



**Department of Education
Charter School Accountability Meeting**

**January 23, 2013
Charter School New Application
Initial Meeting**

Delaware Design-Lab High School

Mr. Harrell called the meeting to order. He explained that the Committee chairperson, Mary Kate McLaughlin, was unable to attend the meeting and the Secretary of Education, Mark T. Murphy, authorized him to chair the Committee in her absence. For the purpose of the record, introductions were made:

Committee Members

- Paul Harrell, Director of Public and Private Partnerships, Acting Chairperson
- Deb Hansen, Education Associate, Visual and Performing Arts, Charter Curriculum Review
- April McCrae, Education Associate, Science Assessment and STEM
- Emily Falcon, Director, Financial Reform & Resource Management
- Kendall Massett, Executive Director, DE Charter School Network (non-voting)
- Donna R. Johnson, Executive Director, State Board of Education (non-voting)

Support to the Committee

- John Carwell, Director, Charter School Office
- John Hindman, Deputy Attorney General, Counsel to the Committee
- Patricia Bigelow, Education Associate, Charter School Office
- Chantel Janiszewski, Education Associate, Charter School Office
- Sheila Kay-Lawrence, Administrative Secretary, Charter School Office

Other

- Leighann Hinkle, OMB

Representatives of the Applicant Group

- Matt Urban, CEO, President Founding Board
- Paul Miller, Vice-President, Founding Board
- Iris Leon, Secretary, Founding Board
- Roxanne Sikes, Treasurer, Founding Board
- Christina Alvarez, Ed.D, CEO Founding Board
- Martin Rayala, Ed.D, CAO, Founding Board
- David Atherton, IT Consultant
- Jennifer Baker, Talent Development & Coach
- Adrienne Carpenter, Board Member

Mr. Harrell explained this was the Initial Meeting and the first of three Accountability Committee meetings relative to the application for a new charter, which also includes the Preliminary Meeting and Final Meeting. He stated the purpose of today's meeting was to meet with representatives of the

charter school to clarify issues and information which were submitted as part of their application. He said the next meeting will be the Preliminary meeting and the charter school representatives may attend the meeting as observers, but will not be able to participate in the Committee's interaction.

Mr. Harrell said the Committee will convene for the Preliminary Meeting and make a recommendation that will be captured in a Preliminary Report and sent to the Applicant. He said the Applicant will have 15 calendar days to respond to the Committee's Preliminary Report and address any concerns at that time. He said the Committee will review the Applicant's response and convene for the Final Meeting. At the end of this meeting, the Committee will make a final recommendation that will be codified in a Final Report sent to the applicant.

Mr. Harrell said the Public Hearing will be the final opportunity to influence the decision of the Secretary and State Board. He said the Committee's report, recommendations, and the public hearing transcript will be sent to the Secretary of Education and State Board, along with any other information which was submitted at the public hearing.

Mr. Harrell stated to the Applicants that the Committee will begin with a series of questions that is related to their application. He stated he will begin with the first question.

Question one. Mr. Carwell asked for the Applicant's plan to serve students who need more intensive special education services.

Dr. Alvarez said their target populations are the students that live in the 10 zip codes in Wilmington. She said the range order started with 19801 and moved into the city area with students that live in the poverty areas. She said the target plan is the students who are at risk academically that need behavioral intervention and behavioral support to address those issues. She said they will have a universal response to intervention program, which means that their teachers are trained in modification of curriculum, accommodations, and a two-tier system. She said responsive to intervention would be applied across the school universally for all students. She said if students need responsive intervention then they will receive help from the instructional support team (IST). She said they have an IST system in place and the students will go through the protocol. She said the IST process will follow the RTI requirements.

Mr. Carwell said there was a question on the application, and he doesn't remember the language specifically, about students who may need different types of services. He said he wanted to know the preparation and the ability of the Applicant to be able to meet the needs of the students.

Dr. Alvarez said they are following an inclusion model, and that they will not have separate classes for students who are identified as having individualized education programs (IEPs). These students will be served in the classrooms. She said they have budgeted certified special education teacher for the first and second year and additional personnel. She said that through their human resources practices, they are prioritizing and giving preferences to candidates who are certified. She said they are looking for teachers who have degrees in special education, and they will be given preference for their school population. She said their entire staff will basically have those qualifications.

Mr. Carwell asked as a follow up question about the percentage of teachers from other schools that are dual certified, such as CHAD.

Dr. Alvarez said she cannot speak to what the Charter High School for Architectural and Design is doing now. She was the school leader until 2005. She said that she knows that it is not ordinary practice for most charters and public schools. She said it was the practice where she had been the school leader. Dr. Alvarez said certified teachers in special education understand modification, providing tier support to students, best practices in instruction, and that the school will create this as an HR practice. She said she does not think that it is very common.

