

**In The Matter Of:**  
*Department of Education  
and Board of Education*

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*In Re: Delaware Design-Lab High School  
May 7, 2013*

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THE STATE OF DELAWARE  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
and  
BOARD OF EDUCATION

In re: )  
 )  
DELAWARE DESIGN-LAB HIGH )  
SCHOOL CHARTER SCHOOL )  
 )

TRANSCRIPT OF PUBLIC HEARING

The Townsend Building  
401 Federal Street  
Dover, Delaware 19901  
Tuesday, May 7, 2013  
5:10 p.m.

HEARD BEFORE: JOHN CARWELL, JR.

APPEARANCES:

CATHERINE HICKEY, ESQ., Deputy Attorney  
General - Counsel to the Hearing Officer

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1 MR. CARWELL: Good evening,  
2 everyone. I declare this public hearing to be  
3 open. My name is John Carwell, Jr. I am the  
4 education associate at the Delaware Department of  
5 Education, and I have been appointed by the  
6 Secretary of Education to conduct this public  
7 hearing.

8 The Delaware Design-Lab High School  
9 Charter School has filed an application for a new  
10 charter. As is required by law, the matter was  
11 referred to the Charter School Accountability  
12 Committee for investigation and report. This  
13 joint public hearing is being held by the  
14 Department of Education and the State Board of  
15 Education to give the school or the applicant an  
16 opportunity to respond to the final report of the  
17 Accountability Committee, which recommended that  
18 the charter school's application be approved with  
19 conditions, and also to receive public comments.

20 I would like the record to reflect  
21 that the notice of the time, date, and place of  
22 today's public hearing was published in The News  
23 Journal and the Delaware State News on April 22,  
24 2013. In addition, notice was posted at the



1 Charter School Accountability Committee's place  
2 of business on the Delaware Department of  
3 Education's official website and on the State  
4 public meeting calendar on the State's official  
5 website on April 22, 2013. Further, the  
6 applicant was personally notified of the time,  
7 date and place of today's public hearing on April  
8 23, 2013.

9 A court reporter is present, so that  
10 a record of this hearing can be made. It will be  
11 necessary for each speaker to clearly identify  
12 his or herself before beginning to speak, so that  
13 the court reporter will be able to note who you  
14 are.

15 The record of this hearing will be  
16 provided to the Secretary of Education and the  
17 State Board of Education, together with any  
18 written or electronic comments received at or  
19 before this public hearing, which in this case  
20 includes a document entitled "Clarifications from  
21 the Final Meeting from the Applicant," as well as  
22 a letter of endorsement. And should these be  
23 included together or --

24 DR. ALVAREZ: Yes.



1 MR. URBAN: And we also have a  
2 number of other letters of endorsement with us,  
3 if you'd like.

4 MR. CARWELL: Sure. Thank you very  
5 much.

6 MS. HICKEY: Let's put all the --  
7 how about we put all the letters of endorsement  
8 together, including this one, rather than make it  
9 part of that. Is that all right?

10 DR. ALVAREZ: Yes. That would be  
11 great.

12 MS. HICKEY: So the clarifications  
13 from the final meeting from the applicant will be  
14 Exhibit A, and the packet of letters of  
15 endorsement -- do you have an idea about how many  
16 there are?

17 DR. ALVAREZ: A dozen.

18 MS. HICKEY: About a dozen? Okay.  
19 Will be Exhibit B. Thanks.

20 (Exhibits A and B admitted into evidence)

21 MR. CARWELL: Thank you. We will  
22 proceed in the following manner: First we will  
23 hear from any representatives of the charter  
24 school applicant team who wish to comment on the



1 Committee's final report. We will then take  
2 comments from anyone else who desires to speak.  
3 And has everyone signed in who wishes to speak?

4 MR. URBAN: Yes.

5 MR. CARWELL: Okay. Great. We'll  
6 plan to be as liberal with time as possible.  
7 Just by a show of hands, make sure I'm not  
8 missing anybody, who desires to speak?

9 (Show of hands)

10 MR. CARWELL: Thank you very much.  
11 At this point we will accept comments from anyone  
12 who desires to speak. Thank you.

