

In The Matter Of:
Department of Education
Renewal Application of Design Thinking Academy

Public Hearing
October 15, 2018

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STATE OF DELAWARE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

PUBLIC HEARING

IN RE:

RENEWAL APPLICATION OF
DESIGN THINKING ACADEMY

Newark Free Library
750 Library Avenue
Newark, Delaware

Monday, October 15, 2018
5:17 p.m.

BEFORE:

JOHN CARWELL
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

VINCENT LOFINK
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

On behalf of the Department of Education:

CATHERINE T. HICKEY,
DEPUTY ATTORNEY GENERAL

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDING

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1 MR. CARWELL: Good evening. I
2 declare this public hearing to be open. My
3 name is John Carwell. I'm an education
4 associate with the Charter School Office
5 and the Delaware Department of Education,
6 and I have been appointed by the Secretary
7 of Education to conduct this public
8 hearing.

9 The Design Thinking Academy
10 charter school has filed an application to
11 renew its charter for a term of five years.
12 As is required by law, the matter was
13 referred to the Charter School
14 Accountability Committee for investigation
15 and report. This joint public hearing is
16 being held by the Department of Education
17 and the State Board of Education. And I'd
18 like to pause to just introduce everyone
19 who is sitting here at the table with me.

20 MS. HICKEY: Good evening. My
21 name is Catherine Hickey. I'm a deputy
22 attorney general with the Delaware
23 Department of Justice, and I'm here this
24 evening representing the hearing officer.



1 MR. LOFINK: My name is
2 Vincent Lofink, and I'm here representing
3 the State Board of Education.

4 MR. CARWELL: I would like the
5 record to reflect that the notice of the
6 time, date, and place of today's public
7 hearing was published in the The News
8 Journal and the Delaware State News on
9 September 20th, 2018. In addition, notice
10 was posted at the Charter School
11 Accountability Committee's official place
12 of business, on the Delaware Department of
13 Education's official website, and on the
14 state Public Meeting Calendar on the
15 State's official website. Further, the
16 Design Thinking Academy charter school was
17 personally notified of the time, date, and
18 place of today's public hearing on
19 September 10th, 2018.

20 A court reporter is present so
21 that a record of this hearing can be made.
22 It will be necessary for each speaker to
23 clearly identify his or herself before
24 beginning to speak so that the court



1 reporter will be able to know who you are.

2 The record of this hearing will
3 be provided to the Secretary of Education
4 and members of the State Board of
5 Education, together with any written or
6 electronic comments received during the
7 course of the renewal-decision process.
8 And to date we have not received any
9 written comments electronically or
10 otherwise.

11 We will proceed in the
12 following manner: First we will hear from
13 any representatives of the charter school
14 who wish to comment on the renewal
15 application. Then we will take comments
16 from anyone else who desires to speak. And
17 one last request. Anyone else who desires
18 to speak -- good evening.

19 (Pause.)

20 MR. CARWELL: I intend to be as
21 liberal as time and reason allows in
22 accepting comments; however, I do reserve
23 the right to limit comments if it is purely
24 repetitive and cumulative. And I will



1 impose a limit of five minutes.

2 At this point I will accept
3 comments from any representatives of the
4 school.

5 MS. HICKEY: Let me just
6 explain something to you. I am the
7 timekeeper. I have these little signs that
8 say "3 minutes," "1 minute," and then my
9 timer will go off.

10 MR. MILLER: Thank you. My
11 name is Paul Miller, and I'm the current
12 board chair at Design Thinking Academy.

13 The reason I say I have the
14 easy job is because I really just want to
15 be here this evening to thank you guys, to
16 thank members of the CSAC for being here
17 and for helping us walk on this journey to
18 renewal. It's my hope that there are some
19 people here tonight to speak in support of
20 our charter for the next five years.

21 So that's really as brief as I
22 would like to be. But again, just thank
23 you all for your support and hard work.

24 MR. CARWELL: Thank you.



1 Any other representatives from
2 the school?

3 MS. SILVERMAN: Hello. Good
4 evening. My name is Stephanie Silverman.
5 I'm the principal and interim head of
6 school at Design Thinking Academy.

7 I'm here to support Design
8 Thinking Academy's charter renewal. In the
9 short time I have been with the school, I
10 have been amazed and overwhelmed with the
11 level of dedication and commitment of my
12 team, staff, and administrative
13 professionals who are completely committed
14 to the mission of our school to create a
15 transformational educational opportunity
16 and the innovative instructional model with
17 potential for ramification across the
18 United States.

19 As you may know, we are one of
20 the 10 original XQ Super School grant
21 winners. And the purpose of that grant was
22 to help students and schools create a new
23 and innovative instructional model to
24 redefine education to better prepare our



1 students for the 21st century.

