



Strategic Plan for Specialized Public Educational Opportunities

**House Bill 56 as Amended
by House Amendment 1**

January 9, 2017



DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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January 9, 2017

Dear Members of the 149th General Assembly:

The Strategic Plan for Specialized Educational Opportunities report is in response to House Bill No. 56, as amended by House Amendment No. 1. This Act required that:

“No new charter schools shall be authorized to open in the City of Wilmington prior to June 30, 2018, or until the development of a needs assessment and strategic plan for specialized public educational opportunities throughout the State, including those at traditional, magnet, charter, and vocational-technical schools. The strategic plan shall be based on an evaluation of educational needs using national models and best practices.”

The Department of Education and the State Board of Education collaborated on the development of the needs assessment and the Department led the work developing this Strategic Plan. Many stakeholders were involved and a number of supporting documents were created or reviewed as part of the strategic planning process. From October 2016 to January 2017, a work committee of education leaders, legislators and a community member was convened to complete the Plan. The committee members are listed for your information on page 6 of this report.

Providing a cohesive system that allows families to identify and send their child to the school that best meets the needs of their child is an important issue. This report, and specifically the Strategic Plan, outlines steps to take in order to achieve such a system.

Do not hesitate to contact Susan Haberstroh at susan.haberstroh@doe.k12.de.us should you have any questions regarding this Strategic Plan and related documents.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Steven H. Godowsky".

Steven H. Godowsky
Secretary of Education

SG:tms

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SPONSOR: Rep. Potter & Sen. Henry
Reps. Baumbach, Bennett, Bolden, Jaques, Keeley, J. Johnson,
Kowalko, B. Short, K. Williams; Sen. Poore

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

148th GENERAL ASSEMBLY

HOUSE BILL NO. 56
AS AMENDED BY
HOUSE AMENDMENT NO. 1

AN ACT TO AMEND TITLE 14 OF THE DELAWARE CODE RELATING TO CHARTER SCHOOLS.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF DELAWARE:

Section 1. Amend § 511(c), Title 14 of the Delaware Code by making deletions as shown by strike through and insertions shown by underline as follows:

(c) Charter school applications shall be submitted to a local school board or the Department for approval as an approving authority. Whenever a charter school seeks a charter from the Department as approving authority, such approval shall require the assent of both the Secretary and the State Board, as shall any action pursuant to §§ 515 and 516 of this title. The approving authority shall be responsible for approval of the charter school pursuant to this section and for continuing oversight of each charter school it approves. In addition, for a charter school applicant seeking to locate in the City of Wilmington, prior to the approving authority authorizing the school to open, the Mayor and the City Council of the City of Wilmington may review and provide comment regarding the likely impact of the proposed charter school on students in the City of Wilmington as outlined in this chapter and further defined in regulations.

Section 2. No new charter schools shall be authorized to open in the City of Wilmington prior to June 30, 2018, or until the development of a needs assessment and strategic plan for specialized public educational opportunities throughout the State, including those at traditional, magnet, charter, and vocational-technical schools. The strategic plan shall be based on an evaluation of educational needs using national models and best practices.

Page 1 of 1

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Overview of the Report

Over the last two years there has been a great deal of attention related to the availability and access for all of Delaware's students to the specialized educational opportunities across Delaware's public education system, including the traditional school districts, vocational technical school districts, charter schools and magnet schools. This report contains information and materials that have been generated related to this topic and concludes with a Strategic Plan for Specialized Educational Opportunities in Delaware (Plan). For purposes of this report the term "specialized educational opportunities" includes programming developed for a specific purpose (e.g. World language immersion, dual enrollment, or to serve specific populations, such as gifted and talented).

This report provides a summary of actions taken in the development of this Plan. While this report will not be all encompassing, the intent is to provide the background needed to understand the recommendations outlined in the Plan.

Background

On March 19, 2015, Governor Markell charged the State Board of Education (SBE) and Delaware Department of Education (Department) with conducting a needs assessment for the specialized educational opportunities and charged the Department of Education with the development of a strategic plan. Additionally, House Bill 56 as amended by House Amendment 1 required that "no new charter schools shall be authorized to open in the City of Wilmington prior to June 30, 2018, or until the development of a needs assessment and strategic plan for specialized educational opportunities..." is completed.

In April 2015, the State Board of Education and the Department of Education convened a small working group of primary stakeholders to develop a Request for Proposal for the needs assessment. The result was a contract with the Public Consulting Group, Inc. (PCG). During the late summer and fall of 2015, PCG conducted a survey to gather information on what specialized programs were being offered, the number of classroom seats available, waiting list if available, participants, and any other information that was available related to these specialized programs. This particular report can be found [here](#) and the accompanying PowerPoint [here](#).

The PCG report came to two overarching conclusions. First, PCG recommended better data collection policies and that procedures needed to be developed in regards to choice enrollment. Specifically, they suggested that schools be provided with uniform program definitions to allow for streamlined program enrollment data. Additionally, PCG recommended that the state investigate ways to strengthen data collection, specifically around choice applications, school admissions, school waitlists, and program availability and enrollment. Overall, the report concluded that better and more complete data was needed to properly assess the educational opportunities available and what students were taking advantage of these opportunities.

PCG also concluded that particular attention should be paid to ensure that proper access was being afforded to specialized educational opportunities in the state. To assist in this analysis of choice participation among specific subgroups of students, PCG stated that first, valid and reliable choice data needed to be collected (as mentioned in their earlier recommendation). Next, they suggested a review of districts with the greatest choice participation differences and that an analysis of program offerings (based upon workforce projections) be conducted. Finally, PCG also developed an interactive map of specialized educational offerings that can be found [here](#) (Appendix B).

The final report was provided to the State Board of Education at the December 2015 meeting. Representatives from PCG were in attendance to answer questions from the SBE members.

From April 2016 through October 2016, the Department re-engaged with PCG to identify additional information needed for the development of the Plan. Primarily, this consisted of national best practice research, a gap analysis, stakeholder outreach including focus groups and interviews, a strategic roadmap and final report. The final report can be found [here](#) (*please note that the internal links within the final report may not be operational because of changes to the document originator website*).

From October 2016 through early January 2017, a small committee was developed to review the material and to develop the enclosed Plan. The membership included:

Heath Chasanov, Superintendent, Woodbridge School District
Mervin Daugherty, Superintendent, Red Clay Consolidated School District
Earl Jaques, Chair, House Education Committee
Elizabeth Lockman, Community Member
Nick Manolakos, Head of School, Odyssey Charter School
Bernardette Maxwell, Supervisor of Special Programs, Lake Forest School District
David Sokola, Chair, Senate Committee
Salome Thomas-El, Principal/Head of School, Thomas A. Edison Charter School
Leroy Travers, Principal/Head of School, Campus Community School
Brenda Wynder, Superintendent, Lake Forest School District
Debbie Zych, Superintendent, PolyTech School District

While the meetings followed the formalities of the open meeting laws, public comment was not limited to one part of the meeting and members of the public engaged with the small working group during the meetings.

Dr. Joan Buttram and Jeff Klein in the Delaware Education Research and Development Center at the University of Delaware provided support through the facilitation of the meetings, gathering of additional material and the writing of the final report. Because of their experience across Delaware, their contribution was beyond the original scope of what was originally asked. Additionally, David Blowman, Susan Haberstroh and Tina Shockley and other Department staff provided support to the committee.

There were four meetings held from October 2016 through December 2016.

Meeting #1 - October 25, 2016

Meeting #2 - November 9, 2016

Meeting #3 - November 30, 2016

Meeting #4 - December 21, 2016

The meeting minutes are included as part of this report in Appendix A.

The committee had access to documents, beyond the two PCG reports, that had been either developed for this purpose or that were relevant to the charge (e.g., University of Delaware's Delaware Unified School District Enrollment Project study and the legislatively driven Enrollment Preferences Task Force Final Report). Additionally, there were representatives of the Department of Education that provided overviews on certain aspects of interest, including the certificate of necessity process, transportation and charter school application process. One piece of additional information (created because of direct conversation related to the choice process) included the 2017 Delaware Choice Application Data report. All of those materials are publicly available and housed on the Department of Education website and found [here](#) (Appendix C).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Delaware can be considered a leader in providing parents a choice to where they send their children to school. Until the mid-1990's the only options available for a parent was to send their child to the district of residence feeder pattern school, vocational technical school, private school, or homeschool. Two legislative Acts changed this – one allowed for “choice” across and within districts and the other allowed for charter schools to be established. Over the subsequent twenty years, many aspects of these legislative acts have come to fruition. As of the 2015-16 school year for the 136,027 public school students enrolled in Delaware schools, 6,461 students (4.7%) are choosing across districts (inter-district choice), 15,272 students (11.2%) are choosing within district (intra-district choice), and 13,897 of students (10.2%) are in charter schools. At the time of this report, there were 16 traditional public school districts, 3 vocational-technical districts, and 25 charter schools operating in Delaware.

