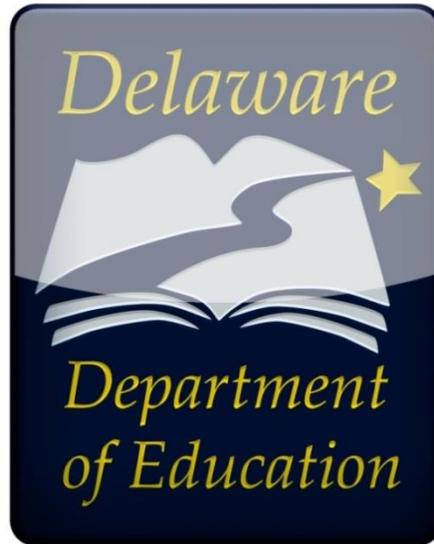


# CHARTER SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE

DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



## The Delaware Met

**FORMAL REVIEW  
INITIAL REPORT**

CSAC Initial Meeting: November 4, 2015  
CSAC Initial Report Published: November 9, 2015

The following were in attendance at the Initial Meeting of the CSAC on November 4, 2015:

**Voting Committee Members of the Charter School Accountability Committee**

- David Blowman, Chairperson of the Charter School Accountability Committee and Deputy Secretary of Education, DDOE
- Karen Field Rogers, Associate Secretary for Adult Education and School Supports, DDOE
- April McCrae, Education Associate, Science Assessment and STEM, DDOE
- Barbara Mazza, Education Associate, Exceptional Children Resources, DDOE
- Atnre Alleyne, Director, Talent Management & Educator Effectiveness, Teacher and Leader Effectiveness Unit (TLEU), DDOE
- Paul Harrell, Community Member

**Non-voting Committee Members of the Charter School Accountability Committee**

- Donna Johnson, Executive Director, Delaware State Board of Education
- Kendall Massett, Executive Director, Delaware Charter School Network

**Staff to the Committee**

- Catherine T. Hickey, Deputy Attorney General, Counsel to the Committee
- Jennifer Nagourney, Executive Director, Charter School Office, DDOE
- John Carwell, Education Associate, Charter School Office, DDOE
- Michelle Whalen, Education Associate, Charter School Office, DDOE
- Brook Hughes, Education Associate, Financial Reform and Resource Management

**Representatives of the School**

- Nash Childs, Board President
- Adriane Anderson-Strange, Board Secretary
- Jillian Wattle, Board Member
- Teresa Gerchman, Chief Schools Officer, Innovative Schools and Acting School Leader, Delaware Met
- Karen Thorpe, Business Manager, Innovative Schools

**Additional Attendees Noted**

- Greg Mazzotta, Delaware Quality Program
- Carleigh Strange, Student
- John Sadowski, Education Associate, Delaware Department of Education
- Swiyah Whittington, Hopes Academy
- Shuanta Bellamy, Hopes Academy
- Kevin Ohlandt, Community Member

## **Discussion**

Mr. Blowman explained that the purpose of the meeting was to review the relevant statutory criteria as to whether the charter holder is violating the terms of its charter and, if so, whether remedial measures are warranted. He noted that no specific recommendations regarding remedial measures would be made at the meeting.

Mr. Blowman noted that the grounds for formal review were outlined in an October 16, 2015 letter to the Board, which included potential violations of the law and charter in the following areas:

- educational program;
- school culture;
- governing board and leadership capacity; and
- financial viability.

On November 1, 2015, the school's Board submitted a set of documents to the Department, which included:

- a copy of a written statement;
- a revised budget and expenditure summary with estimates for FY2016; and
- copies of several school policies.

Mr. Blowman noted that the CSAC would consider the documents that had been submitted and information discussed at the meeting in formulating its preliminary recommendation. He stated that the CSAC would identify any areas of ongoing concern and any further information requested from the school that it deems necessary for formulating its final recommendation.

## **Educational Program**

Mr. Blowman asked the school to speak about its submissions before inviting questions from the CSAC. Ms. Gerchman stated that one area that she felt was not accurately portrayed was the Code of Conduct. She stated that the school has an approved Code of Conduct. She stated that the school distributed the Code of Conduct to students, had a lesson on it, and sent a signature page home to parents, which has been collected. She stated that the Code of Conduct is also posted on the school's website. Mr. Blowman noted that the Code of Conduct issue is part of the school culture area of concern, but stated that the main concern is not whether such a document exists, but whether it is being implemented with fidelity. He noted that this area of concern would be discussed in more detail later in the meeting as part of the school culture discussion.

Mr. Blowman noted that the concerns surrounding the educational programming include the fidelity to the approved curriculum and instructional program: specifically, the Big Picture Learning ("BPL") instructional model, the use of technology, participation in various coalitions, and implementation status of Project-Based Learning.

With respect to the 1:1 student to technology ratio, Ms. Gerchman stated that computers have been ordered and are at the school. She stated that the school wanted to have a firmer grip on where the computers were and how they were going to be used. The school had individual parent meetings on November 4<sup>th</sup> and will have more on November 10<sup>th</sup>, during which parents review and sign the computer policies. She stated that the school has also worked with Positive Outcomes Charter School, which has a similar technology ratio, to ensure safety. The school has purchased the Go Guardian software for the computers, which tracks the computer's location, website history, and internet connections. Ms. Gerchman stated that the computers are being handed out on November 12<sup>th</sup> and will be worked into the curriculum moving forward.

Ms. Nagourney noted that there was discussion at the September 15<sup>th</sup> Board meeting about a computer lab that had suffered damage. Ms. Gerchman responded that there was a "brown out" at the school, which caused damage to some of the computers that were not intended to be counted in the 1:1 technology ratio. However, the damage was repaired and there is a full computer lab on the second floor that is currently being used.