2 While we're committed to making
3 sure that students have the foundational
4 and fundamental literacies in reading,
5 writing, mathematics, global and
6 multi-cultural literacy and digital
7 technology literacy, we're also very
8 committed to our charge to rethink high
9 school and the instructional model to
10 include executed design principles. Among
11 them include knowledge domain such as STEM,
12 the humanities, society of civic
13 engagement, new wave of thinking, including
14 synthesis, analysis, application, and
15 creativity. Students at our school develop
16 collaborative capacities, social awareness,
17 self-awareness, interpersonal skills, and
18 social negotiation.

19 Most importantly, perhaps, is
20 our commitment to students who are learners
21 for life, students who can self-manage and
22 self-direct their own learning, students
23 who have social agency.

24 The XQ design principle is the



1 driver instructional model and are the
2 cornerstone of everything we do include
3 teaching for deeper learning, youth
4 empowerment voice and choice, a broad
5 vision of student success, community
6 partnerships, personalized learning via
7 tech and rethinking traditional systems.
8 Surely, with such an ambitious plan to
9 rethink a prototype instructional model for
10 the 21st, 22nd, 23rd century, certainly
11 there will be a lot of learning involved in
12 being a pioneer in the educational front.
13 We have had five prototyping years. We are
14 poised for another five fantastic years.

15 Already I have seen amazing
16 evidence of the efficacy of our
17 instructional models, including the recent
18 sweeping of the Network For Teaching
19 Entrepreneurship competition. Our students
20 won first, second, and third place. Just
21 today one of our students was awarded
22 \$20,000 to the Moore College of Art &
23 Design for her fine-art design
24 accomplishments.



1 We recently partnered with the
2 Delaware Center For Justice to create an
3 interactive installation for our students
4 to design and conceptualize and install an
5 interactive public exhibition to address
6 and educate the public about
7 decriminalization of poverty.

8 Overall, the school develops
9 students who have agency and resiliency,
10 and we do everything in our full capacity
11 to support our students regardless of their
12 advantage, disadvantage, any kind of
13 exceptionality or ability. I'm committed
14 to this school, and I appreciate your time
15 and consideration of our charter
16 application renewal.

17 Thank you.

18 MR. CARWELL: Thank you. I'll
19 just go down the list of school
20 representatives.

21 Samaira?

22 MS. SIRAJEE: Hi. My name is
23 Samaira Sirajee. I'm a math teacher at
24 Design Thinking Academy.



1 I have an interesting story,
2 because I actually joined the school in
3 2016, and in 2017 I left. The reason why I
4 left was because I felt like the
5 administration was not abiding by the
6 mission that they said the school was going
7 to do. I did a brief stint at a public
8 school in Middletown, and I actually came
9 back to Design Thinking Academy after I saw
10 the amazing changes that the leadership and
11 school and the teachers there had done.

12 Ever since then -- this is my
13 second year now. I guess my third year,
14 now that I'm here at the school. And I
15 can't imagine myself anywhere else as a
16 teacher or as a professional. The type of
17 math teacher that I have become in only my
18 third year of being a teacher I credit
19 completely to the philosophy and the
20 pedagogy of the school. They have made me
21 a math teacher who, although I teach very
22 high-level mathematics, they have pushed me
23 to incorporate creativity and innovative
24 thinking within my mathematics curriculum.



1 That is something I know I would not be
2 able to do at any other school that
3 currently exists.

4 MR. CARWELL: Thank you.

5 Next we have Mr. Burke.

6 MR. BURKE: Am I allowed to go
7 last?

8 MR. CARWELL: Sure.

9 Ms. Hembree?

10 MS. HEMBREE: My name is
11 Christina Hembree, H-e-m-b-r-e-e. I am an
12 administrator at the school, as well as a
13 parent. And over the short time that my
14 son and I have been at the school, I have
15 seen great change. I have seen my son have
16 opportunities. He even had a chance to
17 start a business and really explore desires
18 and likes. So for both of us, we have seen
19 change and exciting opportunities, and I
20 really believe that over the next five
21 years we will have more chances and
22 opportunity for the students to find their
23 passions, create and develop and become a
24 future for us. That's where I feel that we



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1 have a position to have a good future.

2 MR. CARWELL: Thank you.

3 Any other representatives from
4 the school who desire to speak? Please
5 introduce yourself.

6 MS. YONKERS: I am
7 Anna Yonkers. I'm a teacher and a board
8 member at DTA.

9 So I'm here to highlight the
10 exciting work that we are doing at DTA and
11 to encourage you to renew our charter.
12 Last week we held our first pep rally ever.
13 It was an exciting event, complete with a
14 parade, intergrade competitions, and, of
15 course, a school-wide dance-off. Teachers
16 had pies thrown in their face during DTA
17 trivia. We celebrated staff members'
18 promotions, acknowledged our school
19 athletes, student government, and National
20 Honor Society members. The kids were
21 screaming with joy, I was screaming with
22 joy, and the excitement to be at DTA was at
23 an all-time high. The scene truly
24 encapsulates the feeling at DTA in this



1 moment.