While most agree these actions were critical in serving the students in Delaware, there has been recent conversations on whether we are providing all students access to quality educational opportunities that meet their needs.

During Governor Jack Markell's gubernatorial administration, the Wilmington Education Advisory Committee was established. This committee was charged with planning, recommending, and implementing changes to improve the quality and availability of education for children in Pre-K through grade 12 in the City of Wilmington and advise the State on improvements for all schools within the State with high concentrations of children living in poverty and/or English language learners. An overview of the work completed by the Wilmington Education Advisory Committee can be found [here](#).

Over the course of the 147th and the 148th General Assembly's, there has been legislative action specifically related to student choice or enrollment in charter and vocational technical schools. Such actions included House Bill 90 of the 147th General Assembly which created the Enrollment Preferences Task Force and House Bill 100 of the 148th General Assembly which limited enrollment in Sussex Technical High School.

During the course of the four meetings, five topic areas were discussed and became the basis for the Plan. Below is a summary of these five areas:

Topic Area #1 - State Laws, Policies, Regulations

It became very apparent to the committee that laws, regulations, guidelines and policies exist for families to select which school can best serve their child, but the alignment of differing policies may also be a barrier. For instance, the Certificate of Necessity is a process for the traditional and vocational school districts to propose to the State the need to build a new or renovate an existing school. The process includes identifying why the new building is needed. Currently, there is not a specific requirement that existing charter schools in the resident district are taken into consideration. Likewise, impact information is required for the granting of new charters for schools, but that alone cannot be a reason for non-approval.

It was also found that there is a need to compile and align the significant timelines that govern school enrollment, choice, and employment and fiscal decisions. It was found that some timelines may also be in conflict with one another. One such example is requiring a charter school to show enrollment of 80% on April 1st, when the deadline for parents to select schools is the third Friday in March, just ten business days before that date (March 17).

Finally, the committee also expressed that there is a need for codified definitions of the various types of educational programs in Delaware. For instance, the definition of some of the current educational options in the state (such as magnet schools) are not well established or understood.

Topic Area #2 – Transportation

It was also recognized that transportation to the school of choice can be a barrier for school choice in Delaware. Transportation issues were found to impact four types of students the most. First rural students often found transportation to be a barrier because bus transportation is often not available to their choice school or doing so would result in a very long bus ride. Low income families are also often kept from participating in choice because these families often do not have the means to get their student to the hub stop or to the school itself. The current funding structure that only allocates money to provide routes within existing feeders for traditional school districts was also found to be a barrier for those families wanting to exercise inter- or intra-district choice. Commonly, a student who wants to choice into a traditional school district has to find transportation to the closest stop on an already existing route within that school's feeder pattern. In other words, these schools typically do not have hub stops or routes that run outside of the district or school's boundaries. Finally, the lack of after-school buses was also mentioned as a barrier to those children who wish to participate in extracurricular, academic enrichment or tutoring programs that occur outside of typical school schedules.

Overall, the current quality and availability of reliable school bus transportation was frequently mentioned as a concern by members of the task force. Hiring shortages experienced by the bus contractors operating in Delaware was frequently pointed to as the cause of many of these issues.

Topic Area #3 – Data Collection

As mentioned in the PCG report, the committee recognized the need for stronger data, specifically in regards to the school choice process in Delaware. To rectify this issue, the committee recommended that the state work to require all traditional and vocational technical school districts and charter schools in Delaware to utilize Data Service Center’s choice portal for the management of school choice application data. By doing so, parents will have one centralized method to apply to schools. It was noted that parents should still be allowed the option to submit paper choice applications, but this information would be required to be entered into the choice portal. Requiring all schools to utilize this central portal is anticipated to result in more accurate and complete data on parental needs and demands for new and existing programs within the state. Finally, the committee also recommended that efforts should be made to collect and analyze enrollment, school waiting lists, current labor market needs, and other data to regularly determine if schools are offering an appropriate, relevant, and needed mix of educational programs in traditional districts, vocational technical districts, and charter schools.

Topic Area #4 – Gaps in Programming

The committee also recognized the need to encourage and incentivize traditional districts, vocational technical districts, and charter schools to meet gaps in educational programming that are identified across the state. To accomplish this, it was first noted that it is important for the state to encourage the development of informal and formal networks to allow all types of schools (traditional, vo-tech, and charter) to share their knowledge of successful programs and best practices related to the operation of those programs. The inclusion of preschool and higher education stakeholders in this work was also viewed as critical in order to properly provide for the needs of incoming Kindergarten students as well as ensure that our high school graduates are leaving with the needed skills in order to be successful in post-secondary education or in the careers they pursue. Finally, the committee also expressed an interest to see the expansion of successful, high-demand programs, such as Advanced Placement, Dual Enrollment (credit-earning higher education courses for high school students) and Language Immersion Programs in our schools.

Topic Area #5 – Access and Outreach

Finally, the committee saw a need to increase outreach efforts to marginalized (low income, minority and rural) families and inform them of the specialized public educational opportunities and resources available to them in the state. The committee believed that this could be accomplished in several ways. First, a need to provide all families with relevant and useful information regarding school performance, educational programs and opportunities was recognized. The committee also believed that streamlining the school choice process and educating parents on how to navigate this process were also key steps in increasing access and outreach to marginalized groups. There is also an opportunity to expand existing School Choice Outreach like the New Castle County Public School Choice EXPO across the state making it more accessible to all parents and schools.

Furthermore, the committee wanted to build upon existing work conducted by the Enrollment Preference Task Force as well as the Delaware English Learner Strategic Plan. By utilizing those particular recommendations, the committee believed that existing policies and practices could be reviewed and potentially revised in order to ensure that all Delaware students are provided with high quality educational options.

In closing, as Delaware becomes more diverse and the programs offered more specialized, the need to provide access and availability to those who can benefit from these programs is critical. The overarching goal from the committee is ***“To provide a cohesive system of specialized public educational opportunities in Delaware so that all families and their children can participate in those that meet their needs and interests.”*** However, to achieve this goal, there are many actions that need to be completed. Some of these actions can be done relatively quickly, while others are contingent or dependent on the completion of other recommendations. The Plan attempts to summarize the strategies in a straightforward manner so that it is operational. Representative Jaques stated that this is a “living” document so that there needs to be an ability to change the document as actions are completed.

Strategic Plan for Specialized Public Educational Opportunities

Goal: To provide a cohesive system of specialized public educational opportunities in Delaware so that all families and their children can participate in those that meet their needs and interests.

Objective 1: To align different state laws, regulations, policies, guidelines, and timelines to maximize opportunities for families to participate in specialized educational opportunities.

Strategy 1: Compile and align state laws and any corresponding regulations for traditional and vocational technical school districts and charter schools (e.g., Certificate of Necessity, New Charter School Application process, transportation).

Responsible party – DOE

Timeline – Complete by April 1, 2017

Strategy 2: Compile and align master list of timelines that govern school enrollment, choice, personnel employment decisions (hiring and firing), and fiscal decisions.

Responsible party – DOE

Timeline – Complete by April 1, 2017

Strategy 3: Develop codified definitions of the types of specialized educational programs in Delaware (e.g., choice and magnet schools).

Responsible party – DOE and legislators with stakeholder input

Timeline – Complete by June 1, 2017

Objective 2: To minimize transportation barriers that prevent families from exercising choice options that meet their children’s educational needs.

Strategy 1: Explore ways to minimize the transportation barriers for traditionally underserved families (e.g., low-income and rural families), who often do not have the means to get their children to hub stops or to the school itself.

Responsible party - DOE, districts, charter schools and legislators

Timeline – Proposal complete by December 31, 2017

It is expected that there will be additional cost for implementation of this strategy.

Strategy 2: Consider additional funding for after-school activity buses so that more students can participate in extracurricular, academic enrichment and tutoring programs.

Responsible party - DOE, districts, charter schools and legislators

Timeline – Proposal complete by December 31, 2017

It is expected that there will be additional cost for implementation of this strategy.

Strategy 3: Explore options to address school bus transportation issues (e.g., shortage of qualified bus drivers, limited number of bus companies) in order to build parental confidence and satisfaction in the school bus transportation system.

Responsible party - DOE and stakeholders

Timeline – Proposal complete by December 31, 2017

It is expected that there will be additional cost for implementation of this strategy.

Objective 3: To strengthen data collection efforts to support the accurate and timely determination of educational programmatic needs across the state.

Strategy 1: Require all traditional and vocational technical school districts and charter schools in Delaware to utilize Data Service Center’s choice portal for the management of school choice application data.

Responsible party – Legislators

Timeline – Complete by June 30, 2017

It is expected that there may be additional cost for implementation of this strategy.

Strategy 2: Collect and analyze enrollment, school waiting lists, current labor market needs, and other data to regularly determine if schools are offering an appropriate and relevant mix of educational programs in traditional districts, vocational technical districts, and charter schools.