13 DR. ALVAREZ: Good afternoon. My  
14 name is Dr. Cristina Alvarez, and I am the chief  
15 executive officer of the proposed Delaware  
16 Design-Lab High School whose application is  
17 before you for review. We are grateful to the  
18 Department of Education and the Delaware Charter  
19 School Network for their technical assistance and  
20 their thorough professionalism and collegiality  
21 through the charter review process. Thank you.

22 Today the Design-Lab school's team  
23 hopes to persuade you how our mission to produce  
24 the next generation of innovators who become the



1 problem-solvers of the world is important, and  
2 why it is vital that the Department of Education  
3 approves our charter application as an investment  
4 in the future of the state of Delaware.

5 I'll begin by telling you a story,  
6 one simple example of how design has positively  
7 changed the world. This is a potato peeler  
8 (indicates). It is an industrial potato peeler.  
9 Okay? It's the potato peeler that our  
10 grandmothers used. In fact, their mothers used.  
11 It's about 100 years old as a design, and for 100  
12 years it was one single piece of metal with a  
13 looped handle and a blade.

14 And the tool did the job, but it had  
15 some problems. The problems are that it's small,  
16 uncomfortable to handle, hurt users' hands during  
17 repetitive tasks, and required strength to grip.  
18 Handles did not flex for support, the materials  
19 were slippery, especially when wet -- which is  
20 exactly when you need to use it, to peel wet  
21 potatoes. The blades were inefficient, and poor  
22 cutting angles and sharpness cut into the edible  
23 parts of fruit, resulting in significant waste.

24 In 1990, Sam Farber, an entrepreneur



1 in the housewares industry, noticed how hard it  
2 was for his wife to use ordinary kitchen tools  
3 because of arthritis in her hands, so he hired  
4 industrial designers to resign the 100-year-old  
5 industrial potato peeler.

6 The design team began by asking  
7 questions. They are: Why do ordinary kitchen  
8 tools hurt your hands? And how can we make  
9 comfortable tools that are wonderful and easy to  
10 use?

11 The design team that solved this  
12 process used the design process that we would use  
13 in our schools. They literally watched people of  
14 all ages and abilities -- male, female, young,  
15 old, lefties, righties, and people with special  
16 needs -- and saw how they interacted with the  
17 industrial peeler, to identify precisely where on  
18 the handle users applied pressure while peeling.

19 The design team then explored  
20 hundreds of different handles and materials.  
21 They sketched their ideas, they created  
22 prototypes, they tested them with real people,  
23 scrapped the prototypes that didn't work, asked  
24 more questions, redefined more prototypes, and



1 came up with a final solution. And here it is.  
2 It's called the Good Grips Swivel Peeler.  
3 Actually, we'll put it here as our visual aid.  
4 This is our visual exhibit, okay?

5           Okay. So, the innovation -- I'll  
6 explain the innovation a little bit. The large  
7 handle fits comfortably in one's hand. The  
8 elliptical shape keeps it from rotating and  
9 stressing the hand. Fins on either side absorb  
10 pressure while in use. Durable rubberized  
11 material provides a cushioned, non-slip grip and  
12 significant control, even when wet, which is when  
13 you use it. Sharp blades are angled to remove  
14 only the minimum amount of peel necessary, with  
15 little force.

16           The designers' solution was an  
17 innovation for a centuries-old problem, and it  
18 revolutionized the kitchen tools industry and the  
19 housewares industry, and it was only in 1990. As  
20 a result, 23 years later, today's products are  
21 more ergonomic, meaning that they are designed to  
22 provide maximum comfort and to avoid injury and  
23 stress.

24           If you look around you, everywhere



1 in your life, you will notice many or examples of  
2 how designers have made your life easier, safer,  
3 and more comfortable. Design solves problems.  
4 Design literally improves the quality of our  
5 lives.

6 Designers are trained to make sure  
7 that every new product, every new solution to a  
8 problem, delivers a significant improvement over  
9 the status quo, and often a designer's solution  
10 is so creative and unexpected that the solution  
11 surpasses our expectations.

12 Hence, we say that designers are  
13 innovators, and innovators produce innovations.

14 So what are society's problems?  
15 Like the industrial potato peeler, as a human  
16 society we face seemingly intractable problems:  
17 Social ills like poverty, violence, homelessness,  
18 alcohol and drug addiction, and inequities. Like  
19 the industrial potato peeler, many schools still  
20 operate in an industrial paradigm of education.  
21 They don't serve many of our children, the  
22 curriculum fails to motivate students, and too  
23 many of our youths drop out of school. Far too  
24 many are not prepared for careers in a modern



1 workforce.

