



**Department of Education
Charter School Accountability Meeting**

**February 7, 2013
Charter School New Application
Preliminary Meeting**

First State Military Academy

Ms. McLaughlin called the meeting to order. For the purpose of the record introductions were made.

Committee Members

- Mary Kate McLaughlin, Chief of Staff, Committee Chair
- Jennifer Kline, Education Associate, Procedural Safeguards and Monitoring
- Deb Hansen, Education Associate, Visual and Performing Arts, Charter Curriculum Review
- April McCrae, Education Associate, Science Assessment and STEM
- Karen Field Rogers, Associate Secretary, Financial Reform & Resource Management
- Kendall Massett, Executive Director, 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
- Catherine T. 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

Representatives of the Applicant Group

- Dennis Dinger, Founding Board
- Karen DeLissio, Founding Board
- Melinda McGuigan, Board Member
- Dawn Downs, Innovative Schools
- Natalie Sadaf, Innovative Schools
- Rhonda Hill, Innovative Schools

Ms. McLaughlin explained that the purpose of the meeting was for the Committee to review the application evaluation criteria and make a preliminary recommendation to approve or deny the application. Unlike the Initial Meeting representatives of the applicant group may attend this meeting as observers, but do not interact with the Committee. She stated that the Committee's recommendation will be reflected in the Preliminary Report which will be provided to the applicant. The applicant will have 15 calendar days to respond to the Committee's report and address any concerns .

The Committee will review the applicant's response and convene for the Final Meeting and make a final recommendation that will be reflected in the Committee's Final Report. which will be issued to the applicant, the Secretary of Education and the State Board of Education, along with any other information submitted at or prior to the Public Hearing.

Ms. McLaughlin opened the discussion on the Application Criteria:

FOUNDING GROUP AND SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

Mr. Carwell said the Founding Group has education, business and executive-level experience and several members with military backgrounds consistent with the proposed mission of the school. The application listed Charles Taylor as a member of the Founding Group. Mr. Taylor was the school leader for Providence Creek Academy and is currently the Board President for the Delaware Charter Schools Network. He has deep charter school knowledge in leadership, facilities, and charter school finance. However, Mr. Taylor is no longer involved with the Founding Group. The response to the report should include an explanation of how the founding group will backfill for this loss of capacity.

Mr. Carwell recommended that this criterion be considered met.

EDUCATION PLAN

Curriculum and Instructional Design. Ms. Hansen said every content area was approved for their scope and sequence and curriculum in English Language Arts, Math, Science, Social Studies, Health and Physical Education, World Languages, Visual & Performing Arts, Professional Development. She said the only area that had some concern was Technology and she would make sure that it would be added in the preliminary report.

Ms. Hansen recommended that this subsection be considered partially met with clarification.

Student Performance Standards. Ms. McCrae said the wording on exit standards for grade 12 on attachment six reads "Passing grade in World Power, World Voices (World History and ELA), social studies, physics, pre-calculus/statistics or calculus..." She asked does this mean that a student has a choice of which these six courses he/she can take and/or pass in order to complete grade 12 or is this a typo. She needs more clarification on what this statement means.

Ms. McCrae recommended that this subsection be considered partially met with clarification.

High School Graduation Requirements.

How the school will meet requirements. Dr. Bigelow said the applicant plans to require the minimum state graduation requirements and intends to require above the minimum.

Dr. Bigelow recommended that this subsection be considered met.

CTE requirements. Dr. Bigelow noted that the applicant does not plan to apply for state or federal CTE funding. However, the applicant should understand that the JROTC program, as outlined, does not currently meet CTE requirements. If the application is approved and the applicant should ever decide to apply for state and federal CTE funding, then they would be responsible for applying for CTE course and/or pathway approval through the CTE course and/or pathway approval process. The Department can provide guidance.

Dr. Bigelow noted that this subsection is not applicable.

College and Career Readiness Plan. Dr. Bigelow noted that the application included plans for administering the PSAT and SAT as well as researching, visiting, and applying to colleges.

Dr. Bigelow recommended that this subsection be considered met.

Student Success Plans. Dr. Bigelow said the Reviewer comment the use of the advisory to replace traditional homeroom as a vehicle for cadet support. She said the advisory focus driven by cadet needs (based on relationships, coaching, etc.).

Dr. Bigelow recommended that this subsection be considered met.

School Calendar and Schedule. Ms. Hansen said a complete and comprehensive school calendar was provided which included the school days, holidays, and professional developments for teachers and Boot Camp for cadets. She added that the school's exhibition day appeared in the key but was not identified on the school calendar.