Responsible party – DOE with stakeholders

Timeline – Annual Review on May 1

Objective 4: To encourage and incentivize traditional districts, vocational technical districts, and charter schools to meet gaps in educational programming that are identified across the state.

Strategy 1: Foster the development of informal and formal networks for all types of schools (preschool, traditional, charter, vo-tech, and higher education) in order to encourage the sharing of program knowledge, evidence-based best practices, research-based or promising practices and resources.

Responsible party – Districts and charter schools in conjunction with others such as DOE, P-20 Council

Timeline – Ongoing and initiated no later than June 30, 2017

Strategy 2: Support the expansion of existing high demand/high quality programs such as Advanced Placement, Pathways, and Dual Enrollment Programs (credit-earning higher education courses for high school students) and World Language in our schools.

Responsible party – DOE, districts and charter schools, and legislature

Timeline – Proposal by December 31, 2017 and annual review on that date

It is expected that there will be additional cost for implementation of this strategy.

Objective 5: To increase outreach efforts to marginalized (low income, minority and rural) families to inform them of specialized public educational opportunities and resources to support these options.

Strategy 1: Increase outreach strategies to provide all families with easy access to relevant and useful information regarding school performance, educational programs and opportunities, navigation of the school choice process and community organization information relative to school choice.

Responsible party – Districts, charter schools and other stakeholders
Timeline – On or before June 30, 2017

Strategy 2: Utilize the work conducted by the Enrollment Preference Task Force (<http://udspace.udel.edu/handle/19716/17397>) in order to review and revise policies and practices that may contribute to marginalized access to schools of choice.

Responsible party – Legislators and stakeholders
Timeline – To be determined by legislators

Strategy 3: Consult the English Learner Strategic Plan in order to provide English Learners with high quality educational options.

Responsible party – Stakeholders
Timeline - Ongoing

Appendix A
Meeting Minutes

Strategic Plan For Specialized Public Education Opportunities

Meeting #1

October 25, 2016

10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Minutes

Attendees:

David Blowman, Department of Education
Mervin Daughtery, Red Clay Consolidated School District
Steven Godowsky, Department of Education
Susan Haberstroh, Department of Education
Renee Ickes, Odyssey Charter School (sitting in for Nick Manolakos)
Earl Jaques, General Assembly, Chair – House Education Committee
Jeff Klein, University of Delaware’s Educational Resource and Development Center
Elizabeth Lockman, Community Member
Tina Shockley, Department of Education
Brenda Wynder, Lake Forest School District
Debbie Zych, PolyTech School District

Members Absent:

Heath Chasanov, Woodbridge School District
Salome El-Thomas, Thomas A. Edison Charter School
David Sokola, General Assembly, Chair - Senate Education Committee
Leroy Travers, Campus Community School

On By Phone:

Joan Buttram, University of Delaware’s Educational Resource and Development Center
Elizabeth Chmielewski, PCG (Public Consulting Group)
Anna D’Entremont, PCG
Annaelise Eaton, PCG

General Public/Interested Parties:

Laura Manges, member of public/Milford School District
Kendall Massett, member of public/Delaware Charter School Network
Bernardette Maxwell, Lake Forest School District
Denise Stouffer, Department of Education/Charter Schools

Introduction

The first meeting of the Strategic Plan For Specialized Public Education Opportunities began at 10:08 a.m. The meeting was called to order and everyone introduced themselves. It was noted that this was a public

meeting and that public comment would be accepted at the end of the meeting. Joining the meeting by phone were Joan Buttram of the University of Delaware's Educational Resource and Development Center as well as staff from PCG (Public Consulting Group) including Annaelise Eaton, Anna D'Entremont and Elizabeth Chmielewski. PCG worked with DOE and the State Board of Education (SBE) on the needs assessment phase of this project by conducting a survey of information from districts and charter schools and creation of an interactive map last fall and then worked with DOE on additional information over the last few months.

Committee's Charge

The committee's charge originated in two ways. First, Governor Markell came to State Board of Education Meeting in March 2015 and charged SBE and DOE with doing a needs assessment on special education opportunities within the State and then charged the DOE with writing a strategic plan. Secondly, House Bill 56 as amended by House Amendment 1, puts a moratorium on new charter schools in the City of Wilmington until a needs assessment and strategic plan for specialized public education opportunities are developed. In fulfilling this charge, PCG assisted the State with the needs assessment, which was explained later in the meeting. The second phase is the strategic plan which is the focus of this group of individuals.

Prior to PCG's presentation, Secretary Godowsky made brief remarks thanking everyone for their participation. He noted that data collected through PCG, the DOE team, and other entities including the University of Delaware brings us to a place where we can make meaningful analysis of the data and continue forward. Representative Earl Jaques previously encouraged DOE to pull all this into a strategic plan. He noted December 1 is our goal to get this done. He also noted that there is a great cross section of people on the committee. He again thanked them and noted that this is an important part of our work.

It was recognized that in setting up this process there was a great deal of information to go through. The goal is to move quickly with some meaningful conversation around the needs of the state. Questions like, "What should it actually look like?" and other questions as referenced on the Guiding Questions (attached and which were in attendee's packets), will provide a sense of where we have some options for parents. Note there are many processes in place such as an established process around authorizing charter schools, processes related to the vocational technical education system, and some districts are creating their own programs including magnet schools.

The goal is not charter vs. magnet vs. votech vs. traditional. The goal is to look and ask, "Are there ways to expand specialize opportunities across the state?"

Some background on House Bill 56 as amended was provided. It was noted that from the General Assembly's standpoint, we have different kinds of schools and they need to know how they all fit together to make a good education system, so that they can fund them appropriately. This is a struggle for them and likely for parents too. Hopefully this strategic plan will provide us the answer.

The question was asked when we are inundated with request for new schools, are we putting them where they need to be or are they going there just because some group decided it? Is it based on population, future growth, etc?

The group turned to the Guiding Questions which were read before the group:

- How does the current mix of programs regardless of type of school align with current demands/needs as determined through needs assessment?

- What is the mix of programs that the state believes would be beneficial to meet the needs of all students in order to?
- How can we ensure that any new schools proposed and designed meet the needs of the community in which it is to be located or draws students?
- How do we ensure that the original plan is aligned to best practices for student learning?

A question was asked regarding will the strategic plan address access and equity to those opportunities. The response was that it is easy to get information on current demand, but it's harder to determine needs for the future. The Certificate of Necessity process around the request for new schools (enrollment, not programs) was referenced. Also, it was noted that we have a robust choice process – both in and across districts, which can create fluidity and uncertainty in the system. Also noted is that districts know their community is best, but what is the State's role? That role has traditionally been left to districts, and as such this may create tension.

Another concern from the General Assembly's viewpoint, and such was noted with the WEIC proposal, is who is paying for it. Some feel we should change our school districts to "county-wide" districts, so the county pays for students in that area. We need to have discussion about school districts and whether other type of schools are in there as well.

It was noted that another challenge we will face in this work is being clear about the scope of this committee.

Supporting Materials

Several supporting materials were provided in attendees' packets and/or will be available online in the near future. Those that were in the attendee's packet are attached to the minutes. Such supporting materials consist of:

- House Bill 56 as amended by House Amendment 1
- Draft Guiding Questions
- Enrollment Trends
- PCG Report – December 2015
 - Corresponding PCG PowerPoint – December 17, 2015
- PCG Report – October 2016
 - Corresponding PCG PowerPoint – October 25, 2016
- Interactive Map
- Certificate of Necessity Process
- Charter School Authorization Process
- Surplus Building Process
- UD Enrollment Study
- School Choice Information/Application
- Delaware Service Center (DSC) information

It was noted that UD projection data may be surprising. It was commissioned last year through the FY16 budget, and notes that unit growth has been higher in the last few years. A straight line demographic analysis including birthrates, migration, etc. It assumes current choice patterns, but does not account for behavior change/patterns.

One member commented that in order to be productive, we have to ask the right questions, make decisions, and have policy. Other agreed that more policy is needed and that when this is done, what will be helpful for those who make policy decisions and for parents is to have maps showing different categories (blue, green, yellow, red) which would indicate to parents the performance of schools so parents can make a choice. This is about transparency.

One member commented that, in addition, we need to make sure data is useful and measurable. It was noted that much of that is already in the framework.

Review of Reports (PCG)

PCG staff on the phone provided a review of the work they have done to date via two reports. The first was an overview of SREO Phase II Findings and Recommendations PowerPoint from October 25, 2016 (attached). For this PCG was charged to:

- Identify the current specialized educational opportunities available in traditional, vocational, charter and magnet schools
- Produce a report on statewide educational opportunities with supporting data and analysis
- Develop an interactive statewide geographical map detailing school data and information.

PCG collected data from DOE and UD, and conducted their survey and focus groups to obtain data on how people are choosing their school choice. One of the biggest findings was that data indicated that students from low-income families, students with disabilities and students receiving ELL services participate in specialized educational opportunities at lower rates than their peers.