Mr. Carwell stated that this why the question was raised. He asked about what percentage of teachers were dual certified when she was the leader of the school.

Dr. Alvarez said at the last school, Hunter Elementary, they had a huge turnaround and she was hired due to that effect. She said about 50% of the teachers were dual certified and they had to work hard to get them.

Mr. Hindman asked if she was saying that the school will only serve special need students that can only be served in regular classroom settings.

Dr. Alvarez answered, "No", and explained that what she was saying is that they expect about six to eight percent of their students will fall in the category of ordinary special education, mild learning disabilities, mild handicapped, or a wide variety of IEP categories - for example, dyslexia. She said a smaller percentage of children with physical disabilities, including those that might be in a wheelchair, will be accepted as well. She said a good percentage of students with an IEP may also need behavioral intervention, including those who are classified as emotionally disturbed, as they will need to learn the importance of resilience and the kind of behavior that will allow them to be successful in the core curriculum. She said that is what the response to intervention protocols are for.

Ms. Hansen said that on the other end of the spectrum, she'd like to hear Dr. Alvarez's thoughts around students who are gifted and talented.

Dr. Alvarez said that the background of the plan is from the oath of the startup principle of the Charter High School for Architecture and Design (CHAD), where she was in charge from 2001 to 2005. She said that at that time, people had a lot of speculation about charters, they were skeptical, and there was no track record for a new school. She said that once the word got out that they were providing an innovative curriculum, both parents and students were knocking on their doors, including a fair amount of students that were gifted that initially didn't want to go to a high-standard academic school. She said they are planning to attract students who are gifted and talented by the school's name alone.

Dr. Alvarez said design education/design learning is a problem based and project based methodology - a way of learning - that solves the needs of the spectrum of students that come through their doors, from students with disabilities to students who are gifted, or identified as gifted and talented. She said because of the project-based nature, students will be identifying and solving problems that are important to them. She also said that because project-based learning is differentiated by definition, students that are gifted have found their "sweet spot" within those projects.

Dr. Rayala said that the school will be approaching learning as if *all* students are gifted, and there will be a wide range of chances for them to show their capabilities. He said that students who may be considered low achievers in another setting are going to find that having the ability to work with sound, with movement, or with visual communication, as well as with the standard reading, writing, speaking

and listening, and mathematics curriculum, will allow them to demonstrate skills that other people did not recognize. He said that their whole mental construct is that all students are gifted in one way or another, and they are going to bring that out.

Mr. Harrell said that it seemed that the school population will be based on a lottery system. He asked if they could give him an idea of how they view the population of their school as it relates to their mission. He said the mission is very meaningful, worthwhile and everyone applauds them, but asked if they could provide a merit of the students that enter the classroom, percentage-wise, in terms of special education, (including those that needs serious intervention and help, as well as students that are gifted).

Dr. Alvarez said they have an enrollment policy that is in draft form that speaks to that. She said they will use a strategy of conducting outreach into the community, mostly within the city of Wilmington, through the churches and places where the parents and moms work - such as nail and hair salons - because in many cases the moms make the decisions for their children.

Dr. Alvarez said they would also develop a relationship with the feeder schools. As an example, there are three feeder schools that are in the target neighborhood, such as Prestige Academy and East Side Charter School. She said that the school leaders were happy that there would be a charter high school where they would be able to send their students to continue their education. She said once they have made that effort to build relationships, the interest would be there and the applications will come in. She said that even though they have a lottery system, they will also have some enrollment preferences. She explained that could mean that there may be students who can sketch, yet haven't been exposed to art training, but are nonetheless creative and will find out about the school through a website, which they feel will be a wonderful marketing tool. She said that these students will be given preference too.

Mr. Harrell asked if the school discussed the high school concept with Ray Jones Avery, Jack Perry and Lamont Browne, as they are rightly identified these as the feeder schools. He asked if these schools are buying into their school's concept.

Dr. Alvarez replied, "Yes", and that the next step was to establish a relationship with the feeder pattern schools and is happy to work in partnership with them. She said that Design Lab would establish a long term relationship with the school leaders, the parents, and guidance counselors once the school is vetted, and then they could say that if a parent chooses East Side, he/she also has a K-12 school option. She did address the enrollment preference and wanted to be very clear about the idea of inclusion and exclusion. She said that accepting applications with portfolios is not an exclusionary practice. She said they plan to visit the feeder pattern schools as well as to talk with parents in community settings about whether their children either shows a love for sketching, or to take things apart or put things together. They want to be able to identify these children as designers. She said they did this at the Charter High School for Architectural and Design (CHAD) and found that over time, students that would never have gone to CHAD, maybe instead enrolling in a comprehensive high school, or other type of high school, enrolled at CHAD. She said that through this practice of establishing relationships with feeder schools, the school was able to identify the students and the students were able to identify the school.

