



DE Met Formal Review

Written Statement 10/31/15

The following is in response to the Charter School Accountability Committee's Notification Letter dated October 16, 2015 with respect to the Formal Review of The Delaware Met. You have asked us to address several specific issues:

No student use of Technology observed in the classroom:

Chrome Books have been purchased for each student with a plan to begin use this Fall. These Chrome Books are being outfitted for student use and equipped with Go Guardian software. The roll out plan for this technology is as follows:

Teachers received initial training on Go Guardian on Friday October 30th.

November 4th and November 10th as Advisory teachers have parent meetings with each family to finalize the Student Learning Plans; they will review and then have the parents sign the Laptop Computer Borrowing Policy.

Beginning November 12th students will receive their computers for use in Advisory. During their Advisory class, teachers will make sure students understand how to use Google Drive and other features.

Beginning November 30th students will begin bringing their Chrome Books with them to all classes. Teachers will integrate the computers into their courses.

Students will be required to check their computer out at the start of every school day from their Advisory teacher and check it back in at the end of the day. Locking closets with power have been identified for each teacher to store and charge the Chrome Books overnight.

Attachments A:

1. Computer Policy
2. Go Guardian Information sheet for parents

No LTI activity projects observed:

Internships are an integral element of the Big Picture Learning (BPL) school design and for many students it is their first real-world educational experience. In order to prepare them for this, BPL has developed a very specific Interest Exploration and LTI prep syllabus for the DE Met. Students proceed at their own pace, which means that some students will complete the LTI and interest exploration training faster than others. Advisors have begun to identify students who show that they will soon be “LTI ready” and are fast-tracking their progress through the training.

As a new school, our first group of students to go out into the community must be especially professional and well prepared. With a positive experience with our students, our first cohort of mentors will be our greatest asset in recruiting other mentors to work with our students. We cannot afford to send out our students until we are confident that they are ready. The LTI is the key for students to learn through their passions and do meaningful, rigorous, and relevant projects. Without adequate preparation and thoughtful pairing of student and mentor, we risk greatly diminishing their effectiveness and resulting in a lack of integration between the LTI project/experience and core content subjects. We want to set our students up for success and give them every possible chance to succeed. As much as we would love to begin sending our students out into internships as soon as possible, we must proceed with patience and responsibility – both for the student and for the mentor.

Attachments B:

1. LTI Curriculum
2. Advisory Curriculum
3. Internship Ready List

ELA and Social Studies taught separately and taught in different blocks - Integrated Humanities Course:

In order to successfully be a part of a Big Picture learning school, teachers will have to learn a lot about how to implement the model. Because of the amount of time the teachers would need to accomplish this task, the school leader made the decision that the teachers would not have time to develop full integrated humanities courses. The plan is to have these courses as the school moves forward into years two and beyond. The teachers will begin working on the curriculum during the second semester of the year. During this first year each Social Studies class will read a piece of historical fiction to ensure integration of the language arts skills, reflective of the Common Core standards integrated into the Social Studies classes. A joint research project will be conducted during the second semester in these two courses.

Participation in the Social Studies Coalition:

The curriculum maps that were developed and given to the teachers are reflective of the coalition. The school has reached out to the coalition to join.

Participation in the Science Coalition:

The curriculum maps that were developed and given to the teachers are reflective of the coalition. The school has reached out to the coalition to join.

No Project Based Learning observed:

Teachers have been working on the “Who Am I” project in Advisory. Teachers received training on PBL from Frank Livoy’s program at the University of Delaware during the summer. The schedule was reworked in October to ensure that the teachers had enough time to do project work. A block schedule was developed that allow for 90 minutes for all classes so that teachers and students will have sufficient time to complete projects with peers during the instructional day.

Attachment C:

“Who Am I?” project materials

No evidence of development of Personalized Learning Plans:

Ideally, Student Learning Plans are developed by the student, parent, and advisor. This has been an ongoing process. There have been a significant number of parents who have failed to attend the scheduled Learning Plan meetings. In these cases, the advisor and the student have developed a first draft while continuing to set up new appointments with the parents. The hope is that on November 4th and 10th, all parents will be motivated to come to the school to sign the Laptop Computer Borrowing Policy that will enable their child to have access to his/her Chrome Book. Advisors have been making appointments with parents to sign the computer agreements with additional time set aside for the parents who have not attended their child’s Learning Plan meeting to do so at this time. In addition to the Advisory work found in the Learning Plan, every advisor is aware of what each student is responsible for in their content classes.

