

1.1 Executive Summary

14 Del. C. §§ 512 (1), (2), (3), (5) and (6)

Mapleton Charter School at Whitehall (Mapleton) proposes to open as an Expeditionary Learning (EL) elementary school **in the 2016-2017 school year**. The school will serve students in grades kindergarten through grade 5 through a four year scale-up process. The school will be located in the heart of the Town of Whitehall—a planned community of Whitehall Venture Partners (WVP) – situated just south of the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal in New Castle County. The vision for the Town of Whitehall is grounded in how towns existed in the past—walkable communities where everything a resident needed could be found within a reasonable distance from their home. The Town of Whitehall will be a place that honors this tradition—where people will work, where their children will go to school, and where they will shop and enjoy entertainment, all located within a small geographic area. The Master Plan for the Town of Whitehall may be found in Appendix A-4.

The Mapleton board proposes a **2-year planning period with the** school opening to the public in the **2016-17 school year**. This timeline is aligned with the development schedule for the Town of Whitehall and will maximize the opportunity to engage parents and the community as the Town of Whitehall is started.

1. Mission and Vision Statements

Mission Statement

Mapleton Charter School at Whitehall is a diverse learning community which educates all children to live, learn, and lead locally and globally. Grounded in rigorous academic standards, children are challenged to use creativity, critical thinking, and collaboration to be inspired innovators, engineering a sustainable future through scientific, cultural, and economic development.

Vision Statement

Mapleton Charter School at Whitehall: Educating the children of today to be the dynamic leaders of tomorrow.

2. Educational Need and Target Population

a. Identify the target population, grade levels, and school district(s).....

Mapleton Charter School at Whitehall will become a central component of the Town of Whitehall, a planned community by Whitehall Venture Partners (WVP) which will be situated just south of the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal. As part of the planning for this new community, a *Delaware Residential Marketing Study*, prepared by the Gibbs Planning Group (Appendix A-1), established anticipated population growth and need for additional housing in this area. This need, combined with the mix of planned housing units indicates there will be increased demand for school capacity at the elementary grade levels.

A feasibility study (Appendix A-2) was conducted as part of the charter application development process to gauge the parent interest and consideration for enrolling their children

in an elementary Expeditionary Learning academic program. Data from the survey has provided a strong indication that those who learn about Mapleton would consider enrolling their child in this type of academic program, as evidenced by 80% of respondents stating they would consider enrolling their child in a school that uses the Expeditionary Learning program. Community organizations in the area have also shown their support with letters of support.

Recruitment efforts for Mapleton will target families with pre-K or elementary school-aged children who live in and around the Town of Whitehall. Communications will aim to reach families who live in the Appoquinimink, Christina and Colonial school districts. These school districts encompass a geographic area in Southern New Castle County that was chosen by Whitehall Venture Partners in their planning for the Town of Whitehall, as the “Whitehall residential submarket”.

Enrollment trends in local public and private elementary schools surrounding the target area indicate that the number of students that Mapleton hopes to serve is realistic and would have a minimal impact on neighboring schools. Please see the full Feasibility Study for more information (Appendix A-2).

b. Explain how the proposed charter school, including the grade levels chosen, will clearly

Based upon the growth needs established by WVP to support the development of the Town of Whitehall, and the increased demand for school capacity at the elementary grade levels, Mapleton Charter School at Whitehall will clearly meet the identified needs of the community. The selection of the deeper learning Expeditionary Learning instructional model has been shown to be attractive to community-based organizations and prospective parents of elementary-aged children in the target area.

c. Identify any admissions preferences and how they will be implemented.....

Admissions preferences will be limited to: 1) children with siblings concurrently enrolled at Mapleton; 2) children of the School’s Founders (less than 5% of the school’s total student enrollment); 3) children of staff members employed on a permanent basis at Mapleton for at least 30.0 hours per week during the school year; and, 4) children residing within a 5-mile radius of the school location. These preferences will be implemented consistent with 14 Del. C. § 506(b) by ensuring students falling into the preference categories are excluded from admission’s lotteries, as appropriate.