Mr. Blowman asked whether the plan was always to provide the computers in the middle of November, or whether that decision was made as enrollment fluctuated. Ms. Gerchman responded that it was not due to enrollment fluctuations, but rather behaviors that were being observed in the school. She stated that the plan was never to hand out computers on the first day, but certainly during the first quarter following some preparation during advisory classes. The anticipated date of distribution was pushed back to ensure that the school had an adequate computer and acceptable use policy in place, parent awareness, and proper software.

Ms. Johnson referred to the school's computer policy that had been submitted with the school's formal review documents and cited a portion of the policy that provides for students checking out the computers each morning. She asked how this works with the personalized learning model. Ms. Gerchman responded that students have a ten-minute advisory period each morning, at which point they would check the computers out. Ms. Johnson clarified that she was referring to how the personalized learning model calls for students to proceed at their own pace, which usually occurs outside of the classroom. Ms. Gerchman responded that students would be entitled to take the computers home with them once it is determined that they are ready. Ms. Johnson asked how computers will be used to enhance instruction. Ms. Gerchman responded that, during the school day, the computers would be used during advisory to look up businesses, make contacts with people, email, and set up their internships before they actually go out for their internships. Also, the computers will be utilized in the classroom to incorporate more blended learning, such as online Biology labs. Ms. Johnson asked how students will have access outside of the school day, including whether they will be using Schoology. Ms. Gerchman responded that students will be able to use Schoology, the assignments will be completed in the classroom, and they'll be using other materials for outside work. The hope is that all students will be able to take the computers with them by the third quarter.

Ms. Johnson asked when teacher training occurred. Ms. Gerchman responded that the Go Guardian training occurred last Friday. Ms. Johnson clarified that she was referring to the

instructional technology of using the online resources of Schoology and online labs. Ms. Gerchman stated that those trainings occurred during the summer. The online labs are individual to the teachers and they did their training working with individual companies.

Ms. Johnson asked whether there are after school or extended day opportunities available for students to use the resources. Ms. Gerchman responded that there will be after school opportunities, but there is no after school transportation. In addition, once the school starts basketball and winter cheerleading, it will be adding an athletics study hall from 4:00-5:00 PM, with practice starting at 5:00 PM. Mr. Blowman asked whether the school intends to provide after school transportation and Ms. Gerchman responded that there would not be after school transportation this school year.

Mr. Alleyne asked how the school determines readiness to take the computers home. Ms. Gerchman responded that there is an internship readiness rubric, which would be the same for the use of the computers.

Ms. Johnson asked what type of digital citizenship training students are receiving in order to bring the one-to-one computer devices home. Ms. Gerchman responded that this is part of the advisory curriculum, which came from Big Picture Learning.

Ms. Johnson asked about the length of the advisory period each day and Ms. Gerchman responded that it is 90 minutes.

Mr. Blowman asked whether Big Picture is actively engaged in the school. Ms. Gerchman responded that it is. She added that Charly Adler is the Big Picture coach and is frequently in the school. He was in the school two days last week and was previously at the school for two full weeks. He provides support with professional development, and also goes into the classroom and provides assistance to teachers in delivering their advisory lessons. Mr. Blowman asked about Mr. Adler's specific role. Ms. Gerchman responded that Mr. Adler provides coaching for her as the Interim School Leader and for the teachers in preparing students for internships.

Ms. McCrae asked about the current ratio of advisors to students and Ms. Gerchman responded that it is 17:1. Ms. McCrae asked for clarification regarding whether the teachers are the advisors and are responsible for providing instruction throughout the day as well as advising students as they prepare for their internships and serving as the liaisons for the internships. She asked if the teachers are essentially internship counselors as well as teachers. Ms. Gerchman confirmed that Ms. McCrae's summary of the role of the teacher advisor was correct. They work with students on developing their personalized learning plans and meet with parents to discuss the plans. Ms. Gerchman added that they received training over the summer from Big Picture Learning regarding how to serve in that role. They participated in a week-long training in New Orleans. However, not all teachers were on board at that time, which is why Mr. Adler is involved. He is working with those teachers who did not receive the training, as well as those that did but are currently struggling with the process. Mr. Blowman added that it seems as though one week of offsite instruction was not sufficient and asked whether there was an awareness that this was likely. Ms. Gerchman responded that the teachers thought they were prepared, but what they

were not prepared for was the work it took to engage students in the advisory. Mr. Adler is currently troubleshooting how to engage students who didn't come in necessarily wanting to engage in the Big Picture model.

Ms. Field Rogers asked whether there was something else that should have been done to better prepare students or families. Ms. Gerchman responded that she believed that the optional Summer Institute should have been required, as students who participated in the Summer Institute came in much more prepared. However, less than 50% of the students participated. Mr. Blowman asked whether the school is seeing a difference in retention or performance between students who participated in the Summer Institute and those that did not. Ms. Gerchman responded that, as the first quarter winds down, the school is finding that students who participated in the Summer Institute are much more likely to be internship ready. However, the school has not actually done a percentage calculation.