2           The Delaware Design-Lab High School  
3 is our proposed solution for education in  
4 Delaware. Through a unique design-learning  
5 curriculum, Delaware Design-Lab High School  
6 students will learn to think like designers. Our  
7 students will produce solutions to problems that  
8 will be a significant improvement over the status  
9 quo. Our students will design creative solutions  
10 that far surpass expectations. Our students will  
11 learn to be innovators.

12           The Delaware Design-Lab High School  
13 will be a dynamic tuition-free public charter  
14 school where students will use innovative design  
15 learning to imagine, design, and create  
16 successful futures at the university level, at  
17 careers in the 21st century global economy and  
18 lifelong learning.

19           Our mission is to educate every  
20 student at any level of development that they  
21 come to us, optimizing each one's opportunity to  
22 succeed in post-secondary college and careers.  
23 We will design every aspect of the school  
24 experience to ensure that our students have



1 optimum academic and social growth.

2 A Design-Lab school education has  
3 several specific, unique features: A safe, civil  
4 school culture, dynamic learning environment, a  
5 curriculum that is innovative in that it is  
6 science, technology, engineering, media, and  
7 design; and design learning practices that  
8 encourage communication, collaboration,  
9 creativity, and critical thinking.

10 Delaware Design-Lab High School  
11 students will learn to be innovators, which will  
12 build their creative capital. Our graduates will  
13 enter into a whole new socioeconomic class,  
14 referred to as the creative class, which will  
15 improve the economic trajectory of their lives.

16 In conclusion, it is crucial that  
17 the Delaware Design-Lab High School exist,  
18 because the school that we envision will be an  
19 education incubator for positive, productive  
20 future leaders and thinkers.

21 Delaware Design-Lab High School  
22 graduates will become vital contributors to  
23 Wilmington, which is where we plan to situate our  
24 school, to the state of Delaware, and to the



1 communities in which they will live, work, and  
2 raise their families as future educated citizens.

3 The founding group and board of  
4 directors are personally committed to ensuring  
5 the school's success because we believe it is  
6 absolutely vital that we invest in Delaware's  
7 children and the future of the State. Our  
8 ultimate vision is to create a more just and  
9 inclusive world, a world that works for everyone  
10 by design. We welcome your support and  
11 participation in this worthy vision.

12 Thank you.

13 MR. CARWELL: Thank you,  
14 Dr. Alvarez.

15 MS. HICKEY: Dr. Alvarez, you  
16 mentioned your posterboard as an exhibit. Do you  
17 truly want it to be an exhibit to this?

18 DR. ALVAREZ: Sure.

19 MS. HICKEY: Okay.

20 DR. ALVAREZ: And there's another  
21 one, and this is -- this is -- these are actual  
22 design students that -- this is how our kids  
23 learn.

24 MS. HICKEY: So you want them both?



1 I trust you don't want the potato peeler in?

2 DR. ALVAREZ: No. Thank you. I can  
3 take an iPhone picture of it and send it to you,  
4 though.

5 MS. HICKEY: That's okay. So the  
6 posterboards of the two different potato peelers  
7 will be Exhibit C, and then the one of the  
8 students will be Exhibit D. Thank you.

9 (Exhibits C and D admitted into evidence)

10 MR. CARWELL: Thanks again,  
11 Dr. Alvarez. Next we'll hear from Mr. Matt  
12 Urban.

13 MR. URBAN: Hi. I'm Matt Urban.  
14 I'm the board chairman of the Delaware Design-Lab  
15 High School. I want to set a little bit of  
16 context of how this school fits into Wilmington  
17 and how this school fits into the community and  
18 the design and arts community in Wilmington.

19 My company's first office was in  
20 downtown Wilmington. My partners and I started  
21 17 years ago with not much more than high hopes  
22 and a dream for the future. We rented the front  
23 room of a house downtown, kept our expenses low,  
24 and created something new. It was the right time



1 for us to do that.

2 We watched downtown Wilmington  
3 struggle in the late '90s, and when our business  
4 started to grow, we outgrew our first office and  
5 moved away and opened an office in the suburbs.  
6 We stayed there for close to a decade.

