



**Department of Education
Charter School Accountability Meeting**

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

Pike Creek Charter Middle School

Mr. Harrell called the meeting to order. He explained the Secretary of Education, Mark T. Murphy, authorized him to chair the Committee in Ms. McLaughlin's absence. For the purpose of the record introductions were made:

Attending Committee Members

- Paul Harrell, Acting Chairperson, Director of Public and Private Partnerships
- 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, 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 Office

Other

- Leighann Hinkle, OMB

Representatives of Applicant Group

- Thomas T. Hearn, Attorney, Founding Board Member
- Alfred Sowde, Founding Board Member
- Robyn Sheehan, Founding Board Member
- Melissa Whitehead, Founding Board Member
- Michael Smith, Founding 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 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, and will not be able to participate in the Committee's interaction.

Mr. Harrell stated the Committee will convene for the Preliminary Meeting and make a recommendation that will be codified in a Preliminary Report 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. He said 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. He 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 related to their application. He stated he will begin with the first question.

Mr. Harrell asked what administrative experience the proposed school leader has that will assure a successful launch of the school. What qualities does this person have to lead a high quality charter school?

Ms. Whitehead said she has an educational background that includes a Master of Education in School Leadership she received from Wilmington University and is currently in her 2nd year of a Doctoral program in Educational Leadership. She has experience working in a charter school as a dean of curriculum and instruction and she is currently working as a data coach where she has experience in working with the different schools and different models. She knows what is working and what is not working and pulls from those experiences.

Ms. Whitehead stated the qualities are by being driven and motivated by the school's mission and personal experiences. She said the team that is in place to start the school; she will have the support needed during the process in developing a high quality charter school.

Mr. Harrell asked at which charter school she had worked. Ms. Whitehead responded Delaware College Preparatory Academy.

Mr. Harrell asked if she could explain to him the leadership responsibilities she had while working there. Ms. Whitehead stated instructional support, driving the teachers' meetings, grant writing, and analyzing the curriculum.

Mr. Harrell asked how long had she been working there. She said as an administrator for a year and as a teacher for two years.

Mr. Carwell asked Ms. Whitehead what gaps she would need to address as a school leader working alone.

Ms. Whitehead said they have developed a mentor team to help her prepare and develop leadership skills in order to be proactive instead of reactive. She doesn't believe that it will be a challenge for her because she has the time and capability to put towards the gaps along with the advice and experiences the mentor team will provide.

Mr. Carwell asked if she identified mentors already and if so who are they.

Mr. Smith said he brought a team together that focused on community outreach/parents, finance and facilities, and education. He said in terms of education it would include leadership, special education, and physical education. He said he looked at some charter schools that were excelling very well; and talked with several of the school leaders seeking their advice and expertise such as Greg Meece, Chuck Baldwin, and Jed Desmond for advice in finance; along with former superintendent, Robert

Andrzejewski, collectively. He said those school leaders bring valuable information and an understanding of what they want their school to establish.

Mr. Smith said they are trying to bring the strength of their Board together by having a diverse group of people along with their capabilities to mentor Ms. Whitehead as school leader. He said they have members of the founding board that consist of five educators, two representatives from the legal community, and two people that specifically deal with finance and facilities, and that all collectively are involved with the community outreach. He mentioned advice given to him by Secretary Mark T. Murphy, “never shy away from youth, they have the energy and the new intellect that they are being taught in schools today”; he said that is what he is looking forward to.

Mr. Carwell asked if the individuals that he had named; Mr. Meece, Mr. Baldwin, and Dr. Andrzejewski have formally committed to provide leadership for his leadership.

Mr. Smith said they have actively attended most of their meetings and have been there with them along the way; in terms of something in writing, no, but as far as handshake and gentleman's agreements, yes. He said they said they would be there to help walk them through. He said first and foremost they all are for education whether it is in public education or charter education.

Ms. Hansen asked why the Founding Board has selected a physical education focus for the school. What is the evidence that the models cited in the application will be effective with middle school students from the targeted geographic area?