Additionally, PCG looked at the national landscape and determined there are many shared challenges. They found that the following are characteristics of a quality school as per their research – student, staff and parent engagement, school climate and safety, college and career readiness, responsiveness to diversity, quality of teachers and leaders and educational programs. School quality, school choice patterns and school academic performance were key among stakeholders.

Additional areas for review: English Language Learners Needs and Analysis of High Demand Schools
Tizzy asked about the definition of school choice, is the student considered in school choice based on if they applied or if they attend a school not in their feeder pattern? It was noted that if they are attending a school that is not in their feeder pattern, they are counted as a student exercising choice.

There was discussion about using the DSC choice application (statewide), which does allow for DOE to pull data, even though it is not required to be used. Since it is optional and there is not data for all districts, PCG couldn't use it.

It was noted that transportation needs to stay on the table. It was noted that vo-techs, magnet and charter schools have transportation. In traditional public schools, districts have to pay for it. If transportation is a barrier, it's a big barrier and students can't get there, so they go to a charter school because of the transportation issue. It was noted that it is easier for non-low-income middle class families who have more flexibility to make choice work, than it is for low-income, high needs student. Low income students were underrepresented and we need to determine if students are not getting accepted to choice schools or are they just not participating in the process. One of the challenges is that we are prohibited from collecting special criteria information (i.e., low income, English Learner (EL), etc.), but parents can put in racial demographics. We will be able to determine by zip code as to which areas are applying for choice. A member questioned whether the school choice application asks for prior school attendance or resident school, which we will be able to use. It was noted that the choice application does ask this information.

Policy recommendations regarding new school approval process, communications and marketing, collaboration, admissions preferences, vocational/technical and disproportionate number of students choosing to choose out of their home district, English Learner Task Force, and Transportation were a part of the report as well.

Q&A/Future Discussion Items/Public Comment

There was a call for public comment. Kendall Massett, Executive Director of the Delaware Charter Schools Network noted that before reports are put online, PCG needs to fix the report to say District/Charter on one of their charts. Additionally, with respect to transportation and access to programs, especially in low income areas, it's about finding an opportunity to have access for all programs for all families. There are issues with not enough drivers or buses for the schools have. She suggested we look at policy for better access, through transportation and collaboration for all schools. Downstate is not as easy as upstate, but overall we want to improve statewide.

Also regarding the choice and charter piece, she suggested getting more parents to know about it is key.

Laura Manges, a member of the public and Milford School District noted there is no representation from Sussex County on the committee, except one attendee. Susan noted that Heath Chasanov is a member of the group, representing Woodbridge School District, and that he was unable to attend today but is expected to attend future meetings.

The next meeting will be November 9 from 2-4pm in the Library Conference Room. If attendees cannot attend themselves that they may send someone else as a proxy. Several of the documents referenced in the meeting and in the packet will be put on the DOE website for reference.

The meeting adjourned at 11:35 a.m.

Approved 11.09.16

Strategic Plan For Specialized Public Education Opportunities

Meeting #2 - November 9, 2016

2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Minutes

Members and DOE Representatives Present:

David Blowman, Department of Education
Heath Chasanov, Woodbridge School District
Mark Dufendach, attending for Debbie Zych
Susan Haberstroh, Department of Education
Earl Jaques, Chair, House Education Committee
Nick Manolakos, Odyssey Charter School
Bernardette Maxwell, Lake Forest School District
Tina Shockley, Department of Education
Leroy Travers, Campus Community School
Brenda Wynder, Lake Forest School District

Members Absent:

Mervin Daugherty, Red Clay Consolidated School District
Elizabeth Lockman, Community Member
David Sokola, Chair, Senate Education Committee
Salome El-Thomas, Thomas A. Edison Charter School
Debbie Zych, PolyTech School District

General Public/Interested Parties:

Tammy Croce, Delaware Association of School Administrators
Amelia Hodges, Department of Education
John Marinucci, Delaware School Boards Association
Kendall Massett, Executive Director of Delaware Charter Schools Network
Kevin Ohlandt, Member of Public
James Pennewell, Department of Education
Denise Stouffer, Department of Education
Debbie Weaver, DSEA

Facilitator:

Joan Buttram

Welcome and Introductions

The second meeting of the Strategic Plan for Specialized Public Education Opportunities began at 2:00 p.m. The group was welcomed and everyone introduced themselves.

Approval of Meeting #1 Minutes

The group reviewed the minutes from Meeting #1 and Earl Jaques motioned to approve the minutes in their current form, and Brenda Wynder seconded the motion. Everyone voted in favor of approving the minutes with no changes. The minutes were thereby approved.

It was noted that there a lot of different work streams feeding into this conversation. Our goal is to get our arms around those work streams as we move forward. Our first meeting was an opportunity to provide members with an understanding of what is involved in creating specialized public education opportunities. Today's meeting will provide an expanded explanation of issues which must be understood as we move toward creating specialized public education opportunities in our state. These include Certificate of Necessity, the transportation funding process and charter school/choice process, as noted on today's agenda.

Certificate of Necessity (CN) Presentation by James Pennewell

Mr. Pennewell provide a general explanation of the Certificate of Necessity process. A Certificate of Necessity is a document issued by the Department of Education which certifies that a construction project is necessary. It sets the scope and cost limits for that project. It authorizes the school district to hold a referendum for the Major Capital Improvement Program identified and authorizes the school district to sell bonds to pay the local portion in the event of a successful referendum.

Following the presentation several questions were asked and answered by Mr. Pennewell.

Question: What is a facility condition index?

Answer: It is the threshold used to determine if a district should build a new school or renovate an existing school building. The Department works with architects and engineers to determine the overall cost of each to determine which is warranted.

Question: If 12 new classrooms are needed and approved to be built, but only 8 are actually built, what happens to the remaining money?

Answer: The school would be violating a legal document. Mr. Pennewell wishes to consult counsel on what recourse would occur in this circumstance. (Note: DOE will follow up and report out at the next meeting.)

Question: Are vocational-technical and other special schools required to go through the CN process?

Answer: Yes, but in their case there is no referendum at the end of the process.

Question: Are special schools different in how they receive funding versus a traditional district?

Answer: Special schools are funded with 100% state funding, other schools are funded anywhere from a 60%-40% to 80%-20% split.

Question: What is the timeline for the school to be built/renovated from the time the school gets confirmation of the CN?

Answer: It varies, but funds have to be used within 3 years.

Question: Is it true that the CN process isn't focused on programs, it's based on enrollment/physical space needs of the building?

Answer: Yes, that is true.

Question: How does the process account for new land?

Answer: School districts with new land would have gone through the State Planning PLUS process.

Question: If the CN is denied once or twice, is the CN removed?

Answer: Yes it is.

It was noted that there would be a Public Comment period at the end of the meeting and anyone who wished to speak was asked to sign in on the sign in sheet.

Transportation Funding Presentation

David Blowman noted there is a formula for determining transportation costs per school district. The formula accounts for fuel, fixed costs, employment costs, etc. Most districts contract for transportation services, although some districts partially own fleets and only one owns 100% of its fleet (this is due to a high number of short runs, which are not attractive to contractors). Formulas can change annually. It was noted that there are many safety requirements in regulation. The districts/charters propose transportation routes, and DOE must approve the routes to be funded. Once approved, funding follows those approvals. Any funding dollars not used by the traditional districts are returned to DOE/State. It was also noted that mid-year changes can occur as needed.

It was also confirmed that districts must return unused transportation funding, but that does not apply to charter schools.

Traditional districts and vocational-technical schools receive funding under the formula. The State provides 90% of the cost, with the district responsible for 10% of the cost. State pays for the to-and-from transportation, but doesn't pay for after school transportation (that would be done locally). Charter schools receive 70% of average per student cost for the vocational-technical district within the district they are located. Charter schools have flexibility in negotiation with contractors, therefore they do keep some of the savings. It is difficult to attract bus contractors for shorter routes. Rules pertain to students either attending school in their feeder pattern, or in or out of the district/vocational-technical/charter school. It was noted this is the issue Superintendent Daugherty raised at our first meeting.

A student choosing into a traditional district (inter-district) is only entitled to transportation from a stop within the choiced district route. There are some exceptions approved in epilogue language. A major barrier for choice in our state is the inability of parents to get to nearest stop within an approved route to the school they are choosing into.

Barriers and issues in New Castle County are different than in Kent and Sussex Counties. In Sussex County routes tend to be longer and students are on buses for a longer time. In New Castle County routes often overlap. Are there other ways to get greater efficiencies out of the system in New Castle County? Is there a role for non-traditional providers? Amelia Hodges noted the Department is looking to see what options are available to try to solve some of the New Castle County issues, but any solution is going to require significant coordination.

