

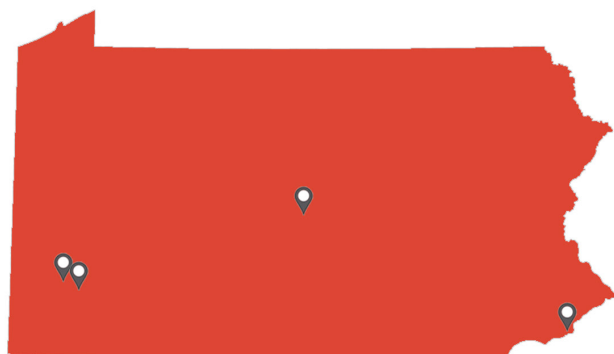
# Pennsylvania





# QUICK FACTS ON GÜLEN CHARTER SCHOOLS

# PENNSYLVANIA



NUMBER OF SCHOOLS

4

KNOWN AS

**YOUNG SCHOLARS  
VISION ACADEMY**

TOTAL ENROLLMENT

**912**

CHARTER VENDOR

**APPLE EDUCATIONAL  
SERVICES, INC.**

TOTAL REVENUES

**\$12,545,382.74**

RELATED  
INSTITUTIONS



Central Jersey  
College Prep  
Charter School  
Arts and Science  
Science and  
Technology



Chesapeake



Hampden  
Pioneer



Academy of Science

## KEY PEOPLE



Riza  
Ulker



Bulent  
Tarman



Adem  
Oksuz



Ismail  
Ozgur  
Zembat



Abdullah  
Yavas



Ali  
Demirci

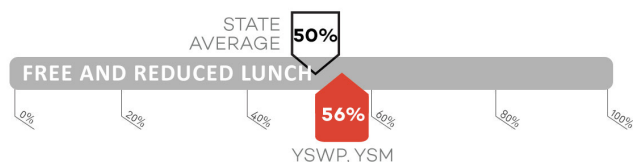


Gulseren  
Karagoz  
Akar



Burcin  
Ogrenir

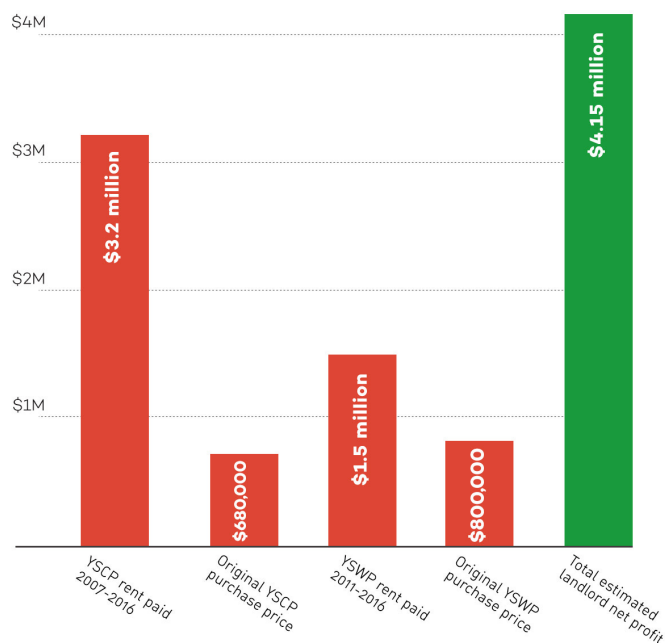
## VULNERABLE STUDENT POPULATIONS



## APPLICATIONS, REJECTIONS, SUSPECTED FRAUD

Gülen-linked schools have since been rejected twice in Millcreek Township, and five times under three different names in Allentown school district, and three times in Lancaster. The Academy of Business and Entrepreneurship Charter School ("ABECS") has been criticized for re-using the same applications, and suspected fraud and forgery to create the appearance of community support.

## PROPERTY SCAMS



All figures based on available data for 2015-2016 academic year.

## Quick Facts

- ▶ Region: Northeast
- ▶ School Names (known as):
  - ▷ Young Scholars
  - ▷ Vision Academy
- ▶ Total # of Schools in State: 4 charter schools open, 1 charter school closed, 1 private school closed
- ▶ Total Student Enrollment 2015-16: 912<sup>1</sup>
- ▶ Charter Holder/Governing Board(s):
  - ▷ Young Scholars of Central Pennsylvania
    - Organized as a non-profit with 501(c)(3) status
    - Operates 1 charter school
  - ▷ Young Scholars of Western Pennsylvania
    - Organized as a non-profit with 501(c)(3) status
    - Operates 1 charter school
  - ▷ Young Scholars of McKeesport
    - Operates 1 charter school
  - ▷ Vision Academy
    - Operates 1 charter school
- ▶ Charter Management Services Vendor: Apple Educational Services, Inc.
- ▶ Regional Gülen Organization Oversight Entity: Apple Educational Services, Inc. ("Apple")
- ▶ Regional Sister Networks: Chesapeake (MD); Hampden (MA); Pioneer (MA); Academy of Science (NY); Arts and Science (NJ); Science and Technology (NJ); Central Jersey College Prep Charter School (NJ).
- ▶ Total Revenues for the 2015-16 school year: \$12,545,382.74<sup>2</sup>
- ▶ Network Founders:
  - ▷ Riza Ulker: Co-authored a paper with fellow PA founder Bulent Tarman while both attended Penn State University;<sup>3</sup> registered the name "Snowdrop School"; Acting director, Snowdrop Elementary School – Gülenist private school (PA);<sup>4</sup> Board member, Young Scholars of Central Pennsylvania (PA);<sup>5</sup> President, Dream Schools, Inc. – Gülenist landlord entity (PA);<sup>6</sup> CEO, Truebright Science Academy (PA);<sup>7</sup> Left Truebright in March 2011 in the midst of turmoil surrounding the school's charter renewal to teach at Zirve University in Turkey;<sup>8</sup> Petitioner,

<sup>1</sup> Student enrollment and demographic information available at: <http://tinyurl.com/k68mkgj>, <http://tinyurl.com/ka37232> (last checked 04/11/2017). The Pennsylvania Department of Education provided supplemental information on request.

<sup>2</sup> Figure includes revenues of Vision Academy, Young Scholars of Central Pennsylvania, Young Scholars of Western Pennsylvania, and Young Scholars of McKeesport, figures available through open records request (last checked 04/16/2017).

<sup>3</sup> Young Scholars of Central Pennsylvania Charter School's application, with founders' biographies, was made available through an open records request to the Pennsylvania Department of Education [YSCP Open Records Request, part 13 at 2-5, 26-30].

<sup>4</sup> Pennsylvania Corporate Records, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/z6ogbfd>; Jacqueline Shoyeb, *Muslim Elementary School Opening Tomorrow in Monroeville*, PITTSBURGH POST-GAZETTE (Sep. 5, 2005) available at: <http://tinyurl.com/mxzjebr> (last checked 4/12/2017); Mary Niederberger and Rich Lord, *Some Practices Questioned at Baldwin Charter School*, PITTSBURGH POST-GAZETTE (Sep. 4, 2011), available at: <http://tinyurl.com/ky9bx7v> (last checked 4/12/2017).

<sup>5</sup> Young Scholars of Central Pennsylvania 990s, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/lz23php> (last checked 4/17/2017).

<sup>6</sup> Dream Schools, Inc., 2005-2007 990s, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/luskcjd> (last checked 4/17/2017).

<sup>7</sup> Young Scholars of Central Pennsylvania, 2005-2010 990s, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/lz23php> (last checked 4/17/2017); Riza Ulker, LINKEDIN, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/jvnkx7b> (last checked 4/17/2017).

<sup>8</sup> Compare Martha Woodall, *Allegations Raised over N. Phila. Charter School Run by Followers of Turkish Imam*, THE INQUIRER (Apr. 19, 2012) (board minutes state Ulker left to address family issues), available at: <http://tinyurl.com/nysuuuy> (last checked 4/15/2017), with Riza Ulker, LINKEDIN, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/jvnkx7b> (last checked 4/17/2017) (Ulker began teaching at Zirve University in March 2011 in Turkey).

- Allentown Science Academy (PA);<sup>9</sup> Adjunct professor, Manchester Community College (NH).<sup>10</sup>
- ▷ Bulent Tarman: Attended Penn State University and co-authored a paper with fellow PA founder, Riza Ulker;<sup>11</sup> Tarman Founding Vice President and Secretary of Dream Schools, Inc. - Gülenist landlord entity (PA);<sup>12</sup> Board Member, Young Scholars of Central Pennsylvania (PA);<sup>13</sup> Teacher, Selcuk University, Necmettin Erbakan University, and Gazi University (Turkey);<sup>14</sup> Employee, Justice Academy of Turkey, Tubitak (a known Gülenist research institute), the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, the Turkish National Agency;<sup>15</sup> currently Editor in Chief, Journal of Social Studies Education Research in Turkey.<sup>16</sup>
  - ▷ Adem Oksuz: Founding CEO, Vision Academy (PA); Regional Director, Apple Education Services - Gülenist vendor (Northeast Region)<sup>17</sup>; CEO, Daisy/Sonoran Schools (AZ)<sup>18</sup>; CEO, Accord - Gülenist vendor (Western Region)<sup>19</sup>; Petitioner, failed Mokapu STEM charter school (HI); Petitioner, Lancaster Science Academy proposal (PA);<sup>20</sup> Educational consultant, ABECS charter application (PA).<sup>21</sup>
  - ▷ Ismail Ozgur Zembat: Attended Penn State University;<sup>22</sup> Teacher, Hacettepe University in Turkey; Teacher, United Arab Emirates University in Abu Dhabi; currently Teacher, Mevlana University in Turkey.<sup>23</sup>
  - ▷ Abdullah Yavas: Student, Bogazici University - Gülenist university in Turkey; Professor, Penn State University; Board member, Istanbul Sehir University; Founder, International Antalya University; currently Member, Monetary Policy Committee of the Central Bank of the Republic of Turkey.<sup>24</sup>
  - ▷ Ali Demirci: Student, Middle East Technical University - Gülenist university; Teacher, University of Gaziantep;<sup>25</sup> currently Teacher, Penn State University.<sup>26</sup>
  - ▷ Gulseren Karagoz Akar: Student, Middle East Technical University

<sup>9</sup> Steve Esack, *Allentown School Directors Question Charter School Applicant's Ties to Gülen Movement*, THE MORNING CALL (Dec. 16, 2012) available at: <http://tinyurl.com/l9fxrbs> (last checked 4/15/2017).