It should be noted that the Student Learning Plans are utilized predominantly during the Advisory period and would not usually be visible during the core content classes.

Attachments D:

1. First Quarter Core Content Objectives for SLP

No Blended Learning activities observed:

The computer roll out has been explained earlier in this response. Teachers were allowed to choose online curriculum materials such as text books, websites and virtual labs. The materials chosen support blended learning. There are also online courses that will be offered for credit recovery.

No evidence that units and instructional materials for the first 6 weeks of school were completed before the beginning of school - Course Scope and Sequence:

All courses offered have Curriculum Frameworks that map out the entire school year. These have been completed since June; these were all posted to dropbox and this was shared with teachers during summer professional development.

Attachments E:Curriculum Frameworks

Science 9

Science 10

Civics and Geology

US History

ELA 9

ELA 10

Math Grade 9

Math Grade 10

Physical Education

Health

Spanish I

Spanish II

Art Appreciation

First Week of School Plan

School Climate:

The school recognized that based on the students and their previous experiences, additional support was and will be needed to support the development of the culture that was envisioned. The school hired a school climate officer to service the school however this individual was not able to handle the volume of infractions that were occurring. He has been given a team of people to work with him that include two hall monitors and an In School Suspension monitor. These individuals have strong ties to the local community and know a lot of the students and their families. These relationships are extremely important in order to establish trust and effect change with our students. These additional staff members allow the school to deal with situations as they arise more effectively. The school also recognized that our students need more support to effectively change their behaviors so that the

culture can develop into what has been envisioned. The school hired AJ English and his team, through English Lessons, to serve as on site mentors for the students of the school. The mentors are able to help us indicate the triggers for some of our students, so that we can avoid and prevent infractions. Some students have a daily check in and check out with their mentor. The mentors are experts in developing relationships with students that will allow us to better support their individual needs. Students are able to have a safe place to discuss what is happening in their lives both in and outside of the school. Teachers are also able to refer students to the mentors based on their concerns.

The school also recognizes that the teaching staff needs support with classroom management. The Assistant school leader will focus 100% on teacher coaching starting on November 2nd. Each teacher will receive multiple classroom visits and coaching sessions with the assistant school leader. Teachers will be supported with student engagement, effective lessons planning, rigorous content as well as classroom management. All of these can support the overall climate of the school.

Code of Conduct:

The school has an approved code of conduct that was given to all students and is posted on the school web site. Teachers sent home a letter for parents and students to sign indicating that they had received the code of conduct. Teachers were given a lesson plan to use during Advisory class to review the code of conduct with the students. The drug and alcohol policy is outlined in Appendix C in the Code of Conduct.

Attachments F:

Code of Conduct
Parent/Student Signature Page
Email to Teachers

School Leader:

The original plan for interim-leadership during the School Leader's maternity leave was developed over the summer by Tricia Hunter and Teresa Gerchman. The plan involved Teresa Gerchman taking the primary leadership position with academic support from Assistant Principal Jackie Adam-Taylor.

With the school experiencing the need for several new initiatives after their opening, just as the school leader was departing for maternity leave, discussions with the board on September 24th and 25th led to the request for Innovative Schools to find extra interim-leadership support beyond the original plan.

Innovative Schools proposed a leadership "team" approach with Sean Gallagher as lead administrator, Teresa Gerchman able to focus on support of operations and new initiatives and Jackie Adam-Taylor still managing academic planning and professional development. It was made clear that this new proposal

would incur additional expense for the school because of the need for Innovative Schools to hire additional supports to cover Sean's primary duties.

While this proposal was accepted at the September 28th meeting, the plan was never formally initiated because the preliminary September 30th count numbers indicated that the school would be facing budgetary constraints. Over the course of the next several days, Innovative Schools worked with board leadership to construct a revised plan that could give the school the leadership support it needed at no additional cost to the school.

While transition to this new plan was complicated by the temporary absence of Teresa Gerchman in mid-October, the school now has a stable leadership team in place with Teresa Gerchman at the helm. With the planned return of Tricia Hunter in mid-November, the board will be considering new options for the school leadership team going forward.

FOIA:

Leading up to the opening of the school, a weekly meeting was held between school leadership, Innovative Schools and a representative of the board. These meetings became dubbed as Executive Committee Meetings and were run by school leadership. The purpose of the meetings was to ensure that the necessary tasks for the school's opening were on track and to provide a recap of items to date. These meetings continued briefly into the school year. Agendas for the meetings are included in this response. Meeting minutes were taken by hand by school leadership and are in the process of being compiled.

Attachment G:

Agendas