Mr. Blowman expressed concern that the model has always been Big Picture, and the school has had 3-4 years since the beginning of the application process, yet it seems as though some of the school's experiences are coming as a surprise. He added that he wonders how much planning was done before the school opened. He asked whether the enrollment pressure was driving the need to recruit students who didn't have a full understanding of what they were signing up for. Ms. Gerchman responded that she believed the message was clear from the beginning, as the majority of the students who applied came to at least one open house or other event at the school. However, she doesn't necessarily know that all of the students who applied were actually embracing the model, as opposed to not returning to their feeder school. She added that a lot of the school's training was provided by people who had not actually worked in an urban school setting or with open enrollment schools. She stated that the school has since connected with some schools in California that are open enrollment, urban setting charter schools. She stated that this did not previously happen, but should have. Ms. McCrae stated that she was surprised to hear that explanation, as Dennis Littky's Big Picture literature is all based on the urban model. She added that one would assume that Mr. Adler and his trainers would base their training on that type of student population. Ms. Gerchman responded that the Providence schools, which were the original schools, were started with ten students per advisor and they were all part of the Providence School District, such that if that model did not work for some children, they could be sent back to their original district school. Mr. Blowman asked whether the model requires a 10:1 ratio and Ms. Gerchman responded that it does not. She noted that the original plan called for a 22:1 ratio. Ms. McCrae added that this was with great concern and Ms. Gerchman stated that she had not heard from Big Picture Learning that it was with great concern. She stated that she had not heard this until after the school was opened.

Mr. Blowman asked whether Ms. Gerchman wished to speak to any of the other areas of concern identified under the educational program. Ms. Gerchman stated that the learning plans are not something that would necessarily be observed when walking into the school, as they are developed over time with the advisors. Students have done this through their "Who am I" project in their advisory, in which they identify their interests and start matching those interests with potential careers. Ms. Gerchman stated that this process is now moving to the next level, in which

parent meetings are held. In those meetings, parents will see those learning plans, discuss them with the advisors, and both parent and student will sign them.

Mr. Blowman asked when the internship component is scheduled to take place. Ms. Gerchman responded that it will vary with each student. However, every student will be in an internship by third quarter. The plan for the first year was for 10<sup>th</sup> graders to start first. For 9<sup>th</sup> graders, the plan was always for them to begin their internships in the third quarter. For 10<sup>th</sup> graders, the plan was for them to begin their internships as quickly as possible, and hopefully within 10 weeks. Ms. Gerchman stated that the school is finding that not all 10<sup>th</sup> graders are ready. As a result, students who are not going into external internships will do them internally until they are ready. Mr. Adler is currently helping the school in identifying which students, because of their disciplinary records, are not prepared to behave appropriately in an internship outside of the school.

Dr. Alleyne noted that the assumption is that all students will be ready by the third quarter. Ms. Gerchman responded that this assumption includes both internal and external internships. Dr. Alleyne noted that the readiness list is long and inquired as to where the bulk of the students fall in terms of readiness. Ms. Gerchman stated that, while she has not yet seen all of the 10<sup>th</sup> graders' documents, approximately 50% of those whose she has seen are ready. She clarified that "ready" refers to those ready for external internships, as the remaining students will do internal internships. Dr. Alleyne asked how different the experience would be for those students and whether the school has the capacity to offer internal internships. Ms. Gerchman responded that the school has the capacity and has other services, such as IT, that would offer opportunities within the school.

Ms. Mazza asked what training staff has received in ensuring that everything in students' Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) are accommodated in the educational program. Ms. Gerchman responded that the learning plan meetings for all students with IEPs is one hour long, rather than one half hour, as the IEP is being looked at in developing the plan. She added that Sue Ogden is responsible for ensuring that all students' goals are incorporated. Teachers have been given a spreadsheet with all of the students' IEP goals listed. In addition, the IEP goals are part of the conversation during the learning plan meeting. Ms. Ogden has worked with and is working with teachers to make sure that they know how to integrate the two. Ms. Mazza asked if Ms. Ogden was providing professional development in the area of scaffolding and differentiated instruction to meet the needs of students with IEPs. Ms. Gerchman responded that Ms. Ogden is working with teachers in this regard, but it was also covered during summer training that was not necessarily delivered by Ms. Ogden.

Ms. Blowman asked whether all eligible students currently have fully approved IEPs. Ms. Gerchman responded that she did not have that information immediately available. She noted that the school was struggling to receive IEPs, but now has all of them. She stated that she knows that the school has had meetings, including meetings on November 4<sup>th</sup>, and that there will be more. Ms. Mazza noted that the meetings are required to be held within 60 calendar days of the first date of attendance, which has passed. Ms. Gerchman responded that she can't guarantee

that every one of them has happened, as she has not been there, but that she knows that Ms. Ogden has a chart, is well-aware of the requirements, and is keeping track.

Mr. Blowman asked how many certified special education teachers are on staff. Ms. Gerchman responded that there were 62 students. As for staff, in addition to Ms. Ogden, the school has two full-time special education teachers (one with a background in math and one with a background in English), as well as two part-time paraprofessionals. Ms. Mazza asked whether Ms. Ogden provides instruction and Ms. Gerchman responded that she does. Ms. Mazza noted that this was still not a lot of staff for 60 students, including a fair amount of intensive and complex students. Ms. Gerchman added that the school has outside service providers coming into the school, including Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, Speech, a Psychologist, and counselors. Ms. Mazza asked whether Ms. Ogden and the two teachers can provide all of the instructional services outlined in the IEPs. Ms. Gerchman responded that she can ask Ms. Ogden for that information. Mr. Blowman clarified that the current staff composed four units. However, 62 students would generate more than four units. Ms. Mazza asked how many units the school estimates that it earned based upon its September 30<sup>th</sup> count. Ms. Thorpe replied that there were a total of 16.76 units earned. Ms. Field Rogers calculated two units based upon the four complex students, two units based upon 17 intensive students, and more based upon 39 basic students. She noted that her calculation is 60 students, but it was agreed upon that the September 30<sup>th</sup> unit count would generate more than four units.