Question two. Ms. Hansen asked about the plans for the advisory bodies. She asked the Applicant to explain their relationship between the school's governing board and leadership.

Dr. Rayala said that the role of the advisory body is basically to connect the media and design world to their school, to provide professional development opportunities, to serve as reviewers for senior project

or junior portfolios, and to provide guidance. He said that there are so many great minds out there, like people from the American Institutes of Graphic Arts, National Design Museum, and National Building Museum, who are promoting these kinds of schools and opportunities. The advisory bodies will not have any voting powers or any control over the school, but rather they will provide some of the “sizzle” to the school. He also said that these organizations will come back to the school twice a year to speak with public groups and to work with their staff to provide insight on what is happening outside in the world to keep their school informed. Truly, they will serve in an advisory capacity.

Question three. Ms. Hansen said that in the application, the Applicant indicated that there were no plans to offer Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses in the school. However, the application stated that there is a plan to offer extracurricular student organizations, such as Technology Student Association (TSA) and Skills USA. Ms. Hansen stated that it is not possible to offer CTE student organizations without CTE courses in the school. She asked about other extracurricular offerings that might meet the needs of their students.

Dr. Rayala said that in the design and media fields, there are people who are technology oriented and people who come from the art side; it could go either way. He said in terms of a career pathway, they are moving in the direction of art, but they would also want to have a technology component. However, this wouldn't be the main way they would approach design and media. He said that the committee would see in their budget section of the application a technology education person with no cost involved. He said that the three student organizations could work with DECA, Marketing, and Skills USA, because these organizations have about 15 categories directly related to their school. Dr. Rayala said that even though they have an arts emphasis, both he and Dr. Baker, who is their talent developer, contributed to the book “Creativity and Design” released by The Technology Associates. He said they have been working very closely with the technology folks and that the school will be the bridge between arts and technology. In the real world, the engineers and technologists are working hand and hand with designers, such as in game design, architecture, and product design. The school will not artificially separate these two.

Dr. Alvarez said there were two other pathways that a number of their students will be interested in. For example, students may be interested in facilities - in the actual building - but they will not be architects. In other words, they won't be interested in designing the buildings, but they will be natural facilities managers. IFMA, International Facilities Management Association, does not have a student chapter, but Design Lab will create a student chapter. She also said that the General Business Contractor Association (GBCA) only has one student chapter, and that is with Charter High School of Architectural and Design (CHAD) because the Applicant started that chapter, and this school in Wilmington will be the second one. She said essentially these two chapters will handle the facilities interests of their students.

Mr. Hindman said that he wanted to go back and examine in more detail the preferences that the Applicant has included in their application. He stated that the first preference is for students who present a multimedia portfolio of design, yet there is no such preference provided for in the charter school law. He stated that there is a preference that the school can grant for interest in the school's teaching methods and so forth, and perhaps they can say that this is a way that interest could be demonstrated. He asked the applicant to explain why the portfolio, or the ability to create such a portfolio, is not an aptitude requirement as opposed to an interest requirement.

Dr. Alvarez said they discussed the wording after submitting the application. She said that this will not be an exclusionary practice. She said they talked about how they would find out aptitude and the statement in the application could very well be something they might have to edit.

Mr. Hindman said that aptitude is not a permissible preference - interest is, but not aptitude.

Dr. Alvarez agreed and said that what they will be identifying students for whom this curriculum would make a difference – the ones who are going to love it. She said they will have to try to find that out in advance and/or during the enrollment process. She said that at CHAD, they admitted students first and then they gave them a baseline drawing - to draw a self-portrait in front of a mirror - and then that became a baseline of how they drew. She said that was it – that was the process.

Mr. Hindman said that he could understand how a test administered *after* admission is granted could be used for placement purposes, but we are not talking about that. He said that what we are talking about is the decision that the Applicant is making before admission is granted.

Dr. Rayala said there are two types of portfolios they have for the school. One is an exit portfolio which is going to be high-end and is going to get students scholarships and things. He said the use of word portfolio as an admissions activity is very loose. He said what it is intended to do is to have a student who is not doing well academically, who doesn't seem to have any prospects, and other teachers have overlooked them, very often you will see tucked in their book bag a scrap of paper in which they have been writing down or doing sketches. That is what the Applicant says they see as a portfolio –some sort of visual representation that they are thinkers and that they are trying things out. They see in these drawings potential that other places have not identified and they don't want to miss those kids. They don't want to see fancy portfolios that may not have been developed by the student, or that show that the student has had advantages in life. They are not looking for that.

