification or collective bargaining debate. The establishment of the charter solely seeks to create an exemplary school. Thus the criterion against which new hires will be judged is; are they exemplary educators?

12. Legal Liability &

Insurance Coverage:

The Prairie Crossing Charter School will operate as a distinct legal entity pursuant to the Charter School Law and terms of its charter. As such, Prairie Crossing Charter

School will be solely liable for its own actions and omissions and intends to enter into reciprocal indemnification agreements with all applicable parties. With regard to insurance coverage, Prairie Crossing Charter School is amenable to either being named as an additional insured entity upon a local district's insurance policies or is prepared to secure its own coverage following issuance of a competitive Request For Proposals. Should the charter school be added to a local district policy, Prairie Crossing would reimburse the district as may be mutually agreed in the future. Should the charter school secure independent coverage, Prairie Crossing shall endeavor to secure coverage equivalent to other district contractors.

13. Transportation Plan:

The Prairie Crossing Charter School transportation plan is closely aligned with the school's size, environmental philosophy, dual district boundaries and finances. Door to door bus service for all students will not be offered, since the Charter Schools Law exempts Prairie Crossing from this requirement except for special needs students.

Prairie Crossing Charter School is situated at the far corner of each district. Its students may come from anywhere in a 70 square mile area. It simply cannot commit to door

to door bus service. The school founders believe and hope that families who value this school will find their way to its door. There is a demonstrated and successful history of such a transportation strategy at work in a host of private and magnet schools.

However, being committed to welcoming a diverse array of students from throughout the districts, Prairie Crossing Charter School will coordinate a car pool program designed to address the needs of families beyond walking or biking distance (which is greater than usual given a regional network of trails). Parents may receive credits against their volunteer commitment for participating in the car pool program. Moreover, a sum has been budgeted to underwrite a transportation stipend to pay staff or associates of the charter school to assist in the rare case in which a distant family can not be matched with car pooling resources. This subsidization of transportation, should it be necessary, shall be offered with priority granted to at-risk and low income children. Any incoming student with an Individual Education Plan (IEP) specifying a transportation need will have that need fulfilled.

Should recruitment indicate the lack of door to door bus service is negatively affecting the school's commitment to geographic,

economic, ethnic and ability diversity, the Prairie Crossing Charter School Board of Directors reserves the right to amend the transportation plan with the advance consent of the charter authority. Such amendment may include contractual use of local district transportation infrastructure or contracting with another transportation provider.

14. Effective Date & Term:

The Prairie Crossing Charter School respectfully requests certification of this charter proposal as soon as practicable with a five year term effective starting with the fall semester of 1999 and ending with the spring semester of 2004.

15. Other Information:

Previous Action

Substantially similar charter proposals to the preceding were submitted to Woodland, District #50 and Fremont, District #79 on May 14, 1997 and June 4, 1997 respectively under the heading of Prairie Commons Charter School. Both districts denied the 1997 charter proposals and provided reports of their denial to the Illinois State Board of Education.

The educational program of the 1997 proposals was well received by all review entities and is not changed substantively in this proposal. Changes to this proposal from the 1997 proposals are primarily logistical or clarifications resulting from, or empowered by, amendments to the Charter Schools Law in the interim.

The principal changes incorporated within this proposal include potentially starting the school in new facilities rather than constructing expanded facilities over time (with a corresponding increase in school size at the onset) and the addition of looped classes as a choice within the charter school. The form of the proposal is also changed from the two 1997 submittals in that the same proposal is being delivered to the local districts for review concurrently. By necessity, Prairie Commons Charter School had to present the 1997 proposals in series to the two local districts given their substantial differences in size and per capita expenditures. Empowered by recent Charter School Law amendments, this proposal is crafted to be effective under any foreseeable charter review and approval scenario.

Prairie Commons Charter School appealed the 1997 local district denials to the State Board pursuant to the Charter Schools Law as originally enacted. A record of these

proceedings, and other information associated with Prairie Commons (or Crossing) Charter School, is available upon request.

Amendment

This proposal may be amended prior to certification with the mutual consent of the Prairie Crossing Charter School, and charter authority. Certified charter(s) following from this proposal may be amended only by consent of Prairie Crossing Charter School and the charter authority and, in the case of material amendments, only after submission of such amendments to, and approval by, the Illinois State Board of Education in accordance with the Charter Schools Law.

Acknowledgments

The Prairie Crossing Charter School Founders thank the following individuals and entities:

The Prairie Crossing Charter School Advisory Board, for their advice and support, with particular appreciation to Patricia Graham, President of the Spencer Foundation and former Dean of the Harvard Graduate School of Education, for coming to Prairie Crossing to meet with us and speak to invited guests.

Susan Klonsky and other Small Schools Workshop staff for their assistance in crafting the educational program of the school.

The law offices of Jenner & Block for their legal counsel.

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The Illinois Facilities Fund, for their assistance in financial planning.