7 Five years ago we moved back  
8 downtown. We moved back because a very wise and  
9 insightful man sold us on yet another dream:  
10 Being part of the revitalization of Wilmington  
11 and using our talents to help showcase the  
12 amazing arts and cultural offerings the city has  
13 to offer. He saw, and we quickly understood how  
14 a design and media company could impact a  
15 community.

16 When we moved back, it was the right  
17 time. Since then I can honestly and proudly say  
18 that we've made a difference in Wilmington, and  
19 Wilmington is not the same place it was before we  
20 moved back. But we've only been one piece of  
21 this puzzle. What's made Wilmington different in  
22 the last five years is that a broad group of  
23 creative people have worked together to design a  
24 new future for the city. Let me say that again:



1 To design a new future for the city.

2 I've found that life often places  
3 opportunities before your feet at just the right  
4 time. When I got the call asking if I'd like to  
5 help open a charter school in Wilmington, it  
6 didn't take long for me to realize that it was  
7 one of those moments and I couldn't pass it up.

8 As a design and media professional,  
9 I saw the strength of the curriculum concept:  
10 Utilizing the same problem-solving skills  
11 designers use to help young people develop the  
12 skills to thrive in 21st century life and work.  
13 And having been a significant part of the  
14 Wilmington community, I saw immediately that they  
15 chose the right time to create the school.

16 So why is it the right time? It's  
17 the right time because Wilmington has a thriving  
18 design community of design and media companies  
19 that can support the school. My company, Mobius  
20 New Media, noted agencies like AB&C, the Archer  
21 Group, Trellis, Caspari McCormick, the Star  
22 Group, and others.

23 It's the right time because there's  
24 a growing concentration of higher education in



1 Wilmington for school students to graduate to,  
2 many with a design focus, including Delaware  
3 College of Art and Design -- and we have a very  
4 nice letter from Stuart Baron, the president of  
5 DCAD, in our packet, so they're a natural fit --  
6 and Wilmington University, which offers very  
7 strong design and media programs.

8           It's the right time because the  
9 incredibly robust arts community in Wilmington  
10 has created an environment in which creativity  
11 thrives, one where design-based problem solving  
12 is the norm, not the exception. The school  
13 students would be a part of that community.

14           It's the right time because there's  
15 a new mayor in Wilmington, one who understands  
16 the importance of education in creating a safe  
17 and crime-free community, and one who has chosen  
18 to make it a major priority of his  
19 administration; a mayor who illustrated this deep  
20 commitment to education with his very first  
21 official act, when he broke with tradition and  
22 held his inauguration ceremony at East Side  
23 Charter School. East Side Charter School.

24           And it's the right time because an



1     incredibly talented, experienced, creative and  
2     skilled group of educators has come together to  
3     build another dream for the future. The people  
4     before you are amongst the best in education.  
5     They have created a remarkably innovative  
6     curriculum and will create a wonderfully  
7     nurturing environment for Wilmington's youth.

8             I am proud and honored to work with  
9     these people. I am proud to put my own  
10    professional reputation on the line in taking a  
11    leadership role with this effort, and I am proud  
12    to stand here and make this statement on behalf  
13    of this school. Big things start with a dream,  
14    like this school: The right school in the right  
15    place, at the right time.

16            Thank you.

17            MR. CARWELL: Thank you, Mr. Urban.  
18    Next we'll hear from Dr. Martin Rayala?

19            DR. RAYALA: Good afternoon. My  
20    name is Dr. Martin Rayala, and I'm the chief  
21    academic officer for the proposed Delaware  
22    Design-Lab High School. That means I'll oversee  
23    that curriculum that they have been talk about.

24            I, too, acknowledge and thank the



1 State charter school application review team, the  
2 Delaware Department of Education, and everyone  
3 who helped us prepare the more than 500 pages of  
4 documentation that make up our proposal for the  
5 Delaware Design-Lab High School. I also want to  
6 acknowledge all of you who are here today for  
7 your dedication to ensuring the highest quality  
8 of education for the young people of Delaware.