<sup>10</sup> Riza Ulker, LINKEDIN, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/jvnkx7b> (last checked 4/17/2017).

<sup>11</sup> Young Scholars of Central Pennsylvania Charter School's application, with founders' biographies, was made available through an open records request to the Pennsylvania Department of Education [YSCP Open Records Request, part 13 at 2-5, 26-30].

<sup>12</sup> Dream Schools, Inc., 2007 990, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/nxala87> (last checked 4/17/2017).

<sup>13</sup> Young Scholars of Central Pennsylvania, 2005-2011 990s, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/lz23php> (last checked 4/17/2017).

<sup>14</sup> Bulent Tarman, LINKEDIN, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/mgj4jq5> (last checked 4/17/2017).

<sup>15</sup> Id.

<sup>16</sup> Id.

<sup>17</sup> Oksuz resume available at page196, <http://tinyurl.com/hrzqv5r> (last checked 1/30/2017).

<sup>18</sup> See 2003 Daisy Education 990 tax form, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/jjcrxh9> (last checked 2/15/2017).

<sup>19</sup> Accord Business profile listing Oksuz as CEO, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/hc7v9lm> (last checked 2/15/2017).

<sup>20</sup> Information taken from: Article discussing petition and Oksuz, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/hxsmlvw> (last checked 2/15/2017); Application for Grants under the Charter Schools Program (CSP); Grants to Non-SEAs; Planning Program Design, Implementation, U.S. DEP'T OF EDUCATION (Oct. 6, 2015), available at <http://tinyurl.com/lhhw3f6> (last checked 4/17/2017).

<sup>21</sup> Gil Smart, *Academy of Business & Entrepreneurship Charter School Has Eye on Lancaster City*, LANCASTERONLINE (Nov. 4, 2012), available at <http://tinyurl.com/hxsmlvw> (last checked 4/15/2017).

<sup>22</sup> Ismail Ozgur Zembat, Curriculum Vitae, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/mewalpj> (last checked 4/17/2017).

<sup>23</sup> Id.

<sup>24</sup> Abdullah Yavas, Curriculum Vitae, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/mrpmncc> (last checked 4/17/2017).

<sup>25</sup> Ali Demirci, LINKEDIN, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/l33tc56> (last checked 4/17/2017).

<sup>26</sup> Id.

- Gülenist university; Student, Pennsylvania State University;<sup>27</sup> currently Teacher, Bogazici University – Gülenist University.<sup>28</sup>
- ▷ Burcin Ogrenir: Student, Middle East Technical University – Gülenist university; Student, Pennsylvania

State University;<sup>29</sup> Volunteer, West Penn Cultural Center – Operator of Snowdrop School – private Gülenist school (PA);<sup>30</sup> currently Teacher, Bahcesehir University in Istanbul; currently Owner, April Institute in New Jersey.<sup>31</sup>

## Overview

As of the 2016-2017 school year, Pennsylvania has four Gülen Organization charter schools in operation. These schools are overseen by four separate governing boards. Young Scholars of Central Pennsylvania ("YSCP") was the first Gülenist charter school in 2005. Two more Gülenist "Young Scholars" schools subsequently spun out off of YSCP: Young Scholars of Western Pennsylvania ("YSWP") and Young Scholars of McKeesport ("YSM"). Gülenists also opened Vision Academy Charter School in 2015 ("Vision Academy"). YSWP, YSM, and Vision all contract

with Apple Educational Services, Inc. ("Apple"), the corporate entity responsible for the north-east region of the Gülen Organization charter networks, for their Student Information Systems. On average, these schools serve approximately 5% English Language Learners vs. 3% state average; 56% free and reduced lunch population vs. 50% state; approximately 9% special education vs. 16% state; 39% African American students vs. 15% state; approximately 48% Caucasian students vs. 67% state; and approximately 4% Hispanic students vs. 10% state.<sup>32</sup>

School	Operation	Student Demographic Information*	Authorizer	Governing Board
Young Scholars of Central Pennsylvania 1530 Westerly Parkway, State College, PA 16801	K-8 2005-Present	07% ELL 26% FRL 09% SWD 06% African American 72% Caucasian 04% Hispanic	State College Area School District	Young Scholars of Central Pennsylvania
Young Scholars of Western Pennsylvania 600 Newport Drive Pittsburgh, PA 15234	K-8 2011-Present	05% ELL 61% FRL 15% SWD 27% African American 65% Caucasian 04% Hispanic	Baldwin-Whitehall School District	Young Scholars of Western Pennsylvania

<sup>27</sup> Gulseren Karagoz Akar, BOGAZICI UNIVERSITY, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/lagortg> (last checked 4/17/2017).

<sup>28</sup> Id.

<sup>29</sup> Burcin Ogrenir, LINKEDIN, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/lgk7r3h> (last checked 4/17/2017).

<sup>30</sup> YSCP Open Records Request, part 13 at 2-5, 26-30

<sup>31</sup> Id.

<sup>32</sup> Some percentages are approximates due to data masking of low demographic counts by the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

School	Operation	Student Demographic Information*	Authorizer	Governing Board
Young Scholars of McKeesport 413 Shaw Ave. McKeesport, PA 15132	K-5 (growing to K-8) 2015-Present	00% ELL 90% FRL ≤13% SWD 84% African American ≤13% Caucasian ≤13% Hispanic	McKeesport Area School District	Young Scholars of McKeesport
Vision Academy Charter School 41 E Baltimore Avenue Landsdowne, PA 19050	K-5 (growing to K-8) 2015-Present	≤02% ELL 86% FRL ≤05% SWD 92% African American ≤05% Caucasian ≤05% Hispanic	William Penn School District	Vision Academy Charter School

*Closed and/or Attempted Schools*

Truebright Science Academy 407 E Roosevelt Blvd. Philadelphia, PA 19120	7-12 2007-2015 Failure to meet academic requirements		School District of Philadelphia	Truebright Science Academy Charter School
Snowdrop Elementary School 233 Seaman Lane Monroeville, PA 15146	2005-2009 Low enrollment		Private School	Snowdrop School
Academy of Business and Entrepreneurship Charter School	Application denied in 2014 for failure to show school would provide a complete learning experience, insufficient special education planning, develop teachers, lack of community support.		School District of Lancaster	
Erie Biosciences Academy	Application denied in 2013 due to safety concerns with the facility and curriculum concerns.		Millcreek Township School District	
Allentown Engineering Academy Charter School	Application denied in 2012 and 2013 due to low community support, potentially inappropriate admissions policy, and failure to show a comprehensive learning experience.		Allentown School District	
Allentown Science Academy	Application denied in 2011 due to a lack of community support, concerns about teaching staff, academic rigor, and a lack of passion.		Allentown School District	Allentown Science Charter School, Inc.



School	Operation	Student Demographic Information*	Authorizer	Governing Board
Lancaster Science Academy	Application denied in 2008 for curriculum issues, underfunding, and inability to meet the needs of special education and ELL students.		School District of Lancaster	
Capital Academy of Harrisburg	Application denied in 2006 due to a lack of community support, failure to provide a comprehensive learning experience, lack of quality curriculum, an insufficient financial plan, and failure to comply with charter law.		Harrisburg School District	
Lehigh College Prep Charter School	Application denied in 2006 and 2009; denied in 2009 application due to a lack of sustainable support.		Allentown School District	
Erie Biosciences Academy	Application denied in 2013 due to safety concerns with the facility and curriculum concerns.		Millcreek Township School District	
Young Scholars of Central Pennsylvania Bellefonte	Application denied in 2006 due to lack of strategy, lack of facility, and impractical assumptions		Bellefonte Area School District	

\*Student demographic information was taken from the 2015-2016 school year. "ELL" indicates English Language Learners, "FRL" indicates students receiving free/reduced lunch, and "SWD" indicates students with disabilities.<sup>33</sup>

## A History of Strategic Ambiguity and Conflicting Interests

Fethullah Gülen moved to Pennsylvania in 1999 and lives at the Golden Generation Worship and Retreat Center in Saylorsburg, Pennsylvania.<sup>34</sup> Although the United States Citizenship and Immigration Service denied Gülen's bid for a visa as an "alien of extraordinary ability in education," Gülen countered by

claiming his followers "had established more than 600 educational institutions" worldwide.<sup>35</sup> Gülen eventually earned a greed card and has remained in Pennsylvania since.

Despite Gülen's presence within Pennsylvania since 1999, the first Gülen charter school in

<sup>33</sup> Student enrollment and demographic information available through open records request responses from the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

<sup>34</sup> Abigail Hauslohner, Karen DeYoung & Valeria Strauss, He's 77, Frail and Lives in Pennsylvania. Turkey Says He's a Coup Mastermind, WASHINGTON POST (Aug. 3, 2016), available at: <http://tinyurl.com/ktrszcp> (last checked 5/12/2017).

<sup>35</sup> Greg Toppo, Objectives of Charter Schools with Turkish Ties Questioned, USA TODAY (Aug. 17, 2010), available at: <http://tinyurl.com/k9tnyqj> (last checked 5/12/2017).

Pennsylvania, YSCP, did not open until 2005. Snowdrop Elementary School ("Snowdrop"), a private school operated by the West Penn Cultural Center, also opened in 2005. It closed in 2009, but not before the school and cultural center applied for 26 H-1B visas for Gülenist employees.<sup>36</sup> After Snowdrop closed, YSWP opened in 2011, YSM opened in 2015, and Vision Academy opened in 2015.

