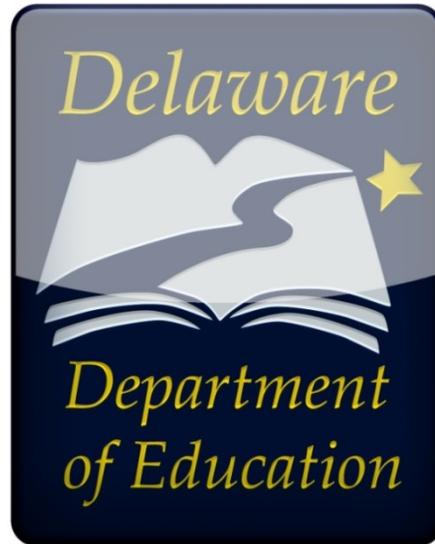


CHARTER SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE

DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



Delaware Design-Lab High School

**FORMAL REVIEW
FINAL REPORT**

CSAC Final Meeting: June 3, 2015
CSAC Final Report Published: June 5, 2015

CSAC FINAL RECOMMENDATION: PROBATION WITH CONDITIONS

The following were in attendance at the Final Meeting of the CSAC on June 3, 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
- Charles Taylor, Community Member and Retired Head of School
- Tasha Cannon, Deputy Officer Talent Recruitment, Selection and Strategy, Teacher and Leader Effectiveness Unit (TLEU), DDOE

Staff to the Committee (Non-voting)

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

Representatives of Design-Lab High School

- Cristina Alvarez, Ed.D., Chief Executive Officer, Delaware Design-Lab High School
- Dr. Martin Rayala, Ph.D., Chief Academic Officer, Delaware Design-Lab High School
- Riccardo Stoeckicht, Chief Operating Officer, Innovative Schools

Discussion

Mr. Blowman stated that the purpose of the meeting was for the CSAC to continue its review of the relevant statutory criteria to determine whether the charter holder is violating the terms of its charter and, if so, whether remedial measures are warranted.

Mr. Blowman noted that the grounds for the formal review are outlined in a letter to the Delaware Design-Lab High School (“Design-Lab”) Board, dated April 23 2015, which include the following potential violations of the law and charter:

- Financial Viability;
- Leadership Capacity; and
- Ability to Implement the Approved Charter with Fidelity.

Mr. Blowman noted that Design-Lab had submitted a set of documents to the Department of Education in advance of the Initial Meeting of the CSAC, which had been added to the record. These documents included a revised budget and organizational chart based on the May 1 enrollment count.

Mr. Blowman noted that an Initial Meeting of the CSAC was held on May 13, 2015 and an Initial Report was issued on May 18, 2015. During the meeting, the CSAC requested the following documents:

- Budget narrative;
- Budget revenue sheets;
- Updated cash flow projection based on September 30 enrollment at 202 students;
- Details about the education plan as it relates to (1) special education staffing, and (2) services to the general school population;
- Narrative describing the professional development program;
- Narrative describing the school leader hiring process & qualifications; and
- Narrative describing the recruitment process for the dual-certified special education teacher.

The CSAC confirmed that each of the requested documents had been received in their entirety, along with Design-Lab’s response to the Initial Report.

Financial Viability

Mr. Blowman noted that, as of June 3, Design-Lab’s enrollment stands at 240 students, which is exactly 80% of its approved enrollment.

Date	# Enrolled Students	Approved Total	% of Approved Total
April 1	137	300	46%
May 1	202	300	67%
Revised Budget Submitted May 5	240	300	80%
May 13	205	300	68%
June 3	240	300	80%

Mr. Blowman noted that the concern about financial viability was not solely dependent on the 80% enrollment threshold, but also staffing, the need to meet the needs of the school’s special education population, and the need to provide a robust array of content for a high school population.

Ms. Field Rogers asked for clarification regarding the number of complex students, noting that nine complex students were reported. Dr. Alvarez stated that the information that Ms. Field Rogers was referring to was incorrect, as those nine students are intensive students.