Ms. Mazza requested an assurance that each of those students with an IEP had an IEP meeting prior to the 60-day timeline, and that all IEPs are in compliance with dates. Ms. Gerchman asked whether Ms. Mazza would like a breakdown of minutes and Ms. Mazza responded that she would like a breakdown for instructional minutes and how they are being met, but not necessarily related services. She noted that she also wanted an assurance that students' behavioral needs are being met. Ms. Gerchman responded that the school does have a Social Worker, as well as two other counselors. Ms. Mazza stated that she noticed in the behavioral data that the school submitted that eight of the students were students with disabilities. She asked what kinds of provisions are in place in terms of Functional Behavioral Assessments, Behavioral Support Plans, and training for staff. Ms. Gerchman responded that the mentoring team includes a Social Worker who comes in every day and the school also works with a Psychologist who will work on doing the Functional Behavioral Assessments, which will inform Behavioral Support Plans. She added that if a student with a disability is involved in a behavioral infraction, Ms. Ogden and the head of the mentoring program are involved in any decision that is made. She stated that one student with a disability brought a weapon to school and the school had a full Manifestation Determination meeting for that student with a Psychologist doing the assessment.

Mr. Blowman asked how the school is structuring special education delivery. He asked whether the school is pushing into core classes. Ms. Gerchman responded that the school is utilizing inclusion as well as pull out small group instruction depending upon the students' IEPs. In addition, the school has 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade English classes, as well as math classes, that are co-taught with special education and general education teachers. Those teachers also have additional time for pull out services. During a 90-minute block, a student may stay in for 45

minutes of co-teaching and then pull out for part of the time. The school is trying to push for acceleration as opposed to remediation. For example, the school is pre-teaching vocabulary so that students are more ready and able to participate in the inclusion class.

Mr. Blowman asked how the school is implementing Response to Intervention (RtI). Ms. Gerchman responded that the school is utilizing intervention blocks of time for students, in which they can be pulled for 45 minutes of level 2 or 3. Those students have been identified based upon reading and math levels. Mr. Blowman asked what screening tool the school is utilizing. Ms. Gerchman replied that the school is using the students' previous DCAS scores. The school looks at all DCAS data for the students and focuses on students who have consistently scored low. She stated that the school has also conducted additional testing to obtain specific levels, but that Ms. Ogden would be able to provide that specific information. Ms. Mazza asked whether, for special education students, these interventions are in addition to the special education services. Ms. Gerchman responded that the RtI services are in addition to special education services.

Ms. Johnson stated that her understanding was that funds that are generated for special education use are to be used only for special education purposes. She requested clarification regarding what dollar amount of funds was generated for special education and what amount of money is currently being spent on special education, as well as the unit counts and staffing.

Ms. McCrae noted that the school had submitted curriculum outlines for science and social studies. She noted that the school also submitted the first quarter core content objectives for science, which are not in alignment with the outline from the coalition that the school provided. The school provided information from science and global issues, which provides an outline for the curriculum that the science coalition offers. However, the first quarter core content information is about substructure and function, which is not in alignment with the sustainability information. She noted that she understands why, as the school has not participated in the science coalition training and hasn't actually administered the science coalition curriculum. She noted that the school's response is that it will join the social studies and science coalitions. However, the school's initial application stated that the school intended to be members of those coalitions before the start of the school year. She added that this was a condition of the school's approval. She noted that it almost reads as if it were a surprise to the school that the school year started without a science or social studies curriculum. Ms. Gerchman responded that she cannot answer what happened or why it did not happen. However, she did reach out to the coalitions to join upon seeing the formal review notification letter. Ms. Nagourney asked whether there was someone else in the room that could provide an explanation as to the sequence of events. She added that there was a startup plan outline in the approved charter. Ms. Gerchman responded that joining the coalitions was listed in the work plan. No additional explanation was provided by anyone in attendance.

Ms. Johnson noted that the school had an additional planning year. In addition, the approved charter did not go through a detailed analysis of science or social studies curricula, because the agreement was that the school would join the coalitions. She added that part of the agreement is to have the teachers trained. She expressed concern that the school waited until it received a

formal review letter to join, meaning that a curriculum would not be in place this school year. She noted that she sees content in the submission, but no alignment to state standards or teacher training consistent with state standards. She requested that the information that the school submitted be aligned to state standards and that the school provide evidence that its teachers have already undergone training consistent with current state standards. She clarified that she is not interested in information demonstrating that the teachers will receive training, but that they already have. Ms. Nagourney requested clarification regarding who was responsible for overseeing that process and who was overseeing the school leader. Ms. Johnson noted that she was not concerned with who was responsible, but rather what happened and why. She stated that she was very concerned, as this was basic. Ms. McCrae added that, because the school is not currently a member of either coalition, and because teachers have not received training, she would like to see current units aligned to state standards to demonstrate that students are receiving quality instruction in those areas.

Mr. Blowman commented that the general consensus is that a lot of the work that should have been done during the last two years has been engaged in while students were in school. He added that the school is essentially sacrificing one year of the model's instruction to figure it out.

Ms. Johnson cited a document that was submitted entitled "First Week of School Plan." She asked whether that week was considered more of an "on ramp" to high school or whether those hours were included in the school's total instructional hours for the school year. Ms. Gerchman responded that it was more of an "on ramp" for Big Picture Learning, as it was an all-day advisory. Ms. Johnson asked the school to confirm that the first week of school does not count towards the required instructional hours in one school year. Ms. Gerchman replied that there are enough instructional hours built in to meet the requirements. She added that she believed that the calendar that was submitted to the Department included those 40 hours, but noted that the school can subtract those hours out and still have enough hours. She stated that there were more than enough Carnegie units, which would have started the week after.

Mr. Blowman asked whether the school had enough days built into its calendar to offset the days that were lost at the beginning of the school year. Ms. Gerchman responded affirmatively and stated that new calendars had been submitted. Ms. Field Rogers noted that what the Department received does not show four days off in September. Ms. Gerchman stated that she would send an updated calendar.