Ms. Hansen said the school's block schedule was broken out by class. The school's unique features are reflected in the calendar as evidenced by Alpha and Bravo days, morning formation, JROTC and integrated courses aligned with English Language Arts such as CaGE, Biolit (Biology and Literature), American Studies and World Powers, World Voices. She said travel time has been built into the seniors' schedule in order to attend a Composition class at Delaware Technical Community College. She said drivers education, technology, physical education, drawing and students would receive three years of Spanish at the First State Military Academy.

Ms. Hansen recommended that this subsection be considered met

School Culture. Dr. Bigelow noted that the Sample Bullying Prevention Policy requires editing based on recent legislative and model policy changes. More detail will be provided in the Preliminary Report.

Dr. Bigelow recommended that this subsection be considered partially met.

Supplemental Programming. Ms. Hansen noted that based on the proposed JROTC program the school will offer drill team, color guard, honor guard, rifle team, leadership weekends, and JROTC Summer Camp. Additionally, based on student interest and the availability of staff members to sponsor the groups the school will offer a sports program, clubs, and activities. Summer school will be offered to students needing extended school year services due to limited funding. Also, cadets will provide 25 hours of community service each year.

Ms. Hansen recommended that this subsection be considered met.

Special Populations and At-Risk Students. Ms. Kline noted that the response was incomplete. She noted that sections 1, 2(b); 2(d) and 2(g) require additional information. Additional detail will be provided in the Preliminary Report.

English Language Learners. Dr. Bigelow said there were significant errors in the ELL section. Additional detail will be provided in the Preliminary Report.

Gifted Education. Ms. Hansen noted that the school said they will align their efforts to the guidelines of the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC).

Ms. McLaughlin recommended that this subsection be considered not met.

Student Recruitment and Enrollment. Dr. Bigelow noted that the recruitment and marketing plans will provide access to all interested students, including academically low-achieving students with disabilities, and other youth at risk of academic failure. Additionally, the plans include input from the First State Military Academy recruitment Committee of the Board, the school leader, and the Charter Management Company's Project Manager. The enrollment preferences appears to be appropriate. Ms. Hickey added as a clarification that the preference for children of persons employed by the school is for the permanent employees.

Ms. McLaughlin recommended that this subsection be considered met.

Student Discipline. Dr. Bigelow noted that the applicant should include a statement to assure compliance with 14 DE Admin Code 601 and 14 Del. Code §4112 that school administrators will attend required DOE trainings regarding the mandatory school crime reporting law. Further details will be provided in the Preliminary Report.

Dr. Bigelow recommended that this subsection be considered partially met.

Ms. McLaughlin recommended that the Education Plan criterion be considered not met pending further clarification from the applicant.

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Mission-specific educational goals. Ms. McCrae said the application seems to meet the expectation for mission-specific educational goals. She added that the applicant should be mindful that the target audience, first generation college students, will need additional supports beyond academics to be successful in college coursework. Ms. Johnson noted that the applicant includes goals that reference the old regulation goals in terms of meeting and exceeding the state averages. It is not clear that the applicant has read the new Charter Performance Framework and understand the new requirements of 14 DE Admin. Code 275.

Ms. McCrae recommended that this subsection be considered met.

DCAS expectations for at-risk students. Ms. McCrae said that this subsection is not applicable.

Mission-Specific organizational Goals. Dr. Bigelow said the application cited two goal areas: (1) Personal Conduct/Military Discipline and (2) School Satisfaction/Market Accountability. She said the culture of the school will emphasize leadership, trust, respect, and responsibility; and the measures cited are average daily attendance and the expectation that school culture will result in low suspension and discipline rates as well as reportable incidents.

Dr. Bigelow said the FSMA community will demonstrate strong involvement and satisfaction from parents, staff, and the community. She said the measures included parent attendance at cadet project exhibitions, satisfaction surveys, low teacher turnover, and community/business support.

Dr. Bigelow recommended that this subsection be considered met.

Student performance levels and academic needs. Ms. Janiszewski said a comprehensive plan was provided. The applicant addressed that MAP testing will be used as a diagnostic tool to assess student Reading and Math levels. Additionally, the applicant provided a description of academic needs.

Ms. Johnson raised a question regarding the applicant's technology plan. The technology plan mentions a one-to-one computer initiative for students and use of online and virtual sources. It is not clear how the one-to-one initiative aligns with the IMP curriculum and assessments.

Ms. Janiszewski recommended that this subsection be considered met.

Interim Assessments. Ms. McCrae said the only interim assessments listed in this section are for Mathematics and English Language Arts. She said there are no assessments listed for science, social studies, or any other academic or related arts programs, including physical education or health education. She commented that students attending FSMA should expect to receive a well-rounded education providing responsible instruction and monitoring in *all* subjects.

