



Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

75 Pleasant Street, Malden, Massachusetts 02148-4906

Telephone: (781) 338-3000
TTY: N.E.T. Relay 1-800-439-2370

Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D.
Commissioner

September 17, 2010

Anthony Blackman, Executive Director
Gloucester Community Arts Charter School
P.O. Box 1631
Gloucester, MA 01930

Dear Mr. Blackman:

I am writing to deny your request to open the Gloucester Community Arts Charter School (GCACS) in Rockport on Monday, September 20, 2010, and to recommend that the students who had planned to attend the school instead enroll in their home districts for the duration of the 2010-2011 school year.

I am guided in my decision-making first and foremost by what is in the best interests of the children involved. We are already more than halfway through the first month of the school year and, for a variety of reasons, the students intending to enroll at GCACS have still not had their first day of school.

In addition, I am deeply concerned that the GCACS Board of Trustees has failed to manage the opening of the school effectively and in compliance with state law. The Office of the Attorney General, at the request of the Inspector General, examined this week and concluded that the procurement processes employed by GCACS to secure the Cape Ann Medical Office Building in Gloucester and the temporary modular structures on that site were in violation of state statute. The school's repeated delays in opening, when coupled with the recent findings of the Attorney General's Office and allegations about the school's actions in the Inspector General's September 17, 2010 letter, leave me with no confidence that the GCACS board can satisfy its obligations under state law and under its own charter before the charter expires on Friday, September 24. As a result, I no longer believe that GCACS is viable.

I recognize that the school's founders, board of trustees, and students and families had high hopes for GCACS, and it is most unfortunate that we are now in this position. Nevertheless, it is my duty as Commissioner to make a judgment as to whether your school can remain faithful to its charter, which includes complying with all relevant state laws and regulations.

I am contacting Acting Superintendent Connelly to ensure that the re-enrollment of students into the Gloucester District Schools is as smooth and efficient as possible for all involved.

Sincerely,

Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D.
Commissioner