Each charter school is associated with its own corporate entity. This has led to a variety of names for Gülenist schools and charter applications including: Young Scholars, Truebright, Allentown Science Academy, Lancaster Science Academy, and the Academy of Business and Entrepreneurship, among others. As bad press about the schools has spread, the use of multiple names and brands allows for the possibility that applicants can avoid association with the existing schools and prior applications.<sup>37</sup> Notably, three of the schools bear the name of "Young Scholars," a name which is also used by another non-Gülenist network of charter schools in Pennsylvania.<sup>38</sup> We believe these tactics help obscure Gülenist activity and connections within the state.

While the PA network use different names and are governed by separate entities, the interconnections between these schools and governing boards are easily identified by following

the trajectory and involvement of certain key Gülenists throughout the state. For example, Riza Ulker started as the Early Childhood Coordinator for YSCP in 2005, but in the same year also registered the name "Snowdrop School," used by a technically separate private Gülenist school in PA.<sup>39</sup> By 2009, Ulker served as the principal for the now closed Truebright Science Academy.<sup>40</sup> In 2011, he filed the application to open the Allentown Science Academy, which was later denied.<sup>41</sup>

Like Ulker, Alpaslan Ozdogan's career spans the Gülenist charter schools within PA. He worked first as the Dean of Academics at YSCP before moving to become the CEO of YSWP, YSCP's "sister school."<sup>42</sup> Despite this reference and the fact that both entities share employees, board members, and the same Gülenist landlord, the board president of YSWP denied the existence of "formal ties" between Turkish-led charter schools in 2011.<sup>43</sup> Alpaslan Ozdogan also claimed his only connection to Fethullah Gülen was that he'd read his books and was inspired by them.<sup>44</sup> Ozdogan would later serve as the spokesperson for YSM's charter application, which was approved.<sup>45</sup> Similarly, Bekir Duz, the CEO of Truebright Science Academy denied any connections with other Gülen charter schools. In arguing that Truebright was an independent school, he downplayed the fact that 10 of the school's 32 administrators and teachers had worked at Gülenist charters across

<sup>36</sup> Andrew Conte, Imam Who Lives in Rural Pennsylvania Arouses Praise, Concerns, TRIBLIVE (Nov. 28, 2010), available at: <http://tinyurl.com/m4xbc68> (last checked 4/30/2017); Snowdrop Elementary School and West Penn Cultural Center visa applications available at: <http://tinyurl.com/ldow894>, <http://tinyurl.com/kedyg4b>, <http://tinyurl.com/jvo2x9a> (last checked 4/17/2017).

<sup>37</sup> See "Notable Articles regarding the Pennsylvania Network," *infra*.

<sup>38</sup> Young Scholars Charter School available at <http://tinyurl.com/lo8rbb9>; 2016-2017 Charter Schools available at <http://tinyurl.com/mtnlxnp>.

<sup>39</sup> YSCP 2005 990 available at <http://tinyurl.com/l2wgovh>; Pennsylvania Department of State records available at <http://tinyurl.com/z6ogbfd>.

<sup>40</sup> Truebright Science Academy 2009 990 available at <http://tinyurl.com/kqzadea>.

<sup>41</sup> Steve Esack, *Allentown School Directs Question Charter School Applicant's Ties to Gülen Movement*, THE MORNING CALL (Dec. 10, 2012) available at: <http://tinyurl.com/l9fxrbs> (last checked 4/12/2017).

<sup>42</sup> Stephanie Hacke, *Charter School Brings Some Controversy to Baldwin Township*, TRIB LIVE (Oct. 13, 2011), available at <http://tinyurl.com/lcqjnu> (last checked 4/12/2017); Mary Niederberger and Rich Lord, *Some Practices Questioned at Baldwin Charter School*, PITTSBURGH POST-GAZETTE (Sep. 4, 2011), available at: <http://tinyurl.com/ky9bx7v> (last checked 4/12/2017).

<sup>43</sup> Niederberger, *Some Practices Questioned at Baldwin Charter School*, *supra*.

<sup>44</sup> Hacke, *Charter School Brings Some Controversy to Baldwin Township*, *supra*.

<sup>45</sup> *Young Scholars of McKeesport Charter School v. McKeesport Area School District*, No. 2013-14, at 24 (Charter App. Bd. Mar. 6, 2015), available at: <http://tinyurl.com/kkd8qlj> (last checked 4/26/2017).



the country.<sup>46</sup> This is the hallmark of strategic ambiguity—denying and attempting to obscure the existence of unambiguous affiliation with each other and Gülen himself.

A review of Gülen charter schools' legal and other filings in Pennsylvania suggest that they are extraordinarily litigious, with several cases stretching out for years and draining limited school district resources. Local school districts initially denied the applications for YSWP, YSM, and Vision Academy. Each school had to appeal to the Pennsylvania's Charter Appeals Board for permission to open the schools.<sup>47</sup> For example, the McKeesport School District denied YSM's original application in 2012 and revised application in 2013.<sup>48</sup> The district found the school lacked community support, failed to provide a comprehensive learning experience, and would not serve as a model for future schools. The William Penn School District initially denied Vision Academy's application in 2013 for the same reasons. The school district attempted to deny the charter application a second time in 2015 when the school's facility would not be ready in time. Vision secured a temporary facility and again successfully appealed the denial of its application.<sup>49</sup>

Likewise, the School District of Philadelphia had to litigate the closure of Truebright Science

Academy from 2012 through 2015.<sup>50</sup> The school district refused to renew the Truebright's charter on the basis of the school's academic performance, the teacher's qualifications, concerns about teacher discrimination, and low enrollment.<sup>51</sup> Prior to the denial of the charter renewal, nine teachers filed hiring complaints against the school in 2011, alleging that the school hired and promoted unqualified Turkish nationals over more-experienced and certified American teachers.<sup>52</sup> With the charter renewal appeal pending, the school purged its staff of American instructors. The teachers released included many of the teachers that previously filed complaints alleging they were paid less than non-certified Turkish employees.<sup>53</sup> During the renewal process, Truebright had Rev. James Wright, Sr., the president of the Truebright PTA read an erroneous statement, claiming that 97% of its first senior class graduated in June 2011. In reality, only 33 of 50 students that started at the school in ninth grade stayed to receive diplomas. Rev. Wright summed up the lack of transparency with Gülen charter schools: "We are in the dark in terms of knowing factual information. Until you get transparency . . . and you get a level playing field with these guys, we are still pulling at straws."<sup>54</sup>

Due to PA's forgiving charter laws and robust appeals process for denied petitioners, school districts ultimately were forced to spend time

<sup>46</sup> Martha Woodall, *Allegations Raised over N. Phila. Charter School Run by Followers of Turkish Imam*, THE INQUIRER (Apr. 19, 2012), available at <http://tinyurl.com/nysuuuy> (last checked 4/15/2017).

<sup>47</sup> In re Young Scholars of Western PA Charter School, No. CAB-2010-03 (Pa. Charter School Appeal Board Oct. 1, 2010), available at: <http://tinyurl.com/kfysf3d> (last checked 4/17/2017); In re Young Scholars of McKeesport Charter School, No. CAB-2013-14 (Pa. Charter School Appeal Board Mar. 6, 2015), available at: <http://tinyurl.com/kkd8qlj> (last checked 4/17/2017); In re Vision Academy Charter School, No. CAB-2013-05 (Pa. Charter School Appeal Board Nov. 13, 2014), available at: <http://tinyurl.com/k228b5f> (last checked 4/17/2017); In re Vision Academy Charter School, No. CAB-2015-03 (Pa. Charter School Appeal Board June 17, 2015), available at: <http://tinyurl.com/k3ard2k> (last checked 4/17/2017).

<sup>48</sup> In re Young Scholars of McKeesport Charter School, No. CAB-2013-14 (Pa. Charter School Appeal Board Mar. 6, 2015), available at: <http://tinyurl.com/kkd8qlj> (last checked 4/17/2017).

<sup>49</sup> In re Vision Academy Charter School, No. CAB-2013-05 (Pa. Charter School Appeal Board Nov. 13, 2014), available at: <http://tinyurl.com/k228b5f> (last checked 4/17/2017); In re Vision Academy Charter School, No. CAB-2015-03 (Pa. Charter School Appeal Board June 17, 2015), available at: <http://tinyurl.com/k3ard2k> (last checked 4/17/2017).

<sup>50</sup> Martha Woodall, *Appeals Court Orders Truebright Charter to Close*, THE INQUIRER (May 6, 2015), available at <http://tinyurl.com/kx5nf7p> (last checked 4/15/2017).

<sup>51</sup> School District of Philadelphia Meeting of the School Reform Commission (Oct. 17, 2013), available at: <http://tinyurl.com/kjbxnbb> (last checked 4/15/2017).

<sup>52</sup> Laura Benshoff, *Philly's Truebright Charter Appeals Shutdown Order to Pennsylvania Commonwealth Court*, NewsWorks (Jan. 29, 2015), available at <http://tinyurl.com/l9kpslj> (last checked 4/15/2017).

<sup>53</sup> Martha Woodall, *Days Before Its Charter Hearing, Truebright Fired 8 Teachers*, THE INQUIRER (July 4, 2012), available at <http://tinyurl.com/n3dzcp> (last checked 4/15/2017).

<sup>54</sup> Martha Woodall, *Allegations Raised over N. Phila. Charter School Run by Followers of Turkish Imam*, supra.

and resources denying charter applications multiple times. For example, the Millcreek Township School District denied Erie Biosciences Academy's application twice in 2013.<sup>55</sup> The Allentown School District has denied at least five different applications under three different names: Allentown Engineering Academy Charter School in 2012 and 2013; the Allentown Science Academy in 2011; and Lehigh College Prep Charter School in 2006 and 2009.<sup>56</sup> The School District of Lancaster denied the application for Lancaster Science Academy in 2008 and the Academy of Business and Entrepreneurship Charter School ("ABECS") application in 2013 and 2014.<sup>57</sup> The School District of Lancaster openly criticized ABECS for submitting the same application multiple times. The tenacity of the Gülenists in PA may be in part due to Gülen's nearby presence within the state.