Staff of the Illinois State Board of Education, for their technical assistance.

The Civic Committee of the Commercial Club of Chicago and particularly John Ayers and Katie Kelley at Leadership for Quality Education, for advice and timely information.

The many Illinois educators and administrators, most notably Phil and Vicki Hunsberger, who have generously shared their expertise and enthusiasm for quality public education.

Roland Barth, Founding Director of the Principals' Center at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, and author of Improving Schools From Within, for meeting with us at Prairie Crossing and

following up with wise counsel and introductions to others.

The Liberty Prairie Foundation, for funding consulting work over the course of charter planning.

Jennifer Jermasek-John, Marion Paulette and Ellen Ewing, who assisted with the original Prairie Commons effort.

Most of all, we would like to thank our families. The children who have inspired us and our spouses who have supported us through two years of unending meetings, late night work sessions and often discouraging public trials deserve much of the credit for this proposal, and the extraordinary school it will give rise to.

Respectfully

Submitted,

Prairie Crossing
Charter School Founders

Evelyn Cole

Miriam Frank

Craig Malin

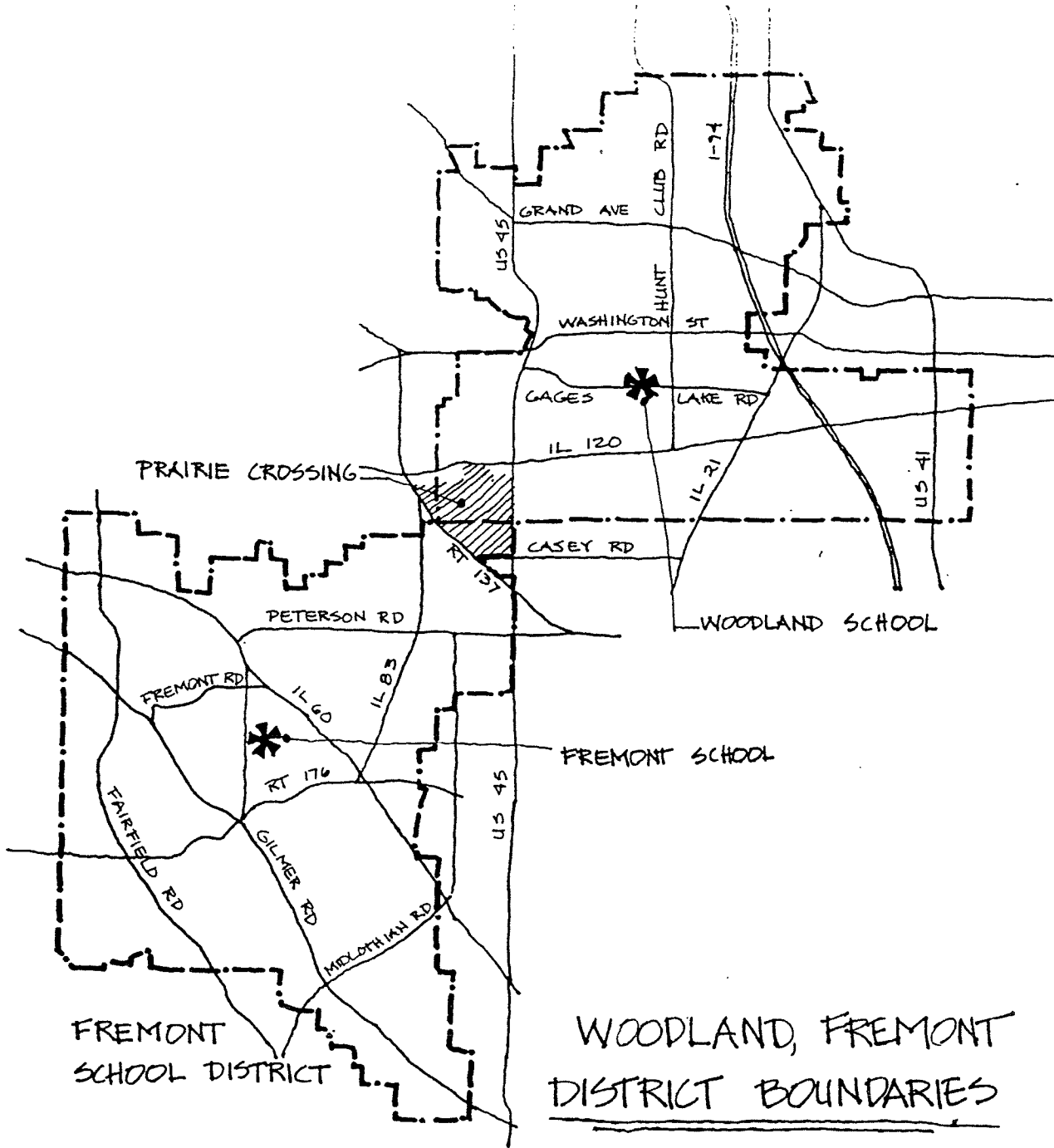
Victoria Ranney

Ellen Winick

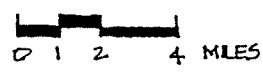


- District Boundaries Map
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- About Prairie Crossing
 - "Reinventing Suburbia"
 - Landscape Architecture - 8/95
 - "Little School on the Prairie"
 - Daily Herald - 11/4/96
 - "A Nature Preserve With Houses In It"
 - Chicago Tribune - 1/10/98
 - Pictures