Mr. Smith said he could answer the first question in terms of why he selected physical education. He said his background is in politics; and that he is also in the process of receiving his Masters in Public Policy and Public Administration. He said a public policy challenge is the cause and effect of childhood obesity and policies that would help to fix it. He said it is a good opportunity to get children moving again and at a young age before they enter high school. He said more so of the data and the public policy challenge where they are trying to make the children become lifelong learners and teach them habits. He said he looked at models, and at other schools that are doing this well and their success rates. Data and evidence supporting the model will be provided.

Mr. Harrell asked how many charter schools he visited where physical education is the main part of the mission in what he is trying to do now. None at this time.

Mr. Harrell asked how much physical education time will be incorporated into the program and how it will be different from the other five middle schools within the five mile radius.

Ms. Whitehead said there will be fifty minutes of physical education every day when the students are up and moving around and being active while learning. She said the students will be engaged, and they will have project based lessons. Also, they will have a physical activity elective, and they have contacted the YMCA to contract with them for yoga classes and strength and conditioning. She said they also contacted Cross Fit to have some type of relationship with them. She said physical education is a big piece, but also the idea of being physically active in the classrooms and the option of taking a physical activity elective would make the school different from the other area middle schools.

Mr. Smith added that at the end of the day the students have to commit to a club or tutoring.

Ms. Johnson stated that in the application it was mentioned that they looked into the Fitnessgram report; and she wanted to know about the five middle schools that were in the jurisdictional area that the applicant was looking to pull students from, and about the feeder elementary schools.

Mr. Smith said they worked with the Nemours Foundation on gathering the data used for the application, and it consisted of data from the 12 public elementary schools that they saw feeding into the school.

Ms. Whitehead said they were looking at whether there is a connection between the Fitnessgram and the DSTP. She said they were looking at broad research to determine a connection to education outcomes for students who are physically active. She reinforced that physically active does not have to mean that you are an athlete or in a great physical condition.

Ms. Whitehead said what they are promoting for their school is for students that may not be physically active but want to be, to enroll. She re-stated an earlier point made by Mr. Smith, that one of their key components is that Monday through Thursday, their instructional day runs until 2:30; but students are required to stay until 3:40 PM which is to participate in an after school sport or club activity. The activities would range from club sports, tutoring, music, performing arts, etc. in an effort to keep students active in the after school hours. She said they also are going to require the teachers to facilitate the after school activities to build a relationship with their students.

Ms. Johnson asked whether any elementary or middle schools in the feeder pattern currently utilize the extra 150 minutes with the Nemours program.

Mr. Smith said he didn't know of any. He did want to add that a nutritional aspect was also planned for the school.

Ms. Johnson asked if that component would be an addition to their health curriculum

Mike Smith agreed that this component would be beyond their health curriculum. The goal is to reinforce physical activity beyond the school to help the family.

Ms. Hansen asked what standards will be used to inform curricular choices for each of the tested (English language arts, mathematics, science, social studies) and untested content areas?

Ms. Whitehead said the English Language Arts and Math will both be using the DDOE Common Core Standards. She said the Science and Social Studies curriculum were developed by the DDOE Content Standards. She did mention that the Science Standards will be revised once it becomes available to reflect the changes. She said the Physical Education Standards were developed by the National Standards for Physical Education and Health was developed by the DDOE Health Standards.

Ms. Hansen added as a footnote the visual and performing arts will be released after the science within a year.

Ms. McCrae asked what quantitative student performance measures would be used to monitor student achievement and how will these measures align to the Charter Performance Framework? Specifically the students' goals relate to the school. She said as an example; physical education, health, and nutrition. The applicant didn't have any quantitative measures listed that will be used.

Ms. Whitehead said for the main core subjects such as math, ELA, social studies and science, they will be using the DCAS. She said hopefully by then it will be the smarter balance and they would be able to facilitate that turnover. She said for physical education they will be using Fitnessgram. She said also they will be using some things from the health portal - leisure fitness will be helping them build a health portal where the students and their families will be able to list their physical activities, and what they are eating where they will be able to track the information over a period of time. She said when they are in the eighth grade the students will have to analyze and evaluate their portal from sixth through eighth grades. She said when they are in the eighth grade there will be additional related projects that they are required to do. She said for health they will be using a portal as well, as a source of data in how they have been tracking and what changes that occurred over the years from what they have learned.