At this point Tina Shockley provided a handout to the group with various transportation scenarios (see attached). The group explored the examples and the unintended consequences of each for parents. It was noted that there is no difference between inter-district or intra- district school choices, in that the parent would need to get their student to a stop within the feeder school. Mark Dufendach of PolyTech School District noted that funding-wise these are the same. They are based on the 90%-10% even though the routes are longer, which are more profitable for the bus contractor. He was asked if the length of route is a factor. He said there was no real data on that, but parents have not complained if the student is on the bus a long time.

Nick Manolakos noted that parents leave Odyssey Charter School because they find that the quality of transportation service is an issue. He notes this is having a negative impact on enrollment. Additionally, the quality of service seems to be declining and wants to know more about the oversight of the contractors. It is a deterrent for people who want to exercise choice in New Castle County.

Leroy Travers of Campus Community, who serves students in Capital School District, said that this year they struggled with bus service too. They withdrew their contract as they struggled to find bus drivers. They did find a new company, but have struggled with quality of service. Students on buses for a long time is also an issue for Capital School District. It causes more parent pickups which then become a traffic issue.

Mr. Manolakos agreed that when the confidence in the bus company drops, parents drive their kids to school which causes traffic problems. This is a major issue in New Castle County, especially for charters. Rep. Jaques agreed and added that the public asks why buses are empty and why the State is paying for empty buses.

Heath Chasanov noted traditional districts like his, which are small, use a lot of “mom and pop” style bus operators. Their issue is driver quality. He noted that in large rural areas buses run long distances to get out to areas. They double run their buses, as they have two elementary and two secondary schools. He notes that they do not have the issues that they have in New Castle County.

Brenda Wynder of Lake Forest noted that they have a mixture of “mom and pop” bus contractors, and that their issue is quality of drivers too. They mainly do east-to-west, long ride routes for students due to it being a rural area.

Kevin Ohlandt asked what is the rationale around charters only getting 70% of funding. Mr. Blowman said he would find out the answer and get back to the committee.

At this point a member asked, “In allowing students to use public transportation, especially in New Castle County, how would that work, is there a formula for that? In some cases that would be easier.” David Blowman noted that this is a policy conversation that needs to occur. Several members of the committee said that conversation needs to happen. Whatever the solution, we know that this idea would need a great deal of coordination.

It was noted that DART services may be attractive for such services, as they have low ridership and would be good for secondary students. Safety of DART vs. traditional yellow school bus would be a big issue. Yellow school buses are much safer. Again, potential conversation needed here.

Another questions asked by the group is, “Regarding legal issues with riding public transportation, DART would be responsible when they are riding the bus, but when they get off the bus, who is legally responsible for the student?” While we acknowledge this is a big concern and legal responsibility for someone, the answer is not clear. It was also noted that there is a federal regulation that prohibits public transportation system to change route times to accommodate the school, so the school would need to change its schedule to accommodate the DART schedule.

Conversation followed on the relative safety of different transportation options.

Another member noted that it sounds like we are not making it profitable enough for the contractor, so we need to have those conversations. Dr. Hodges noted that we will be having those conversations later this month. We should also think about how this impacts parents participating in choice.

Charter School/Choice Process Timeline Presentation

The group then turned to referenced handouts (see attachments) regarding the charter/school choice process. With the School Choice Option, the district determines its capacity, and then publicly announces that it is open to receive students. The choice window is open from first Monday in November until the second Wednesday in January for parents to apply. There is an exception for kindergarten, in which parents can enroll their student up until the first day of school year of the choice school. Another key deadline is the third Friday in March, which is the date when parents have to notify the receiving school if they are going to accept that school. This is significant because this is around the charter enrollment deadline which is April 1. Parents have to sign a first year agreement with their charter school.

Questions included, “Are there other barriers/changes that we should be looking at in terms of the entire choice process – to either parents or the system?” and “Should we look at the timelines?” The group noted that the best use of this committee is to look at overall landscape, though the timeline is worthy of a conversation.

A comment was made that streamlining the process is needed, specifically requiring choice applications to be submitted online via the Data Service Center (DSC). Jeff Klein noted in our last meeting that this would provide us with data to determine need, use, etc.

Kendall Massett noted that in some charter schools they hear complaints that if the parents are interested in choice and inquire the last week of October, they are turned away because the choice time period isn’t open yet. That is a barrier. Parents think the school is being unreasonable rather than following the law. Several of the superintendents in the room noted that they take the applications rather than turning away parents. A suggestion was that the law be changed to say “before or after first Monday in November” so that parents cannot be turned away. DSC can run the lottery for those choice schools.

It was noted that by October 31 each year, public information meetings are required to be held by schools for choice. It was asked if that can be done at a school board meeting. Yes, it can be.

It was also noted that parents entering public school system in Delaware for the first time have to register at their feeder school first before proceeding with the school choice process. For parents enrolling in kindergarten, this is specifically a problem. It was noted that this procedure is necessary for the student funding to follow them.

Someone suggested that perhaps this is to establish residency. Some members of the group did not believe that the parent should have to go to the feeder school to register first.

Q&A/Future Discussion Items

Joan Buttram asked the group if we need to have any other discussions prior to moving forward. There was no request for additional discussion. Joan noted that Jeff was going to look at the DSC information to evaluate the waiting list, capacity issues, and thereby analyze the data we do have. Jeff will look to see if schools are reaching their capacity levels (over/under) and will bring that information to the next meeting.

We haven’t talked about new application process for charter schools. Are there areas where that and CN overlap? It was determined that we would do an overview at the next meeting.

It was also noted that the approved minutes and other meeting items will continue to be posted to the website.

Public Comment

The public comment opportunity was offered before the group and there were two public comments.

Kevin Ohlandt, Dover resident and parent, noted he has been tough on charter schools, but choice started with best intentions and has reached the point where there are so many different programs, there are inequities developing. He believes that we are oversaturated with opportunities, which has resulted in a disservice to students.

Kendall Massett, Executive Director of Delaware Charter School Network, noted that every child deserves the opportunity for education. Not every school is everything to every child. She suggested this group could look at what a charter compact could look like. Could charter schools get a compact with districts to meet that need and what would that look like? This is happening across the country.

How does a district create a new program? How do they find out what they need? Do they talk to parents to find out what things are needed? How can we get more districts authorizing charter schools? This would be a great opportunity for districts to provide more choice within the district.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:15 p.m., with the next meeting scheduled for November 30, 2016.

Approved
11.30.16

Strategic Plan For Specialized Public Education Opportunities
Meeting #3 - November 30, 2016 – Townsend Building, Cabinet Room

2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Minutes

Attendees:

David Blowman, Department of Education
Heath Chasanov, Woodbridge School District
Susan Haberstroh, Department of Education
Earl Jaques, Chair, House Education Committee
Jeff Klein, University of Delaware
Elizabeth Lockman, Community Member
Nick Manolakos, Odyssey Charter School
Bernardette Maxwell, Lake Forest School District
Tina Shockley, Department of Education
David Sokola, Chair, Senate Committee
Leroy Travers, Campus Community School
Brenda Wynder, Lake Forest School District
Debbie Zych, PolyTech School District

Members Absent:

Joan Buttram, University of Delaware
Mervin Daughtery, Red Clay Consolidated School District
Salome El-Thomas, Thomas A. Edison Charter School

General Public/Interested Parties:

John Marinucci, Delaware School Boards Association
Kendall Massett, Executive Director of Delaware Charter Schools Network
Kevin Ohlandt, Member of the public
Kim Williams, Representative, Delaware General Assembly
Kristin Dwyer, DSEA

Welcome and Introductions

The third meeting of the Strategic Plan for Specialized Public Education Opportunities began at 2:01 p.m. The group was welcomed and introductions were made. The agenda was reviewed by all. Representative Kim Williams and Senator Sokola were welcomed to the meeting.

Approval of Meeting #1 Minutes

The group reviewed the minutes from Meeting #2. Earl Jaques motioned to approve the minutes in their current form and Tizzy Lockman seconded the motion. Everyone voted in favor of approving the minutes with no changes, and the minutes were thereby approved.

To date the group has been discussing issues regarding existing choice patterns statewide, not just application acceptance, but how the choice process looks and how it aligns across the state. Jeff Klein of

University of Delaware has done an analysis of the school choice data that is available in the Data Service Center (DSC).

DSC Data Analysis of Capacity – Jeff Klein

Jeff Klein provided a handout to the group for his presentation (posted online) and explained that parents can go to the website schoolchoicede.org, create a unique username, and submit choice applications to any participating school. All schools except for a few are on the DSC system. He noted that the data presented does not accurately represent all the school choice applications, as some are submitted in paper copies as opposed to online (via DSC). (The document provides the districts and charter schools participating in the DSC online application process.)

Some highlights from the presentation include:

-Overall the number of applications submitted is not reflective of number of students participating in choice, as you can have one child apply for two or more schools, and the parent can also rank the choices. When we look at this data for the 2016-2017 school year, 24,957 applications were submitted in the DSC system. In reality there were more, but again this is just those entered into the DSC system.