9 We're thrilled about this  
10 opportunity to open a design-based high school in  
11 Wilmington, Delaware, in August of 2014. This is  
12 a labor of love. I was a public schoolteacher,  
13 and then had a career as a curriculum supervisor  
14 for the State Department of Education in  
15 Wisconsin. After 20 years in that position, I  
16 became a university professor, where I helped  
17 prepare over 400 future teachers to be licensed  
18 to teach in the public schools.

19 The Delaware Design-Lab High School  
20 is based on something called design thinking.  
21 Design thinking means imagining a better future  
22 and taking action to turn dreams into reality.  
23 Design thinking begins by identifying a gap  
24 between what currently exists and what could make



1 it better. We generate and visualize many  
2 possible ways to fill that gap. We develop and  
3 test prototypes of potential solutions, and  
4 through that process we come up with solutions  
5 that fill the needs of others and that are  
6 feasible, sustainable, safe, and satisfying.

7 As the next generation of national  
8 standards for education are rolled out over the  
9 next few years, we will see amazing changes in  
10 education in America. I see these changes coming  
11 because I currently serve on two task forces  
12 writing the next generation of national education  
13 standards.

14 The Delaware Design-Lab High School  
15 is perfectly poised to be a leader in taking the  
16 next generation of educational goals and  
17 standards and making them a reality for the  
18 students and teachers in schools. With your  
19 help, we can together shape the future of  
20 education, not only in Wilmington, and in  
21 Delaware, but in the nation.

22 Our promise is to create a school of  
23 exceptional quality that will open new doors for  
24 students in Delaware and create the future



1 problem solvers of the world. We look forward to  
2 working with all of you to make these dreams a  
3 realty.

4 Thank you.

5 MR. CARWELL: Thank you. Next we'll  
6 hear from Mr. Paul Miller.

7 MR. MILLER: Good afternoon. My  
8 name is Paul Miller, and I will be serving as  
9 vice chairman should this charter be approved. I  
10 want to begin by thanking you for allowing us to  
11 speak in support of this possible new charter.

12 I am personally a product of  
13 Delaware's public education system. I went  
14 through Brandywood and Harlan Elementary, to  
15 Hanby Junior High to Brandywine High School. And  
16 the reason I mention that is because I believe  
17 that a good public education -- and as a result  
18 of the good public education that I received, it  
19 was a factor in preparing me for my career as an  
20 SEC-registered investment advisor.

21 You see, all those in this room  
22 agree that good public education is critical to  
23 the betterment of us all, and I believe that  
24 Delaware's Department of Education understands



1 this, and I applaud your efforts.

2           So imagine this: Imagine students  
3 and teachers generating ideas, envisioning  
4 possibilities, prototyping and testing solutions,  
5 implementing real-world innovations to make the  
6 world a better place.

7           In hearing from many of Delaware's  
8 most significant leaders, both for-profit and  
9 non-profit, including our own Governor, we all  
10 agree that preparing our children to compete in  
11 this globalized world is critical to our  
12 collective success. And when we think about  
13 economic development, right, when a company has  
14 to make a decision as to whether or not to locate  
15 in the state of Delaware, education plays a role,  
16 maybe even a significantly important role, in  
17 that determination.

18           You see, it's my personal opinion  
19 that we need to challenge our children to look  
20 beyond; to look beyond ourselves, to look beyond  
21 our place, to look beyond our time, and to look  
22 beyond our resources. Why? Because along with  
23 death and taxes, about the only thing that we  
24 know with certainty is change.



1           Design education provides the means  
2 to create a better option from which to choose.  
3 Through design thinking, we're able to look  
4 beyond what currently exists and create new  
5 possibilities. We've heard from the business  
6 community itself that this concept of design  
7 thinking is being adopted in business as a growth  
8 strategy to boost innovation and results in the  
9 marketplace.

10           Design thinking hones skills and  
11 communication, collaboration, critical thinking,  
12 creativity, and superior problem-solving; skills  
13 which we all know have been important, but are  
14 possibly even more substantial in this globalized  
15 21st century.

16           The Delaware Design-Lab High School  
17 will be the only school in our state to use  
18 design thinking to prepare our children for  
19 future in industry and enterprise. Simply put,  
20 more than any other charter which has been  
21 granted by this State, the Delaware Design-Lab  
22 High School, in my opinion, most completely  
23 prepares our children to compete successfully.