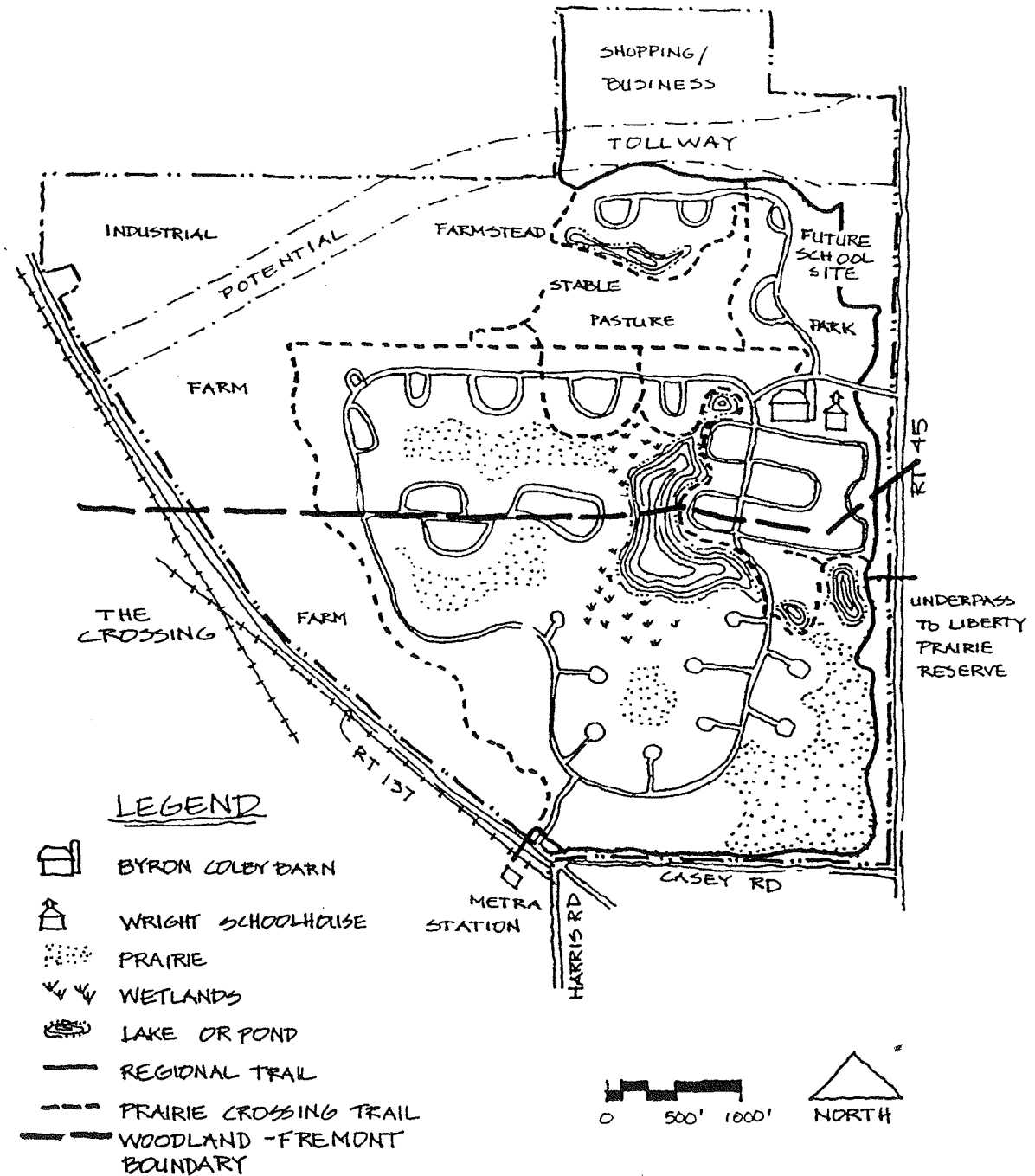
WOODLAND SCHOOL DISTRICT

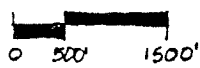
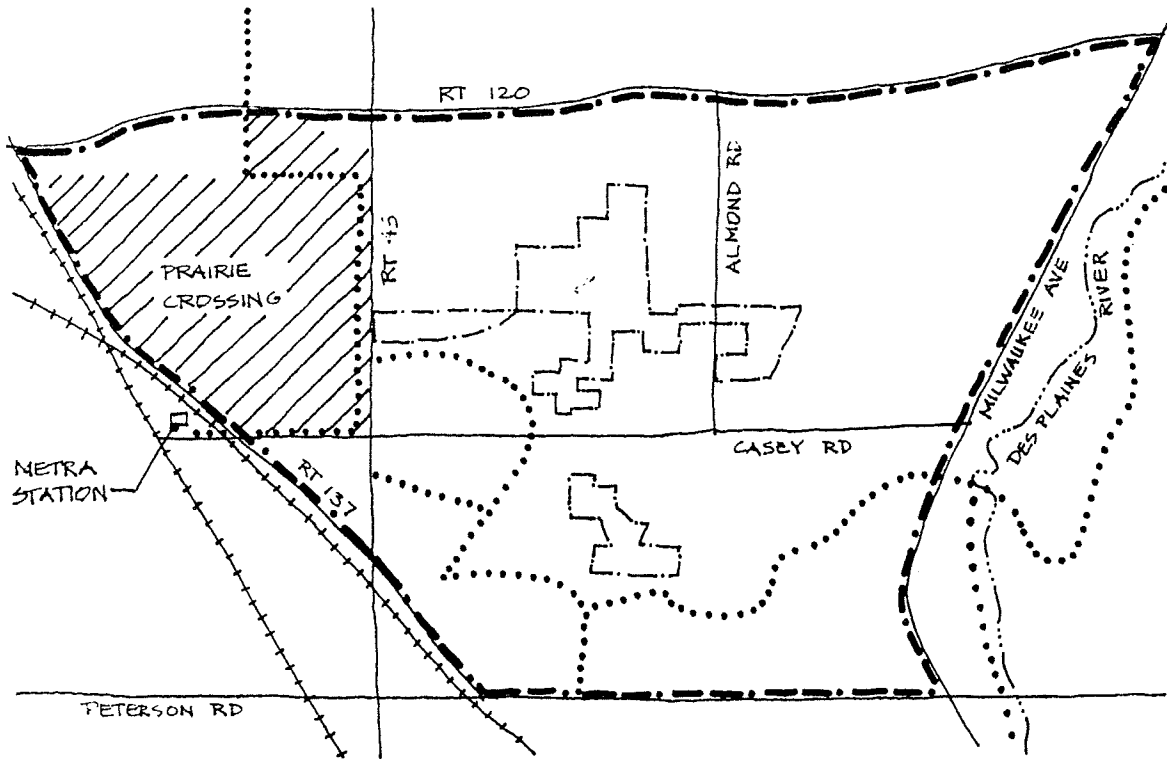


WOODLAND, FREMONT DISTRICT BOUNDARIES



PRAIRIE CROSSING





- — — — — LIBERTY PRAIRIE RESERVE BOUNDARY
- . - . - . DEDICATED ILLINOIS NATURE PRESERVES
- PROPOSED TRAIL SYSTEM

LIBERTY PRAIRIE RESERVE

Educational Program:
A Day In The Life Of Prairie
Crossing Charter School

In order to describe the scope and order of learning activities at Prairie Crossing, we would like to walk you through an imaginary school day. Mindful that this day takes place in the school's second year of activity, let us imagine ourselves in the month of March.

The second week in March is cloudy and windy, but there is much to see and to prepare for the coming of spring on a farm. Activity is beginning to pick up. The whole school studies the life cycle of trees. Each morning, we check on "adopted" trees (each pair of students has its tree to observe) for signs of the rising of sap. Older and taller children measure and chart the bud development. Younger (shorter) children watch for changes in the color or texture of bark (When does moss turn green?).

A morning assembly brings all the students together in the gym to prepare for the day's work. Announcements by adults are followed by announcements from kids about meetings of special-interest clubs (chess, anyone?) Students and teachers go over plans for the day and head for their classrooms.

Today, kindergarten kids are learning about animal paws and tracks, making designs and patterns with homemade rubber stamps, and working on signing their names to their creations. First and second-graders are busy reading, selecting favorite vegetables from a seed catalogue and writing letters to order them. They have to work out the arithmetic to know how many of how much they need to order, and what it will cost (Don't forget shipping and handling, kids!). The third and fourth-graders are reading two novels together in cross-age groups--classics of children's literature--which are accompanied by lengthy discussions, drawings and other interpretive work. Half the class is working on one novel and half on the other; they will give a dramatic presentation to their peers at week's end.

The oldest children in the school are working today on a list of rules for managing their part of the children's garden, a menu of selected vegetables on which they are seeking consensus, and a model for a drip irrigation system that would save water and take care of their plantings.