Ms. McCrae asked the school to describe what it means to be internship ready. Ms. Gerchman responded that Big Picture Learning has worked on what those traits would be. Mr. Adler worked extensively with advisors. There is a readiness list in the materials that the school submitted. However, internship ready essentially means that the school knows that the student will go where they're supposed to go and be responsible in their behavior, dress, and language, as well as follow through with expectations. For those students who are not ready, the school will give them an internal internship and work on whatever needs to be worked on, with the expectation that they will eventually be able to participate in an internship outside of the school.

Mr. Harrell asked how often the School Psychologist visits the school. Ms. Gerchman responded that she can get those numbers from Ms. Ogden. She does not know whether there are set times, but knows that the Psychologist comes in when needed.

Mr. Harrell asked who the mentors are. Ms. Gerchman replied that A.J. English runs the program, which is called "English Lessons." He serves as a mentor and has two other mentors who work under him. Mr. Harrell asked whether the program was local and Ms. Gerchman replied that it is. Ms. Gerchman added that one of the mentors is a licensed social worker.

Mr. Harrell asked whether there was anyone else in Delaware that uses Mr. English and Ms. Gerchman stated that she did not know. Later in the meeting, Ms. Gerchman reported that she received information that Mr. English works with two other schools.

Ms. Nagourney asked the school to identify its Learning Through Interest (LTI) coordinator. Ms. Gerchman responded that Keina Hodges of Innovative Schools is currently serving in that role on an interim basis. Ms. Nagourney asked whether there is a search for a permanent LTI Coordinator and Ms. Gerchman stated that the position is currently posted on [joindelawareschools.org](http://joindelawareschools.org) and the Big Picture Learning site.

Ms. Nagourney asked whether the school has a list of confirmed external internship partners. Ms. Gerchman responded that there are no confirmed partners, as no students have been placed. However, the school has a list of partners willing to work with the school, which she can have Ms. Hodges provide.

### **School Culture**

Mr. Blowman asked Ms. Gerchman to address any of the items of concern in this area before inviting questions from the CSAC.

Ms. Gerchman stated that the assessment that the school culture is not where it needs to be is clear to anyone who walks in. She noted that Mr. English's program was originally intended to be a voluntary after school program. However, the school recognized a need for him to be in the building starting with the second week of school. Ms. Gerchman added that there is a need to identify what is triggering the students' behavior, rather than punish, and that Mr. English is helping in this regard. Mr. English's group has a rubric and assessment tool. Mr. English had previous relationships with some of the students in the building and is continuing to work with them. Ms. Gerchman added that the school realized that support above and beyond the mentors was needed. The school hired and identified a School Climate Officer prior to the start of the school year. However, he did not start until the second week of school. The School Climate Officer was given additional support staff, as the school realized that he could not do the job alone. For example, the school brought in an experienced In School Suspension staff member. The school also brought in Rob Moore, who works in the community, to assist the School Climate Officer. Mr. Moore runs a basketball program and knows a lot of the students and their families. He can remove disruptive students from class with the goal of reintegrating them into the classroom as

quickly as possible. She noted that the School Climate Officer could not handle all of the school's issues as a one person team.

Mr. Blowman asked how Ms. Gerchman would describe the current climate in the building. Ms. Gerchman responded that it was better, but not where it needs to be. She added that teachers need to do a better job of fully engaging all of the students in their lessons to get where the school needs to be. She added that the school needs to provide more professional development to achieve this. Ms. Gerchman also noted that the school is using the Teaching Excellence Framework ("TEF") which provides coaching to teachers after administrator classroom visits. Ms. Gerchman noted that she recently re-joined The Delaware Met on October 27, 2015 after personal leave and has been conducting observations and coaching sessions with teachers since then. She provides teachers with feedback and follows up on implementation in two weeks. Dr. Alleyne asked if the school originally planned to use the TEF. Ms. Gerchman stated that the TEF was originally planned and teachers received training in August 2015. She also noted that observations did not occur as frequently after Ms. Hunter, the permanent school leader, went out on leave.

Dr. Alleyne asked the school to explain what is currently needed for the school climate to improve. Ms. Gerchman explained that the school must get students fully engaged in learning. When students are engaged there are less discipline problems. She added that the school has identified the 4-5% of students who are causing the majority of the discipline issues and individual behavior intervention plans have been developed. Mentors and/or advisors have been identified to work with many of the students. Ms. Gerchman added that the intent of these relationships is to keep issues from outside of school coming into the school.

Ms. Johnson noted that the school did not originally plan to use the TEF which the DDOE recently approved the school to use based on its minor modification application. Ms. Gerchman clarified that she meant that the school planned to use the TEF when it opened but it was not part of its approved charter application.

Ms. Mazza asked the school to describe how services are provided to students with disabilities when they are placed in in-school suspension. Ms. Gerchman stated that the school's Director of Student Supports, Ms. Susan Ogden, determines whether students with disabilities should be pulled out of the classroom for special education services or not and monitors services when these students are placed in in-school suspension. Ms. Mazza asked the school to describe Ms. Ogden's role. Ms. Gerchman stated that Ms. Ogden is part of the school's leadership team.

Ms. Nagourney asked the school to provide the most recent date that police officers were summoned to the school. Ms. Gerchman stated that Mayor Dennis Williams recently visited the school and recommended that the school have a Wilmington Police Department ("WPD") officer present during school dismissals. The school hired a WPD officer to be present from 2:30 – 4:30 PM daily. Ms. Gerchman explained that since Delaware Met's dismissal time is later than area high schools, students from other schools are often present during dismissal. The police officer's presence is intended to prevent potential problems when Delaware Met students are being

dismissed. Ms. Gerchman added that on November 3, 2015, a student who was suspended and sent home returned to school during dismissal to fight with the student she had a verbal altercation with earlier that day which led to the suspension. The police officer intervened and requested back up. Mr. Blowman asked the school to report the number of times that police have been called to the school since the school opened. Ms. Gerchman stated that she did not know but would provide the information. Ms. McCrae asked if the incidents have been reported. Ms. Gerchman stated that the incidents have been reported.