-Kindergarten choice period is open until school starts. The regular school choice application period is from the first Monday in November through the second Wednesday in January. Charter schools and vocational technical schools can continue to receive applications until the fulfillment of availability.

-There are also “good cause” applications. These are instances where a parent moved to a school district, and even though they may not be living in a resident district (say a house construction was not complete), most districts or schools allow the child to start at the beginning of the school year. Another example may be if parents were divorced. The “good cause” provisions are included in Delaware Code.

-For this past school year, 18,856 applications were marked as complete by the school/district, and it is only these completed applications that are entered into lottery pools. Reasons why an application may be marked incomplete is that parents fill out choice application but don’t register with their home district first. Or, sometimes an application is incomplete, and usually the school will contact the parent to get the necessary information.

-The data presented also shows what feeder district applications originate from. Most applications were submitted from parents in the Christina School District. As an example, it was noted that Indian River (IR) is not in the DSC system, so the committee cannot see how many choice applications are there.

-If we break down the numbers by resident/county, we see the bulk of applications come from New Castle County (87%) and Sussex County has the least (due to IR and Sussex Tech not being in DSC).

-In looking at ethnicity, some applications did not indicate Hispanic or Non-Hispanic. Also important to note that ethnicity is not race.

-In looking at race by county, we see that 34% are for African American students, and 38% are Caucasian, with 10% don’t provide race or ethnicity. Therefore, there is no evidence that minority students are applying for choice and not getting it. A member noted that minority students are participating in school choice proportionately less to schools that have higher rates of achievement. We probably could not draw any specific conclusions from these data because it is only a subset.

Representative Williams asked if this includes paper school choice applications. Jeff noted it does include paper applications if schools entered them into the DSC system. It was noted that we do not know how many paper applications get submitted if they are not submitted into the DSC system, and that can skew the numbers. She also asked if UD has compared these numbers to those that DOE has on its website. Jeff noted it will not correspond because DOE's numbers are for those who successfully enrolled in choice and these numbers are for those seeking choice.

-Jeff noted that we do have the zip code for each application submitted, and a chart displayed the highest number of choice applications from those zip codes (19702) in Newark/Bear area. As we move south there are less people in those zip codes, and again some Sussex school districts are not participating in DSC. A representative from Woodbridge School District noted that they mostly have paper applications submitted. The Lake Forest School District representative agreed with that statement and added they do not have many who submit online.

-Jeff noted that we can see the number of applications received by date, with 27% submitted the first week the choice process is open. We also see numbers decrease during the holidays, but increase in the new year as the deadline approaches.

-In other charts we can see where students are applying to based on their feeder district. For example, 949 Appoquinimink residents applied for MOT Charter and 510 Appoquinimink residents applied for an Appoquinimink school other than their feeder pattern school. We have this data for choice/charter enrollment, so we could compare applications to enrollment. This comparison would be interesting to see.

-Jeff notes the data shows the top 6 most common choice schools with Christina residents choosing to Newark Charter School the most.

At this point several questions/answers were discussed:

Q: If we don't have a paper trail or some districts are not participating, how reliable is this data?

A: The New Castle County data is solid, but is less so the further south you go. There are not many paper applications that are not put in the DSC system because otherwise it would be difficult to run the lottery. This is a policy concern and potential recommendation. It was stated that the data are not as robust as needed, but what is here is reliable.

Q: Do all districts need to do a lottery system?

A: Yes if they have more applications than space. It was noted that smaller districts like Lake Forest just fill to capacity and do not do a lottery. Representative Williams noted each local school board has to approve their lottery.

Q: What is the criteria for a school district to participate in a lottery?

A: To run a lottery through DSC, students have to be in the system. Currently, it is voluntary to participate online through DSC. This may be something the committee wants to change/recommend.

Q: Based on the data available in terms of applications vs students, would that impact the patterns we see?

A: We do not think it would impact the data patterns we see emerge in school choice.

Q: How many school districts use the system to do a lottery?

A: This information was not available as this has not been asked. Representative Williams noted that she has a potential bill to make that happen.

Potential New Application Process For Charter School/CN Overlap

Denise Stouffer, Education Associate in DOE Charter Office, provided a presentation on the Charter School Application Process and Timeline. She referenced the Charter School Application and process/timeline (both available online) that is used for the opening of a new charter school.

From approval in April to the opening of school (which is the school year after that), several verifications take place, such as enrollment numbers, financial viability, academics. These items are also monitored every year the charter school is opened. This process is governed by Title 14 of Delaware Code, Chapter 5 (also available online).

At this point the group asked questions regarding the charter school approval process:

Q: How many applications has the state received since the process began vs. how many have opened?

A: We do have the numbers but not readily available for this meeting. It was noted that over the last couple years there have not been many applications and those applications received have been screened out in the initial stage of the process. There were also a couple charter schools who had approval to open but then did not do so.

Q: Does Red Clay Consolidated School District have their own process for charter schools?

A: They may have their own process, but the district uses the State's template. A district could come up with their own process.

A member noted that Christina follows what is in the law in terms of what they have to turn in. Red Clay did not vote to have their own process anymore. The group was reminded that due to legislation that there is a moratorium on any new charter schools opening in the City of Wilmington until June 2018 or the completion of the strategic plan.

Q: What does a charter school have to do to show community impact? What does that look like?

A: The Charter School Accountability Committee (CSAC) is looking for number of students, grade level, connections to people within community, enrollment, and established need for the charter school in the area.

Q: If a charter school offers a language immersion program like a public school is that considered impact?

A: Impact can mean many different things.

Q: What is the difference between community impact (as noted in Delaware Code as amended by SB 209) and district impact?

A: Title 14, Del. C., Section 511 (b)(4) outlines what is required of a charter school with regard to impact and consideration of other factors. There is no distinction in the law between community impact and district impact.

It was stated that the bar has been raised for the approval of a new charter school, as it is harder now to get approved than five years ago. Interested applicants are fully aware of what it takes to get through the process.

Recently, the DOE has been more active in intervening in the process prior to a charter school opening.

A member of the public asked for confirmation that the City of Wilmington moratorium under the current Charter School Application process that begins January 3, 2017, and thus a charter school would not be allowed to open until 2018-2019 school year. Others confirmed that is correct.

The transportation barrier was restated briefly and how differences between rules related to whether intra-district choice vs. vocational-technical vs. charter choice may dissuade people from going through any of these choice process.

Q: Regarding application patterns and demand vs. need, are applications requesting a program that should/can be replicated?

A: The waiting list info is actual data. It becomes a problem when you have two choice schools with the same programs. Different districts have different levels of choice because of programs they have put in place.

One member noted that there may be an opportunity here. DOE currently does not have a mechanism to identify students that want specific programs (like IT or culinary arts). The only current data are the choice data we have (i.e., kids applying to programs/schools). This committee may include a mechanism that can be put in place to identify what specific programs are desired. The districts and charter schools and an entity wanting to open a charter are currently able to do this.

Heath Chasanov noted they partnered with Seaford School District on manufacturing because it was identified as a need.

It was noted that the reason we have school boards is to represent the community and the needs of that community. The group agreed that is a fair statement.

Mr. Chasanov was asked how the district identified there was a need for manufacturing. The response was that Choice applications, or popularity of existing program in schools informed the districts. Local school boards and administrators have the authority to identify these kinds of needs.

Rep Jaques noted that the Christina School District is thinking about their own school of arts, since Cab Calloway is so hard to get into. How do they know if there are enough students interested? The old theory of “build it and they will come” may apply, and it is adjusting to the market. Someone else suggested you put a disclaimer in your course catalog that if a certain number of students do not register the program may not be implemented or run.

Q: Does the DOE have socio-economic status (data) on the application. No, choice applications specifically do not include such info because of current Code related to civil rights reasons. However, if students are already in the system and then choice, the DOE could identify some of this information if the student was in the system. If it is a new student, the DOE would not have that info until the student is enrolled in system. The DOE could do a run by zip code to gain some information.

It was noted that the Enrollment Preferences Task Force ruled against a lot of that additional information. Yes, that is correct and there are specific reasons why it is not on the application. Rep. Williams asked why it was not noted in the PCG report. She also noted that information from the District/Charter Collaboration Task Force was included while this work was never finished. DOE noted it was working with PCG to find out

that answer. Rep. Williams is upset the report was not looked at and does not understand how we can move forward without looking at that report. It was noted that while such report was referenced and PCG may have used it for their reports, that is not exclusive of all information. It was noted we can make that report part of the materials online.

It was noted that there may be some slight CN overlap with the Charter School application process, but one reason the impact conversation got traction was that Red Clay had CN approved for renovation/new building and there was a charter school application for the same area. There is legitimate concern regarding having approved funding for new school and the potential for losing students to a proposed charter school. In that specific instance the school ultimately did not open, but it fueled concern.