Mr. Harrell said that the Applicant will not be able to find these types of portfolios with the population of students they are seeking to serve. He expressed sincere concern about the program, because with 90% of students on free or reduced lunch programs, they're coming out of poverty, it is a challenge.

Dr. Baker added that in addition to being the department chair at CHAD, she taught at CHAD for seven years and during her last year, was heavily involved in the admissions process. She stated that she went out to eighth grade schools throughout Philadelphia, and she was meeting young people who were going to be going through the same processes that the students in Wilmington, Delaware will be going through. She stated that most students in the eighth grade have no clue what they want to be when they grow up, and that they really want to go to a fun high school where they will enjoy themselves. Some of these students like to draw, and most of the time they draw anime because of their exposure to television. In her experience, they do know more about the students coming through the doors of the school than the proposal can provide. She concluded by stating that the most desirable thing is for students to go to your school because it's a great school where people care.

Mr. Hindman said that the Applicant had second preferences for children of board members. He pointed out in both Code and DDOE regulation, preference is not for board members, but rather for the founders of the school. He said the DDOE regulation requires that the Applicant define what you mean by a founder in your application. He said the next preference is for children of employees and by law there is a limitation on that also. They have to be full time employees who work a certain number of hours at the school. He said their fourth preference is for siblings, but he was not sure what the

Applicant meant about that. If they meant that they can accept two kids who have applied at the same time because they were brother and sister, that is not the preference. He said that it has to be a child or a sibling of someone who is already enrolled in the school. He said that the last preference is for students residing in the Christina and Red Clay School Districts. He said that the law does not provide for that, but the law does allow you to grant a preference to students who reside in the school district in which the school is located and/or within a five mile radius of the school, but you cannot use this school district in which you are located some other school district and grant that preference. That is not permitted in the law. He said that according to the table of contents in the application, there the Articles of Corporation and Board Bylaws and Policies were supposed to be included, however his copy did not have any bylaws in it, only the Certificate of Incorporation. Dr. Rayala said the electronic copy has this information. Dr. Alvarez said she would send Mr. Hindman a copy.

Dr. Alvarez wanted to address the school district preference. She stated that the intention was to find students in the city of Wilmington, and they understand now that it includes some kids based on the zip code which includes Red Clay, Christina, Colonial and Brandywine.

Ms. McCrae said that the Applicant mentioned on pages 9 and 10 in the education plan section that chemistry and physics are required, but in the appendix where the actual courses are listed, Integrated Science I, II, and III are listed as *required* and biology, chemistry, and physics are listed as electives. She asked the Applicant to double check that and align those appropriately.

For question four. Ms. McCrae expressed concerns around capacity building. She asked the Applicant to address how they will ensure: a) the staff is dedicated to the mission of the school, b) they have the right people in the appropriate staffing positions from the beginning, and c) their professional development plan supports and sustains a this learning model over time.

Dr. Alvarez said that in the professional development section of the application, they looked at building leadership capacity and sustainability over time. She stated that she is nationally certified as a staff developer through the National Staff Development Council, that she is a charter member and she understands that professional learning is crucial to sustainability. Everything in the professional development section of the application is about getting teachers the training they need from the very beginning, throughout the school day and throughout the year. She said that they have created a schedule that allows students to be dismissed early on Wednesday afternoons so that there is time for professional development for the teachers from 2:15 to 4:30 PM. Time and resources have been budgeted to make professional learning a focus.

Ms. McCrae asked if they plan to make this expectation clear to teachers prior to the hiring process. Dr. Alvarez replied, "Absolutely".

Dr. Alvarez further explained the hiring preferences of the school, including hiring teachers that are interested in working with technology and that want to learn with it. There is also a dual certification preference, as these teachers have already demonstrated that they want to teach kids differently, or want to accommodate different kinds of learners. She believes that eager, interested, creative teachers will find their way to the school.

Dr. Alvarez also said that they plan to build partnerships with the certifying institutions so that they can identify the best teachers.

For question five. Mr. Harrell asked the Applicant to describe the knowledge, skills, and experiences they see as essential in the governing board of the school, and to give the Committee several examples of people to whom they would extend an invitation to join the board. He also asked the Applicant to describe the training that you would require of the Board members.