3. Community Engagement

a. Describe how the Applicant has assessed demand and/or solicited support for the school.

To date, Mapleton has conducted a feasibility study to determine demand for the school. Activities to recruit prospective students have included parent information sessions and a robust social networking campaign to reach families with students. Members of the Founding Board have also reached out to businesses involved in development of the Town of Whitehall, local churches, and nonprofit organizations to inform them about the school and solicit their support for future partnerships related to the school’s curriculum.

Mapleton's Founding Board intends to continue this engagement throughout the 2-year planning cycle preceding the school's opening. Outreach activities will include engaging the school's Advisory Committee to determine the best marketing strategies to reach local parents and businesses; conducting community meetings; reaching out to groups that participated in the feasibility study for the school through monthly communications to ensure that they are informed of the school's progress; meeting with State representatives and key stakeholders; and establishing a social media presence just to name a few. For a full marketing plan, see Appendix B-9. The Board and school leadership will continue to engage interested parents and local businesses by sending regular communications highlighting the school's progress over the next several months.

4. Education Plan

a. Briefly describe the most important characteristics of the educational program, including any ... Mapleton will provide students from kindergarten through grade 5 with an academically demanding, integrated education that uses the design process of *imagine, plan, design, and improve* to explore the school's theme of 'Engineering a Sustainable Future through Scientific, Cultural, and Economic Development.' To accomplish this innovative vision, Mapleton has selected the Expeditionary Learning (EL) school design (Appendix A-3) for its academic program, which defines successful school practice in the areas of curriculum and learning expeditions, instruction, culture, assessment, and leadership. Adopting this model will provide Mapleton with a strong foundation that has been successfully replicated across diverse demographics in 193 schools across the United States. Instructional practices at Mapleton will emphasize student inquiry, critical thinking, and craftsmanship. Students will engage in original research and create high-quality academic products to share with outside audiences.

b. Briefly describe the learning environment.

The nationally recognized EL academic program emphasizes learner-centered instruction which energizes and motivates students through high-level tasks and active roles in the classroom. Through case studies and projects, students become connected to real-world audiences, compelling them to care about and contribute to the world around them. Curriculum and instruction in EL schools is organized around the Common Core and State Standards, and is articulated to students through clear expectations as student learning targets. Students engage in a blend of classroom-based and community-based learning projects under teacher supervision to nurture the development of self-directed learning and collaborative learning with adults and peers. Students work in small, flexible cooperative learning groups with tight follow-through for respect and responsibility, teamwork and contribution, and commitment to high-quality work. Students are entrusted with deep cognitive challenges and important responsibilities which prepare them to be leaders and develop critical thinking, problem-solving, and other 21st century skills. In an EL school, educators work to intentionally build a school culture where students feel safe, respected, and challenged to be their best selves.

c. Briefly describe the plan to improve student learning for *all* students, including exceptional ...

At Mapleton, all students will have equitable access to the curriculum. The school will implement a full inclusion model and all students will be part of the regular classroom unless

their IEP defines a different learning accommodation for them. The curriculum is designed and will be delivered using a performance-based, continuous growth approach that is grounded in the premise that all students are capable of achieving excellence in learning, and that high-quality instructional planning to accommodate all students is integral to improving learning. Through instructional differentiation within the classroom, the RtI process, IEP instructional accommodations and curricular modifications, teachers will be able to address the unique needs of specific students while ensuring the content that students learn is derived from a set of curriculum documents that articulate the common expectations for all students.

Mapleton, with its unique approach to learning, will allow students with diverse needs and abilities to reach their full potential. The approach for serving students with identified special needs or those who are deemed at-risk will be collaborative.

d. Briefly describe how the school will use assessment to improve student learning.