Ms. Field Rogers inquired about a student coming from the Cape Henlopen School District area. Dr. Alvarez clarified that the student’s mother works near the school and would be providing private transportation for that student. She also noted that there is a student coming from Spain.

Ability to Implement the Approved Charter with Fidelity

Mr. Blowman requested more information regarding the school’s proposed changes in special education staffing. Dr. Alvarez responded that Design-Lab has a preference for dual-certified teachers. Additionally, because Design-Lab understands the need to be fully compliant with respect to special education paperwork, it has added a Special Education Coordinator position to be paid for by federal funds. The Special Education Coordinator will be a case manager for the special education files and take the lead for professional development of teachers. The school intends to have a special education teacher in Year 1. Ms. Mazza warned the school to be cautious with its dual-certified teachers, as passing the Praxis does not necessarily mean that a teacher is qualified to work with special education students as a practical matter.

Dr. Alvarez added that Design-Lab is having an educator recruitment fair Saturday, June 6, at the school. The school also has a robust social media presence and has posted positions on

JoinDelawareSchools.org. Design-Lab is hopeful that it will have a nice pool of candidates to choose from.

Ms. Mazza emphasized the importance of using multiple service delivery models and ensuring that the rigor in all of those settings is where it needs to be in terms of the Common Core State Standards.

Leadership Capacity

Mr. Blowman requested an update on Design-Lab's School Leader selection process. Dr. Alvarez responded that Design-Lab had gone through almost the entire hiring process with one candidate. However, the Board indicated that it wished for the pool to be widened. The school then reopened the search, reposted the position, and now has several potential candidates. Dr. Alvarez stated that Design-Lab expects to have hired its School Leader in two weeks.

Mr. Blowman asked whether there is a contingency plan in place in the event the school does not find a School Leader. Dr. Alvarez responded that she would serve as the School Leader if that is the case. Additionally, Design-Lab has multiple professional associates who are retired and could step in to assist as needed. Mr. Stoeckicht added that there may be potential candidates in Academia Antonia Alonso's candidate pool, as Innovative Schools is assisting in that search effort.

Mr. Taylor asked whether the Board intends to participate in the Delaware Alliance for Nonprofit Advancement ("DANA") training and Dr. Alvarez responded that the school does intend to participate.

Mr. Blowman asked whether the school has its Certificate of Occupancy. Dr. Alvarez responded that it was just picked up today. She indicated that she would provide a copy to the Department.

Conclusion:

Mr. Blowman stated that there are ongoing concerns to be monitored, particularly as they relate to enrollment. While the school's enrollment currently stands at 80%, it will need to remain at 80% or better to ensure financial viability. He noted that the school clearly violated the terms of its charter as it relates to the April 1 80% enrollment threshold.

The CSAC voted to recommend that Design-Lab be placed on probation through December 31, 2015, subject to the following conditions:

1. Submit monthly updates on recruitment and enrollment efforts;
2. Submit an updated detailed budget based on the September 30, 2015 enrollment and unit count by October 31, 2015;
3. Submit updates on the School Leader selection process as they become available;

4. Board members must participate in training offered by the Delaware Alliance for Nonprofit Advancement by October 1, 2015; and
5. Submit the detail budget and expenditures of December 31, 2015 compared to the detail budget.

Ms. Mazza abstained from the vote because she did not attend the Initial Meeting.

Next Steps:

- A second and final public hearing will be held on June 9, 2015, beginning at 5:00 p.m, in the 2nd Floor Auditorium of the Carvel State Office Building located at 820 N. French St. in Wilmington.
- The public comment period is open, and will close on June 12, 2015.
- The Secretary will announce his decision at the June 18, 2015 State Board of Education meeting, beginning at 1:00 p.m., in the 2nd Floor Cabinet Room of the Townsend Building located at 401 Federal Street in Dover.