In Prairie Crossing proper, there are not yet mature sugar maples for tapping, so the school makes arrangements for a field trip to a Forest Preserve where trees will be tapped and sap boiled down for syrup. This will be

the first all-day outdoor outing of early spring, and can be a family education event. Leading up to the trip, stories and poetry about maple sugar and the production process will be read. Children will think about questions they may want to ask the farmer. How do you think people discovered the sweet taste of the sap? How do they get the sap out of the tree? Children will draw and paint and write their recollections of what they observed and tasted. Children's literature about trees, farm life and prairie pioneers will be explored at the appropriate age levels.

Embedded mathematics and ecologic questions may lead to follow-up activities: How long will it take for the maples at Prairie Crossing to be old enough to make maple syrup? How could we find out? How old will you be when that happens? How much sap makes how much syrup? We can make a bucket chart or other ways of graphically illustrating the ratio of sap to syrup...or the relationship between the lifespan of humans to maples--i.e., the height of a child growing up per year to the height and growth of a tree.

At the same time that preparations for the maple sugaring trip are underway, classroom planting has begun. All the classes discuss and select the plants they wish to grow. Older students must learn the optimal

growing conditions and determine when the seed must be sown. Worm boxes are built and maintained to create nutritious soil for the future seedlings. The children collect newspapers to make recycled seedling pots in which to start seed.

Children scout the school campus for incipient signs of spring. These include animal pregnancies and births, return of migrating birds, emergence of hibernating mammals (trail walks take children to search for tracks and habitats).

Incorporated in all of these activities are *intensely teachable moments*, in which the cycles of water, migration, birth and growth are clearly illustrated. Their discovery is endlessly repeated and renewed. Capturing that wonder in the visual and performing arts is a big part of school life.

In the cold months, working on a school play about a tropical rainforest, such as "The Great Kapok Tree" may keep us busy and warm. The fruits of our labors will be self-published in our literary annual and our newspaper. All of these elements and experiences come together to forge a sense of community that is grounded in shared wonder and the excitement and pleasure of learning and contributing to the community.

OpYear	SYear	Class#	Students	Grades	Paid FTE	ChildPerFTE	Revenue	Expend	Annual Reserve	Cumulative Reserve	Facilities Cost	Base Tuition
1	99-00	4k, 9	240	K-6	23.5	10.2	1,541,640	1,503,719	37,921	37,921	212,000	6111
2	00-01	3k, 13	300	K-7	30	10.0	1,903,200	1,854,151	49,049	86,969	334,000	6294
3	01-02	2k, 15	330	K-8	33	10.0	2,139,390	1,996,360	143,030	229,999	340,350	6483
4	02-03	2k, 16	330	K-8	33	10.0	2,203,410	2,068,441	134,969	364,969	345,734	6677
5	03-04	2k, 15	330	K-8	32	10.3	2,269,410	2,107,598	161,812	526,781	349,151	6877
<i>term of first charter</i>												
6	04-05	2k, 16	330	K-8	31	10.6	2,337,720	2,160,013	177,707	704,488	352,602	7084
7	05-06	2k, 15	330	K-8	30	11.0	2,407,680	2,220,349	187,331	891,818	363,060	7296
8	06-07	2k, 16	330	K-8	30	11.0	2,479,950	2,287,070	192,880	1,084,699	361,651	7515
9	07-08	2k, 15	330	K-8	30	11.0	2,554,530	2,366,161	188,369	1,273,068	370,278	7741
10	08-09	4k, 14	330	K-8	31	10.6	2,631,090	2,462,584	168,506	1,441,574	373,940	7973
							22,468,020	21,026,446		totals	3,402,766	

Start Up Costs	Typical Operational Expenditure Projection	Anticipated Grants	Op Year	Volunteer Value@ \$8 / hr. 80 hrs. / year
Admin Equip 7,500	Operating Debt 28,195		1	153,600
Chairs / Desks 18,000	Equip Maint 5,000	75,000	2	192,000
Tables / Shelves 4,000	Site Maint 10,000		3	211,200
Athletic Equip 3,000	Utilities 30,000	15,000	4	211,200
Computers 50,000	Equip Rental 5,000	0	5	211,200
AV 5,000	Printing / Copying 17,500	0	6	211,200
Food Service 2,500	Postage 7,500	0	7	211,200
Classroom Supplies 25,000	Staff Development 25,000	0	8	211,200
Education Material 25,000	Insurance 50,000	0	9	211,200
Custodial Supplies 2,500	Misc Supplies 15,000	0	10	211,200
total 142,500	Legal 12,500	0		
per student 594	Finance / Audit 12,500	0		
	Substitute / Temp 12,500			
	Field Trips 12,500			
	Transportation 7,500	90,000	totals	2,035,200
Offset Costs - fees paid by parent	Contingency 32,960			3,052,800
180 days lunch per student - \$315	total 283,654			
Per Semester Materials per Student - \$150	per student 1,182			

