

Cristina C. Alvarez, Ed. D. – CEO, Delaware Design-Lab High School

Speech for the Charter Application Public Hearing

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Dover DE

My name is **Dr. Cristina Alvarez** and I am the Chief Executive Officer of the proposed **Delaware Design-Lab High School**, whose application is before you for review. We are grateful to the Department of Education and the Delaware Charter School Network for their technical assistance, thorough professionalism, and collegiality throughout the charter review process.

Today the Design-Lab Schools team hopes to persuade you 1) how our mission to produce the next generation of innovators who become the problem-solvers of the world is important, and 2) why it is vital that the Department of Education approves our charter application as an investment in the future of Delaware.

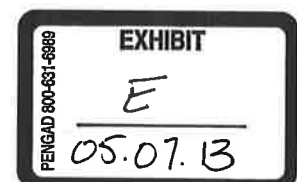
I'll begin by telling you a story, in one simple example, of how design has positively changed the world:

Industrial Potato Peeler

This is the potato peeler our grandmothers used in their kitchens. For 100 years, the industrial potato peeler was a simple piece of metal with a looped handle and a blade. This tool did the job but it had some problems.

The Problem

- The small, uncomfortable handles hurt users' hands during repetitive tasks and required strength to grip. Handles did not flex for comfort.
- The materials were slippery, especially when wet.
- The blades were inefficient. Poor cutting angles and sharpness cut into the edible parts of fruits and vegetables, resulting in significant waste.



In 1990, Sam Farber, an entrepreneur in the house wares industry, noticed how hard it was for his wife to use ordinary kitchen tools because of arthritis in her hands. So he hired industrial designers (SMART Design) to redesign the industrial potato peeler.

The Question

The design team began by asking these questions, “Why do ordinary kitchen tools hurt your hands? How can we make wonderful, comfortable tools that are easy to use?”

The Process

The design team used the Design Process to solve the problem. They literally watched people of all ages and abilities (male & female, young & old, lefties & righties and people with special needs) interact with the industrial peeler to identify precisely where on the handle, users applied pressure while peeling. The design team then explored hundreds of different handles and materials. They sketched their ideas, created prototypes, tested them with real people, scrapped the prototypes that didn't work, asked more questions, redesigned more prototypes, and came up with a final solution. And here it is:

The Solution: OXO Good Grips Swivel Peeler

This innovation has the following features:

- The large handle fits comfortably in one's hand. The elliptical shape keeps it from rotating and stressing the hand.
- "Fins" on either side absorb pressure while in use.
- Durable, rubberized material provides a cushioned, non-slip grip and significant control, even when wet.
- Sharp blades are angled to remove only the minimum amount of peel necessary with little force.

The Impact of Design

The designers' solution was an innovation for a centuries old problem, and it revolutionized the kitchen tools industry. As a result, today's products are more ergonomic, meaning that they are designed to provide maximum comfort and to avoid injury and stress. If you look around you, you will notice many more examples of how designers have made your life easier, safer and more comfortable. Design solves problems. Design literally improves the quality of our lives.

Designers are trained to make sure that every new product, every new solution to a problem, delivers a significant improvement over the status quo. And often a designer's solution is so creative and unexpected, that the solution surpasses our expectations. Hence, designers are innovators and they produce innovations.

Society's Problems

Like the industrial potato peeler, as a human society we face seemingly intractable problems – social ills like poverty, violence, homelessness, alcohol and drug addiction, and inequities. Like the industrial potato peeler, many schools still operate in an industrial paradigm of education. They don't serve many of our children, the curriculum fails to motivate students, too many of our youth drop out of school, and far too many are not prepared for careers in a modern workforce.

The Delaware Design-Lab High School is our proposed solution for Delaware:

Through a unique Design-Learning curriculum, **Delaware Design-Lab High School** students will learn to think like designers. Our students will produce solutions to problems that will be a significant improvement over the status quo. Our students will design creative solutions that far surpass expectations. Our students will learn to be innovators.

The **Delaware Design-Lab High School** will be a dynamic tuition-free public charter school where students will use innovative Design-learning to imagine, design and create successful futures in college, careers in the 21st century global economy, and lifelong learning.

Our mission is to educate every student, at any level of development, optimizing each one's opportunity to succeed in post-secondary college and careers. We will design every aspect of the school experience to ensure that our students have optimum academic and social growth. A Design-Lab School education features:

- Safe, civil school culture
- Dynamic learning environment
- Innovative Science, Technology, Engineering, Media and Design (STEMD©) curriculum
- Design-Learning practices that encourage communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity.

Delaware Design-Lab High School students will learn to be innovators, which will build their creative capital. Our graduates will enter into a whole new socio-economic class, referred to as the “creative class”, which will improve the economic trajectory of their lives.

In conclusion, it is crucial that the **Delaware Design-Lab High School** exist because the school we envision will be an education incubator for positive, productive, future thinkers and leaders. **Delaware Design-Lab High School** graduates will become vital contributors to Wilmington, to the state of Delaware and to the communities, in which they will live, work and raise their families as future, fully educated citizens.

The Founding Group and Board of Directors are personally committed to ensure the school's success because we believe it is *vital that we invest in Delaware's children and future*. Our ultimate vision is to create a more just and inclusive world, a world that works for everyone, by design. We welcome your support and participation in this worthy vision.