Ms. McCrae asked if it was like an ePortfolio type.

Mr. Smith said yes only they will have access to be able to do it from home or school and they will have a specific link to gain access to it.

Ms. McCrae said on the very next page in the same section the school made reference to value added comparisons. She asked how the school leadership plans to use value added models within the performance management system.

Ms. Whitehead said she planned to use the value added cohort in comparing students year to year and throughout grade levels. She said for an example if a seventh grade math class is not performing well within two to three years then that is time for them to look at and evaluate their curriculum and scope and sequence, and using that as a management tool not just year to year but over a period of time long term and short term. She said also if a cohort is not performing sixth or seventh grade in math then they will need to look at the foundation skills and see what is missing so that they can add and make sure those foundation skills are there to continue to be built up over time.

Ms. McCrae said value-added models are generally used in terms of teacher evaluation models. She said the school is describing cohorts of students that will be compared and tracked. She asked if they are presenting this as a teacher evaluation system using student models or using it in term of student evaluation and general data.

Ms. Whitehead stated she was thinking more of general data for looking at and it could be used as teacher evaluation. She stated that she was looking at it more as a data source when looking at student data.

Mr. Carwell asked about student performance where it was stated that students will demonstrate mastery in English language Arts on common core state standards including reading standards for literature etc. He asked why the school didn't include a quantitative measure there in terms of percent proficient or performance on the DCAS.

Ms. Whitehead stated this measure is provided in a different section. She said for ELA it is 80% for DCAS in math, 85% and science and social studies, 80%.

Ms. Johnson asked why the rationale to use 80% and 85% was.

Ms. Whitehead stated that they chose 85% for math based on the scores from feeder schools, and that the math scores were higher than the other area among the potential students; they wanted to keep challenging them in that area.

Ms. Johnson asked if they utilize the charter performance framework and academic framework to look at the goal targets in there.

Ms. Whitehead stated that they had not.

Mr. Carwell asked the rationale for a five-mile enrollment preference.

Mr. Smith said the rationale started from looking at the building that they were going to use to house the students and they did a five mile radius based on that. They used the 2010 Census Data to determine exactly what the community is made up of demographically - gender, race, age, economic status, etc. He said they looked at males and females under the age of five; five to nine; ten to fourteen and took the percentage of the two districts of Red Clay and Christina, and the numbers associated with those age groups. He said they looked at twelve elementary schools in that five-mile radius and five middle schools and they looked at the need in terms of population.

Mr. Carwell asked if there was a downside without a five-mile preference.

Mr. Smith said there was no downside. The expected enrollment would be similar

Ms. Johnson asked the applicant to identify the data source for the class size data presented in the application.

Mr. Smith said he pulled from Census 2010 blocks from the geography department of the University of Delaware.

Ms. Johnson asked the class size reports.

Ms. Smith said they pulled that from the Census track from the geography department of the University of Delaware.

Mr. Harrell said the average class size was 31 students and asked where the applicant acquired those data?

Mr. Smith said University of Delaware and he pulled it from the Census track as well.

Ms. Johnson said the DDOE releases class size reports each year and she was wondering where he received his information from.

Mr. Smith said he received his from Census 2010 data; and he noticed that the DDOE released their data from 2011 and 2012.

Mr. Johnson asked if he used the DDOE 2010 class size report and not from the Census 2010.

Mr. Smith replied yes for the class size data, but everything else he received from the Census 2010 blocks.

Ms. Johnson asked about the table of preference for year 1 and 2 where they listed five-mile radius and below it you have non mile radius, and then founding board of children/grandchildren.

Mr. Smith said the non-mile radius is not applicable. He said the five-mile radius and founding board children/grandchildren should be listed. He said for everyone else they will be doing a lottery if they are not filled through the five-mile radius then they will pull from other areas.

Mr. Hindman said there is no provision in the charter school law for grandchildren.