2 Whatever the path, we look
3 forward to a bright future, with a sense of
4 anticipation. We, the board,
5 administration, teachers, and students, are
6 unified in a common goal to build a school
7 for the future. And I'm pleased to say
8 that we have never been better poised to do
9 so.

10 We recently hired
11 Ms. Silverman, our principal. She is a
12 decorated art and design professional who
13 is building capacity within our staff to
14 deliver quality instruction for students
15 through our signature pedagogy design
16 thinking.

17 As you know, we were selected
18 in 2016 as a recipient of an XQ grant which
19 gives us \$10 million over five years.
20 Well, that was a wonderful blessing for us.
21 It left some wondering about the
22 sustainability of our school after the
23 grant. In a forward-thinking move, we
24 hired Hallie Biden, our major gift officer,



1 ensuring that we will remain open and
2 financially healthy well beyond the years
3 of the XQ grant. In addition, this year we
4 have our highest enrollment to date, adding
5 to our financial stability and proving that
6 there is a demand in the community for our
7 school.

8 We're building a community of
9 scholars who are actively involved in
10 innovative, interesting programming. Our
11 participation in these programs rivaled
12 participation of schools three times our
13 size. We currently have the largest cohort
14 of students participating in dual
15 enrollment, Dual School, and Upward Bound
16 college programs, in addition to many
17 others.

18 Beyond this, students are
19 learning at DTA. Each year students show
20 growth on standardized assessments such as
21 math and the SATs. We have recently
22 integrated targeted RTI support through a
23 program called IXL, which is an individual
24 adaptive program for ELA and math. And I



1 know that we are going to have even better
2 scores in the future in the months and the
3 years to come.

4 In addition to these concrete
5 examples of success, I must also talk about
6 those things that we cannot measure.

7 Moments that, while fleeting, are still
8 very important. The feel of the building,
9 the energy that the place possesses. As
10 you walk down the hall, you would notice
11 the beautiful artwork, student artwork
12 displayed throughout, evidence of
13 investment in our signature pedagogy design
14 thinking. You'd pass students proudly
15 wearing their DTA apparel on game day ready
16 to take home another win for our school.

17 You would listen to heated debate in
18 classes as students discuss the tough
19 issues put in the work and commit to
20 deeper-level thinking. You would see the
21 sense of satisfaction in a scholar's eyes
22 as she presents a project she put her all
23 into.

24 All of these themes which I



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1 encounter on a daily basis as a teacher at
2 DTA cannot be measured or placed into a
3 chart for you to consider, but I know that
4 they are important.

5 Thank you for considering our
6 application for renewal, and I hope this
7 statement will convince you of the value we
8 add to the community as we empower all
9 students to be tomorrow's innovators and
10 lifelong learners to question, imagine
11 create, and share every day.

12 MR. CARWELL: Thank you.

13 Any other representatives of
14 the school before I go to Mr. Burke?

15 MS. MARVEL: My name is
16 Nancy Marvel. I'm an entrepreneurship
17 teacher.

18 I'm here to support our
19 application for our charter. I have been
20 at the school from the very beginning, and
21 what I'd like to tell you is that the
22 school that I am a teacher at right now,
23 I'm excited to go to work every day. We
24 have amazing leadership under Ms. Silverman



1 and Mr. Burke. The atmosphere from a
2 teacher point of view is incredible. We
3 trust our leadership. We see it growing in
4 very positive manners. Our students have a
5 voice. They're excited to come to school.
6 They're excited to learn that they're being
7 chosen to be partners with the University
8 of Delaware and to take college-level
9 classes. We will have the highest cohort,
10 and I actually have students taking
11 upper-level classes at the University of
12 Delaware in entrepreneurship as well.

13 Our students' voices are heard.
14 They're the ones that said they wanted a
15 pep rally and that's what they got. It was
16 a tremendous success.

17 I think we're poised to be an
18 even greater asset to the community. And I
19 don't look at us as just a school any
20 longer. We are a community, a community of
21 learners, and we're becoming a family,
22 people that support each other. And it's
23 just getting better and better each day.

24 So thank you.



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1 MR. CARWELL: Thank you.

2 Mr. Burke?

3 MR. BURKE: Good evening. My
4 name is Damien Burke. I'm Dean of College
5 and Career Readiness at Design Thinking
6 Academy. Thank you for the opportunity to
7 speak tonight.

8 I have had the opportunity to
9 visit hundreds of high schools, public high
10 schools, across the nation, and Design
11 Thinking Academy is where I want to be.
12 It's a very special place, and I love going
13 to work each day. I love the mission of
14 the school. I love the model of the
15 school. It a problem-based model that adds
16 two very important components: Empathize
17 and reflect.

18 So it's important that our
19 scholars are learning how to empathize
20 instead of just going in and solving a
21 problem on their own terms. We're taking
22 this empathize aspect across all classrooms
23 and with our partners and with our
24 projects.