24           Thank you.



1 MR. CARWELL: Thank you, Mr. Miller.  
2 Next we will hear from Adrienne Carpenter.

3 DR. CARPENTER: That's right, thank  
4 you. Good afternoon, everyone. My name is  
5 Dr. Adrienne Carpenter, and I am a supporter and  
6 a member of the founding group for the Delaware  
7 Design-Lab High School. In my many roles as  
8 teacher, principal, former assistant  
9 superintendent, and regional superintendent, I  
10 have come this afternoon in support of the  
11 Delaware Design-Lab High School for the city of  
12 Wilmington, Delaware, that is scheduled to open  
13 August, 2014.

14 As a career urban educator and  
15 former superintendent, I have seen many types of  
16 school reform. What the founders and the board  
17 of the Delaware Design-Lab High School have  
18 planned is high quality and sustainable  
19 educational change that will benefit the children  
20 of Delaware in ways that the State has never  
21 seen.

22 The Delaware Design-Lab High School  
23 will be a spotlight in the Wilmington community,  
24 serving as a source of educational opportunities



1 for students engaged in innovative learning.  
2 This unique school will involve partnerships with  
3 the private sector and academic communities  
4 seeking to provide platforms for collaboration,  
5 sharing of educational best practices, and  
6 expanded efforts to ensure teaching and learning  
7 extend far beyond the traditional school  
8 services.

9 With the core of visionary leaders  
10 who clearly understand the needs of the student  
11 population and its community, the Delaware  
12 Design-Lab High School is committed to ensuring  
13 rigorous intellectual-challenging school  
14 programs.

15 The Delaware Design-Lab high school  
16 holds true to the belief that every student  
17 matters in an inclusive society. With a unique  
18 design learning curriculum, the Delaware  
19 Design-Lab High School clearly announces, clearly  
20 announces, that "average" is officially over.

21 Imagine. Imagine. Imagine a school  
22 where creativity, innovation, and imagination are  
23 part of daily learning. Imagine students who are  
24 mentally engaged, imaginative, and articulate,



1 and who are committed to making a difference in  
2 their own lives, as well as their community.

3 Imagine an innovative school that  
4 increases the high school graduation rate.  
5 Imagine a school where students proudly come to  
6 learn. I have. I have imagined that. And it is  
7 for this reason that I ask you to support the  
8 charter approval for the Delaware Design-Lab High  
9 School.

10 Thank you.

11 MR. CARWELL: Thank you,  
12 Dr. Carpenter.

13 At this point I will accept comments  
14 from anyone else who desires to speak. Anyone  
15 else? If not, I want to thank you all for  
16 participating today. The Secretary of Education  
17 and the State Board of Education will consider  
18 your comments in deciding what recommendation to  
19 propose for the consent of the State Board, and  
20 this hearing is now closed. Thank you.

21 (Brief discussion off the record)

22 MR. CARWELL: Excuse me, everyone.  
23 I need to reopen the record for the Design-Lab  
24 public hearing. There were public comments,



1 written comments from one of the founders that  
2 she wanted to submit as part of the record, her  
3 actual spoken comments. Okay. This public  
4 hearing for Design-Lab is now closed.

5 (Exhibit E admitted into evidence)

6 (Hearing concluded at 5:40 p.m.)

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I N D E X

|                                 | PAGE |
|---------------------------------|------|
| SPEAKER: Dr. Cristina Alvarez   | 5    |
| SPEAKER: Matt Urban             | 13   |
| SPEAKER: Dr. Martin Rayala      | 17   |
| SPEAKER: Paul Miller            | 20   |
| SPEAKER: Dr. Adrienne Carpenter | 23   |
| CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER         | 28   |



1 REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE  
2

3 I, JULIANNE LaBADIA, Registered Diplomate  
4 Reporter and Notary Public, do hereby certify that  
5 the foregoing record, pages 2 through 26 inclusive,  
6 is a true and accurate transcript of my  
7 stenographic notes taken on May 7, 2013, in the  
8 above-captioned matter.