Mr. Harrell asked how many total students are in the 5-mile radius?

Mr. Smith said the total population is 125,000 and there are 16,000 students.

Ms. Janiszewski stated this is a three part question and asked how they will assure that:

- (a) the staff are dedicated to the mission of the school?***
- (b) you have the right people in the right positions from the beginning?***
- (c) your professional development plan supports and sustains a high quality learning environment?***

Mr. Smith said (b) start with having the right board members.

Ms. Whitehead said with the staff normal hours and after school activities; and professional development will be set up every Friday after school. And professional development will be set up every Friday after school.

Mr. Smith added based on the correspondence that they have put out in the media and the mission of the school they have received several responses.

Ms. Janiszewski asked whether all teachers were going to be certified in special education.

Ms. Whitehead said they will offer to pay for the class for teachers to be certified.

Ms. Falcon asked about the cost for professional development and if \$5,000 would be enough to accommodate the special education teachers.

Ms. Whitehead said additional funding through grants and fundraising would be applied towards the special education needs.

Mr. Carwell asked if the applicant had letters for fundraising.

Mr. Smith said that there were several people that want to help with fundraising and grants but will assist until once approved.

Mr. Harrell asked whether the school has committed to helping financially if the school is approved.

Mr. Smith said yes it was Nemours Foundation will help out and Fitnessgram.

Mr. Carwell asked if worst scenario what if they only have \$5000.

Mr. Smith said they will not open if they don't have the funding.

Mr. Harrell asked what knowledge, skills, and experiences do you see as essential in the governing board for the school? Give the Committee several examples of people to whom you would extend an invitation to join the board. Describe the training that you would require of the Board members.

Mr. Smith said he would want people that specialized in finance and especially public finance; people that have experience in project management, people that work in schools i.e., education, physical education; and people that are knowledgeable about their mission, as well as parents.

Ms. Whitehead stated the assessment that the school has, their role and people that know how to be effective with financial information and any needs that the school might run across.

Mr. Smith said the people in front of them are founding board members with their expertise that are leading subcommittees.

Mr. Carwell asked the applicant to explain their understanding of effective board practices.

Ms. Whitehead said she sat on the board for a year and a half as a teacher representative and for the building of a school being built the first and second year and it was great to see how things worked.

Ms. Falcon said the 100% budget shows a \$648K+ deficit in the planning year and a deficit in the first year of operation. She said considering this deficit, explain why the Director of Finance and the Business Manager position are both needed. She asked how will they eliminate the planning year deficits and what the timeline is for doing so?

Mr. Smith said fundraising will cover from one year to the next year to cover costs. He said the director of finance will handle the fundraising and the business manager will run the day to day operations at the school. He said if they run into a deficit problem then the business manager position will be eliminated until they are able to fund that position. He said the director of finance will have to their hands full with all the different roles; transportation and human resources. He said this is why the business manager is needed to be able to do the day to day operations.

Mr. Carwell stated that having two finance people is not common among other charter schools. He asked the rationale of having the structure of two positions at what is considered to be a small school by enrollment.

Mr. Smith said the business manager role would also be performing functions such as bookkeeping, and that possibly the title was causing confusion around the need.

Mr. Hearn said it is confusing.

Mr. Smith said he took the title from Red Clay and their pay scale not knowing their dynamics of what the business manager would be responsible for. He said basically a secretary would be able to handle that aspect of financial responsibilities.

Ms. Falcon asked what the contingency plan for the budget is if the school does not meet its enrollment targets.

Mr. Smith said the staff is based on enrollment to make it a viable.

Ms. Falcon asked whether they had number in mind what the viability target would be.

Mr. Smith stated he did not, but it could be 80% and that could make the number viable, but that he does not know what that number is.

Mr. Harrell asked John Carwell to share next steps for upcoming meetings and dates.

Mr. Carwell stated the following next steps.

- Preliminary Meeting is scheduled for February 6, 2013 at 1:00 PM
- Final Meeting is scheduled for March 11, 2013 at 1:00 PM
- Public Hearing will be announced at a later date

Meeting adjourned.