

**District Office**

33 N. Zack Hinton Parkway  
McDonough, GA 30253  
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**Henry County  
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August 6, 2025

State Charter Schools Commission of Georgia  
c/o Guin Jones and Allen Mueller  
2 Martin Luther King Jr. Drive SE  
1356 Twin Towers East  
Atlanta, GA 30334

Henry County Schools (HCS) received a letter of intent from Harvest Academy on September 13, 2024. The petitioner voluntarily moved forward in the district's process and submitted the full petition on April 18, 2025, for a start-up charter school proposing to open fall of 2027. The Board of Education voted to deny Harvest Academy's petition on Monday, July 14, 2025.

**HCS 2025 Charter Petition Review Cycle**

After receiving the petition on April 18, 2025, the district's review committee evaluated the petition in its entirety and engaged with the petitioners throughout the initial process. The district hosted Harvest Academy for a 90-minute panel interview on May 14, 2025, with members of the district's review committee.

Upon completion of all review cycle activities, the committee recommended that the HCS Board of Education deny Harvest Academy's petition. The HCS Board of Education voted with a majority vote to deny Harvest Academy's petition at the regular business meeting on Monday, July 14, 2025. Please note that the review and final vote were completed within the 90-days of the petition's submission; *SB 82*.

**Reasons for Denial**

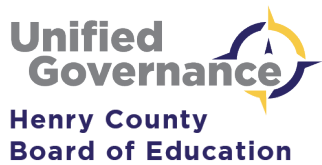
The following insufficiencies render this petition irreparable for the 2025 Review Cycle; *SB 82*

- **Executive Summary**

- The petition inaccurately defines the attendance zone. The petition indicates that Harvest Academy will serve students within a defined 10-mile attendance zone encompassing McDonough, Stockbridge, and Hampton clusters (p. 62) but the defined attendance zone covers almost every single cluster in the county.
- There is insufficient evidence of community interest with only 262 students being represented in a survey. The petition also indicates that farm emphasis was praised in the Locust Grove area but the identified clusters in the petition do not serve this area.

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- There is a lack of local partnerships noted in the petition with only one mentioned potential partnership in Henry County, Narrow Way Farm (p. 18). Other farms were mentioned in Bluffton, GA and Koinonia Farms but those are 2-3 hours away from Henry County.
- The petition lacks information about the teacher/staff evaluation instrument and cycle.

- **Academic Programming**

- The proposed personalized learning model is not innovative and does strategically address the academic, social, or emotional needs of students that are not otherwise addressed by Henry County Schools.
- Henry County Schools already have a strong focus on STEM outlined in our Strategic Plan and this petition does not bridge a gap for our students in this area.
- The petition uses STEM and STEAM interchangeably without purposefully describing the arts integration or differentiating between the two.
- Local concern noted with reading fluently on grade level by fourth grade when third grade is defined as a benchmark year for reading on grade level.
- All curricula chosen has been aligned to the Georgia Standards of Excellence but there is no identified ELA curriculum (p. 25).
- The petition states that students will be assessed using GMAS in 5th grade for social studies which does not match GA's testing requirements.
- Classrooms concerns noted:
  - 32:1 student to teacher ratio in a multiage classroom setting
  - The personalized learning instructional model presented has students working extensively independently and on computers for most of the day
  - Gifted learners will "accelerate their learning as opposed to enriching the grade-level content itself" in a self-paced environment (p.37); spend less time with small groups and more time individually with check-ins

- **Student Services**

- Local concern with "MOU with Henry County Schools to provide overflow services" (p. 49) as this is an area HCS

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struggles to fill and often times has to use contract service providers.

- The petition did not outline specific behavior processes and procedures for students with 504s.
- Local concern with “MOU with Henry County Schools to provide overflow services.” (p. 49)
- The petition lacks information regarding a comprehensive counseling plan, counseling services and student/staff mental health and wellness support services.
- The petition insufficiently addresses a structured and clear plan of support for students in crisis.
- For students with disabilities, limited funding has been identified to employ staff to provide specialized services.
- The petition did not specifically address supports for students with disabilities. The members of the charter school team were not able to address how they would meet the needs of students who have needs beyond what they could offer and referred to partnership with Henry County Schools.
- During the interview, the petitioner was unable to explain the requested waiver for English Language Learners noted in the petition and its impact on students.

• **Facilities**

- The petition states that Harvest Academy would be uniquely situated on a farm, but the proposed facility does not support the identified agricultural focus and would require rezoning approval to operate as a school. The required changes in zoning could pose problems with facility preparation. The location would need to be rezoned, and the location is not ideal for students to “spend time in nature on a farm setting, tending to a garden, and tending to animals.” (p. 21)
- Insufficient details about the facility impede the ability to predict its likelihood of success.
- Safety is a top priority for Henry County Schools and our community. The petition lacked sufficient details for emergency safety plans. (p.68-69)
- The proposed location also lacks space for outdoor activities such a recess, a GA requirement in grades k-5.
- The backup location poses safety concerns with it being all modular units. (p.65)



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- Specific safety precautions are not mentioned for students' interactions with animals.

- **Transportation**

- Harvest Academy is a commuter school with a proposed location of 103 Jonesboro Rd. in McDonough. The transportation plan is to provide gas cards with an intent to possibly partner with Henry County Schools transportation in year 3. (p. 63) This partnership would not be conducive to best meeting the needs of students.
- The school would not open with a working farm and that would require more field trips/needs for transportation to visit locations with working farms.

Henry County Schools appreciated the opportunity to review Harvest Academy's charter petition. If you have additional questions or points of clarity regarding the district's review process, the Board's majority vote of denial, or any of the documentation provided in this letter, please reach out to Mrs. Summer Cox, Deputy Superintendent of Staff and Operational Effectiveness, at [Summer.Cox@henry.k12.ga.us](mailto:Summer.Cox@henry.k12.ga.us) or at 770-957-6601.

In partnership,

Dr. Micki Foster

Executive Director of Strategic Initiatives and Policy Design

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