



**Department of Education
Charter School Accountability Meeting**

**January 24, 2013
Charter School New Application
Initial Meeting**

First State Military Academy

Ms. Field Rogers called the meeting to order. She said the Secretary of Education authorized her to Chair today's meeting in Ms. McLaughlin's absence. For the purpose of the record introductions were made:

Attending Committee Members

Karen Field Rogers, Associate Secretary, Financial Reform & Resource Management
Jennifer Kline, Esq., Education Associate, Procedural Safeguards & Monitoring
Deb Hansen, Education Associate, Visual and Performing Arts, Charter Curriculum Review
April McCrae, Education Associate, Science Assessment and STEM

Support to the Committee

John Carwell, Director, Charter School Office
C. Terry Hickey, 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

Kendall Massett, Executive Director, Delaware Charter School Network
Leighann Hinkle, OMB

Representatives of Charter School

C. Scott Kidner, Founding Board
David McGuidan, Founding Board
Channing Greene, Founding Board
Chris Weeks, Vice Chair
Andie Davis, Teacher Board Member
Jerome Ridgeway, Board Member
Karen DeLissio, Board Member
Manuel Cuesta, Board Member
Kevin Donnelly, Board member
Rhonda Hill, Innovative Schools
Dawn Downes, Innovative Schools
Sharon Oldham, New Tech Network (via Skype)

Ms. Field Rogers stated this is the Initial Meeting, the first of three Accountability Committee meetings relative to the application for a new charter which includes the Initial Meeting, Preliminary Meeting and Final Meeting. She said the purpose of today's meeting is to meet with representatives of the applicant group to clarify issues and information which were submitted as part of their application.

Ms. Field Rogers said in the Preliminary Meeting the school representatives may attend this meeting as observers, but may not participate in the Committee's interaction. She said the Committee's

recommendation will be codified in a Preliminary Report which will be sent out to the applicant. She said there will be a response to the Preliminary Report where the applicant will be provided 15 calendar days to respond to the Committee's report and address any concerns.

Ms. Field Rogers said there will be a Final Meeting where the Committee will review the applicant's response and convene for the Final Meeting. She said at the end of this meeting the Committee will make a final recommendation that will be codified in a Final Report which will be sent to the applicant.

Ms. Field Rogers said the Public Hearing will be the final opportunity to influence the decision of the Secretary and State Board. She said at the State Board Meeting, the Committee's Report, recommendations and the Public Hearing transcript are sent to the Secretary of Education and State Board, along with any other information which was submitted at the public hearing.

Mr. Carwell asked the Applicant what knowledge, skills, experience or background do you see as essential in the governing board for the school?

Mr. Kidner said he felt that they have provided a robust application from being in front of the Committee a year ago. He said they have received board training, developed a solid curriculum, partnered with Innovative Schools and hired a CMO. He said they have adopted a new model by New Tech and Private Based Learning that they are very excited in having.

Mr. Kidner said the answer to your question; skills, knowledge, and background; the Delaware Department of Education (DDOE) has always wanted the Board, to his knowledge, looking for stuff from the ground up and not the top down. He said he believes their board is just this. He said every one of them are not connected to the DDOE; they are moms and dads, business leaders, business owners and people that have a passion to bring choice that is needed here in the Kent and Sussex County areas. He said this is why their Board is good, plus they have the skill set and equipped with the business and financial components in doing what they need to be doing for the school is strong and they are well rounded.

Mr. Weeks said what the Committee should see from their application is that they have broad experiences in business and serving on numerous boards. He said the question, experience and background, is what they have discovered was an understanding that a Board of a charter school's responsibility is oversight for the operation of the school to ensure the viability of the program. He said to take a monthly look at student performances and staff performances and to make a strategic planning ensure that they are in the right direction and the school is fulfilling its responsibility to the children of the state.

Ms. Janiszewski said to the Applicant on Page 3-3 of the application (under the "Performance Management" section) you were asked to explain how the school will measure, monitor, and evaluate academic progress and achievement. She asked how will the Applicant use the Charter Performance Framework to measure and evaluate academic progress.

Mr. Kidner said the board function is to monitor and assess to determine what is working and not working and to work with the CMO and school leader. He said the responsibility is not only to the school but to DDOE because they are evaluating the school to make sure they are doing what they need to be doing. He said there will be monthly meetings of the Board and there will be quarterly meetings with Innovative Schools, there will be roll-ups and dashboards. He said they met with Newark Charter

School and they told them they need to evaluate what their performance goals are going to look like; teachers doing well in school, parents are involved, internal surveys for the kids, do we have business partners, how is the graduation rates, etc. things of that nature are important. He said that is their role.

Ms. Davis said the program ECHO is a built in program through New Tech Network. She said one of the nicest things about it is that it offers transparency from day one from all performances. She said parents, students, teachers; everyone is able to access and look at how the students are performing. She said how classes, in general, are performing and everyone being on the same page of communication.