As a fully inclusive school, most students' needs will be met in a heterogeneous classroom through a focus on common essential learning targets. Teachers will use assessment strategies, including clarifying learning targets, pre-assessment, models, targeted feedback, tracking progress, and multiple opportunities for success to determine student needs. When appropriate, students': a) Readiness needs will be met through tiered activities which will address diverse student levels or compacted activities (primarily for gifted students) that help all students meet common essential learning targets; b) Interest needs will be addressed through high quality and respectful choices; and, c) Learning style needs will be met through variety, different presentation modes, and choices of activities specifically designed to address learning differences. Leader and teaching team use of external summative assessment information (Grade 3 and above with state assessments), and formative, curriculum-based assessments developed within the EL learning context and aligned with state academic standards will be systematic and ongoing.

5. Leadership and Governance

a. Provide an overview of the school's governance and management structure and leadership ...

The Board will be responsible for the oversight and governance of the school, its operations, and its administration. The overarching philosophy of governance that will guide the proposed school is to operate in an open and transparent way to ensure that parents, teachers, and stakeholders have a clear understanding of the school's financial health and academic standing, and have regular access to all governance functions as prescribed by law.

The leadership team providing the governance and management structure will include the Board, key members of the Innovative School's team (CMO), and the school leader. The addition of an Advisory Board, Citizen's Budget Oversight Committee (CBOC), and a Parent's Advisory Committee will complement the overall structure.

b. Highlight the strengths of the leadership team and the proposed governing board.

During the 2-year planning cycle, and until the school's first charter renewal, Innovative Schools will serve as the Charter Management Organization (CMO) for Mapleton. During the first of

two planning years, the Founding Board will expand to fill key gaps in membership and further engage in the local community. During the second year of planning, the leadership team will emerge and will be comprised of the school's Board of Directors, the CMO staff and, once hired, the school leader.

Innovative Schools is a local, non-profit public school support organization. The organization has served as an essential partner by providing model school tours for members of the Board to see the EL model in action, providing board training, and supporting the development of the Mapleton charter application to ensure the proposed charter school offers a superior 21st century educational experience for students.

EL is the national education non-profit network of more than 160 schools and 4,000 teachers committed to deeper learning. The EL model is based on research and honed by 17 years of working closely with schools and districts.

c. Explain how the governance and management structures will provide for stable, effective...

The Board intends to contract with Innovative Schools to serve as the CMO for the first five years of the school's existence. The intent of this contractual relationship is twofold:

1. As the CMO, Innovative Schools will build the capacity of the Board and staff to be able to sustain the administrative and academic functions of their charter school independent of a CMO by the time of the school's first charter renewal. As the CMO, Innovative Schools will support full implementation of the EL academic program, and will serve as the main partner with EL as its subcontractor.
2. As CMO, Innovative Schools will support full implementation of the EL academic program, and will serve as the main partner with EL as its subcontractor.

6. Business Plan

a. Provide a brief overview of the business plan that includes facilities, financial management...

Mapleton will be located in the Town of Whitehall in New Castle County. The proposed master plan is included in Appendix A-4. The Board has engaged with EDiS Construction to review different facility options for the school. EDiS is a Delaware-based construction firm that was established in 1908. They provide construction management services to clients in Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania and New Jersey. To date, EDiS construction volume exceeds \$1.5 billion worth of work in place.

With the management support provided by Innovative Schools, Mapleton will utilize funds provided by DDOE and annual local revenues, per formula calculations, to pay the operating, payroll, and occupancy costs. To ensure that fiscal viability is maintained, the Board, along with the school leader, will regularly analyze enrollment, expenditures, and financial management practices, and will report on this information to the Board on a monthly basis. To ensure financial solvency, particularly during the planning years and first four years of operation, the Board intends to aggressively implement a fundraising plan, and to apply for operating and capital loans (see Appendix E) to supplement available resources for school operations.