

**TO: Charter School Accountability Committee (CSAC)  
Charter School Office  
Delaware Department of Education**

**REF: Formal Review Documents**

**FROM: Dr. Cristina C. Alvarez, Chief School Officer**

### **Executive Summary**

Delaware Design-Lab High School (school #96094065) proposes to be removed from formal review and to open with 240 students in August 2015, because there are currently 202 fully enrolled students in eSchool and reflected on the May 1<sup>st</sup> enrollment count, and the enrollment number continues to grow daily. We are confident that this positive enrollment trend will continue, i.e. that we will enroll a minimum of 240 students, which is 80% of the charter school's authorized number of students. The attached revised budgets, budget narrative and organization chart demonstrate that the school is economically viable at the funding levels of 202 and 240 students. Continued increased student enrollment will only strengthen our position to operate the school successfully in the first year and in subsequent years.

**Enrollment Detail:** The Board of Directors and Management Team are aware of the Title 14, Delaware Code, Section 506(c)(1) requirement for the charter school to enroll a minimum of 80% of its authorized number of students. Recent enrollment trends show a steady student enrollment increase.

Students enrolled in eSchool:

Date	#	Percent of total authorized enrollment
1 April 2015	137	46%
1 May 2015	202	67% (21% increase in one month)

Furthermore, we are able to demonstrate that Design-Lab High is becoming known to families and is an increasingly popular school choice. The data reveal the following application activity on the school choice website: (<http://www.schoolchoicede.org/ApplyInfo/Design-Lab>)

Applications received on school choice website	- 345
Active applications on school choice website	- 301
Applicants who have accepted our invitation	- 204
Applicants fully enrolled in eSchool	- 202
Undecided Applicants	- 30

**Reasons for Enrollment Challenges:** Difficulties in meeting enrollment targets were a matter of challenges we faced in leasing and losing a facility, having to make a location change in January 2015, and spreading the word about the school's existence to Delaware communities. Once a change in location from Wilmington to Newark was approved by the CSAC (in a major modification for location change) we increased marketing efforts for the Newark campus, and that signaled to families the assurance of the stability of a suitable school facility.

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The resulting increased enrollment is evidence that our most significant marketing and enrollment challenges are in the past. Once Design-Lab High opens in summer 2015 and the school becomes part of the New Castle County community, the high quality college preparatory program will sell itself. Solid demand for a Design-Lab education will further boost enrollments.

**Current and Future Marketing Strategy:** We are implementing aggressive marketing strategies to increase new applications now. We are committed to continue these successful marketing strategies in the future. Examples:

- Face-to-face recruitment – recruitment team deploys at festivals, community events, feeders school presentations, ongoing Open Houses and Tours of the Faith City Newark school campus (every Wednesday and 8 am to 5 pm each Sunday).
- Postcard flyer mailings – 3 distributions to 12,000 households with 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> graders in New Castle County
- Stand alone banner in Christiana Mall – 6 months from February through July 2015
- Print ads in theater Playbills, Delaware Today
- Email blasts
- Personal telephone calling campaigns
- Round the clock radio ads – once every three hours on REACH FM
- Student events – skating party, bowling party, picnic on school grounds, game nights
- Billboard Blitzkrieg – 8 highway billboards throughout New Castle County, 8 weeks
- Social Media – frequent postings to Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Design-Lab website
- Student-to-student marketing – offering enrolled students incentives to enroll their peers

**Acknowledging the Financial Scenario:** We understand that the initial funding the school will receive in the first six months of operations is based on 50% of the May 1<sup>st</sup> student enrollment count of 202 students. We understand that we must assume costs for 240 students on the funding amount of the May 1<sup>st</sup> count.

Therefore, attached please find a 12-month cash flow projection. We have assumed the second half of local funding in the month of December and acknowledge it puts some cash flow pressures in the month of November. This should be a non-issue should the school receive state revenue in November. We are developing contingency actions to further help alleviate this constraint should it be necessary.

We are confident that these analyses and supporting documents demonstrate how we will operate a successful academic program. And enrolling additional students, up to and beyond 240 students, will only strengthen the school's financial viability.