

**CHARTER SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE**

**DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**



**Delaware Design-Lab High School**

**MAJOR MODIFICATION APPLICATION  
INITIAL REPORT**

CSAC Initial Meeting: March 17, 2015  
CSAC Initial Report Published: March 19, 2015

By March 1, 2015, Delaware Design-Lab High School submitted an application for a major modification of its charter.

The following were in attendance at the Initial Meeting of the CSAC on March 17, 2015:

**Voting Committee Members of the Charter School Accountability Committee**

- David Blowman, Chairperson of the Charter School Accountability Committee and Deputy Secretary of Education, DDOE
- Karen Field Rogers, Associate Secretary, Financial Reform and Resource Management, DDOE
- April McCrae, Education Associate, Science Assessment and STEM, DDOE
- Atnre Alleyne, Director of Talent Management, Leadership and Educator Effectiveness, Teacher and Leader Effectiveness Unit (TLEU), DDOE

**Staff to the Committee (Non-voting)**

- Catherine Hickey, Deputy Attorney General, Counsel to the Committee
- Jennifer Nagourney, Executive Director, Charter School Office, DDOE
- Brook Hughes, Education Associate, Financial Reform and Resource Management, DDOE
- John Carwell, Education Associate, Charter School Office, DDOE
- Michelle Whalen, Education Associate, Charter School Office, DDOE

**Representatives of Delaware Design-Lab High School**

- Cristina Alvarez, Ed.D., Chief Executive Officer, attending and participating by telephone
- Dr. Martin Rayala, Ph.D., Chief Academic Officer

**Additional Attendees Noted**

- Kathleen Geiszler, Deputy Attorney General
- Elizabeth Lewis, Office of Management and Budget

## Discussion

The following issues were discussed:

- A summary of the request – The school explained that the request is to change the location of the school from Wilmington, DE to 179 Stanton Christina Road, Newark, DE.
- The impact of the new location on enrollment – The school explained that the new location has positively impacted enrollment. Recruitment for the Wilmington location was difficult due to perceived safety concerns expressed by parents. A year ago more than 50% of prospective parents lived in Newark, Bear and southern New Castle County areas. They were reluctant to come into the City of Wilmington, which impacted enrollment. Currently, parents are more interested in the new location given its closer location to their communities. New applications have increased based on the new location.
- Total number of enrollment applications to date – The school stated that a total of 217 applications had been submitted and all students have received letters of invitation. As of the date of the meeting, 200 applications were active, 83 students had accepted the invitation, 67 had been inputted into e-School Plus and 17 students had declined.
- DDOE records only show one student entered into e-School Plus as of March 16<sup>th</sup> – The school stated that applications were inputted in afternoon and into the evening on March 16, 2015. Applications were also entered the morning of March 17, 2015. The students entered in e-School are only students who have submitted signed first year charter agreements.
- Whether all applicants and accepted students were aware of new location – The school stated that all applicants and accepted students are aware of the new location. Additionally, ongoing open houses and tours are being provided to families. Open houses and tours are not a requirement of acceptance but it is highly recommended and many families are convinced when they see the location. The open houses and tours occur on Sundays and Wednesday evenings. In February, there were three Tuesday evening open houses. Another open house is scheduled for the evening of Wednesday, March 18<sup>th</sup>.
- The budget projects 12% of students in special education and the CSAC asked if actual acceptances align with that projection – The school stated that acceptances align with the budget projection.
- Whether the school was on-track to meet the 80% (240 students) enrollment target by April 1, 2015 – The school stated that they plan to meet their enrollment target by April 1<sup>st</sup>. Their recruitment efforts include: home visits to families who do not have transportation and targeted outreach to families of English Language Learners (ELL). Spanish speaking families have been the only ELL applicant group. Dr. Alvarez is bilingual and conducts this outreach personally. The school also noted that two additional recruitment workers were recently hired.
- The budget worksheets submitted with the application were outdated relative to OEC calculations. The CSAC noted that current budget worksheets are available on the

Charter School Office website. – The school noted the updated worksheets and stated that they plan to contract Innovative Schools for financial management services.

- Impact of Innovative Schools contract on proposed budget – The school stated that management services are reflected in the submitted budget on line 55 at \$41,250 for Year 1.
- Current state of new location regarding its readiness to open as a school and receive a temporary certificate of occupancy (CO) by June 15, 2015 – The school stated that the portion of the site it will occupy was built as a school. Any needed renovations are minimal and cosmetic in nature. The site was designed to serve high school students which is far easier to use than the Wilmington location, which was designed to serve elementary students.
- Whether the sanctuary was separate from the school and religious artifacts removed – The school affirmed that the school has a separate entrance from the sanctuary. Students do not enter near it and it is up to code. The school stated that all religious artifacts and symbols have been removed.
- Whether a kitchen was available for cooking or if food would be delivered – The school stated that a commercial grade kitchen and equipment are available, but food service is to be determined.
- If the new site is intended to be a temporary or permanent location – The school stated that the site will be a permanent location but it will outgrow the building by Year 3. The school also noted that the landlord will permit the addition of modulars and new construction without an increase to the cost per square foot.
- Potential impacts of new site on educational program – The school stated that the impacts have been positive. The site includes more space (11 acres) for outdoor activities (horticultural, biology, etc.). Expenses will be reduced by \$10,000-15,000 because the Wilmington site required a contract with the Salvation Army to provide physical education. The new site will accommodate physical education activities and the sports program can grow. Parents have reacted positively to this feature. Additionally, instructional time will increase because students will not have to travel to the Salvation Army.

## Conclusion

Mr. Blowman asked voting members of CSAC whether there was any additional information that it required to inform its decision-making.

- None stated.
- The CSAC reminded the school that any changes to special education enrollment could impact revenue projections.

## Next Steps:

- The CSAC will provide the school with an Initial Report no later than March 19, 2015.

- An initial public hearing will be held on March 23, 2015, in the 2nd floor Cabinet Room of the Townsend Building in Dover, DE.
- The applicant's written response to the CSAC Initial Report is due on or before March 26, 2015.
- The final meeting of the CSAC will be held on March 30, 2015, in the 2nd floor Cabinet Room of the Townsend Building in Dover, DE.
- CSAC's Final Report will be issued no later than April 2, 2015.
- A second and final public hearing will be held on April 7, 2015, in the 2nd floor Auditorium of the Carvel State Office Building in Wilmington, DE.
- The public comment period ends on April 10, 2015.
- The Secretary will announce his decision at the April 16, 2015 State Board of Education meeting.