1 It's even helped us recently
2 when we were able to welcome some new
3 students from another high school. Many of
4 the students, some sitting in this room
5 today, reached out with open arms and
6 really wanted to help welcome these
7 students after a high school year had
8 started to make them feel like one of our
9 community immediately. And that keeps
10 going on week over week. It's not a
11 one-and-done-type thing.

12 In addition to empathize and
13 reflection piece after solving problems,
14 some students are learning how to be
15 reflective upon themselves and
16 introspective, so how we can continually
17 improve our society.

18 We have partnered with the
19 Brandywine Zoo to help them solve some of
20 society's and the zoo's problems. We have
21 students visiting the zoo and the zoo
22 visiting us to help them use Design
23 Thinking to, again, work towards these
24 social problems.



1 I love our staff. Our staff
2 are phenomenal. They have worked thousands
3 of hours optionally over the summer to
4 prepare for this school year. They worked
5 evenings. They work weekends. And they
6 come in smiling and ready to go each
7 morning. They are committed to the
8 students, and they're committed to our
9 school community.

10 I really appreciate the work
11 our board does. Our board is doing
12 top-notch work. They're engaged in a
13 day-to-day and a month-to-month
14 collaborative fashion, which is helping us
15 forge our future.

16 Our scholars are amazing. They
17 bring this energy to the school. They help
18 drive. They help one another. And they
19 take ownership in the classroom and
20 ownerships of their education.

21 As was alluded to a little bit,
22 we have some of the highest participation
23 rates in programs outside of the school
24 proper which is a big part of our



1 re-imagining the high school process. So
2 when we have 25 students taking classes on
3 University of Delaware's campus, four are
4 on Wilmington University's campus, and we
5 have just over 300 students, it's
6 meaningful and it helps transform and build
7 our culture for the future.

8 We had 18 students go to Upward
9 Bound over the summer. By far the highest
10 high school participation rate across the
11 state. And those students, again, are
12 bringing it back to help us understand and
13 challenge their peers and, frankly, the
14 entire staff. We can do more, and we're
15 listening and learning and acting upon
16 their recommendations.

17 Dual School is another partner
18 with whom we have had great success where
19 it's learning outside of a classroom. We
20 have had 17 students participate in Dual
21 School, and we have two more in the program
22 right now. Again, by far the No. 1 high
23 school partner for Dual School in the
24 state.



1 So we're really doing learning
2 within the classroom, across the school,
3 and a lot of learning outside of the
4 classroom to help them prepare for whatever
5 they want to do next. We are poised for
6 the future. And please consider us because
7 the next five years are only going to be
8 better.

9 MR. CARWELL: Thank you, sir.
10 Are there any other
11 representatives of the school? Yes, ma'am?

12 MS. MAY: Good evening. My
13 name is Melodye May. I'm a recruiter at
14 Design Thinking Academy. Melodye is
15 spelled M-e-l-o-d-y-e. Thank you for
16 allowing me to speak for a few minutes
17 before you today.

18 I would just like to say that I
19 have formally been involved with the school
20 since August 1st this year. In the short
21 time I have been at Design Thinking
22 Academy, I have been amazed as a recruiter
23 to see how many families have found the
24 right fit for their child. It's more than



1 a decision that is considered and decided
2 upon on a whim. It's considering where
3 your child will go to decide where their
4 future is going to be determined.

5 The career pathways offered at
6 the school, the environment, the student
7 body, even the relationships that the kids
8 have with the staff and the faculty at the
9 school, it really is tremendous. And that
10 trust relationship that has been developed
11 from the time that the kids are accepted at
12 the school throughout the time of the first
13 graduation that they had, really it is a
14 community perspective to which the families
15 had been established with DTA.

16 I am really proud to work
17 there, and I'm proud to say that through
18 everything that the school has, from the
19 way that the school looks, the feel, the
20 culture there, many families have expressed
21 that they found the right fit for their
22 child, and as a parent, that is a very
23 important thing.

24 Thank you.



1 MR. CARWELL: Thank you.

2 Any other representatives of
3 the school? Just to be clear, any other
4 representative of the school that either
5 works there or board members?

6 (No response.)

7 MR. CARWELL: Now we will open
8 it up for comments by other folks.

9 Please introduce yourself.

10 MR. HICKS: My name is
11 Jahod Hicks. I am a senior at Design
12 Thinking Academy. I have been here since
13 the start. Just being here from day one,
14 it's been an amazing journey, and you
15 really get to see how we have grown and how
16 we built up the students. So my 9th-grade
17 year was the best year, but I know ever
18 since I stayed, I have grown a lot. And I
19 really made history at Design Thinking
20 Academy. I don't want to see the history
21 that will be made and that can be made go
22 away. And it's a really good school for
23 entrepreneurs and anyone who's interested
24 in becoming great.