It was noted that this is the other part of community impact – traffic concerns with two schools close together. It was noted that DOE could not have disapproved the charter school on that basis.

When SB 209 (previous General Assembly) was presented, the two school districts submitted impact letters to the State Board of Education, which specific concerns about the impact on current district. Unless deficient that impact cannot be deciding factor in and of itself. SBE thought this was unfair and they wanted to weigh in. This is a complex issue with a variety of outside factors

Kendall Massett noted that in evaluating reasons why charter schools should open, the positive impacts should be considered as well. There is a great deal of focus on the negative aspects. When parents/teachers need something that is not being provided, there needs to be an opportunity for charter school to open.

Q: Was a needs assessment performed at all?

A: Yes, that was the second report PCG prepared.

Q: Was there a recommendation for an ongoing needs assessment?

A: That could be a recommendation that comes out of this committee.

A committee member noted that with regard to the moratorium on charters in the City of Wilmington, there were concerns about having no control / discretion over where schools would be located.

DOE is required by Delaware Code to look at capacity, enrollment, and that DOE will work with the district to determine possible change in feeder pattern before construction. Both charter and districts have to defend the need. The planning process and CN process would need to occur.

Likewise, if district has unfilled capacity, the district has the ability to offer a charter school use their facility. It may not be in the districts best financial interest to declare it has unused space. Additionally, there can be expenses (nurses, principals, etc.) in each new building. There is potential benefit to others, like DTCC in one case, so the capacity doesn't have to go to charter school.

One member of the public noted that what we heard last time from Jim Pennewell with regard to CN progress should be included in that charter school enrollment, i.e., capacity within the area that school serves. We need to look at all the (historical) data when making a decision.

DOE reps noted that that the law says you go to school in area of residence. For instance, by law Appoquinimink is required to serve any student in their district. There may be existing charters that can be taken into consideration but charter applications may be another issue.

Another member of the public asked if DOE could look at removing enrollment preference or other barriers to kids as a recommendation

Q&A/Future Discussion Items

It was noted that there our work is not done, and we may need another meeting. Our next step is to put together a list of policy questions/solutions and have conversations about those policy questions at the next meeting. The committee also recognizes that it will not be able to provide solutions to all policy questions at this point, as some of those solutions are outside the authority of this Committee or even the DOE. The group agreed DOE would provide a list of policy questions and distribute to everyone prior to the next meeting.

It was reiterated that our goal is not to exclude any issue that is being raised, but that we want to need be responsive to the timeline

The group looked for dates for another meeting, sometime after December 19. Suggested dates will be put out via Doodle Poll.

Public Comment

Kevin Ohlandt asked what the timeframe was for this report. DOE noted that we are trying to respond to legislation HB 56 as amended. He noted that comments he made earlier in the meeting were sufficient for his public comment.

Likewise Kim Williams was asked if she had public comment, and noted that her previous comments constituted her public comment.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:52pm.

Approved 12.21.16

Strategic Plan For Specialized Public Education Opportunities
Meeting #4 – December 21, 2016 – Townsend Building, Cabinet Room

2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Draft Minutes

Attendees:

David Blowman, Department of Education
Joan Buttram, University of Delaware
Susan Haberstroh, Department of Education
Earl Jaques, Chair, House Education Committee
Jeff Klein, University of Delaware
Elizabeth Lockman, Community Member
Bernardette Maxwell, Lake Forest School District
Tina Shockley, Department of Education
David Sokola, Chair, Senate Committee
Debbie Zych, PolyTech School District

Members on Via Phone:

Mervin Daugherty, Red Clay Consolidated School District

Members Absent:

Heath Chasanov, Woodbridge School District
Nick Manolakas, Odyssey Charter School
Salome Thomas-El, Thomas A. Edison Charter School
Leroy Travers, Campus Community School
Brenda Wynder, Lake Forest School District

General Public/Interested Parties:

Tammy Croce, Delaware Association of School Administrators
Bill Doolittle, Advocate
Sarah Fulton, House of Representatives
Donna Johnson, State Board of Education
John Marinucci, Delaware School Boards Association
Kendall Massett, Delaware Charter Schools Network
Kevin Ohlandt, Public Member
Kimberly Williams, State Representative

Welcome and Introductions

The fourth meeting of the Strategic Plan for Specialized Public Education Opportunities began at 2:06 p.m. The group was welcomed and Mr. Blowman noted that Mervin Daugherty may be calling in.

Approval of Meeting #3 Minutes

The group reviewed the minutes from Meeting #3 and Earl Jaques motioned to approve the minutes in their current form, and David Sokola seconded the motion. Everyone voted in favor of approving the minutes with no changes. The minutes were thereby approved.

Review of Policy Questions/Recommendations

It was noted that at our last meeting we summarized some of the policy questions to date. University of Delaware staff organized some of those discussion items and the policy recommendations that came out of the PCG reports in order to provide us with the “Suggested Recommendations to Include in the Strategic Plan for Specialized Public Education Opportunities” handout that was distributed to the group.

For this meeting, the group will talk through those recommendations in hopes of pulling together a report, which we will email to everyone as soon as possible. We want to get something together before January 11, 2016 (which is the date of DOE’s presentation before the House Education Committee). It is important to note that further discussion may be needed, but we hope to be in position to make some recommendations today if we can reach consensus.

Mr. Blowman welcomed Representative Kim Williams to the meeting.

Jeff Klein suggested the group review the handout titled, “Suggested Recommendations.” He explained the recommendations were broken down into large category headings.

Transportation – The group discussed how this can be a real barrier to parents exercising choice in Delaware. Issues include quality and availability. Likewise, it is a barrier to rural students, low income families and inter- and intra-district choice by traditional school districts. There are perceived inefficiencies in the system.

Rep. Jaques commented that there is a lack of transportation for afterschool programs, and would like that specifically added to the list.

Another member questioned if magnet schools have different transportation situations in that they can set their own bus routes. The answer is that it varies. There are instances where there is approval of such transportation through the Budget Act or Epilogue. The school district that houses the magnet school would still be responsible for their share of costs. One member added to that by saying that magnet school transportation should be standardized. Mr. Klein acknowledged that this recommendation aligns with PCG’s recommendation #8.

There was also a question on the definition of magnet schools. It was stated there is not a definition in code or regulation.

A member of the public questioned that if districts have the flexibility that charters schools do, would that fix this problem. The answer is potentially. For the districts the state is allocating resources based on approval of routes. The State doesn’t approve routes for non-feeder pattern students. The formula would need to change from one not based on approval of routes, but on combination of students and length of route. It was noted that this is different at various vocational-technical schools as well.

The group agreed that transportation is a barrier to choice process.

Certificate of Necessity (CN) Process

Mr. Klein presented the question to the group, “should the CN process mesh with the charter school process regarding long-term projections?” The CN proceeds needs to focus on programs, not just enrollment and physical space needs. One member noted that the CN process should mesh with the

charter school process if they are planning in a comprehensive way. Also regarding the charter school authorization process, there needs to be a clearer definition of community impact. Mr. Klein noted that this recommendation aligns with PCG's recommendation #1.

There was additional discussion about this item including comments such as the impact and how this may need to be addressed in the future.

There were various questions from the public related to impact such as community outreach, and also questions related to location of the proposed charter school. For example, if the proposed charter school does not have a location, how can they gauge community impact? Also preferences were discussed and specifically the five mile radius and other preference criteria. It was asked if school districts have to show necessity in order to get approved first. The answer is not necessarily, and it depends on what their request is for, i.e. building new school vs. buying land.

School Choice Application Process

In review the group discussed the need to streamline and centralize the school choice application process by requiring all LEAs to use Data Service Center's online choice application portal, and by examining the school choice timelines. Parents need to be provided with relevant information on school choice options to make best decision for their child. Mr. Klein noted that this recommendation aligns with PCG's recommendation #2.

Additional discussion occurred on this topic, as someone noted that not all parents have access to or are comfortable with completing it online. It was suggested that someone at the district could enter the information online, but that may be a time consuming process and draw on resources. It was suggested that maybe a physical space/computer could be provided to have parents complete it online themselves.

A public member noted that we shouldn't eliminate the paper copy. The group agreed we would not eliminate the paper copy, just add the online option. It was also noted that we would gain a lot of understanding by using the online system.

A question was asked regarding Red Clay's paper applications, how did they include them in the lottery? Merv Daugherty indicated they do enter them into the DSC system.

A representative from a smaller school district noted that small districts don't do a lottery, as there are not enough applications.

Another question was asked regarding when supplemental information is required, does the system prompt you? No, a parent would fill in the main part, and then need to add supplemental information.

The issue of the timeframe of the application process (Nov-Dec) was raised, and it was noted that this may be a bad time for some families due to the holidays. The group indicated that maybe a wider or no timeframe would be better. There was some push back as to a wider timeframe as opposed to less, as there are time constraints for districts in terms of considering capacity.