Our research has revealed that Gülenist applicants have also used other questionable tactics, including suspected fraud and forgery, to create the appearance of community support. ABECS was caught using form letters, letters from Gülenist founders and family members, letters of support from a previous application, and letters from outside the Lancaster School District to inflate the community support for the school. The Gülenist applicants went door to door and harassed individuals for letters of support. Thirteen businesses—including Loomis Company and Capital BlueCross—rescinded

letters of support for ABECS after learning low-level employees signed the letters instead of the businesses' actual owners or decision makers.<sup>58</sup> Hearings on ABECS became heated, with applicant Sait Onal accusing a parent of lying and verbally accosting another parent in 2013.<sup>59</sup>

As discussed below, Gülenist applicants even use some of these suspect tactics in court cases. Pennsylvania courts have found serious issues with the petitions supporting Gülen charter schools. Three cases have found issues such as fraudulent signatures, signatures with common authorship, illegible signatures, signatures from individuals outside the appropriate school district, and duplicate signatures inflated the number of legitimate signatures in support of the schools. In two cases, the courts found the applicants' did not have enough signatures to appeal the charter denials. In the third case, the applicants had enough legitimate signatures to appeal the denial of the charter application. The Charter Appeals Board, however, affirmed the denial of the charter application.<sup>60</sup>

Like its regional sister networks, the PA network uses the Gülenist-controlled Apple Educational Services as a vendor for its student information systems. Apple has come under fire in other states for its abusive property arrangements that systematically exploit Gülenist charter schools by charging exorbitant rates. YSWP, YSM, and Vision all feature student information system log-ins bearing the trademark of Apple

<sup>55</sup> Erica Erwin, *Charter School's Petition Ruled Invalid*, GoERIE.COM (Oct. 1, 2014), available at <http://tinyurl.com/lo4rzhx> (last checked 4/16/2017).

<sup>56</sup> Adam Clark, Allentown School Board Again Rejects Science/Technology Charter School, THE MORNING CALL (Feb. 28, 2013), available at <http://tinyurl.com/mtseyan> (last checked 4/15/2017); In re Allentown Engineering Academy Charter School, No. CAB-2014-01 (Pa. Charter School Appeal Board Oct. 30, 2014), available at: <http://tinyurl.com/kzbtmyq> (last checked 4/17/2017); Matt Shelosky, Charter School One Step Closer to Approval, WFMZ (Feb. 10, 2011), available at: <http://tinyurl.com/k83cj6r> (last checked 4/17/2017); Steve Esack, *Allentown School Directors Question Charter School Applicant's Ties to Gülen Movement*, THE MORNING CALL (Dec. 16, 2012) available at: <http://tinyurl.com/l9fxrbs> (last checked 4/15/2017).

<sup>57</sup> Kara Newhouse, School District of Lancaster Rejects Charter School, Approves Preliminary Budget, LANCASTER ONLINE (Feb. 18, 2014), available at: <http://tinyurl.com/n4cpf5b> (last checked 4/17/2017); In re Applicants for Acad. of Bus. & Entrepreneurship Charter Sch., No. CI-14-06095 (Pa. Ct. Common Pleas Dec. 18, 2015), available at <http://tinyurl.com/lmdoojk> (last checked 4/16/2017).

<sup>58</sup> Decision of the Board of School Directors of the School District of Lancaster Denying the Requested Charter of ABECS, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/mxor3pa> (last checked 4/14/2017).

<sup>59</sup> Brian Wallace, *Police Called to Wild School Board Hearing on Charter School Proposal*, LANCASTERONLINE (Feb. 20, 2013), available at <http://tinyurl.com/m8znjd8> (last checked 4/15/2017).

<sup>60</sup> See Scandals, Investigations & Notable Activities, *infra*.

Educational Services, Inc.<sup>61</sup> The Apple website was recently re-designed and scrubbed of information linking Apple to Gülenist charter schools in the Northeast. According to archived information from the website, however, the Apple website showed that YSCP was also affiliated with Apple.<sup>62</sup>

Like Concept Schools and New Plan Learning in the Midwestern region, the PA network leases from a related Gülenist landlord entity, Dream Schools, Inc. and its subsidiary Newport Drive Properties, both established by PA network founders. We believe this allows the Gülen Organization to purchase and hold title to properties financed by public funds siphoned from

its captive charter school customer base. Both YSCP and YSWP lease facilities from Dream Schools, Inc. Riza Ulker and Bulent Tarman, two of the PA founders, served as officers of Dream Schools, Inc. while both simultaneously served on the board of YSCP. Melih Demirkan, who has served as the president of YSWP from 2012 to the present, previously served on the board of Dream Schools, Inc. from 2008-2009. Omer Gul served as both treasurer of YSCP and vice-president of Dream Schools, Inc. in 2010.<sup>63</sup> These connections constitute clear conflicts of interest on the part of YSCP, and, as the state auditor of Pennsylvania has found, give the appearance of circular leasing arrangements.<sup>64</sup>

## Financial Issues

Pennsylvania requires its charter schools to undergo annual audits. Only a few of the audits—most of them several years old—are publicly posted. The lack of required public disclosure makes it easier for schools like YSCP, YSWP, YSM, and Vision Academy to hide financial and procurement issues with the schools. The available audits showcase a series of ongoing financial issues at the charter schools that are endemic to other Gülen Organization charter networks. On the whole, these issues demonstrate a lack of financial controls, documentation, and transparency that are critical to obscuring the true use of state and federal funds by Gülen Organization charter networks. While the PA network does not engage in borrowing and lending between schools, a practice seen in other more developed Gülen charter networks, YSWP did take loans from its Turkish governing board members, which it then had to pay back.<sup>65</sup> The Pennsylvania Auditor General also audited YSCP in 2013 and found certification deficiencies for teachers and possible ethics act violations.

The numerous audit findings occur across multiple years and at multiple schools, including:

- ▶ Lack of Compliance with Required Financial Procedures and Accounting Standards:
  - ▷ Failure to properly segregate financial duties;
  - ▷ Necessity of material adjustments to YSWP's records;
  - ▷ Altered check dates by YSWP to move expenses into subsequent fiscal years; and
  - ▷ Lack of a fixed asset tagging system.
- ▶ Teacher Qualification Issues:
  - ▷ Non-compliance with Pennsylvania's requirement that 75% of professional staff have state certification;
  - ▷ Non-compliance with Pennsylvania's principal certification requirement.

<sup>61</sup> Student Information Log-In, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/lxmdt55> (YSWP); <http://tinyurl.com/mr23llv> (YSM); <http://tinyurl.com/ms5bvo6> (Vision).

<sup>62</sup> YSCP participated in Apple-hosted math contests in 2010, 2011, and 2012. Apple Educational Services, Events, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/m3rf8rp>; <http://tinyurl.com/myn5jts>; <http://tinyurl.com/mcy4ecu> (last checked 4/28/2017).

<sup>63</sup> Tax returns for these entities are available at: <http://tinyurl.com/lz23php> (YSCP); <http://tinyurl.com/n5rm35q> (YSWP); <http://tinyurl.com/luskcjd> (Dream Schools); <http://tinyurl.com/katm6xo> (Newport Drive Properties).

<sup>64</sup> Auditor General of Pennsylvania, March 2013 YSCP Audit, available at <http://tinyurl.com/k8xjhtz> (last checked 4/14/2017).

<sup>65</sup> YSWP, 2012 990, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/n5rm35q> (last checked 4/17/2017).



- ▶ Possible Ethics Act Violations:
  - ▷ Common officers between YSCP and its landlord that did not disclose their overlapping financial interests.
- ▶ Inappropriate Lending Between Entities:
  - ▷ Loans to YSWP from governing board members.<sup>66</sup>

Additionally, tax returns for YSCP show large expenses for property and professional services.

YSCP paid \$440,248 for professional services and \$607,431 for property services in 2014-15; \$343,195 for professional services and \$628,578 for property services in 2013-14; and \$320,482 for professional services and \$594,202 for property services in 2012-13.<sup>67</sup> These payments warrant further scrutiny to determine if YSCP diverted public funds to related Gülenist vendors like Apple for justifiable expenses.

## Bond Financing

As of July 10, 2016, Dream Schools, Inc. was in the process of obtaining bond financing for the construction costs of expanding YSCP.<sup>68</sup> This situation should be monitored as bond financing

greatly increases the hold of a Gülenist charter network within a state. As of the publication of this report, no bonds financing Gülen charter schools in Pennsylvania had been finalized.

## Real Estate

The Young Scholars network engages in the same type of dubious leasing arrangements utilized by the Concept network and its affiliated real estate arm, New Plan Learning, throughout the Midwest; the Harmony network and its affiliated real estate arm, Charter School Solutions, in Texas; and the Dove Science network in Oklahoma. This model of real estate dealing depends on a related entity, also controlled by Turkish Gülenists, acquiring land and facilities and leasing it back to the Gülenist charter network at unjustified premiums. The Gülenist landlord entity is often included on major bond financing on behalf of the Gülen Organization charter network. Currently, there is no bond financing for any of the Pennsylvania schools. But the affiliated landlord entity of YSCP and YSWP, Dream Schools, Inc., sought bond financing for

construction costs at YSCP as recently as July 10, 2016.<sup>69</sup> The schools affected are YSCP and YSWP thus far.

The Pennsylvania Auditor General has already criticized YSCP for this “circular leasing arrangement” and associated conflict of interests.<sup>70</sup> These overlapping interests constituted possible ethics act violations. The Auditor General highlighted that two board members (Bulent Tarman and Riza Ulker) of YSCP did not disclose their roles as president and vice president of Dream Schools, Inc. Bulent Tarman even served as the CEO of YSCP from June 23, 2006, through 2009.<sup>71</sup>

Similar relationships exist with YSWP. The president of the YSWP board, Mehmet Melih

<sup>66</sup> Audits available at: <http://tinyurl.com/koo7wzz> and <http://tinyurl.com/k8xjhtz> (last checked 4/13/2017). YSWP and YSCP audits available through public records requests.