Scenario "A" Financial Plan

Op Year	School Year	Classes - Teachers - TAs	New Hires	Operational (Non-Personnel)	T & A & S & TA	Staff Equip	Start Up & Staff Equip	Cumulative Start Up & Equip
1	99-00	11 - 12 - 8	24	283,654	811,565	54,000	196,500	196,500
2	00-01	15 - 17 - 9	6	365,205	1,100,421	18,900	54,525	251,025
3	01-02	16 - 18 - 11	3	413,426	1,210,731	14,040	31,852	282,878
4	02-03	17 - 19 - 10	0.5	425,127	1,281,823	9,819	15,756	298,634
5	03-04	16 - 19 - 9	0.5	436,828	1,304,881	10,801	16,738	315,372
6	04-05	17 - 19 - 8	0.5	448,529	1,341,064	11,881	17,818	333,191
7	05-06	16 - 19 - 7	0.5	460,229	1,378,053	13,069	19,007	352,197
8	06-07	17 - 19 - 7	0.5	471,930	1,433,175	14,376	20,313	372,511
9	07-08	16 - 19 - 7	0.5	483,631	1,490,502	15,814	21,751	394,262
10	08-09	16 - 19 - 8	1	495,332	1,568,855	18,520	24,457	418,720
				4,283,892	12,921,069	181,220		
				totals				

Op Year	Teachers FTE	Teachers Sal&Ben	Teachers Total	Admin Sal&Ben	Support FTE	Support Sal&Ben	Support Total	TA FTE	TA Sal	TA Total
1	12	45,500	546,000	78,000	2.5	31,250	78,125	8	13,680	109,440
2	17	46,865	796,705	80,340	3	32,188	96,562	9	14,090	126,814
3	18	48,271	868,877	82,750	3	33,153	99,459	11	14,513	159,644
4	19	49,719	944,662	85,233	3	34,148	102,443	10	14,949	149,485
5	19	51,211	973,002	87,790	3	35,172	105,516	9	15,397	138,573
6	19	53,259	1,011,922	91,301	3	36,579	109,737	8	16,013	128,103
7	19	55,389	1,052,399	94,953	3	38,042	114,127	7	16,653	116,573
8	19	57,605	1,094,495	98,751	3	39,564	118,692	7	17,319	121,236
9	19	59,909	1,138,275	102,702	3	41,146	123,439	7	18,012	126,086
10	19	62,306	1,183,806	106,810	3	42,792	128,377	8	18,733	149,862

FTE = Full Time Equivalent Admin = Administrator Sal = Salary Ben = Benefit Cost
Support = Support Personnel TA = Teaching Assistant Equip = Equipment

OpYear	SYear	Class#	Students	Grades	Paid FTE	ChildPerFTE	Revenue	Expend	Annual Reserve	Cumulative Reserve	Facilities Cost	Base Tuition
1	99-00	2k,1	60	K-2	5.5	10.9	441,660	422,233	19,427	19,427	90,000	6111
2	00-01	4k, 9	240	K-6	23.5	10.2	1,525,560	1,504,662	20,898	40,325	227,000	6294
3	01-02	2k, 13	300	K-7	30	10.0	1,944,900	1,907,044	37,856	78,181	342,000	6483
4	02-03	2k, 15	330	K-8	33	10.0	2,203,410	2,051,834	151,576	229,757	346,400	6677
5	03-04	2k, 16	330	K-8	33	10.0	2,269,410	2,125,272	144,138	373,895	349,834	6877
<i>term of first charter</i>												
6	04-05	2k, 16	330	K-8	32	10.3	2,337,720	2,178,260	159,460	533,355	354,302	7084
7	05-06	2k, 16	330	K-8	31	10.6	2,407,680	2,239,243	168,437	701,792	364,811	7296
8	06-07	2k, 15	330	K-8	30	11.0	2,479,950	2,289,276	190,674	892,466	363,420	7515
9	07-08	2k, 16	330	K-8	30	11.0	2,554,530	2,368,324	186,206	1,078,672	372,064	7741
10	08-09	2k, 15	330	K-8	30	11.0	2,631,090	2,444,837	186,253	1,264,925	375,744	7973
							20,795,910	19,530,985	totals		3,185,575	

Typical (Second Year)

Start Up Costs

Admin Equip	7,500	Operating Debt	28,212
Chairs / Desks	18,000	Equip Maint	5,000
Tables / Shelves	4,000	Site Maint	10,000
Athletic Equip	3,000	Utilities	30,000
Computers	50,000	Equip Rental	5,000
AV	5,000	Printing / Copying	17,500
Food Service	2,500	Postage	7,500
Classroom Supplies	25,000	Staff Development	25,000
Education Material	25,000	Insurance	50,000
Custodial Supplies	2,500	Misc Supplies	15,000
total	142,500	Legal	12,500
per student	594	Finance / Audit	12,500
		Substitute / Temp	12,500
		Field Trips	12,500
		Transportation	7,500
		Contingency	33,778
		total	284,491
		per student	1,185

Offset Costs - fees paid by parent

180 days lunch per student - \$315

Per Semester Materials per Student - \$150

Typical (Second Year)