Mr. Harrell asked the school for the date when the code of conduct was issued to students. Ms. Gerchman stated that the code of conduct was issued at the beginning of school. Mr. Harrell asked if it might have been a better plan to distribute the code of conduct during the summer so that students understood what was expected of them prior to the first week of school. Ms. Gerchman explained that the school wanted to meet with students to make sure they understood the code of conduct instead of sending it to them.

Mr. Blowman asked the school to describe the strategies and approaches in place to ensure that the faculty are effectively engaging students. Ms. Gerchman stated that the administration checks teachers' lesson plans and provides feedback before the lessons are delivered. In addition, the administration monitors and provides additional supports to teachers who are struggling (e.g. teachers who request assistance in their classrooms or have students removed). Ms. Gerchman also noted that the administration is working with teachers to develop better relationships with the students. Ms. Gerchman added that the classroom issues are not student issues but adult issues and teachers who have the best relationships with students have the least difficulty in their classrooms.

Mr. Harrell asked the school to describe the morale of the faculty. Mr. Gerchman stated that faculty morale is not great. Ms. McCrae noted that the school has an issue with fighting and asked if the faculty have received training in de-escalation and restraint. Ms. Gerchman stated that some but not all have received this training. Ms. McCrae commented that it is imperative that Delaware Met faculty be trained to appropriately serve the 62 students with disabilities.

Ms. Johnson asked the school to provide an outline of how the Board, administration, staff utilized the additional year of planning. Mr. Childs explained that the Board requested a one-year delay to open the school to secure a facility. He also noted that the school acquired the former Maryland Bank, N.A. (MBNA) building which was owned by the State of Delaware. Mr. Childs explained that acquiring the facility was a long process and the building was not acquired until shortly before the school opened. He admitted that Delaware Met leadership did not spend sufficient time on the educational program, and was more focused on securing the facility. He added that school leadership struggled with recruitment and getting a certificate of occupancy for the facility. Mr. Childs also noted that although the school leader was identified prior to the delayed opening request to DDOE, the Board did not have funding to pay the school leader for one year before the school opened.

Ms. Johnson noted that Delaware Met was approved with a charter management organization (“CMO”) and asked what, if any, part of the school’s start-up plan had been delegated to the CMO, Innovative Schools. Mr. Childs explained that the Board determined that it would focus on facility acquisition because the Board had greater expertise in this area. Ms. Johnson noted that Board fulfilled its role in acquiring the facility but there are current deficits in the educational program which Innovative Schools was responsible for. She asked how the Board held Innovative Schools accountable for delivering the educational program. Mr. Child stated that the Board did not hold Innovative Schools accountable enough. He noted that he had to disengage in May 2015 due to illness. Ms. Johnson asked the school to describe the current responsibilities the Board has delegated to Innovative Schools. Mr. Childs stated that the Board will lean very heavily on Innovative Schools for help with the formal review process. Ms. Childs also noted that it was a challenge for the school when the current school leader, Patricia Hunter, went out on leave soon after the school opened.

Ms. Johnson asked the school to clarify the role of Innovative School beyond supporting the Board through the formal review process. Ms. Gerchman stated that Board provided a scope of work to Innovative Schools in September 2015. Mr. Childs noted that the Board’s contract with Innovative Schools was not fully executed until after May 2015. He also reiterated that the Board was not certain that it would have a school building until months prior to the school’s opening date. Ms. Johnson noted that she understood the fact that the school did not have a building, but the Board had a school when they were granted a charter and students were recruited on the basis that they would receive a high quality education. She asked the school to provide a list of the expectations the Board provided to Innovative Schools.

Dr. Alleyne asked the school if issues with faculty morale are impacting faculty retention. Ms. Gerchman noted that an English Language Arts teacher resigned the first week of school and a math teacher submitted her resignation this week.

### **Governing Board & Leadership Capacity**

Mr. Blowman noted that the school has had transition in leadership and asked the school to describe its plans for recruiting a permanent school leader. Ms. Gerchman noted that the current school leader, Ms. Hunter, will return on November 17, 2015. She also stated that the Board has decided to hire an executive director that understands the BPL model at a deeper level to oversee Ms. Hunter. Ms. Hunter will remain as the school leader. The job description is developed and posted.

Mr. Harrell asked the school to describe the responsibilities of the new executive director position. Ms. Gerchman stated that the executive director will be responsible for overseeing the entire school climate, school systems, internships and execute the BPL model effectively. Ms. Hunter will directly support teachers and operations. Mr. Childs noted that the Board’s personnel committee is leading the search process and the timeline for hiring is as soon as possible. He also

noted that BPL's consultant to Delaware Met, Mr. Charly Adler, assured the Board that the new leadership structure at Delaware Met is not uncommon at BPL schools.

Mr. Blowman noted that the new leadership structure was not the Board's original plan. Ms. Field Rogers asked the school if the new leadership structure is reflected in the revised budget. Ms. Gerchman stated affirmatively that the new structure is reflected in the revised budget. She added that, in the interim, staff from Innovative Schools will take on additional roles. Mr. Blowman noted that a lot of new resources have been added to the school and asked if they are all reflected in the budget. Ms. Thorpe affirmed that the additional staff resources are reflected in the revised budget. Ms. Field Rogers asked if the school climate resources described previously are also reflected in the revised budget. Ms. Thorpe affirmed that the school climate resources are reflected in the revised budget. Mr. Blowman asked if the additional Innovative Schools staff will increase the school's costs. Ms. Gerchman noted that she and the interim LTI Coordinator, Keina Hodges, will support the school at no cost. Mr. Blowman asked the school if these costs will be deferred. Ms. Gerchman confirmed that it supports more schools there will not be any deferred costs for these positions; they are being provided to the school at no additional cost.