<sup>67</sup> YSCP 990s available at: <http://tinyurl.com/l8aaxgu> (last checked 4/17/17).

<sup>68</sup> Britney Milazzo, *Young Scholars Expansion Plans Underway*, CENTRE DAILY TIMES (July 10, 2016), available at <http://tinyurl.com/l7dyd7h> (last checked 4/12/2017).

<sup>69</sup> Id.

<sup>70</sup> Auditor General of Pennsylvania, March 2013 YSCP Audit, available at <http://tinyurl.com/k8xjhtz> (last checked 4/14/2017).

<sup>71</sup> Tax returns for these entities are available at: <http://tinyurl.com/lz23php> (YSCP); <http://tinyurl.com/luskcjd> (Dream Schools).

Demirkan, served as treasurer of Dream Schools, Inc. in 2008 while he served as president of YSWP from 2008 through the present. During that time, YSWP has leased facilities from Newport Drive Properties, a subsidiary of Dream Schools, Inc.<sup>72</sup>

Both schools have made significant rental payments to Dream Schools and Newport Drive Properties:

School Year	YSCP Lease Costs (Paid to Dream Schools, Inc.)	YSWP Lease Costs (Paid to Newport Drive Properties)
2015-16	\$466,416.00	\$401,049.96
2014-15	\$453,564.96	\$370,200.00
2013-14	\$447,085.50	\$370,200.00
2012-13	\$419,654.93	\$268,380.00
2011-12	Unknown	\$172,778.00
2010-11	\$310,200.00	
2009-10	\$310,200.00	
2008-09	\$291,566.00	
2007-08	\$181,863.00	

Dream Schools purchased the YSCP property in 2007 for \$680,000, and from 2007-2016, has collected approximately \$3.2 million in rent from the school. This represents a \$2.5 million net profit at the school's expense, orchestrated by the school's own founders and leadership overlapping with the landlord. Similarly, Dream Schools via Newport Drive Properties bought the YSWP property for \$800,000 in 2011. From 2011-2016, it has already collected \$1.5 million. Assuming both these schools paid the same rent for the 2016-17 school year as they did for the prior year, Dream Schools has made a net profit of \$4.15 million on the PA network's expense.

YSWP also advanced funds to Newport Drive Properties to allow the landlord to renovate YSWP's parking lot in exchange for rent abatements through 2020. Essentially, YSWP financed

the parking lot renovation for its own landlord. If YSWP is able to pay the costs for its facility by itself, the benefits of using a middle-man like Newport Drive Properties to hold title are suspect. The arrangement allows YSWP to fund the costs of the facilities while the improved property remains in the hands of Newport Drive Properties and the Gülen Organization if the school's charter contract is revoked or non-renewed.

In spite of Dream Schools, Inc.'s ongoing role as landlord for YSWP and YSCP, Sait Onal—the corporation's secretary—declared the company "inactive."<sup>73</sup>

The other two Pennsylvania schools, YSM and Vision Academy, lease facilities from apparently unrelated entities.

## Excessive Use of the H-1B Visa Program

Like other Gülen Organization charter networks, the PA network utilizes the H-1B visa program to immigrate large numbers of

Turkish Gülenists into the United States for employment in the schools and network. From 2001-2016, these schools have filed 106 H-1B visa

<sup>72</sup> Tax returns for these entities are available at: <http://tinyurl.com/n5rm35q> (YSWP); <http://tinyurl.com/luskcjd> (Dream Schools); <http://tinyurl.com/katm6xo> (Newport Drive Properties).

<sup>73</sup> Gil Smart, *Charter School Friends, Foes Air Their Feelings*, LANCASTERONLINE (Mar. 3, 2013), available at <http://tinyurl.com/krvpzwm> (last checked 4/15/2017).

applications for foreign workers.<sup>74</sup> Bekir Duz, the CEO of Truebright Science Academy, took offense in 2012 to inquiries about the school's use of H-1B visas. He claimed the inquiries had a racial motivation and disclaimed any knowledge of whether teachers had to pay a percentage of their income to Gülenist organizations.<sup>75</sup> Although the Gülenists state that these visas are used to attract foreign workers with math, science, and technological backgrounds, these schools filed H-1B applications to fill such positions as: English teachers, principals, business/operations managers, education administrators, instructional/program development coordinators, financial/business analysts, college prep coordinators/counselors, school counselors, middle and elementary school teachers, social and community service managers, and community program directors.

Pennsylvania schools use the same immigration attorneys to file and process their H-1B applications as other known Gülen Organization charter networks, vendors, and cultural associations, indicating once again the existence of an overall network. For example:

**Remzi Kulen:** The PA network used Kulen, a New York-based attorney, to file numerous H-1B applications. Kulen also filed applications for:

- ▶ Concept Schools (OH, IL, MO, IN, MI, MN)
- ▶ Horizon Science (OH, IL)
- ▶ Noble Academy (OH)
- ▶ Gateway (MO)

- ▶ Pioneer (MA)
- ▶ Niagara Foundation (IL)
- ▶ Golden Generation Worship & Retreat Center (PA)
- ▶ Blue Ocean Construction (FL)
- ▶ Academy of Science, Syracuse, Buffalo (NY)
- ▶ Arts and Science, Bergen, Passaic (NJ)
- ▶ Beehive (UT)<sup>76</sup>

**Seth Leech:** The PA network used Leech, a New York-based attorney, to file numerous H-1B applications. Leech also filed applications for:

- ▶ Little Scholars (AR)
- ▶ Pioneer (MA)
- ▶ Hampden (MA)
- ▶ Academy of Science, Syracuse, Buffalo, Utica (NY)
- ▶ Paterson Science and Technology; Central Jersey College Prep Charter School (NJ)<sup>77</sup>

**Leonard D'arrigo:** The PA network used D'arrigo, a New York-based attorney, to file numerous H-1B applications. D'arrigo also filed applications for:

- ▶ Cosmos Foundation, Inc. (TX)

<sup>74</sup> In another example of strategic ambiguity, the schools use several different versions of their names to make it difficult to aggregate how many H-1B applications they are filing. The sum total of all of their organizations (including closed schools) is 106, and the numbers supporting that total are located at the following links: from 2001-2015, <http://tinyurl.com/lwyp9ov> (21); <http://tinyurl.com/koqky2z> (2); <http://tinyurl.com/lly8drk> (1); <http://tinyurl.com/mlhg4fg> (6); <http://tinyurl.com/lmwj4b2> (9); <http://tinyurl.com/k3jwqgr> (1); <http://tinyurl.com/l6ugqvd> (27); <http://tinyurl.com/ldow894> (11); <http://tinyurl.com/l7qmmwd> (6); <http://tinyurl.com/kedyg4b> (9). For 2016, refer to the 2016 data on the US DOL website, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/zm5dvec> (last checked 1/30/2017).

<sup>75</sup> Martha Woodall, *Allegations raised over N. Phila. Charter School Run by Followers of Turkish Imam*, THE INQUIRER (Apr. 19, 2012), available at <http://tinyurl.com/nysuuuy> (last checked 4/12/2017).

<sup>76</sup> List of entities represented by Remzi Kulen, available at <http://tinyurl.com/gptwx5x> (last checked 4/14/2017).

<sup>77</sup> List of entities represented by Seth Leech, available at <http://tinyurl.com/zlc7eq1> (last checked 4/14/2017).



- ▶ Central Jersey College Prep Charter School (NJ)
- ▶ Millenium Education Foundation (now Frontier) (MO)
- ▶ Hampden (MA)
- ▶ Academy of Science, Syracuse (NY)
- ▶ Arts and Science, Bergen (NJ)<sup>78</sup>

## Scandals, Investigations & Notable Activities

Gülen charter schools in Pennsylvania have been involved in numerous lawsuits highlighting these schools' lack of transparency.

### **Illegitimate Signatures on Community Petitions Supporting Charter School Applications:**

Under Pennsylvania law, applicants may only appeal a charter denial if they collect signatures of at least 2% of the district's residents or 1,000 residents of the school district, whichever is less.<sup>79</sup> Applicants for the ABECS, Capital Academy of Harrisburg, and Erie Biosciences Academy appealed charter denials using this mechanism. In all three cases courts found significant issues with the collected signatures. For example, signatures on the petitions came from non-residents of the appropriate districts, lacked dates, lacked complete identifying information, or had information completed by a person other than the signer. Signatures were illegible, duplicative, and forged. Individuals that collect these signatures must sign affidavits attesting that they live in the appropriate school district and the collected signatures are valid. ABECS had a person that lived outside the School District of Lancaster collect signatures; one person collecting signatures for Erie Biosciences

Academy did not recognize 21 pages of signatures associated with her affidavit. In the ABECS and Erie Biosciences Academy cases, there were not enough legitimate signatures to proceed. Although the Capital Academy of Harrisburg court found enough signatures legitimate for its appeal to proceed, the Charter Appeals Board still affirmed the denial of the application.<sup>80</sup> These cases highlight the drastic lengths Gülen charter applicants will go to open new schools and the costs to authorizers that must scrutinize the applications.<sup>81</sup>

**Closure of Truebright Science Academy and Allegations of Discrimination:** Truebright Science Academy closed in 2015 due to academic underperformance. In the hearings that led to the non-renewal of the Truebright charter, the school district questioned administrators about erroneous data reporting.<sup>82</sup> Reports emerged that the school was under federal investigation, and staff reported that school officials shredded documents and removed security cameras.<sup>83</sup>

Before the school closed, nine teachers also filed employment complaints, alleging that the school discriminated against certified, American-born teachers and paid higher salaries

<sup>78</sup> List of entities represented by Leonard D'arrigo, available at <http://tinyurl.com/kcb3kjq> (last checked 4/14/2017).

<sup>79</sup> 24 Pa. Stat. § 17-1717-A(i).

<sup>80</sup> In re Capital Academy Charter School, No. CAB 2007-02 (Pa. Charter App. Bd. Apr. 14, 2009), available at: <http://tinyurl.com/n2kbh3j> (last checked 4/14/2017).