1 MR. CARWELL: Thank you, sir.

2 MS. SILVERMAN: Tell them how
3 great you are.

4 MR. HICKS: I'm going to DTA.

5 MS. SILVERMAN: No, you're not.

6 MR. HICKS: Oh. I'm going to
7 New York for -- tomorrow I'm going to
8 New York for a shared competition that was
9 held at the school. And I was one of the
10 contestant winners. So it's going to be
11 me, a couple other students, and then their
12 teacher-chaperones. Going to be fun, and
13 I'm really ready.

14 MR. CARWELL: Thank you, sir.

15 Is there anyone else who
16 desires to speak? Everyone who checked
17 that they wanted to speak has spoken. I'm
18 opening it up. Did I miss you? I'm sorry.
19 Please introduce yourself.

20 MS. BARNETT: My name is
21 Eva Klaess Barnett, B-a-r-n-e-t-t.

22 My son is Basil. He is a 10th
23 grader at DTA. He's been there since the
24 beginning of his freshman year. We were



1 really heartened to find out that the
2 school was a majority-minority school, and
3 that was an important selling point for us
4 when he enrolled.

5 At every school he attended
6 previously, he was considered disabled, and
7 teacher after teacher suggested that he
8 would need drugs for ADD. In public
9 schools and private schools. The few
10 interventions that they came up with
11 actually worked for him. In pre-K public
12 elementary and private elementary and
13 middle school grades Basil was failed by
14 teachers. Time and again, they wouldn't
15 adjust their expectations for the volume or
16 quality of work that my son was expected to
17 produce. Twice I pulled him out of school
18 to allow him to decompress and catch up and
19 mature a little bit. And we enrolled him
20 in DTA, with little hope of him thriving.
21 But he was a good student in a homeschool
22 setting, so we knew he was capable.

23 We were pleasantly surprised to
24 learn that he was excelling at DTA and



1 completing his work, testing well. He's
2 made many friends and now feels more
3 schools should look at DTA as an example,
4 and I agree with him.

5 Three key points that he wanted
6 me to make tonight. Teachers instruct
7 instead of assign. Less focus is placed on
8 work volume and greater emphasis is placed
9 on understanding.

10 The second one is instruction
11 is focused on real-world application and
12 emphasis is placed on using what's learned
13 to bolster critical thinking.

14 And, third, because of
15 democratic nature of the school, students
16 feel more invested and, therefore, try
17 harder. Over the summer my son Basil
18 participated in some of the interviewing
19 process for the teachers. He was invited
20 to be a student in mock lessons, and
21 students were able to review the teachers.
22 And he really enjoyed that process. It was
23 really important that they did that.

24 So Basil's DTA success story,



1 and I think the school should be really
2 proud of him, and we're incredibly grateful
3 to the school.

4 Thank you very much.

5 MR. CARWELL: Ms. Kelly Close?
6 Please introduce your self.

7 MS. CLOSE: My name is
8 Kelly Close. I am a parent of a student at
9 Design Thinking Academy, and now I am also
10 the president of the PTO. And I would like
11 to just speak on behalf of the school, and
12 my daughter has been there since the first
13 day. She's a senior this year. And we are
14 really pleased with the direction the
15 school has taken. I will comment that
16 there were some definite big bumps and
17 potholes in the road on the way to where we
18 are now, but I would say without any
19 reservation my only regret is, Hannah is a
20 senior this year. I wish that she had her
21 high school career to do at Design Thinking
22 Academy from the way it is now forward
23 because it is a fantastic place. And she
24 will tell you that, from last year and this



1 year, it has been an amazing transition,
2 and the school is what we originally had
3 signed up for.

4 I would clearly speak to any
5 students that are rising 8th graders going
6 to 9th grade next years and say, if you
7 have a kid who doesn't necessarily like to
8 just sit and read, which it was crushing
9 for me, but my daughter did not like to
10 just sit and read, and I really like to sit
11 and read, and I wanted her to sit and read,
12 but that was not her thing. She was the
13 kind of kid who loved crafts, she did
14 stuff, and with her more hands-on spin,
15 that is originally why we came to Design
16 Lab. And she has flourished. I think she
17 has like a 3.8 or something like that. She
18 has a really good GPA. As a matter of
19 fact, now that she's a senior, I kind of
20 gave up on looking on the computer school
21 thing.

22 Anyway, I'm just saying that
23 it's a great school for kids who maybe
24 aren't the ones who need to always sit in



1 the chair and always need to read books and
2 that kind of thing.

3 So I think, as several people
4 have said, the school is poised to go in a
5 more fabulous direction than where they
6 have been.

7 MR. CARWELL: Thank you.

8 Is there anyone else who
9 desires to speak? Please introduce
10 yourself.

11 MS. T. KNOX: Hi. I am
12 Tori Knox, and I was a student of
13 Mrs. Silverman when she taught at Tatnall,
14 and she actually is still continuing to
15 help me.

