



TO: Charter School Accountability Committee (CSAC), Delaware Dept. of Education
REF: Major Modification Application for Enrollment
Written Response to CSAC Initial Report
DATE: 16 February 2016

Please accept this written response to the CSAC Initial Report published on 29 January 2016. Separate attachments are included for two of the items.

The CSAC requested:

1) A clearer articulation of the relationship between projected student enrollment that includes new students and the retention of current students.

Response:

School leadership and the management and recruitment teams have worked diligently to think through a reasonable growth strategy. We carefully mapped out enrollment targets in order to reach the maximum enrollment of 600 students in the next four years (2016-2020) and balance enrollment among the grades from the school years 2016-2023. The revised enrollment waterfall, attached in APPENDIX A, shows targets that cap student attrition to a maximum of 10%, i.e. from 9th to 10th grade, from 10th to 11th grade, and so on. This approach supports the school in meeting the indicators and metrics of the Delaware Performance Framework.

The enrollment strategy makes sure that we are growing in a way that makes sense for our students and for the operations of our school. Based on current enrollment and on new applications, we believe that the restructured enrollment numbers are achievable and will positively impact our school culture and our students, families, and faculty.

2) Student retention strategy. What are the plans and goals for student retention?

Response:

Our student retention strategy acknowledges that parents and students want a college preparatory education to prepare their children for college and career success. Therefore we are consistently implementing rigorous academic programs and the Design-thinking methodology and curriculum approved in the charter. Examples:

- **College Preparatory Courses and Curriculum** – Students are scheduled for seven classes in grade 9 and seven classes in grade 10. In 2015-2016, freshmen are scheduled for English 1, Interactive Mathematics 1, Integrated Science, Civics/Regional Planning, Physical Education, and Technology Education Design. Sophomores are scheduled for English 2, Interactive Mathematics 2, Biology, Big History, Driver's Education, and Media Design.
- **National Honor Society** – Current students can earn membership in the National Honor Society by demonstrating academic excellence.
- **Advanced Placement Courses** – AP courses will be offered in the 2016-2017 school year in English, Mathematics, Science, History, and Computer Science.
- **Design and Media in the Curriculum** – Films and video are used for educational purposes as part of a teacher's lesson plan and/or unit of study. Technology Education



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Design and Digital Media Design classes use films and video to teach the design curriculum and media literacy. Students produce stop-motion animation films and videos in Digital Media Design.

- **Technology Enhanced Learning** – A) Computer Labs - From November 2015 to present, freshmen and sophomores have had access to DELL desktop computers and software in the Technology Education Design and Digital Media Design computer labs. Digital Media Design students use video cameras and digital still cameras. B) One-to-one Chromebooks - In February 2016 we are implementing Google for Education school-wide. Chromebooks were purchased for each student and teacher. A Google for Education certified trainer worked with the faculty this fall and winter. Additional trainings happen in January and throughout the spring.

Our student retention strategy also acknowledges that parents and students want a safe school. Therefore we are consistently implementing a school-wide behavior management system that holds students accountable for their actions and supports the establishment of a positive school climate and culture. Examples:

- **Student Leadership & Excellence Program** – An inclusive school-wide positive behavior program that promotes leadership and excellence in our student population. Exemplary students display appropriate behaviors and become models for others to emulate. All students are given an opportunity to reach the highest levels of behavior and academic excellence.
- **Evidence-based Behavior System** – Teachers record and track their students' behaviors in the evidence-based educational tool to track data of positive and negative behavior within the classroom and school. ClassDoJo classroom management helps encourage students in class and communicates behavior data to students and parents.
- **Restorative Practices** – Teaching our students through positive role modeling, relationship building, and repairing and fostering mutual respect, this restorative practice approach to servicing an inclusive youth population positively improves student behavior and strengthens civil society in the school culture and for their individual futures.

Outreach initiatives also support student retention. We are participating in the XQ Super School Project (www.xqsuperschool.org) with a Design-Lab High team of students, parents, educators, community members and business leaders who have met at the school since October 2015 to rethink high school. We hosted the Design Aware Delaware Conference on January 29, 2016 and will host the national conference of Design-ED in June 2016. (See Design-Lab Schools Facebook page for XQ Super School Project and Design Aware Delaware Conference.)

Outreach initiatives engage and inspire our families because they deliver the promises of the mission and vision that were approved in the charter. Evidence that our student retention strategy is successful is the fact that many of the new applicants for the 2016-2017 school year have heard about Design-Lab High School by word-of-mouth from currently enrolled satisfied students and parents.



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3) Budget based on 80% projected enrollment

Response:

APPENDIX B contains the budget and APPENDIX C the budget narrative based on 80% enrollment. In light of current successful enrollment applications that show a demand in grades 9, 10, and 11, we are confident that an 80% projected enrollment budget will not be needed. The 80% budget shows that we are able to operate the school and deliver the academic programs and services approved in the charter and maintain fiscal viability.

Successful Enrollment

School Choice applications for the 2016-2017 school year as of 16 February 2016 –

Total applications – 157

Grade 9 – 119

Grade 10 – 21

Grade 11 – 17

18 of the 157 applicants have applied to other schools as well.

Design-Lab High School's enrollment strategies are very successful. We believe it will be more than attainable to retain most of our current students, and to fill any vacancies with new student applicants, thereby exceeding the minimum 80% enrollment required by the April 1st deadline.