<sup>81</sup> Capital Acad. Charter Sch. v. Harrisburg Sch. Dist., 934 A.2d 189 (Pa. Commw. Ct. 2007); In re Applicants for Acad. of Bus. & Entrepreneurship Charter Sch., No. 1033 C.D. 2016, 2017 WL 1056403 (Pa. Commw. Ct. Mar. 21, 2017); In re Applicants for Acad. of Bus. & Entrepreneurship Charter Sch., No. CI-14-06095 (Pa. Ct. Common Pleas Dec. 18, 2015), available at <http://tinyurl.com/lmdoojk> (last checked 4/16/2017); Erica Erwin, *Charter School's Petition Ruled Invalid*, GoERIE.COM (Oct. 1, 2014), available at <http://tinyurl.com/lo4rzhx> (last checked 4/16/2017).

<sup>82</sup> Oscar Wang, *SRC Votes Not to Renew Three Charters*, NEWSWORKS (Apr. 19, 2012), available at <http://tinyurl.com/lna3po5> (last checked 4/15/2017).

<sup>83</sup> Martha Woodall, *Allegations Raised over N. Phila. Charter School Run by Followers of Turkish Imam*, THE INQUIRER (Apr. 19, 2012), available at <http://tinyurl.com/nysuuuy> (last checked 4/15/2017).

to non-certified Turkish nationals.<sup>84</sup> With the school's renewal decision pending, the school fired eight teachers, all of whom were U.S. citizens and many of whom had previously filed discrimination complaints.<sup>85</sup> One American teacher kept her job and later filed a lawsuit against Truebright alleging discrimination.<sup>86</sup> At the time of her lawsuit, she alleged that she had six years of experience and earned a salary of \$42,000. But Mehmet Yaramis, a Turkish male teacher with only three years of experience, earned a salary of \$49,500. She also alleged that the school violated Title IX, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, and less-qualified male Turkish nationals received promotions at her expense.<sup>87</sup> The parties settled the action out of court; the court dismissed it on May 10, 2013.<sup>88</sup>

**Charter Renewal for YSCP:** In 2010, the State College Area School District conditionally renewed the charter for YSCP due to ongoing concerns about teacher and administrator certification, the experience of lead teachers, and compliance with Pennsylvania's Sunshine Act. During the renewal process, the school had to address issues and concerns common to all Gülen charter schools. For example, the school had to address the following concerns raised during the renewal process:

- ▶ teachers and administrators lacked the appropriate certifications;
- ▶ the school under-delivered on its promises of providing technology and resources to students, and the school under-delivered on its curriculum and education promises;

- ▶ special education was haphazard and the school failed to follow IEPs
- ▶ the school lacked procedures to evaluate and develop administrators and teachers
- ▶ teachers received fewer benefits than promised in the charter;
- ▶ the school failed to involve parents in the school's administration; and
- ▶ the school failed to comply with Pennsylvania's Sunshine Act.

**Opinions Highlighting Schools' Refusals to Provide Documents under Pennsylvania's Sunshine Act:** YSCP, YSWP, and Truebright have all refused to turn over public records under open records requests. The requestors had to appeal to Pennsylvania's Open Records Office to require the schools to disclose the records.<sup>89</sup> These problems are endemic to Gülen charter schools, which are frequently cited for violations of open records and open meetings laws.

**Student Bullying and Criticism of YSWP by Baldwin Whitehall School District:** In 2017, the Baldwin-Whitehall School District received several complaints about parents regarding bullying at YSWP. According to the complaints received by the school district, YSWP did not adequately respond to parents' concerns, necessitating police involvement and creating the impression that parents did not feel heard by the school. YSWP also failed to respond to the school district's inquiries, and the school district stated it would bring the matter to the attention of the PA

<sup>84</sup> Laura Benshoff, *Philly's Truebright Charter Appeals Shutdown Order to Pennsylvania Commonwealth Court*, NEWSWORKS (Jan. 29, 2015), available at <http://tinyurl.com/l9kpslj> (last checked 4/15/2017).

<sup>85</sup> Martha Woodall, *Days Before Its Charter Hearing, Truebright Fired 8 Teachers*, THE INQUIRER (July 4, 2012), available at <http://tinyurl.com/n3dzcp> (last checked 4/15/2017).

<sup>86</sup> Jalon v. Truebright Science Academy Charter School, No. 2: 13-cv-01011-BMS (E.D. Pa. Feb. 25, 2013).

<sup>87</sup> Id.

<sup>88</sup> Jalon v. Truebright Science Academy Charter School, No. 2: 13-cv-01011-BMS (E.D. Pa. May 10, 2013), ECF #10.

<sup>89</sup> In re Penn. School Boards Ass'n v. Truebright Science Academy, 2015 WL 4395328 (Pa. Off. Open Rec. July 15, 2015); In re Penn. School Boards Ass'n v. Young Scholars of Western Penn. Charter School, 2015 WL 4385425 (Pa. Off. Open Rec. July 13, 2015); In re Lakatos v. Young Scholars of Central Penn. Charter School, 2010 WL 2128755 (Pa. Off. Open Rec. Feb. 8, 2010); In re Hocker v. Young Scholars of Central Penn. Charter School, 2009 WL 6503941 (Pa. Off. Open Rec. Dec. 17, 2009).

Dept. of Education and the local solicitor.

## Notable Turkish Vendors

► **Apple Educational Services, Inc.**

**(Apple):** Apple is connected to the Gülen charter schools in Pennsylvania, though ties to the regional oversight entity are more difficult to trace in the northeast than in other regions. YSWP, YSM, and Vision all feature student information system log-ins bearing the trademark of Apple Educational Services, Inc.<sup>90</sup> Adem Oksuz, the first CEO of Vision Academy, worked at Apple for over a year in 2012-2013.<sup>91</sup> The Apple website was recently re-designed and scrubbed of information linking Apple to Gülenist charter schools in the northeast. But before the redesign, the Apple website showed that YSCP participated in Apple-hosted math contests in 2010, 2011, and 2012.<sup>92</sup> Tax returns for YSCP show large expenses for property and professional services. YSCP paid \$440,248 for professional services and \$607,431 for property services in 2014-15; \$343,195 for professional

services and \$628,578 for property services in 2013-14; and \$320,482 for professional services and \$594,202 for property services in 2012-13.<sup>93</sup> The size and description of these payments mirror payments made to regional oversight entities in the Western and Midwestern regions (Accord and Concept). For that reason, these payments warrant further scrutiny to determine if YSCP diverted public funds to related Gülenist vendors, such as Apple.

► **Dream Schools, Inc.:** As detailed under the section describing real estate transactions, YSCP and YSWP both lease facilities from Dream Schools, Inc. and/or its subsidiary Newport Drive Properties. Board members and employees of the schools have served on the boards of their landlord, raising conflict of interest concerns.

## Gülenist Cultural Foundations

► **Peace Islands Institute:** The Peace Islands Institute, formerly The Interfaith Dialog Center, is openly Gülenist: Fethullah Gülen is the group's honorary president.<sup>94</sup> It is active throughout the northeast, with locations in Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Jersey,

and New York.<sup>95</sup> The Peace Islands Institute works closely with other Gülen organizations to advocate with legislators on their behalf and also to coordinate junkets to Turkey.<sup>96</sup>

► **Lehigh Dialogue Center (formerly**

<sup>90</sup> Student Information Log-In, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/lxmdt55> (YSWP); <http://tinyurl.com/mr23llv> (YSM); <http://tinyurl.com/ms5bvo6> (Vision).

<sup>91</sup> Application for Grants under the Charter Schools Program (CSP); Grants to Non-SEAs; Planning Program Design, Implementation, U.S. DEPT OF EDUCATION (Oct. 6, 2015), available at <http://tinyurl.com/lhhw3f6> (last checked 4/17/17).

<sup>92</sup> Apple Educational Services, Events, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/m3rf8rp>; <http://tinyurl.com/myn5jts>; <http://tinyurl.com/mcy4ecu> (last checked 4/28/2017).

<sup>93</sup> YSCP 990s available at: <http://tinyurl.com/l8aaxgu> (last checked 4/17/17).

<sup>94</sup> Honorary President, Peace Islands Institute, <http://tinyurl.com/kvkzbsf> (last checked 4/17/2017).

<sup>95</sup> Id.

<sup>96</sup> Jean Rimbach, Jeff Pillets & Hannan Adely, *Investigation: Charter School Leaders, Founders Linked to Controversial Turkish Cleric*, NORTHJERSEY.COM (Feb. 15, 2017) available at: <http://tinyurl.com/lсны9ys> (last checked 4/14/2017).



**Lehigh Mosaica Foundation):** The Lehigh Dialogue Institute is a partner organization with the Turkish Cultural Center Pennsylvania, the Peace Islands Institute, and Embrace Relief.<sup>97</sup> The Lehigh Dialogue Center is openly Gülenist.<sup>98</sup> In 2012, the organization sponsored a \$2,650 trip to Turkey for state senator David Argall.<sup>99</sup> Abdulkadir Veziroglu would serve as treasurer, president, and secretary for the center between 2004 through 2011; he would later serve as the lead applicant for the Allentown Engineering Charter School.<sup>100</sup> At a hearing on the Allentown Engineering Charter School, Veziroglu would call the question about ties to the Gülen movement “obscene” and deny such a connection despite his earlier role with the Lehigh Dialogue Center.<sup>101</sup> Numerous board members of the center have contributed to the political campaigns of U.S. Senator Robert Casey and U.S. Representative Matt Cartwright.<sup>102</sup>

► **Red Rose Intercultural and Educational Foundation:** The Red Rose Intercultural and Educational

Foundation d.b.a. Turkish Cultural Center Pennsylvania (“TCC Penn”) openly features writings and editorials of Fethullah Gülen.<sup>103</sup> It is affiliated with the Turkish Cultural Center, which in turn is affiliated with the Peace Islands Institute, Lotus Media, and Ebru TV.<sup>104</sup> From 2012-2014, the president was Sait Onal, who petitioned to open the Academy of Business and Entrepreneurship Charter School, Lancaster Science Academy, and Capital Academy of Harrisburg.<sup>105</sup> Sait Onal has served as the secretary of Dream Schools Inc. since 2010; he has served as the secretary of Newport Drive Properties since 2012.<sup>106</sup> Suleyman Erdem has served as TCC Penn’s treasurer since 2012; he would later attempt to serve on the founding board of the Erie Biosciences Academy.<sup>107</sup> In 2012, TCC Penn gifted Pennsylvania Governor Tom Corbett Turkish robes, towels, a vase, and a plate valued at \$275.<sup>108</sup>

► **Golden Generation Worship & Retreat Center, Inc. (formerly Golden Generation Students Association, Inc.) (“Golden Generation”):** Fethullah

<sup>97</sup> Partner Organizations, Lehigh Dialogue Center, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/l9j6u7j> (last checked 4/17/2017).