Ms. McCrae recommended that this subsection be considered not met.

Measuring and evaluating academic progress. Ms. McCrae said this section was acceptable.

Information system to manage student performance. Ms. McCrae said in this section has met the requirements set forth in the application. She said it will be important that the applicant work over time with technology staff at the Delaware Department of Education to review the Echo application and the marriage of Google Apps, which is used within the Echo system, with secure data services. She said this may (or may not) be a security issue for the Department of Technology and Information (DTI).

Ms. Johnson said they did mention they were going to use Gaggie mail for their email and she strongly suggest that the school contact DTI to look at the user scale. She said if you are using the State network you might want to check that you are in compliance with the State regulations and guidelines.

Ms. Hansen said in the technology review, Wendy Modzelewski has added a list of resources and will provide the school with it.

Ms. McCrae recommended that this subsection be considered met.

Training and support for teachers in data use. Ms. McCrae said the applicant provided the information for teacher training and it is considered met.

Ms. McCrae recommended that this subsection be considered met.

Corrective actions if school falls short of student goals. Ms. McCrae said this section meets the expectations of the application.

Ms. McCrae recommended that this subsection be considered met.

Ms. McLaughlin recommended that the Performance Management criterion be considered not met pending further clarification from the applicant.

STAFFING

Staff Structure. Dr. Bigelow said the mission is focused on the cadets, with strict discipline and accountability noted throughout the application. She said the staffing plan should demonstrate that most hires “fit” this school culture design and hold adults accountable the same way the students are. She said the staffing structure aligns with the vision and that was a plus. She also noted that a long-term vision for capacity/staffing is evident. Additional details will be provided in the preliminary report.

Dr. Bigelow recommended that this subsection be considered met.

Staffing Plans, Management, and Evaluation. Dr. Bigelow said an external partnership with the Delaware Talent Management Project (DTMP) is proposed within the charter. She said it denotes a commitment to strong recruitment, selection, and induction processes as well as a culture of collecting human capital data on an on-going basis. She said also an external partnership with the New Tech Network is also outlined for the purposes of building a “large pool” of candidates for positions. She said there was more but will be listed in the preliminary report.

Dr. Bigelow recommended that this subsection be considered met.

Professional Development. Ms. Janiszewski said the applicant’s response to this section was well-developed and the professional development evaluation model has been provided.

Ms. Janiszewski recommended that this subsection be considered met.

Ms. McLaughlin recommended that the Staffing criterion be considered met.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Mr. Carwell said the Founding Board has demonstrated governance experience and has participated in Innovative Schools’ Board Development Program. Additionally, the Founding Board has visited New Tech Network schools and attended informational webinars. The application also includes plans to form a Citizens Budget Oversight Committee. Innovative Schools will also provide comprehensive ongoing Board training.

Ms. Hickey said the submitted by-laws appear to be in draft form and contain some remarks that seem to be communications from the drafter to reviewers (e.g., the last sentence in Article II, Section 3). A finalized version might streamline the proposed activities and provide clarity for such areas as provisions addressing the creation of the Board of Directors. It is not clear from the draft by-laws if there are to be

two co-existing Boards, one the “Founding Board” and one the “Operating Board” or if the intention is to subsume one into the other. She noted that the application itself indicates that the Founding Board will transition to the Operating Board, but the by-laws do not make that clear. Also, she stated the Citizen’s Budget Oversight Committee is included in the draft by-laws as a sub-committee of the Charter school’s Board. However, the law contemplates that this Committee is a stand-alone one. More details will be provided in the Preliminary Report.

Ms. McLaughlin recommended that the Governance and Management criterion be considered not met pending further clarification from the applicant.

PARENT AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Mr. Carwell said the applicant provided a comprehensive plan for parent and community involvement. He said a feasibility study and community meetings have been completed.

Mr. Carwell recommended that this criterion be considered met.

START UP AND OPERATIONS

Start-up Plan. Dr. Bigelow said the start-up plan is a chart outlining the tasks that need to be completed. The plan did not include any narrative that demonstrates the applicant truly understands the tasks and concrete steps required to ensure completion and compliance. The response to the Preliminary Report should include additional detail.

Dr. Bigelow recommended that this subsection be considered partially met.

Transportation. Dr. Bigelow noted that the school leader will maintain responsibility for oversight of transportation operations. She said the start-up plan includes actions by the Charter Management Company. Additional detail will be provided in the Preliminary Report.

Dr. Bigelow recommended that this subsection is partially met.