16 So when I started at Tatnall, I
17 had taken some art classes, but I had never
18 really considered myself an artist. And
19 when I had Mrs. Silverman, she was so
20 encouraging. She taught me to find my
21 voice. She helped me to create artwork
22 that actually had a meaning, not only for
23 me but for other people. And I was able to
24 not only participate in the scholastic art



1 competition, but I got nominated for an
2 American Vision award. I was nominated for
3 a Golden Key award. I won, like, a
4 competition where I got first place in
5 Delaware. I never knew that was possible
6 until I had a teacher like Mrs. Silverman.
7 Even my sister, who doesn't consider
8 herself an artist, having Mrs. Silverman,
9 she was able to walk away feeling great
10 about her artwork, and she was able to make
11 something that she actually felt proud of
12 besides like stick figures and other
13 things.

14 But now that I'm in college,
15 even though I'm not, like, majoring in art
16 or minoring in art, I'm still able to find
17 ways that I can connect with my college
18 community, whether I help to put together
19 art displays. We're actually working on
20 putting on another art show this year.

21 And Mrs. Silverman has been
22 there for me whenever I have to reach out
23 to her and ask her questions about how to
24 do this with my artwork or how to do that.



1 She's always right on it. She's sending me
2 emails. She's telling me how to do this,
3 this, and this. I have felt, like, the
4 support from her from day one when walking
5 into her classroom my freshman year. And
6 still being in college, she's still
7 teaching me and guiding me.

8 When I heard that she was
9 leaving Tatnall, I was really bummed and I
10 was, like, how could she leave such a great
11 place like that. When I heard why and I
12 heard that she was going to become
13 principal of a place like Design Lab and
14 what she was going to be doing for
15 children -- like, one of my friends who
16 actually goes there, I was, like, yes. And
17 I know that she's going to be there for
18 more high school students beyond them just
19 being in high school at the Design Lab.
20 She will help them in college.

21 MR. CARWELL: Thank you very
22 much.

23 Anyone else who desires to
24 speak? Could you sign in, please?



1 Please introduce yourself.

2 MS. D. KNOX: My name is
3 Dani Knox, and Tori is my daughter, but I
4 am also here, as well, as a testimony
5 speaker for the character of
6 Mrs. Silverman.

7 You heard Tori tell what
8 impacts she's had on her life, but I have
9 been involved in the Tatnall community for
10 15 years my children have been there, and I
11 have been part of the Home and School -- a
12 very integral part of the Home and School
13 Association, part of the development office
14 and working to bring funding and things
15 into the community. And not only did she
16 bring out and help to nurture a creative
17 element in my child, but whenever I needed
18 to call upon her for other aspects of the
19 school, she was there. If it was something
20 as small as, Stephanie, I need you to help
21 me to figure out how to do an ornament that
22 we can sell that people will want to buy at
23 the fund-raiser that will bring money in to
24 the community, she was right there.



1 I just have to tell you, the
2 day that it was made known that she was
3 leaving the Tatnall School was one of the
4 most awestruck days that I think I can
5 recall at Tatnall. But like Tori also
6 stated, when we understood why, it made
7 sense.

8 I made it a point when we
9 recognized that Marjani (phonetic) also had
10 a creative -- she's a student at the Design
11 Lab now -- also had an artistic desire, I
12 made it a point to introduce Stephanie to
13 Crystal Griggs at Tori's graduation party
14 because I wanted Marjani to come to the
15 Tatnall School. And I don't believe in
16 coincidences, because here they are
17 together now in this institution, and I
18 couldn't be more pleased that that is how
19 it has worked out. And I couldn't be more
20 pleased for you that you have the headship
21 of someone like Stephanie Silverman.

22 MR. CARWELL: Thank you.

23 Is there anyone else who
24 desires to speak? Please introduce



1 yourself.

2 MR. CLOSE: Alex Close. I am a
3 father. I'm Hannah Close's father. And as
4 I'm sitting here listening, one thing I
5 think that the board needs to recognize
6 is -- the board at Design Thinking Academy.
7 As you have heard, the school has had a lot
8 of bumps, and I have saw firsthand how the
9 board of this school handled that. And I
10 appreciate that in them. And I think
11 that's a key component when reviewing their
12 charter. And I think that they are poised
13 for great success because they have a
14 strong voice.

15 MR. CARWELL: Thank you, sir.
16 I saw another hand. Have you
17 signed in?

18 MS. MAGEE: I did.

19 MR. CARWELL: Please introduce
20 yourself.

21 MS. MAGEE: I have to spell my
22 name. C-a-l-y-c-e, last name M-a-g-e-e.

23 My son is a freshman. He just
24 started there, so I don't have a lot of



1 data points, but I know -- my story of my
2 son is that he's very similar to Basil in
3 that I had to pull him out of public school
4 to homeschool because he's not a typical
5 lecturer learner. So whenever we visited
6 many schools, and he was actually accepted
7 to many private, as well as we considered
8 many other public schools, he was super
9 excited about the Design Thinking Academy.
10 And as anyone knows with kids, getting them
11 excited about school is the hardest thing
12 ever. The fact that he was excited to go
13 to this school is huge.