Ms. Johnson noted that the school's response to the formal review notification lists Sean Gallagher as lead administrator, Ms. Gerchman focused on operations and Jackie Adams-Taylor focused on academic planning and professional development. She asked the school to clarify whether the school would incur additional costs because the document seems to indicate that there will be additional costs to the school from Innovative Schools. Ms. Gerchman stated that her time offsets Mr. Gallagher's time. Ms. Johnson asked Ms. Gerchman if she will continue in her role as Chief School Officer for Innovative Schools. Ms. Gerchman affirmed that she will continue in this role, similarly to how she supported Academia Antonia Alonso last year. Mr. Blowman expressed concern regarding the capacity of Innovative Schools to support its current portfolio of schools. Ms. Johnson noted that the DDOE expressed concern about Innovative Schools' capacity last year and this year.

Ms. Johnson asked the school to provide an update on the governance training (e.g. FOIA, due process, finance) the Board has completed to date. Mr. Childs stated that 85% of the Board has completed governance training and he can provide a list. Ms. Johnson asked the school if a plan is in place for new board members to complete governance training. Mr. Childs affirmed that that a plan is in place. Ms. Gerchman added that all Board members except for Mr. Childs completed the Delaware Alliance for Nonprofit Advancement ("DANA") training in September 2015. Mr. Childs noted that not all of the Board members have completed DDOE's Board Finance training.

### **Financial Viability**

Ms. Thorpe stated that the school's current enrollment is 215 students and revenues are tight. She also stated that the expenditures side of the budget has been vetted by several individuals including herself and Ms. Gerchman. Ms. Thorpe noted that contracts are currently in place for various contracted services, including transportation. Instructional supplies and materials have

also been vetted by the school. Ms. Thorpe noted that one goal for the budget was to not draw any additional funds from the line of credit. \$65,000 was drawn from the line of credit during the initial planning year but there are no plans to draw from that any further. Ms. Thorpe stated that another goal of the revised budget was to reserve summer pay as required by the state. Another goal of the budget was to provide one-on-one technology and necessary instructional materials for school.

Ms. Field Rogers noted that the budget submission listed enrollment at 218. Ms. Thorpe stated that a new budget was resubmitted with enrollment at 215. Ms. Nagourney noted that a revised budget was submitted a few hours prior to the CSAC meeting and asked the school to explain the enrollment adjustment. Ms. Thorpe explained that the 218 enrollment dated back to before the Unit Count was finalized. Ms. Nagourney stated the formal review notification letter requested a budget with revenues broken out by funding streams but this was not the case with the first submission. Ms. Thorpe stated that the recent submission breaks down revenues by funding streams (e.g. state, local and federal).

Ms. Field Rogers asked Ms. Thorpe to confirm that summer pay is broken out in the most recent budget submission. Ms. Thorpe affirmed that summer pay is included in the salary expenses. Ms. Field Rogers noted that the surplus lists \$10,000 but does not reflect summer pay as of June 30, 2016. Ms. Thorpe stated that she can provide a monthly cash flow spreadsheet that reflects summer pay of approximately \$200,000. Ms. Field Rogers noted that the first budget submission listed a local carryover of \$58,000 but it did not match the validity which was closer to \$15,000. Ms. Thorpe explained that the \$58,000 did not include encumbrances carried over at the end of the year but expenses from the encumbrances are included in the current year budget.

Ms. Field Rogers asked the school to provide the date when the \$65,000 line of credit was drawn. Ms. Thorpe stated that the line of credit was drawn in June 2015. Ms. Thorpe explained that some of the expenses that the school had planned to pay in June 2015 were not paid until July 2015. Ms. Field Rogers asked the school if they had any bank accounts external to the state financial system. Ms. Thorpe affirmed that the school did not have any external bank accounts. Ms. Field Rogers asked the school to explain the "Non-SEA grant" local. Ms. Thorpe explained that it is a three-year federal Charter School Program (CSP) grant that Innovative Schools obtained on behalf of Delaware Met which provides \$175,000 per year. Delaware Met is in the second year of the grant. Ms. Thorpe also noted that the grant is reimbursable so the school has to spend its own funds and draw down grant funds for reimbursement.

Ms. Field Rogers noted that the school's enrollment was 215 as of September 30, 2015 and asked the school if any students have withdrawn since then. Ms. Gerchman indicated that students have withdrawn since then. Ms. Field Rogers asked the school if agreements had been established with the receiving schools to provide prorated funding for these students and does the revised budget account for those students. Ms. Thorpe stated that students who have withdrawn after September 30, 2015 are not accounted for in the revised budget.

Ms. Field Rogers asked the school if there are any alternative placements for students who have had discipline issues. Ms. Gerchman stated that there is one student who is receiving homebound education services and this expense is reflected in the revised budget. Mr. Blowman asked the school for the total number of students who have withdrawn since September 30, 2015. Ms. Gerchman stated that she did not have the total number but she is aware of four students who returned to Red Clay Consolidated School District ("Red Clay") due to bullying. Ms. Johnson asked the school if an agreement was in place with Red Clay to transfer funding. Ms. Gerchman affirmed that agreements had been established. Ms. Johnson asked the school if any of these students were special education or regular education students. Ms. Gerchman affirmed that the students are all regular education students. Ms. Nagourney stated that just prior to the CSAC meeting the Charter School Office had received complaints from parents that qualify for releases from their first year charter agreements based on good cause.