Mr. Urban stated that it is important to have skill in governance and in working on a board as a governing body and sharing in the responsibility. He stated that one of his primary goals as a chairman of the board is ensuring that the board does have that level of qualification and level of experience. He stated that while he was not involved in the initial selection of the current board members, the experience that was brought to the table was very diverse. He said that he has experience in design and media and was able to bring that expertise to the table. He further stated that as they expand the board, they will be looking for people who can expand the current skill set. He said fundraising will be another key component because they will need that in order to survive, and they will be reaching out to the community and the city of Wilmington to help create connections for exposure of the school.

Mr. Harrell said the last question is, "Do you think board training is necessary, and what do you think you should know about the training?"

Dr. Rayala responded by saying yes, and that there are two sides to this; Fox and Rothschild will talk with the board about their share of responsibility and the primary function of the board. He said they are also planning charter school specific board training.

For question six. Ms. Falcon asked what their contingency plans for a facility are if the Community Education Building location is not possible.

Dr. Alvarez said they have talked with the commercial realtor that work with charters and is familiar with the Wilmington area. She said they understand that the Community Education Building is a very competitive opportunity for them and there is no guarantee that they will be selected. She said the backup plan is in place for them to scout real estate in Wilmington.

Ms. Falcon asked if they plan to stay in the city of Wilmington.

Dr. Alvarez responded by saying yes, and that this the only option for them.

Mr. Harrell said that they have a very heavy lift in finding space in Wilmington. He said there have been a number of charter schools that wanted to stay in the city but were unable to find the space because of the economic times; they had to find space outside of the city which is more economical. He advised that the Applicant not delude themselves because it will become difficult.

For question seven. Ms. Falcon said that the budget for year one is inconsistent with the staffing plan. The staffing plan mentions 15.5 teachers while the budget shows 14.5. She asked if they could clarify the staffing plan.

Dr. Alvarez said that it is 15.5 teachers and it might have been the position of the counselor.

Ms. Falcon said there is a counselor position listed in the budget, but there are no special education teachers listed and there appears to be one listed in the staffing plan.

Dr. Alvarez said that it could have been how the organizational chart was written, but it was included in the budget. She said they may have to revise their organizational chart.

For question eight. Ms. Falcon asked a) how did the school arrive at the revenue estimates of 16.6% special education that includes a high number of intensive students? And why did they use only Red Clay and Christina students as your student population? Also, there appears to be an overestimate of local revenues as well as State units; b) what is the contingency plan for the budget if the school does not meet its enrollment targets; and c) the narrative states that many of the budgeted items (supplies, textbooks, curriculum, professional development) were provided by Christina. Does this mean that the applicant team does not plan to acquire them directly or has not researched their costs? She asked if this portion of the narrative be clarified.

Dr. Alvarez said that was a recommendation of the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) that they were working with from the Charter School of Wilmington. She said that even though they indicated six to eight percent in the narrative, it is a lot more realistic to include those numbers because that is more likely what you will find. She said they will have to adjust that in their revision. She said another thing is that they said Red Clay and Christina, but what they really mean is the ten zip codes of Wilmington which includes Brandywine and Colonial as well. She said they will have to align those pieces as well.

Ms. Falcon asked what plan b is in revising the budget if the unit they receive are decreased. She said her estimate would be that the school will lose about four or five state units and about \$150,000.00 in local revenue simply by not having the level of special education students that they are estimating.

Dr. Alvarez said they would have to look at the staffing of the teachers and make adjustments in the technology plans.

Ms. Falcon said that if there is any slippage in their enrollment targets in general, obviously that will have implications for their budget as well. She asked what their plan would be in having to meet that.

Dr. Alvarez said the budget works at 80% enrollment and it is tight, but doable. She said 100% would be ideal where they could swing out a bit, but the budget plan is 80%.

Ms. Falcon asked if they will adjust the high numbers of special education. Dr. Alvarez said they will adjust it.

Ms. Falcon said her final question is that in the application it mentions that most of the budgeted items listed were provided by Christina. She asked if it was the numbers provided by Christina or if the Applicant was acquiring them from the district. She asked for clarity.

Dr. Alvarez said they were working with the CFO at Charter School of Wilmington and there was a suggestion that they get that data moving forward. She said they basically will get more accurate data in the next several months.

Ms. Falcon asked if the data was provided by the district and if they plan on acquiring everything directly for themselves by not going through the district.

Dr. Alvarez responded by saying yes, by themselves.

Mr. Harrell asked if there were any more questions. With none raised, he turned the meeting over to John Carwell.

Mr. Carwell stated the following next steps.

- Preliminary Meeting is scheduled for February 6, 2013
- Final Meeting is scheduled for March 11, 2013
- Public Hearing is to be determined.

Meeting adjourned.