Safety and Security. Dr. Bigelow said a statement is needed from the applicant assuring that First State Military Academy will comply with the requirements of The Omnibus School Safety Act of the 146th Delaware General Assembly and 14 DE Admin Code 621.

Dr. Bigelow recommended that this subsection is partially met.

Lunch/Breakfast. Dr. Bigelow noted that the applicant plans to participate in the National School Lunch/School Breakfast Programs (NSLP/BSP) and, as a participant in these programs, must follow NSLP procurement processes for obtaining a vendor for meals, which includes going to bid. Additionally, the schools participating in NSLP/SBP must have a current Food Establishment Permit. If the charter is approved, the applicant will need to contact Public Health to ensure that the facility has one or must obtain one.

Dr. Bigelow recommended that this subsection is partially met.

Insurance Coverage. Dr. Bigelow noted that the applicant submitted a quote relative to insurance coverage and it meets the standard.

Dr. Bigelow recommended that this subsection is met.

Student Records. Dr. Bigelow noted that the applicant will use the eSchoolPLUS (eSP) pupil accounting system. Additionally, the application includes a statement that staff plans to be trained in eSP which meets the standards.

Dr. Bigelow's recommendation is that this subsection is met.

Ms. McLaughlin recommended that the Start-Up and Operations criterion be considered not met pending further clarification from the applicant.

FACILITIES

Dr. Bigelow noted that the Founding Board is assessing appropriate sites for the school. The Board is currently investigating the feasibility of leasing the St. Joseph's Industrial School site in the greater Smyrna/Clayton area of Kent County. This location was used as the startup site for Providence Creek Academy (PCA) Charter School, and has become available now that PCA has relocated to its new site. She said following approval of FSMA's charter, the board will move forward to structure plans for acquisition of this, or another suitable site. Additional information will be provided in the Preliminary Report.

Dr. Bigelow's recommendation is that this criterion is partially met.

Ms. McLaughlin recommended that the Facilities criterion be considered not met pending further clarification from the applicant.

BUDGET AND FINANCE

Ms. Field Rogers said additional information was received from the applicant but it was too late to review in time for this meeting. The budget pages submitted were not complete. The "Other Funds" portion of the budget does not show the entire page; so it is impossible to determine if the budget presented is balanced and realistic. Additionally, the budget narrative indicates that the Charter Management Organization (CMO) fees are budgeted on lines 53 through 56 of the State Funds pages. However, there is nothing budgeted until Year 3 and the amount shown does not align with the contract submitted.

Ms. Field Rogers also noted that the 80% budget contains no narrative to explain the changes. Also, the budget relies on other funds to cover curriculum and technology and the source of some of the funding are construction and bank loans. Repayment and terms for these loans are not clear. In Year One, the budget lists a construction and bank loan for \$450,000; and in Year Two loans for \$550,000. It is confusing because in one section the budget shows a principal in Year One but they would not earn a principal unit based on enrollment. The narrative mentions that the principal will be an independent contractor and not receive OECs for that year.

Ms. Field Rogers noted that in the facility section there is a comment indicating the Board has budgeted \$3 million in renovations to the leased space. It is not clear how that will be paid. In addition, there is a great concern with enrollment, especially in the early years. It is not clear that the school would be able to cover its operating costs if they are not able to obtain loans or other funds.

Ms. Field Rogers recommended that this section be considered not met.

CHARTER MANAGEMENT COMPANY SUPPLEMENT

Mr. Carwell noted that the charter management organization (CMO), Innovative Schools, was instrumental in brokering FMSA's partnership with New Tech Network. Additionally, the New Tech Network provides a proven school model and Innovative Schools has experience serving existing charter schools. However, Innovative Schools is new to the CMO space and they have contracts with two recently approved charters. Thus Innovative Schools will have responsibility for four start-up charters which raises concerns given its limited experience as a CMO. The applicant's response to the Preliminary Report should explain the CMO's capacity to serve all four schools with quality. Additionally, given the number of schools that the New Tech Network serves across the country, the applicant should provide a description of any New Tech schools that were not successful and any lessons learned which can be applied to this effort. Mr. Carwell also requested a breakout of the CMO fee.

Mr. Carwell recommended that this section be considered not met.

RECOMMENDATION

For the purposes of the Preliminary Report, Ms. McLaughlin's recommendation to the Committee is that the charter application for First State Military Academy be considered **Not Approved**. A vote was taken. Five ayes; none opposed and no absentions.

Ms. McLaughlin asked Mr. Carwell to share next steps for upcoming meetings and dates.

Mr. Carwell stated the following next steps.

- Final Meeting is scheduled for March 11, 2013 at 1:00 PM
- Public Hearing will be announced at a later date.

Meeting adjourned.