<sup>98</sup> Gülen Movement, Lehigh Dialogue Center <http://tinyurl.com/kstzb7u> (last checked 4/17/2017).

<sup>99</sup> Kent Jackson and Robert Swift, *Lawmakers Have Different Takes on Gifts*, STANDARD-SPEAKER (Apr. 3, 2014), available at <http://tinyurl.com/lmybfog> (last checked 4/15/2017).

<sup>100</sup> Lehigh Dialogue Center 990s available at: <http://tinyurl.com/k35p6qq> (last checked 4/17/2017).

<sup>101</sup> Gil Smart, *Charter School Friends, Foes Air Their Feelings*, LANCASTERONLINE (Mar. 3, 2013), available at <http://tinyurl.com/krvpzwm> (last checked 4/15/2017); Lehigh Dialogue Center, 2004-2011 990s, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/k35p6qq> (last checked 4/17/2017).

<sup>102</sup> For example, Abdulkadir Veziroglu, David Eygorin, and Omer Alici have contributed to Robert Casey and/or Matt Cartwright’s campaigns. Federal Election Database, Transaction Query by Individual Contributor, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/fgcdj> (last checked 4/17/2017).

<sup>103</sup> TCC Penn, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/lzleahq> (last checked 4/17/2017).

<sup>104</sup> Turkish Cultural Center, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/mesteu6> (last checked 4/17/2017).

<sup>105</sup> Red Rose Intercultural and Education Foundation, 2012-2014 990s, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/lmspok3> (last checked 4/17/2017).

<sup>106</sup> Dream Schools, Inc., 2010-2014 990s, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/luskcjd> (last checked 4/17/2017); Newport Drive Properties, 2012-2014 990s, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/katm6xo> (last checked 4/17/2017).

<sup>107</sup> Erie Biosciences Academy’s application is available through BoardDocs for the Millcreek Township School District, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/k57scjk> (last checked 4/17/17).

<sup>108</sup> Associated Press, *Gov. Corbett Discloses Gifts, Free Travel for 2012*, PENNLIVE (May 1, 2013) available at: <http://tinyurl.com/kfba6ju> (last checked 4/14/2017).

Gülen lives at the Golden Generation conference center.<sup>109</sup> In spite of this direct connection, the Golden Generation website features only minimal references to Fethullah Gülen.<sup>110</sup> Sezai Sablak, vice president of Golden Generation, inappropriately collected signatures in support of Capital Academy of Harrisburg (PA).<sup>111</sup> Sablak also attempted to found the Lancaster Science Academy.<sup>112</sup> Golden Generation exists to provide a worship center for Muslims and to promote

interfaith harmony.<sup>113</sup>

- **West Penn Cultural Center, Inc. (inactive):** Bekir Duz, who would later serve as the CEO of Truebright Science Academy, served as a board member of this organization in 2006. He claimed the cultural center followed the teachings of Fethullah Gülen while the cultural center operated the private Snowdrop Elementary School.<sup>114</sup> The center reported no income or assets on its 2013 tax return.<sup>115</sup>

## Friends of Gülen Spotlight: Robert Casey, Matt Cartwright, and Mike Brubaker

Robert Casey currently serves as a U.S. Senator from Pennsylvania and used to serve on the Senate's foreign relations committee as the chair Near East and South/Central Asia subpanel;<sup>116</sup> Matt Cartwright is the U.S. representative for the 17th District of Pennsylvania, which includes Fethullah Gülen's residence at the Golden Generation Worship & Retreat Center. Each has received donations from numerous Gülenists: Sezai Sablak (Golden Generation Worship & Retreat Center); Suleyman Eris (Lehigh Dialogue Center, Cosmos Foundation, and Istanbul Center for Culture & Dialogue); Suleyman Erdem (Red

Rose Intercultural and Educational Foundation); Abdulkadir Veziroglu (Lehigh Dialogue Center); David Eygoren (Lehigh Dialogue Center); Omer Alici (Lehigh Dialogue Center); Metin Bor (West Penn Cultural Center); and Furkan Kosar (Paterson Charter School for Science and Technology, among other associations).<sup>117</sup>

Perhaps as a result of these contributions, Rep. Cartwright recognized Fethullah Gülen in the House of Representatives on November 19, 2014.<sup>118</sup> Robert Casey has spoken at an annual friendship dinner for the Turkish Cultural Center and

<sup>109</sup> Abigail Hauslohner, Karen DeYoung & Valeria Strauss, He's 77, Frail and Lives in Pennsylvania. Turkey Says He's a Coup Mastermind, *WASHINGTON POST* (Aug. 3, 2016), available at: <http://tinyurl.com/ktrszcp> (last checked 5/12/2017).

<sup>110</sup> Golden Generation Worship and Retreat Center, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/k8nxmj3> (last checked 5/15/2017).

<sup>111</sup> Capital Acad. Charter Sch. v. Harrisburg Sch. Dist., 934 A.2d 189, 192 (Pa. Commw. Ct. 2007) (finding Sablak did not reside in the Harrisburg School District and was ineligible to attest to signatures); Golden Generation 990s, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/m884x5w> (last checked 5/15/2017).

<sup>112</sup> Brian Wallace, *Focused on Science: City District Studies Charter School*, *LANCASTERONLINE* (Jan. 3, 2008), available at <http://tinyurl.com/muh8ks2> (last checked 4/15/2017).

<sup>113</sup> About Us, Golden Generation Worship & Retreat Center, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/kqhe9w9> (last checked 5/12/2017).

<sup>114</sup> Jan Ackerman, *Owners Apply to Operate Cultural Center in Recently Acquired South Park Building*, *PITTSBURGH POST-GAZETTE* (Mar. 9, 2006) available at: <http://tinyurl.com/ko5n7lb> (last checked 4/14/2017).

<sup>115</sup> West Penn Cultural Center Inc., 2011-2013 990s, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/kh4gwuo> (last checked 4/17/2017).

<sup>116</sup> Julian Pecquet, *Markey Replaces Casey on Foreign Relations Panel*, *THE HILL* (July 17, 2013) available at: <http://tinyurl.com/mghx5nf> (last checked 4/17/2017).

<sup>117</sup> Red Rose Intercultural and Education Foundation, 2012-2014 990s, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/lmspok3> (last checked 4/17/2017); Lehigh Dialogue Center, 2004-2015 990s, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/k35p6qq> (last checked 4/17/2017); Federal Election Database, Transaction Query by Individual Contributor, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/fgdcj> (last checked 4/17/2017).

<sup>118</sup> Congressional Record, Extension of Remarks at E1633 (Nov. 19, 2014), available at: <http://tinyurl.com/kbt3jt> (last checked 4/17/2017).

Council of Turkic American Associations.<sup>119</sup> During an interview at the friendship dinner, Sen. Casey mentioned the “great support” he received from Turkish-Americans during his senate campaign.<sup>120</sup>

Gülen cultural associations have also attempted to influence local politics in Pennsylvania through state senators—particularly in areas targeted for charter school growth. Mike Brubaker served as a Pennsylvania state senator from the 36th District of Pennsylvania from 2007-2015. His territory covered Lancaster County, an area targeted by Gülenists for expansion. He took a trip to Turkey paid for by the Bogazici Atlantik Kültürel Dostluk Ve İsbirligi

Dernegi worth \$10,900 in 2011 organized by Sait Onal.<sup>121</sup> Sait Onal previously applied to open the Lancaster Science Academy in 2008 and would go on to apply to open ABECS in 2013 and 2014. Although ABECS never opened, it took years of litigation, a court finding that ABECS forged signatures on petitions supporting the school, and the withdrawal of illegitimately obtained letters of support by community businesses. Mike Brubaker’s trip to Turkey and the questionable history of the ABECS application underscores the lengths Gülen charter school petitioners will go to create support, legitimate or otherwise, for their applications.

## Individuals Caught in the Gülen Organization Web

Our research shows that it is quite common for the charter networks within a region to shuffle their Turkish H-1B visa teachers from school to school, as well as between education management vendors such as Apple. This is just a small number of individuals with these overlapping ties throughout the region and other regions, which further demonstrates the region’s interconnections. Former Truebright CEO Bekir Duz compared the situation to a Chinese restaurant. He argued that employees of Chinese restaurants know all the other Chinese restaurants and can go work at the other Chinese restaurants.<sup>122</sup> This does not explain, however, why this shuffling only occurs with these schools’ Turkish

employees.

- **Bekir Duz:** Board member, West Penn Cultural Center, which operated Snowdrop Elementary School (PA);<sup>123</sup> Administrator, Central Jersey College Prep Charter School (NJ); Principal, Truebright Science Academy.<sup>124</sup>
- **Isik Durmus:** Vice principal and Teacher, Pioneer Academy of Science (NJ); Principal, Rochester Academy Charter School (NY);<sup>125</sup> Dean of Academics, Truebright Science Academy;<sup>126</sup> Principal, Vision Academy.<sup>127</sup>

<sup>119</sup> Admin, Friendship Dinner Stirs Excitement, TURKIC AMERICAN ALLIANCE (Mar. 26, 2011), available at: <http://tinyurl.com/mewwgha> (last checked 4/17/2017).