9 IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my  
10 hand and seal this 9th day of May, 2013, at  
11 Wilmington.  
12  
13

14 

15  
16 Julianne LaBadia, RDR, CRR  
17  
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21  
22  
23  
24



|  |   |   |  |  |
|--|---|---|--|--|
| <b>A</b>   | <p>allowing (1) 20:10<br/>along (1) 21:22</p>   | <b>B</b>  | <p>business (4) 3:2<br/>14:3 22:5,7</p>  | <p>6:3 10:13<br/>15:5 16:23,23<br/>18:1 20:9,11<br/>22:20 25:8</p>   |
| <p>AB&amp;C (1) 15:20<br/>abilities (1) 7:14<br/>able (2) 3:13<br/>22:3<br/>absolutely (1)<br/>12:6<br/>absorb (1) 8:9<br/>academic (3)<br/>11:1 17:21<br/>24:3<br/>accept (2) 5:11<br/>25:13<br/>Accountability (3)<br/>2:11,17 3:1<br/>acknowledge (2)<br/>17:24 18:6<br/>act (1) 16:21<br/>action (1) 18:22<br/>actual (2) 12:21<br/>26:3<br/>Actually (1) 8:3<br/>addiction (1) 9:18<br/>addition (1) 2:24<br/>administration (1)<br/>16:19<br/>admitted (3) 4:20<br/>13:9 26:5<br/>adopted (1) 22:7<br/>Adrienne (2) 23:2,<br/>5<br/>advisor (1) 20:20<br/>afternoon (5)<br/>5:13 17:19<br/>20:7 23:4,10<br/>again (2) 13:10<br/>14:24<br/>agencies (1)<br/>15:20<br/>ages (1) 7:14<br/>ago (2) 13:21<br/>14:7<br/>agree (2) 20:22<br/>21:10<br/>aid (1) 8:3<br/>alcohol (1) 9:18</p> | <p>ALVAREZ (11)<br/>3:24 4:10,17<br/>5:13,14 12:14,<br/>15,18,20 13:2,<br/>11<br/>amazing (2)<br/>14:12 19:9<br/>America (1) 19:10<br/>amongst (1) 17:4<br/>amount (1) 8:14<br/>angled (1) 8:13<br/>angles (1) 6:22<br/>announces (2)<br/>24:19,20<br/>applaud (1) 21:1<br/>applicant (5) 2:15<br/>3:6,21 4:13,24<br/>application (5)<br/>2:9,18 5:16<br/>6:3 18:1<br/>applied (1) 7:18<br/>appointed (1) 2:5<br/>approval (1) 25:8<br/>approved (2)<br/>2:18 20:9<br/>approves (1) 6:3<br/>April (3) 2:23<br/>3:5,7<br/>Archer (1) 15:20<br/>around (1) 8:24<br/>Art (1) 16:3<br/>arthritis (1) 7:3<br/>articulate (1)<br/>24:24<br/>arts (3) 13:18<br/>14:12 16:9<br/>aspect (1) 10:23<br/>assistance (1)<br/>5:19<br/>assistant (1) 23:8<br/>associate (1) 2:4<br/>August (2) 18:11<br/>23:13<br/>average (1) 24:20<br/>avoid (1) 8:22<br/>away (1) 14:5</p> | <p>back (4) 14:7,8,<br/>16,20<br/>Baron (1) 16:4<br/>based (1) 18:20<br/>became (1) 18:16<br/>become (2) 5:24<br/>11:22<br/>began (1) 7:6<br/>begin (2) 6:5<br/>20:10<br/>beginning (1) 3:12<br/>begins (1) 18:23<br/>behalf (1) 17:12<br/>belief (1) 24:16<br/>benefit (1) 23:19<br/>best (2) 17:4<br/>24:5<br/>better (4) 18:21<br/>19:1 21:6 22:2<br/>betterment (1)<br/>20:23<br/>beyond (7) 21:20,<br/>20,20,21,22<br/>22:4 24:7<br/>Big (1) 17:13<br/>bit (2) 8:6 13:15<br/>blade (1) 6:13<br/>blades (2) 6:21<br/>8:13<br/>Board (7) 2:14<br/>3:17 12:3<br/>13:14 23:16<br/>25:17,19<br/>boost (1) 22:8<br/>both (2) 12:24<br/>21:8<br/>Brandywine (1)<br/>20:15<br/>Brandywood (1)<br/>20:14<br/>Brief (1) 25:21<br/>broad (1) 14:22<br/>broke (1) 16:21<br/>build (2) 11:12<br/>17:3</p> | <p><b>C</b><br/>calendar (1) 3:4<br/>call (1) 15:4<br/>called (2) 8:2<br/>18:20<br/>came (1) 8:1<br/>can (6) 3:10 7:8<br/>13:2 14:17<br/>15:19 19:19<br/>capital (1) 11:12<br/>career (3) 18:13<br/>20:19 23:14<br/>careers (3) 9:24<br/>10:17,22<br/>Carpenter (4)<br/>23:2,3,5<br/>25:12<br/>CARWELL (13)<br/>2:1,3 4:4,21<br/>5:5,10 12:13<br/>13:10 17:17<br/>20:5 23:1<br/>25:11,22<br/>case (1) 3:19<br/>Caspari (1) 15:21<br/>centuries-old (1)<br/>8:17<br/>century (3) 10:17<br/>15:12 22:15<br/>ceremony (1)<br/>16:22<br/>certainty (1) 21:24<br/>chairman (2)<br/>13:14 20:9<br/>challenge (1)<br/>21:19<br/>change (2) 21:24<br/>23:19<br/>changed (1) 6:7<br/>changes (2) 19:9,<br/>10<br/>Charter (18) 2:9,<br/>10,11,18 3:1<br/>4:23 5:18,21</p> | <p>chief (2) 5:14<br/>17:20<br/>children (7) 9:21<br/>12:7 21:10,19<br/>22:18,23 23:19<br/>choose (1) 22:2<br/>chose (1) 15:15<br/>chosen (1) 16:17<br/>citizens (1) 12:2<br/>city (4) 14:12,24<br/>15:1 23:11<br/>civil (1) 11:3<br/>Clarifications (2)<br/>3:20 4:12<br/>class (2) 11:13,<br/>14<br/>clearly (4) 3:11<br/>24:10,19,19<br/>close (1) 14:6<br/>closed (2) 25:20<br/>26:4<br/>collaboration (3)<br/>11:8 22:11<br/>24:4<br/>collective (1)<br/>21:12<br/>college (2) 10:22<br/>16:3<br/>collegiality (1)<br/>5:20<br/>comfort (1) 8:22<br/>comfortable (2)<br/>7:9 9:3<br/>comfortably (1) 8:7<br/>coming (1) 19:10<br/>comment (1) 4:24<br/>comments (9)<br/>2:19 3:18 5:2,<br/>11 25:13,18,<br/>24 26:1,3<br/>commitment (1)<br/>16:20<br/>committed (3)<br/>12:4 24:12</p> |