Operational Expenditures

	Op Year	Anticipated Grants	Volunteer Value@ \$8 / hr. 80 hrs. / year
	1	75,000	38,400
	2	15,000	153,600
	3	0	192,000
	4	0	211,200
	5	0	211,200
	6	0	211,200
	7	0	211,200
	8	0	211,200
	9	0	211,200
	10	0	211,200
		90,000	1,862,400
		totals	2,793,600

Scenario "B" Financial Plan

Op Year	School Year	Classes - Teachers - TAs	New Hires	Operational (Non-Personnel)	T & A & S & TA	Staff Equip	Start Up & Staff Equip	Cumulative Start Up & Equip
1	99-00	2 - 2 - 2	6	71,123	211,985	13,500	49,125	49,125
2	00-01	11 - 12 - 8	18	293,025	835,912	41,850	148,725	197,850
3	01-02	15 - 17 - 9	6	376,950	1,133,434	19,035	54,660	252,510
4	02-03	16 - 18 - 11	3	426,380	1,247,053	14,188	32,001	284,511
5	03-04	17 - 19 - 10	1	438,115	1,320,278	11,107	17,045	301,556
6	04-05	16 - 19 - 9	0.5	449,851	1,357,076	11,093	17,031	318,586
7	05-06	17 - 19 - 8	0.5	461,586	1,394,706	12,202	18,140	336,726
8	06-07	16 - 19 - 7	0.5	473,321	1,433,175	13,423	19,360	356,086
9	07-08	17 - 19 - 7	0.5	485,056	1,490,502	14,765	20,702	376,789
10	08-09	16 - 19 - 7	0.5	496,792	1,550,122	16,241	22,179	398,968
				3,972,199	11,974,243	167,405		
				totals				

Op Year	Teachers FTE	Teachers Sal&Ben	Teachers Total	Admin Sal&Ben	Support FTE	Support Sal&Ben	Support Total	TA FTE	TA Sal	TA Total
1	2	45,500	91,000	78,000	0.5	31,250	15,625	2	13,680	27,360
2	12	46,865	562,380	80,340	2.5	32,188	80,469	8	14,090	112,723
3	17	48,271	820,606	82,750	3	33,153	99,459	9	14,513	130,618
4	18	49,719	894,943	85,233	3	34,148	102,443	11	14,949	164,434
5	19	51,211	973,002	87,790	3	35,172	105,516	10	15,397	153,970
6	19	53,259	1,011,922	91,301	3	36,579	109,737	9	16,013	144,116
7	19	55,389	1,052,399	94,953	3	38,042	114,127	8	16,653	133,227
8	19	57,605	1,094,495	98,751	3	39,564	118,692	7	17,319	121,236
9	19	59,909	1,138,275	102,702	3	41,146	123,439	7	18,012	126,086
10	19	62,306	1,183,806	106,810	3	42,792	128,377	7	18,733	131,129

FTE = Full Time Equivalent Admin = Administrator Sal = Salary Ben = Benefit Cost
 Support = Support Personnel TA = Teaching Assistant Equip = Equipment

Op Year - Operational year.

S Year - School year.

Classes - Number of classes planned, k indicates Kindergarten (morning or afternoon).

Students - Number of students planned.

Grades - Grade span.

Paid FTE - Paid full time equivalent employees.

ChildPerFTE - Students divided by Paid FTE

Revenue - Calculated as Base Tuition multiplied by students plus anticipated grants (does not include categorical funds which the charter school would be entitled to, depending upon enrollment of children).

Expend - The total expenditures projected for each operating year.

Annual Reserve - Revenue minus Expend for each operating year

Cumulative Reserve - The running total of annual reserves through the term of the financial plan.

Facilities Cost - Estimate of lease payments and associated annual building costs based on \$2,500,000 new school (including site work) constructed by third party and leased to PCCS at market rates with ownership of building anticipated to be conveyed to PCCS at end of 20 year lease. First year lease rate reduced to accommodate other start up costs with out year rates increased to account for first year reduction. Scenario B first year cost includes estimate of cost to convert structure to school use and lease payments.

Base Tuition - A weighted average of "base" per-capita tuition representing uniform parental choice of PCCS across both districts (i.e. 80% of students from District 50, 20% of students from District 79) increasing 3% annually from last reported figures (year ending 6/97 - \$5,362 for District 50 / \$6,519 for District 79).

Start Up Costs - Start up costs as delineated. Applied to budget in year students arrive at school. Op Year 4 and beyond includes estimated replacement of equipment as required.

Typical Operational Expenditure Projection - Annual (first year - scenario A, second year - scenario B) operational expenses as delineated or as defined below:

Operating Debt - Approximated as 7.5% of annual expenses divided by four to fund operations in advance of revenues. May be reduced in out years as accumulated reserves offset need for debt.

Equip Maint - General equipment maintenance costs.

Site Maint - Site maintenance costs not included in lease.