14 But a second thing I wanted to
15 talk about is I work at the University of
16 Delaware in the Registrar's Office, and
17 some of the things that we think about and
18 discuss with some of the college students
19 that we have are the fact that they don't
20 have a lot of, like, personal and social
21 responsibilities. They walk through the
22 door almost still children, acting like
23 children. Like, they call 911 when there's
24 a mouse. They don't know how to handle



1 themselves a lot of the time.

2 Just I feel, like, the school
3 with their model and the way they teach in
4 terms of having the children own their
5 education, teaching them how to take
6 responsibility, not only for their personal
7 self but out socially as well out in the
8 community, teaching them planning, critical
9 thinking, reasoning, and using creativity
10 in that education process is really huge.

11 I think a lot of people -- one
12 of my -- I'll quote my son. He's been
13 taking Spanish for maybe three years now.
14 He says, "Mom, this is the first year I'm
15 actually learning anything because she's
16 not just trying to shove it down my throat
17 and make me remember it and regurgitate it.
18 The exercises that she's doing, the way
19 she's teaching, I actually can remember."
20 Which is to me is, like, wow, wow,
21 incredible.

22 But teaching them strong
23 communication skills and understanding,
24 that's a huge issue also at the college



1 level. There's a lot of tensions that
2 happen at the college level.

3 And I also really love the use
4 of technology. A lot of kids now,
5 technology is a big part of their lives,
6 and being able to use that technology so
7 that when they're home, they can do things
8 at home, or when they're at school, they
9 can -- because my son learns a lot through
10 technology. So being able to use that
11 technology at school has been a really big
12 plus for him.

13 Thanks.

14 MR. CARWELL: Thank you.

15 Anyone else who desires to
16 speak? Yes, sir. Sign in, please. Please
17 introduce yourself.

18 MR. BARAK: My name is
19 El'Ahmad Barak.

20 When I got the email from the
21 principal advising that there was going to
22 be a meeting here because there was some
23 type of issue concerning the Design
24 Thinking Academy being funded or continuing



1 their funding, I was kind of confused as to
2 why a school that's an XQ school, a school
3 that satisfied all the criteria to receive
4 a \$10 million grant, why would a school
5 like that be at risk.

6 My son is on the spectrum. He
7 has been in charter schools since he was --
8 I think it was the 7th grade. He started
9 at Gateway. And they found themselves in a
10 similar situation where funding was being
11 threatened to be removed from them and for
12 them to be shut down.

13 You know, my child went to
14 public school. He was bullied constantly
15 to the point where I had to sit in the
16 classroom with him for six weeks. This is
17 within the Colonial School District. I
18 drop names. Colonial School District.
19 They did not have the services that he
20 needed. Instead of them being cooperative
21 when we, his mother and I, raised issues,
22 they circled the wagons against us. And I
23 think that they put our child at risk.

24 We were on the waiting list for



1 Gateway for three years. Finally got in
2 there. He spent his last three years
3 there. And it was amazing. When we walk
4 through the doors here, Design Lab, also an
5 amazing experience. There were young
6 people that met us and took us on the tour
7 of the school. The school, I mean, they
8 had the confidence and the knowledge to
9 take us to every class to show us how
10 things were done.

11 My son is a junior now. He
12 started when he was in the 9th grade. He's
13 on the honor roll. His socialization
14 skills are through the roof now. Even
15 though he's still a quiet type of person,
16 likes to work on his own, he's been taught
17 how to take his individualism, mesh it in
18 with other children or other young adults
19 at this particular point, and be a part of
20 a team to finish projects.

21 A school like this that uses
22 hands-on, whether it be videography,
23 computer coding, you can name it, whatever
24 it is this school offers. They are not so



1 much geared towards giving you tons of
2 homework. They want you to be in the
3 classroom and be engaged so that you can
4 know firsthand what it is that you're
5 doing.

6 A school like this is very,
7 very important. Public schools have let us
8 down. A school like this needs your
9 continued support in order to have children
10 like my son that was on the spectrum. Now
11 he's being considered for the Delaware
12 robotics program. And he was competing
13 against children, unaffected children, all
14 over the state of Delaware. I have got to
15 give this school some credit for that.

16 I think it would be a real bad
17 idea for you to let a school like this fall
18 by the wayside.

19 Thank you.

20 MR. CARWELL: Thank you, sir.

21 Anyone else who desires to
22 speak?

23 MS. LIVELY: Good evening. My
24 name is Beverly Lively.



1 I have a daughter that attends
2 Design Lab, and this is her first year.
3 And I can relate to some of the other
4 parents that are here. At birth my
5 daughter was a pound. So her life started
6 out rough. From there on I was told that
7 she wouldn't be able to do anything, she
8 couldn't learn, they gave her labels. We
9 relocated here from Maryland because I was
10 determined to give my daughter a better
11 education from where we lived. So we
12 relocated to Delaware.