Perhaps we change the language from "on or after" to say "on or before" first Monday in November. This would give them more opportunity. There is no benefit to submitting the application earlier in the process. It was noted that consistency is important and we need to ensure that this would work for districts and the DSC, and know how this would affect the lottery.

Someone asked if a parent can edit their application via DSC system. Yes, you can if it's in draft, but once submitted, it is submitted, and at that point you would need to delete the application and resubmit. It's not closed until close of choice date.

Regarding the DSC choice portal, why do you need to register at your home school before doing choice? Tammy Croce, who is a retired school district employee, noted that they (the feeder pattern school) want to be the ones to verify the address even if the student is doing choice. This is because the feeder pattern school is providing the local funding to the choice school for the student. It was noted that this is a barrier. It was further noted that it is sometimes a struggle to get kids to register for kindergarten at all. Requiring the parent to go to the neighborhood school and the school choice school to complete paperwork just presents another barrier to kindergarten/school registration.

Vocational-Technical School Choice Process

For this item we are looking at determining if vo-tech programs are needed at traditional high schools to help those who do not have access to vo-tech high schools. We need to determine if there are sufficient seats in vo-tech schools and if vo-tech schools are offering the right mix of programs for Delaware's students. One school district wants to confirm this by looking at labor/market statistics. Mr. Klein noted that this recommendation aligns with PCG's recommendation #5.

There was additional discussion about students choosing programs within vo-tech school districts, and someone suggested that this indicated that some students can learn basic skills, like culinary skills, from a vo-tech school. Someone else noted that all schools are looking at labor market statistics now, and noted that with CTE classes there are benefits in all pathways. This is important as schools want to offer pathways that will offer students jobs. Others in the group do not believe all students should be tied to CTE programs, as there may be higher level spots to fill. This could give some students a leg up.

Traditional Districts Creating their own programs

For this item the group noted that having traditional districts create new educational opportunities (magnet schools/other programs) could be beneficial. The State encourages the development of informal and formal programs for all types of schools. Also, higher education and daycares are encouraged to explore programs. Mr. Klein noted that this recommendation aligns with PCG's recommendation #3.

Additional discussion occurred around this topic, specifically making sure AP courses and Dual Enrollment continue as these reduce the cost for college. Likewise, district leaders and board should maintain control over what programs they are to have (not the State dictating), but we may need to incentivize some districts to recognize demands and create programs. It was noted that it is not always easy for schools to judge the increase in capacity.

Admission Preferences

It was recognized that the work conducted by the Enrollment Preference Task Force could assist in the choice process, and will be recognized in our final report. Rep. Williams noted that she intends to bring forth legislation for enrollment preferences in the next session. Mr. Klein acknowledged that this recommendation aligns with PCG's recommendation #4.

English Learners (EL)

It was noted that an ELTask force has been created and is developing a strategic plan. Their work should be reviewed in order to determine how to best engage EL and their needs. It was noted that this recommendation aligns with PCG 's recommendation #7. It was further noted that information regarding this task force will be put on the website.

At this point, the group discussed the relationship between the April 1 requirement for charter schools, and whether the first year agreement is or is not a barrier. One member noted that this is unfair to public schools that this agreement forces children to stay at a school they don't want to attend. This agreement was instituted because parents were "school" shopping and it curbed some of that activity. While this is the law, the April 1 date is a hardship for schools.

Tammy Croce reminded the group to keep in mind that May 15 is the date for notification of teachers regarding a reduction in workforce and that the school boards must approve at their April board meeting (prior to May 15).

Next steps:

The group was advised that the next step is to draft a report with recommendations and circulate it with a timeline to the group over the holiday, in order to meet the January 11 deadline. A final version of the report and recommendations would be circulated by January 11.

It was noted that this strategic plan is a living document and therefore will change. When we print a final version, we will do so in a way that we can change pages as things progress.

Public Comment

Bill Doolittle provided public comment reminding everyone that the best interest of the child needs to be our primary focus as we move forward. Additionally he congratulated Polytech School District for a take-all lottery (which includes special education students). Lastly he noted that there are multiple programs for special education students who are denied choice.

Kim Williams provided public comment by noting that the greatest barrier is what parents have to provide, such as transportation, etc.

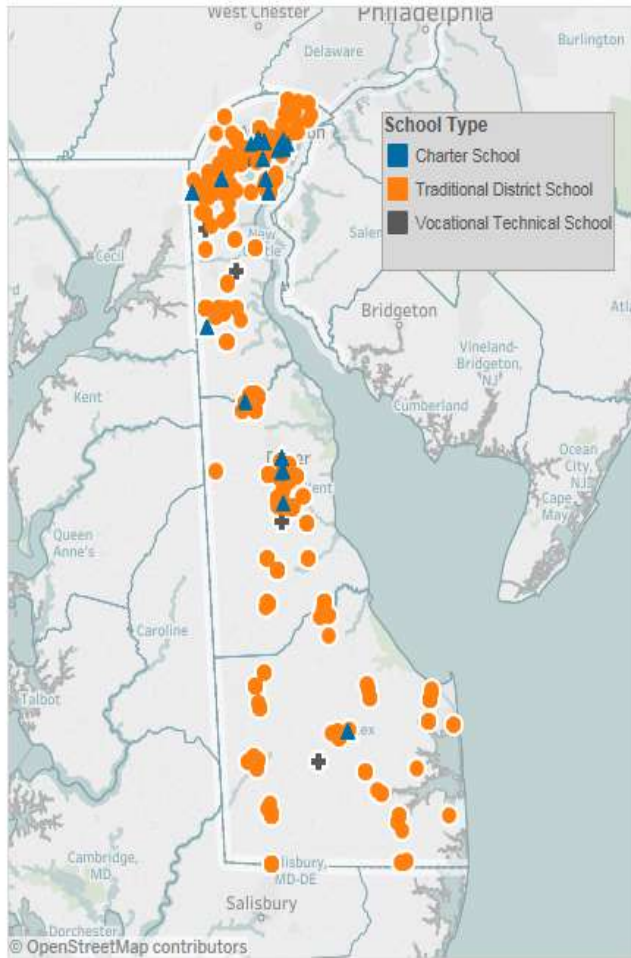
The meeting was adjourned at 3:51 p.m.

Drafted 12.21.16

Educational Programming Options in Delaware Schools

< **General Program Availability by School** Career and Technical Education Pathways by School AP and IB Course Offerings by School >

Program Opportunities in Delaware Schools



District/Charter School Name
(All) ▾

School Name
(All) ▾

County
 (All)
 Kent
 New Castle
 Sussex

Cancel Apply

Program
(All) ▾

Instructional Focus/School Design
(All) ▾

Grade Level(s)
(All) ▾

Program Offerings at Selected School

Appendix C: Strategic Plan for Specialized Public Educational Opportunities Webpage and Links

The screenshot shows the State of Delaware Department of Education website. The header includes the state logo, search bar, and navigation links. The main navigation bar lists various sections like Schools, Instruction, and Supports. The breadcrumb trail indicates the current page is under Public Information / Task Forces.

TASK FORCES

- Wellness
- Educational Technology
- Education Funding Improvement Commission
- Strategic Plan for Specialized Public Education Opportunities

Strategic Plan for Specialized Public Education Opportunities

Meetings

- Meeting #1 - October 25, 2016
- Meeting #2 - November 9, 2016
- Meeting #3 - November 30, 2016
- Meeting #4 - December 21, 2016

Minutes

- [Meeting #1 Minutes - Approved](#)
- [Meeting #2 Minutes - Approved](#)
- [Meeting #3 Minutes - Approved](#)
- [Meeting #4 Minutes - Draft](#) (these minutes are included in the final report)

Supporting Materials

- [House Bill 56 as amended by House Amendment 1](#)
- [Guiding Questions](#)
- [Enrollment Trends](#)
- [PCG Report - October 25, 2016](#) - (Note: Because of changes to the Delaware General Assembly website not all embedded links are operational.)
- [PCG Corresponding PowerPoint - October 25, 2016](#)
- [PCG Report - December 17, 2015](#)
- [PCG Corresponding PowerPoint - December 17, 2015](#)
- [Interactive Map](#)
- [Certificate of Necessity and Surplus Building Process](#)
- [Charter School Authorization Process](#)
- [1Q Enrollment Study](#)
- [School Choice Information](#)
- [Certificate of Necessity PowerPoint - November 9, 2016](#)
- [Examples For Discussion - Allowable Transportation](#)
- [Title 14 Del. C., Section 511 - Charter School Law](#)
- [New Charter School Application](#)
- [Enrollment Preferences Task Force Final Report](#)
- [Choice Chart Data Powerpoint](#)
- [2017 Delaware Choice Application Data](#) - (Note: This document has been modified, from the version handed out at meeting, for further clarification)
- [Suggested Recommendations for Inclusion in the Strategic Plan for Specialized Public Education Opportunities](#)
- [DRAFT English Learner Strategic Plan Information](#)