Mr. Blowman asked the school to describe the state of its related arts (drivers education, physical education, music and art) based on the \$35,000 allocated in the revised budget. Ms. Gerchman stated that the physical education teacher also teaches health and will teach drivers education in the second half of the year. She also noted that the school has an art teacher.

Ms. Field Rogers noted that the revenue listed on the budget did not match the revenue sheets as well as the transportation eligible students. Ms. Thorpe stated that the local revenue matches what is listed on the DDOE website but state revenue is higher because there are some teachers who have not yet updated their credentials. She also noted that there was a discrepancy with transportation eligible students which has since been corrected and revenue increased from \$67,000 to \$150,000. Ms. Thorpe stated that she also expects revenue to increase after teacher credentials have been updated. Mr. Blowman noted that one of the budget sheets had Academia Antonia Alonso listed in the heading and asked the school to confirm if it was the correct budget sheet. Ms. Thorpe affirmed that the budget sheet was correct but the heading was a mistake.

Ms. Field Rogers noted that the cafeteria revenue seems high at \$189,000. Ms. Thorpe stated that the budget line is based on actual data.

Ms. Field Rogers noted concerns with the school's special education program. The school has earned nine special education units but only has two full-time teachers and two paraprofessionals and four complex students. She noted that it is important that special education resources are used for these students.

Ms. Mazza asked the school if the Educational Diagnostician is Susan Ogden. Ms. Gerchman stated that Ms. Ogden's title is Director of Student Support.

Ms. Nagourney asked the school to provide an update on its student recruitment plans for the 2016-17 school year. Ms. Gerchman stated that recruitment activities are planned for when Ms. Hunter returns from leave. The application is posted. Ms. Nagourney noted that recruitment will impact the long-term financial viability of the school.

Ms. McCrae stated that she heard several consistent themes throughout the CSAC meeting regarding students leaving due to bullying, police intervening at the school and teachers not feeling comfortable. She asked the school if students feel safe at the school. Ms. Gerchman stated that the majority of students feel safe but some do not. She added that the bullying incident involved seven students and the four students who withdrew were involved in that incident. Ms. Gerchman stated that a lot of students come from areas where chaos is comfortable for them and the students who withdrew are not comfortable with that level of chaos. Mr. Blowman stated that the school still has work to do.

Ms. Field Roger noted that the Performance Fund grant is included in the budget as general support and asked the school if there are any restrictions on the use of those funds. Ms. Thorpe stated that the Performance Fund grant application included items that were already part of the budget. Mr. Blowman asked the school if there have been any expenditures against the Performance Fund grant. Ms. Thorpe affirmed that there have been no expenditures to date.

Ms. Mazza asked the school for its timeline to recruit and hire additional special education staff. Ms. Gerchman stated that Ms. Ogden is leading the recruitment process and interviews were scheduled for November 5 and 6, 2015.

Ms. Johnson requested information on the steps the school has taken to engage families around school culture before and after the school's opening and plans going forward.

The following specific information was requested by the CSAC:

- Budget, with the costs of the Wilmington Police Department contract included, based on 215 enrolment to include a budget narrative.
- Cash flow analysis
- Detailed evidence that special education units/funds are being utilized for special education and appropriate staffing is in place to serve students with disabilities
- The total number of students who have withdrawn since September 30, 2015.
- Updated school calendar with hours (including days the school was not open).
- Science and Social Studies units that outline what is currently being taught and evidence of alignment to state standards.
- Evidence of professional development teachers received in Science and Social Studies state standards and alignment of units and assessments to state standards. Clarification regarding who was responsible for overseeing that process and who was overseeing the school leader.
- Evidence that the school staff have received training in de-escalation/non-violent physical restraint techniques.
- List of police visits to the school and the reasons

- Evidence that each student with an IEP had an IEP meeting prior to the 60-day timeline, and that all IEPs are in compliance with dates and are being met with a breakdown of instructional minutes. (Note: Redact any personally identifiable information)
- For any students with disabilities whose needs are not being met based on the scheduling of special education staff, provide a plan for making up special education services.
- List of entities who have agreed to be external internship providers, and of internal internships opportunities.
- The school's plan to provide support to students with disabilities at internal and external internships so that their disabilities do not become a barrier.
- Information about the other two schools the A.J. English program partners with.
- List of teacher resignations/turnover.
- Discussion about Schoology – past training, current use and any follow up training for teachers and students.
- List of expectations the Board provided to Innovative Schools.
- Governance Training – list of Board members who have and have not completed governance training.
- Detail on how the Board utilized its additional planning year
- Steps the Board has taken to engage parents around school culture.

Mr. Blowman called for a motion that the CSAC's preliminary finding is that the school is out of compliance in all areas outlined in the Formal Review notification. The motion made, seconded and unanimously carried.

**Next Steps:**

- The CSAC Initial Report will be issued no later than November 9, 2015.
- The first public hearing on this application is scheduled for November 16, at 5:00 p.m. in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Auditorium at the Carvel building.
- The charter will have the opportunity to submit a written response to the CSAC Initial Report, which is due by close of business on November 24, 2015.
- The final meeting of the CSAC will be held on November 30, 2015 at 1:00 p.m., in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Cabinet Room at the Townsend building.
- If, after the final meeting, CSAC recommends probation or revocation of the charter, a second public hearing will be held on December 7, 2015 at 5:00 p.m. in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Auditorium at the Carvel building.
- The public comment period is open, and will close on December 11, 2015.

- The Secretary of Education will announce his decision at the December 17, 2015 State Board of Education meeting.