13 The first year here -- we have
14 been here two years. The first year here,
15 it was just a nightmare. And one day I was
16 standing in my kitchen and I had the radio
17 on and it came Design Lab and they were
18 accepting kids, and so I called. I called
19 because I felt like I was at the end of my
20 rope. I felt like I was failing my
21 daughter. So I applied.

22 We got accepted, and this has
23 been our first year, and I am just amazed
24 with the school. My daughter can't keep



1 her mouth shut when I get home. She really
2 loves the school. I love the fact that
3 Ms. Silverman knows all these children.
4 And my daughter talks about her constantly.
5 She's opened up. She's really doesn't have
6 a lot of friends. She's not that social
7 butterfly person. I feel by her attending
8 this school, that she's going to blossom.

9 I switched my schedule today so
10 that I could be here to support this
11 school, because they supported me. I feel
12 like my daughter can do anything now that
13 she wants to do. No labels. I'm not
14 worried about scores, this number, this
15 number, this number, because I know with
16 the support of Design Lab, she's going to
17 go very far in life, and that's all I want
18 for her.

19 So I support this school and
20 everything that they do. This has been a
21 lifesaver for me, and I'm looking forward
22 to see what the outcome is going to be.

23 So thank you.

24 MR. CARWELL: Thank you.



1 I think I saw a hand. Please
2 introduce yourself.

3 MS. DUPREE: Hello. My name is
4 Janae Dupree. I work at the Tatnall School
5 where Stephanie worked, was employed. I'm
6 just here to give a testament to how I
7 believe Stephanie is as a leader.

8 When I first started at
9 Tatnall, this was about almost six years
10 ago now, I knew of Stephanie only because I
11 cofounded a non-profit organization that
12 was geared towards photography and science.
13 And Stephanie was one of the first names
14 that I heard about because of her terrific
15 artistic abilities and the way that she
16 worked with her students.

17 Just about -- I don't know if
18 it was about three years ago or two years
19 ago, Stephanie started a student art show
20 at the Tatnall School where the students'
21 artwork was on display and they was selling
22 their own artwork to the Tatnall community
23 and other friends and family members.
24 Stephanie asked me to be a part of it,



1 knowing my history with my own non-profit
2 and art shows that we did together. I
3 thought it was a wonderful idea.

4 And her support of her students
5 is what really resonates with me as far as
6 Stephanie being a tremendous leader. She's
7 very supportive of all of her students that
8 she works with. And I just believe that
9 her leadership is really important,
10 especially in this day and age as a
11 principal. And I know that she expects a
12 lot from, you know, her students and she is
13 willing to sacrifice to help them along the
14 way to get to that successful point. And I
15 also know that she is going to expect a lot
16 from her faculty. And with that, she will
17 expect her faculty to be supportive of the
18 students at Design Thinking.

19 So I just really believe with
20 all that I have seen at Tatnall, with all
21 of the awards, and, as Tori said, just with
22 the support that she has and the guidance
23 that she did, she will just be a tremendous
24 leader.



1 Thank you.

2 MR. CARWELL: Thank you.

3 Yes, sir? Have you signed in?

4 MR. WARRINGTON: Yes, I have.

5 James Warrington, W-a-r-r-i-n-g-t-o-n.

6 Just real brief. I just want
7 to thank the school for the support that
8 they have given my son and the support that
9 they have given me. They have got a heck
10 of a mission trying to get students ready
11 for the fourth industrial revolution.

12 The other thing I would say is
13 part of their curriculum, people should
14 come in in five years and go, I wish I was
15 going there now, because they should be
16 constantly improving their model,
17 constantly coming up with new-and-improved
18 ways of doing things.

19 So as I say, so far it's been a
20 great experience, and I look forward for
21 him graduating from there.

22 MR. CARWELL: Thank you, sir.

23 Is there anyone else who
24 desires to speak?



1 (No response.)

2 MR. CARWELL: If not, I want to
3 thank you all for participating today. The
4 Secretary will consider your comments in
5 deciding at the conclusion of the renewal
6 process what decision she should make to
7 the state board for assent, if needed.

8 This hearing is now closed.

9 Thank you.

10 (Hearing concluded at
11 6:15 p.m.)

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C E R T I F I C A T E

STATE OF DELAWARE)

)

NEW CASTLE COUNTY)

I, Kimberly A. Hurley,
Registered Merit Reporter and Notary
Public, do hereby certify that the
foregoing record, pages 1 to 48 inclusive,
is a true and accurate transcript of my
stenographic notes taken on Monday,
October 15, 2018, in the above-captioned
matter.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have
hereunto set my hand and seal this 20th day
of October, 2018, at Wilmington.



Kimberly A. Hurley, RPR, RMR



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