Ms. McCrae said she has a three part question that she will be asking. She began with page 3-1 of the application which states that all cadets will demonstrate college and career readiness by earning SAT scores that demonstrate readiness for college. What does that mean for the First State Military Academy? Does this mean that they expect basic SAT proficiency (combined 1550) or better for all cadets or does this mean that they expect scores that will ensure college acceptance for all cadets and to which colleges? She asked Military academies such as West Point and the Citadel or the University of Delaware or Delaware Technology and Community College?

Ms. Davis said it depends on the students because all of them are different. She said the idea is to offer the students the opportunity to perform and succeed to the best level that they can.

Ms. DeLissio said they have a couple of Board members that graduated from West Point including herself and Channing; and she knows how hard it is to get in. She said her son applied and was not able to get in. She said one of the things they did when they partnered with Innovative Schools was to look at New Tech Network model. She said this model will be something that other military academies would want to look at. She said that her friend works for admission at West Point and she contacted her and asked for her to take a look at the curriculum and her friend told her that she didn't think that it would be an issue. She said SAT scores were not the only thing they looked at.

Ms. McCrae said your comment in the application was that SAT scores demonstrated readiness for college. She said the Committee was trying to gauge what your goal was.

Ms. Davis said they wouldn't believe that any student could not achieve that goal and continue on to West Point. She said they recognize the fact that the population of students is going to be a vary population so they are not going to tie them to a number.

Mr. Weeks said because there are different levels of students that he can assure the committee, from the Board level, that every child will excel and be pushed to get the best SAT scores that they can.

Ms. Downs asked Ms. Oldham from New Tech Network (via Skype) if she had anything to add about SAT scores from New Tech Network.

Ms. Oldham said she didn't have anything specific with her comments in regards to that, but she wanted to explain the whole design of New Tech Schools is built around the whole focus of college career readiness. She said when they work with schools they define that with an awareness level for students about college and career readiness. She said they look at when they develop master schedules that they are aligned with whatever state requirements in order for them to get into a four year college. She said lastly, students need to be prepared and for them that mean to be able to get into colleges without

being a part of any kind of remediation program. She said they have assessment being aligned to the common core to help teachers learn what it means to be aligned to those standards.

Ms. McCrae asked what financial and application support will be in place to assist cadets on their journeys toward college. She said the population described for this school will need scaffolded assistance in approaching the college trajectory, and while the academic aspect is imperative, the application and financial process can be nearly as challenging.

Ms. Davis said the process for the students to go to college is built in the curriculum in each grade level to be able to fill out applications are built in the classes. She said New Tech offers through their classes a lot of community experiences and business experience that will help build their resume to see what is expected of them when they get out there. She said this is what they thought about and the model was chosen very carefully. She said financially for those students that want to stay local could benefit from the local scholarships that will help them financially; she said especially the ROTC program.

Ms. DeLissio said that the Board does understand the importance of involving parents and it will be an expectation of the Board to see the communications to the parents coming from the guided communication to have the parent meetings in applying to colleges. She said this will make sure that the students that do want to pursue a college career are not limited because they don't know that if they want to go to West Point they will have to start in January in their junior year.

Ms. Davis said that the New Tech Model also offers a type of advisory and a cohort moving through that offers opportunities for teachers and administrators to be hands on mentoring the students. She said with her experience she would find it hard for a student to get lost in the model.

Ms. Downes said the cadet sample that was included as one of the attachment has a half hour of advisory time which is building school culture and is aware of these kinds of college readiness awarenesses. She said the advisors will make sure that they check the students' success plans and career cruises to be sure they are making applications and having career pathways to college. She said there is a structure in place to make sure there is a clear pathway for students to get into college.

Ms. McCrae said finally, in reading the goals and objectives listed on pages 3-1 and 3-2, the school notes a culture of respect, leadership, and responsibility with a low need for discipline for severe infractions or suspensions. This is an admirable goal; however, what plans or procedures are in place work with those cadets who demonstrate non-compliance in conforming to the FSMA model and behavioral expectations?

Mr. Kidner said they do have a code of conduct as a part of the JROTC program and New Tech Network model there is a set of respect and trust. He said there will be an inherent culture. He said they will be bringing students in that will be wearing uniforms of their Country. He said the way the students act when they wear the uniform represents a whole new culture for them. He has seen them wear the uniforms with pride and respectfulness. He said there will be adventurous classes and also there will be discipline issues but they will deal with it as it arrives. But parents will not want to send their children to a school that will not address these issues.

Ms. Davis said there is a choice to attend a very discipline environment and be a part of the program. She said another part is because of project based learning is very structured and the groups actually create contracts. She said there are peer to peer responsibilities within the groups.

Ms. DeLissio said they understand as a Board and it is a part of their responsibility to establish policies and procedures. She said even though they might think they will have a wonderful culture in this school that will have minimum infractions. She said they are not naïve and they know they will have infractions and they expect them to be dealt with and they will hold the administration and teachers accountable for making sure that there will be no tolerances for bullying.