<sup>120</sup> Turkish Cultural Center New York, US Senator Robert P. Casey, Jr. at Turkish Cultural Center’s Annual Friendship Dinner, YOUTUBE (Apr. 11, 2011), available at: <http://tinyurl.com/kejj7bl> (last checked 4/17/2017).

<sup>121</sup> Karen Shuey, Sen. Mike Brubaker Says 7 Trips in 2011 Benefited Constituents, LANCASTER ONLINE (Mar. 20, 2013), available at: <http://tinyurl.com/mvng66d> (last checked 4/17/2017).

<sup>122</sup> Martha Woodall, *Allegations Raised over N. Phila. Charter School Run by Followers of Turkish Imam*, THE INQUIRER (Apr. 19, 2012), available at <http://tinyurl.com/nysuuuy> (last checked 4/12/2017).

<sup>123</sup> Id.

<sup>124</sup> Jan Ackerman, *Owners Apply to Operate Cultural Center in Recently Acquired South Park Building*, PITTSBURGH POST-GAZETTE (Mar. 9, 2006) available at: <http://tinyurl.com/ko5n7lb> (last checked 4/14/2017).

<sup>125</sup> Application for Grants under the Charter Schools Program (CSP); Grants to Non-SEAs; Planning Program Design, Implementation, U.S. DEP’T OF EDUCATION, at 200 (Oct. 6, 2015), available at: <http://tinyurl.com/lhhw3f6> (last checked 4/17/17).

<sup>126</sup> Connie Langland, *School Facing Possible Closure Receives \$1.2 Million in Three-Year Grant*, THE NOTEBOOK (Nov. 10, 2014) available at: <http://tinyurl.com/n8k5qn6> (last checked 4/14/2017).

<sup>127</sup> Nick Tricome, *First Charter School Opens in William Penn School District*, DAILY TIMES NEWS (Sep. 8, 2015) available at: <http://tinyurl.com/lu23ere> (last checked 4/14/2017).



- ▶ **Levent Kaya:** Director, Buffalo Academy of Science Charter School (NY); currently CEO/principal, YSCP.<sup>128</sup>
- ▶ **Emrullah Durmaz:** Dean of Academics, Truebright Science Academy; Principal, Putnam Science Academy (CT); CEO, Apple (Northeast region);<sup>129</sup> CEO Johnson Road Properties.<sup>130</sup>
- ▶ **Tansu Cidav:** Teacher, Assistant Principal, Harmony Science Academy (TX); Assistant Principal, Truebright Science Academy (PA); Assistant Principal, Harmony Science Academy (TX).<sup>131</sup>
- ▶ **Sait Onal:** Petitioner, Lancaster Science Academy, Capital Academy Harrisburg, and ABECS;<sup>132</sup> Secretary, Dream Schools, Inc. and Newport Drive Properties;<sup>133</sup> President, Red Rose Intercultural and Education Foundation/TCC Penn;<sup>134</sup> currently sales and marketing account executive at Transamerica Agency Network, Inc.<sup>135</sup>
- ▶ **Sezai Sablak:** Inappropriately collected signatures in support of Capital Academy of Harrisburg (PA);<sup>136</sup> Attempted Founder, Lancaster Science Academy;<sup>137</sup> Vice President, Golden Generation Worship & Retreat Center – Gülen's home compound;<sup>138</sup> currently Chief Scientist, Inertial Labs, Inc.<sup>139</sup>
- ▶ **Melih Demirkan:** Board president, YSWP;<sup>140</sup> Treasurer, Dream Schools, Inc.,<sup>141</sup> currently Managing Principal, Rizzo Associates.<sup>142</sup>

## Notable Articles regarding the Pennsylvania Network

- ▶ Martha Woodall, *Appeals Court Orders Truebright Charter to Close*, The Inquirer (May 16, 2015) (discussing tying Truebright Science Academy to Gülen and discussing the school's closure).<sup>143</sup>
- ▶ Erica Erwin, *Charter School's Petition Ruled Invalid*, GoErie.com (Oct. 1, 2014)

<sup>128</sup> Levent Kaya, LINKEDIN, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/l3o83z2> (last checked 4/17/2017).

<sup>129</sup> Emrullah Durmaz, LINKEDIN, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/n9yvzvz> (last checked 4/17/2017).

<sup>130</sup> Corporate documents for this entity are available at: <http://tinyurl.com/jvp5sjw> (last checked 5/23/2017).

<sup>131</sup> Tansu Cidav, LINKEDIN, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/nyvhngx> (last checked 4/17/2017).

<sup>132</sup> Gil Smart, *Charter School Friends, Foes Air Their Feelings*, LANCASTERONLINE (Mar. 3, 2013), available at <http://tinyurl.com/krvpzwm> (last checked 4/15/2017).

<sup>133</sup> Dream Schools, Inc., 990s, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/luskcjd> (last checked 4/17/2017); Newport Drive Properties, 990s, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/katm6xo> (last checked 4/17/2017).

<sup>134</sup> Red Rose Intercultural and Education Foundation, 2012-2014 990s, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/lmspok3> (last checked 4/17/2017)

<sup>135</sup> Sait Onal, LINKEDIN, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/n3df2up> (last checked 4/17/2017).

<sup>136</sup> Capital Acad. Charter Sch. v. Harrisburg Sch. Dist., 934 A.2d 189, 192 (Pa. Commw. Ct. 2007) (finding Sablak did not reside in the Harrisburg School District and was ineligible to attest to signatures).

<sup>137</sup> Brian Wallace, *Focused on Science: City District Studies Charter School*, LANCASTERONLINE (Jan. 3, 2008), available at <http://tinyurl.com/muh8ks2> (last checked 4/15/2017).

<sup>138</sup> Golden Generation Worship and Retreat Center, 990s, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/m884x5w> (last checked 4/17/2017).

<sup>139</sup> Sezai Sablak, LINKEDIN, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/mus8o9m> (last checked 4/17/2017).

<sup>140</sup> YSWP, 990s, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/n5rm35q> (last checked 4/17/2017).

<sup>141</sup> Dream Schools, Inc., 990s, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/luskcjd> (last checked 4/17/2017).

<sup>142</sup> Melih Demirkan, LINKEDIN, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/k39g5o2> (last checked 4/17/2017).

<sup>143</sup> <http://tinyurl.com/ko5n7lb> (last checked 4/14/2017).

(discussing fraudulent signatures in connection with petitions in support of Erie Biosciences Academy).<sup>144</sup>

- ▶ Gil Smart, *Charter School Friends, Foes Air Their Feelings*, LancasterOnline (Mar. 3, 2013) (discussing heated hearings on the application of ABECS, in which Sait Onal accusing opponents of lying, Sait Onal's prior charter applications and ties to cultural foundations, and withdrawal of letters of support due to harassment and questionable tactics).<sup>145</sup>
- ▶ Steve Esack, *Allentown School Directors Question Charter School Applicant's Ties to Gülen Movement*, The Morning Call (Dec. 16, 2012) (discussing attempt to open Allentown Engineering Academy Charter School, applicants' evasive answers to questions about ties to Gülen, and H-1B visa abuse in other states).<sup>146</sup>
- ▶ Martha Woodall, *Days Before Its Charter Hearing, Truebright Fired 8 Teachers*, The Inquirer (July 4, 2012) (highlighting that Truebright Science Academy fired U.S. nationals, many of whom filed discrimination complaints against the school, while retaining Turkish nationals).<sup>147</sup>
- ▶ Martha Woodall, *Allegations Raised over N. Phila. Charter School Run by Followers of Turkish Imam*, The Inquirer (Apr. 19, 2012) (discussing a potential federal investigation of Truebright Science Academy, teacher allegations of discrimination, complaints by the PTA president about a lack of transparency, the school's effort to

stay open, ties to Gülen, use of H-1B visas, and allegations that staff must donate salaries to the Gülen movement).<sup>148</sup>

- ▶ Stephanie Hacke, *Charter School Brings Some Controversy to Baldwin Township*, Trib Live (Oct. 13, 2011) (discussing the questionable leasing arrangements of YSCP, YSWP, and Dream Schools, Inc.).<sup>149</sup>
- ▶ Mary Niederberger and Rich Lord, *Some Practices Questioned at Baldwin Charter School*, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (Sep. 4, 2011) (discussing the questionable real estate and renovation contracting practices of YSCP, YSWP, and Dream Schools).<sup>150</sup>
- ▶ Martha Woodall and Claudio Gatti, *WikiLeaks Files Detail U.S. Unease over Turks and Charter Schools*, The Inquirer (Apr. 4, 2011) (discussing Truebright's use of H-1B visas, pension records showing salary discrimination against Americans, possible kickbacks to the Gülen movement, and concern from U.S. officials that Gülen schools mold and indoctrinate students to be proselytizers).<sup>151</sup>
- ▶ Colin Deppen, *Court Ruling Reignites Lancaster's Surreal Charter School Drama*, PennLive (June 3, 2016) (discussing the School District of Lancaster's \$450,000 legal fight against ABECS due to the school's use of forged, illegible, and duplicative signatures on petitions necessary to appeal the school district's denial of the charter application).<sup>152</sup>

<sup>144</sup> <http://tinyurl.com/lo4rzhx> (last checked 4/16/2017).

<sup>145</sup> <http://tinyurl.com/krvpzwm> (last checked 4/15/2017).

<sup>146</sup> <http://tinyurl.com/l9fxrbs> (last checked 4/15/2017).

<sup>147</sup> <http://tinyurl.com/n3dzcp> (last checked 4/14/2017).

<sup>148</sup> <http://tinyurl.com/nysuuuy> (last checked 4/12/2017).

<sup>149</sup> <http://tinyurl.com/lcqcjnu> (last checked 4/12/2017).

<sup>150</sup> <http://tinyurl.com/ky9bx7v> (last checked 4/12/2017).

<sup>151</sup> <http://tinyurl.com/mb43al8> last checked 4/12/2017).

<sup>152</sup> <http://tinyurl.com/myb8l6a> last checked 4/12/2017).