

Fact Sheet: Why Sarasota School Board Must Reject Charter Schools USA's Application

Charter Schools USA is the second largest for-profit education management organization in both Florida and the United States. It has applied to Sarasota County Schools to open a school in North Port even though the district plans to soon build a high school and elementary school less than 1.5 miles away. *Here are facts that need attention and consideration:*

Proposed School: College Preparatory Academy at Wellen Park of FL Charter Education Foundation Inc.

1. Charter Schools USA (CSUSA): Headquartered in Palm Beach, it will manage the Wellen Park school.
2. CSUSA charges schools 10% to 12% of revenue each year for management services.
3. CSUSA underpays its teaching staff, providing limited benefit packages, while paying its executives well. It skimps on its buildings as they often lack libraries, music rooms and auditoriums.
4. CSUSA is a growing empire, managing nearly 100 charter schools in 5 states.
5. CSUSA has many D & F rated schools. Its closest school to Sarasota is located in Manatee County. That Charter School has a “C rated school” with declining enrollment and a *financial deficit* of nearly \$1.5 million. It is a drag on Manatee District’s academic rating, as well as a financial liability.

CSUSA's Business Model: It utilizes a *predatory model extracting millions of public funds* into the pocket of its founder & CEO, Jonathan Hage, a multi-millionaire who sent his own kids to stellar private schools.

1. Jonathan Hage has close connections to wealthy individuals like junk-bond ex-con Michael Milken and “education reformer” Ron Packard. Hage got his start as an adviser to Jeb Bush.
2. Jonathan Hage has six CSUSA-related real estate entities registered in Florida.
3. CSUSA has at least 40 active corporations listed on the FL Division of Corporations. These corporations supply products, technology, and services (also at a profit) to support CSUSA school operations.
4. CSUSA is the largest US seller of charter school bond debt, almost \$800,000,000 in 2019.
5. Jonathan Hage and/or his wife, Sherry Hage, control separate corporations that bring in millions in rent from CSUSA-managed schools and for building and ground services, curriculum materials and other services.
6. Sherry Hage is CAO of CSUSA and CEO of the for-profit EMO Noble Education Initiative.

CSUSA at Wallen Park: The proposed K-8 College Preparatory Academy at Wallen Park will be located in an affluent neighborhood of North Port on the border of Venice. CSUSA chose one of its schools, the Clay Charter Academy, in Clay County, Florida to replicate, a process which speeds up the approval process.

1. A site visit conducted on February 18, 2022, by Clay County District Schools, found disturbing short comings in the Clay Charter Academy. Here is a small sampling of the findings:
 - About 40% of *teachers were not certified* or licensed for the courses taught.
 - There were ESE students who were not assigned case managers and did not receive specified therapies.
 - Many English Language Learner students were not screened for entry into ESOL programs; required meetings were not held with parents; *none* of the required monitoring occurred.
 - Reading lessons were taught using "workshop packets:" and "online programs" rather than the specified high-level evidence-based materials promised in CSUSA's published curriculum.
 - Medicine cabinets Inside the unmanned clinic were unlocked and accessible by students.
2. The demographics of the Clay County replication school do not match the proposed Wellen Park school.
3. No busing is planned for Wallen Park school which is situated in an affluent neighborhood, yet CSUSA claims it will be a diverse school in largely affluent Wellen Park.

Sarasota School District's Charter Review: The initial review of CSUSA's application by Sarasota School's Charter Review Committee, found that *CSUSA's application did not meet standards*, partially and/or fully, in 76% of specifications. Specific instances of failure include - Transportation and budget standards fully failed the review. Additional points of weakness and concern include:

1. The school's Mission & Vision is not compelling and definately not unique; its curriculum is boilerplate.
2. There is no local board; the board is composed of 5 persons, appointed by CSUSA, who residing distant counties with no connection to the Wallen Park Community.
3. The curriculum offers fewer opportunities than Sarasota district schools.
4. The cost estimates of many budget items, including mental health services, were "lowballed," setting the expectation that the cost to Sarasota School District's taxpayers will exceed the application's cost estimates.

**The FACTS show thta Charter Schools USA does NOT belong in Sarasota -
DENY the APPLICATION**