Mr. McGuidan said that his son went to Delaware Military Academy (DMA) and he was a chatterbox and he went from talking too much to a well-disciplined person. He said the school culture changed his demeanor that when you talk with him he would say yes sir or no sir. He became very responsible by getting to the school coming all the way from Dover. He said he never took him there because it was a part of the school's culture and disciplinary.

Ms. DeLissio said as mentioned before the school discussing the disciplinary policy with the parents and it is very important. She said they expect that the administration and teachers are communicating with the parents. She said when they interview the administrator they would be looking to see if the applicant can demonstrate and if they had prior experience in dealing with parents. She said the administrator will have to make sure they can handle this and the Board has to make sure that it happens.

Ms. Davis said the reason why the New Tech Network model is a very good match with this program is because there is a good transparent through ECHO and a lot of communication options through ECHO that the parent can access an entire library of information.

Ms. Kline asked how the school administration will communicate the Grievance Policy to parents. She asked how will the Board track and resolve grievances in a timely manner.

Mr. Kidner said the Commandant of the school that is their role and responsibility when there are grievances that come up between parents and teachers. He said when it reaches their level there will be a process for their Commandant will have to identify at the Board meetings. He said there will be things that will occur out of the blue and they know they will be meeting with their school leader monthly. He said as you have seen through the CMO contract they will be contracted out for the first five years.

Ms. Hansen asked in what ways the JROTC focus of the school will inform curricular and instructional choices for each of the tested and untested content areas.

Ms. Davis said the New Tech model covers the academic program and that includes the foreign language program. She said math and English is based on common core standards and the science and social studies are based on the DDOE Coalitions. She said one of the nicest things about it is the English is the Integrated class each year and they get experience using languages, not just learning the language but actually hands on in applying knowledge. She said it is the sense of application and knowledge and community involvement with the projects that really mirrors it to the ideal of the service of the ROTC program.

Ms. Hansen said it will also speak to the shifts they will find in the common core standards as well.

Ms. Davis said yes in a teacher's perspective with ECHO program it is one of the clearest ways to plan with common core because you are able to go in through ECHO and write those plans that are already in the system.

Ms. Hansen said her understanding is that ECHO was an online mapping tool.

Ms. Davis said it is like an internal server network almost. She said every student and parent has a log in and the students have one to one laptop. She said in ECHO the students are able to see a dashboard that is very similar to the state's dashboard all of their classes and keep up with all of their grades and assignments and the parents are able to see the same thing. She said teachers and administrations are able to go in during the advisory periods and look at all of the classes that the student is enrolled in. She said it was connected to a different website such as Facebook, twitter, with a nonprofessional development. She said there is a log that is for tracking built into it as well.

Mr. Carwell asked what qualities will the Board seek in the applicants for the Commandant position and what is the process for selecting the Commandant.

Mr. Kidner said the Board's point of view would have an individual with a military background and another component would be if the person ran a school before. They chose to go to Innovative Schools because they have the experience and the network in the hiring process and they know exactly what to look for.

Mr. Carwell asked does the New Tech Network play a role in the hiring process as well.

Ms. Downes said yes they will be a part of the job recruitment process and they will integrate their comments as well. She said they will also serve on the review committee team to screen the applications and the Board will conduct the round one interviews.

Ms. Field Rogers asked why the New Tech is an appropriate model for this school. She asked how compatible it is with JROTC. She asked about the capacity to incorporate both New Tech and JROTC with fidelity.

Ms. DeLissio said JROTC is not a model it is an environment and culture. She said New Tech is the academic for the school and the leadership that is needed to hold them both together.

Mr. Ridgeway said one thing that needs to be mentioned is the that First State Military will be the 2nd full time JROTC program with New Tech that will be meshed together.

Ms. Kline asked how the school will adopt the Kuumba Academy bullying policy to FSMA.

Mr. Kidner said the Board will approach it the same way they approached their bylaws the 501c process. He said bullying behavior doesn't fit into their school because it doesn't support self-respect, respect of the other students and the teachers. This will be the principle driver that the commandant will have to put it in place.

Ms. Kline said that she would strongly recommend that when they are looking for their Commandant that they understand the Part B of the IDEA section 504 labeled students with disabilities in how to apply those procedures in regard to your school practices in the disciplines and code of conduct.

Ms. Field Rogers said there appears to be no accounting in the budget for the \$175,679 CMO fee for FY14 that is listed in the Innovative Schools' contract. She said this fee increased to \$276,822 in FY15 and continues to increase for the duration of the contract. She said there is a management fee

budgeted in the third year of operation but is not sufficient to cover the fee outlined in the contract. She said the unknown location and mortgage expense is also a potential threat if the school cannot stay within its cost estimates.

Mr. McGuigan said they were missing a page at the bottom of the spreadsheet and asked if they could provide the information at a later date.

Mr. Carwell stated the following next steps.

- Preliminary Meeting is scheduled for February 7, 2013 at 1:00 PM
- Final Meeting is scheduled for March 14, 2013 at 10:00 AM
- Public Hearing is TBA

Meeting adjourned.