Equip Rental - Rental / lease of office equipment (copy machine, etc.)

Staff Development - Continuing education support for staff.

Insurance - Planning budget for risk management costs.

Legal - Planning budget for legal counsel and representation.

Finance / Audit - Planning budget for financial counsel and annual audit.

Substitute / Temp - Contingency for substitute teachers and temporary employees.

Field Trips - Transportation, other expenses for field trips.

Transportation - Potential expenses to support transportation-challenged students.

Contingency - Calculated at 5% of all non-personnel annual expenditures.

Anticipated Grants - ISBE grant program at typical award over first two years.

Volunteer Obligation Value - A delineation of the labor cost value of the parental commitment.

Teachers FTE - Planned number of full time equivalent teachers for any given year.

Teachers Sal&Ben - Average teacher salary and benefit cost calculated at \$35,000 (added benefits at 33%) increasing 3% annually during first term of charter and 4% annually in second term.

Teachers Total - Number of planned teachers multiplied by TeachersSal&Ben.

AdminSal&Ben - School administrator salary starting at \$60,000 (added benefits at 33%) increasing 3% annually during first term of charter and 4% annually in second term.

Support FTE - Number of full time equivalent support personnel.

SupportSal&Ben - Average support salary calculated at \$25,000 (added benefits at 25%) increasing 3% annually during first term of charter and 4% annually in second term.

Support Total - Number of planned support personnel multiplied by SupportSal&Ben.

TA FTE - Number of full time equivalent teaching assistant positions.

TA Sal - Average teaching assistant salary calculated as \$9/ hour increasing 3% annually during first term of charter and 4% annually in second term.

TA Total - Number of planned teaching assistants multiplied by TA Sal.

New Hires - Number of new or incremental hires in any given operational year (minimum of .5 as contingency for staff transitions).

Operational (Non-Personnel) - Operational costs in any given operational year. Based on operational costs detailed on first page increasing 3% annually, includes staff equip and start up as school grows in student and staff population.

T & A & S & TA - Sum of Teachers Total, Admin Sal&Ben, Support Total and TA Total (i.e. total personnel costs).

Staff Equip - Calculated at \$2,250 for new personnel at hire plus 10% of cumulative equipment costs in any given operational year to reflect on-going equipment expenses (hardware, software updates, etc.) Op Year 4 and beyond includes estimated replacement of equipment as required .

Start Up & Staff Equip - Sum of Start Up Per Student expense multiplied by added students in any given year plus Staff Equip in same year.

Evelyn Cole is an Illinois Certified (K-9) teacher with a language arts and social studies endorsement. She is the holder of a Master's Degree in elementary education, and has taught middle school level English and reading. Ms. Cole is currently working as an elementary reading and math tutor and is the mother of a two year old son and infant daughter.

Miriam Frank holds a Master's Degree in Personality Psychology, is a graduate of the University of Michigan School of Law and has practiced in a major Chicago law firm and two area corporations. Since 1993, she has been a principal in Major, Hagen & Africa, L.L.P.. Ms. Frank was actively involved in school redistricting matters in Evanston, Illinois. Ms. Frank is the mother of a daughter currently enrolled at Woodland.

Craig Malin is the Assistant Village Manager of the Village of Vernon Hills. Mr. Malin holds Master's Degrees in Public Administration and Human Resources Development, has completed the coursework for a master's in Urban Planning and Policy, is pursuing a fourth Master's Degree with a focus on Community Studies at Northwestern University and has been recognized as the 1997 "Assistant Manager of the Year" by the International City/County Manager Association. He is the father of a pre-school age daughter and infant son.

Victoria Post Ranney is Vice President of Prairie Holdings Corporation, developer of Prairie Crossing. Ms. Ranney was an editor of The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted, designer of urban parks and planned residential communities. Ms. Ranney, a former teacher, has served as President of the Friends of the Parks in Chicago, which she helped to found, and Chair of the Illinois Humanities Council. She is currently Vice Chair of the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission. Ms. Ranney is the mother of three grown children.

Ellen Winick is the holder of a Master's Degree in Education and the Learning Sciences from Northwestern University. She presently serves on the Grayslake Library Board and has contributed to the design of tailored learning methods incorporating state-of-the-art information technology. She has taught a wide range of topics including English as a second language, Hebrew, and business development coaching. She is now the owner of a small business and is the mother of a one-year-old daughter.

**Founders
Profile**

- Senator Adeline Geo-Karis
- Senator Terry Link
- Representative Robert Churchill
- Representative Andrea Moore
- Dr. Patricia Graham - President,
Spencer Foundation / Former Dean,
Harvard School of Education
- Dr. Michael Klonsky - Co-Director,
Small Schools Workshop, UIC
- Dr. Valerie Owen - Special Education
Department Chair, National Louis Univ.
- Wallace Winter, Disability Law Project
Director
- Paula Lillard, Head of School, Forest
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