|  |   |   |  |   |
|--|---|---|--|---|
| 25:1<br><b>Committee (2)</b><br>2:12,17<br><b>Committee's (2)</b><br>3:1 5:1<br><b>communication (2)</b><br>11:8 22:11<br><b>communities (2)</b><br>12:1 24:3<br><b>community (12)</b><br>13:17,18<br>14:15 15:14,<br>18 16:9,13,17<br>22:6 23:23<br>24:11 25:2<br><b>companies (1)</b><br>15:18<br><b>company (3)</b><br>14:14 15:19<br>21:13<br><b>company's (1)</b><br>13:19<br><b>compete (2)</b><br>21:10 22:23<br><b>completely (1)</b><br>22:22<br><b>concentration (1)</b><br>15:24<br><b>concept (2)</b> 15:9<br>22:6<br><b>concluded (1)</b><br>26:6<br><b>conclusion (1)</b><br>11:16<br><b>conditions (1)</b><br>2:19<br><b>conduct (1)</b> 2:6<br><b>consent (1)</b> 25:19<br><b>consider (1)</b><br>25:17<br><b>context (1)</b> 13:16<br><b>contributors (1)</b><br>11:22<br><b>control (1)</b> 8:12<br><b>core (1)</b> 24:9<br><b>court (2)</b> 3:9,13<br><b>create (8)</b> 10:15<br>12:8 15:15 | 17:6 19:22,24<br>22:2,4<br><b>created (4)</b> 7:21<br>13:24 16:10<br>17:5<br><b>creating (1)</b> 16:16<br><b>creative (6)</b> 9:10<br>10:9 11:12,14<br>14:23 17:1<br><b>creativity (4)</b> 11:9<br>16:10 22:12<br>24:22<br><b>crime-free (1)</b><br>16:17<br><b>Cristina (1)</b> 5:14<br><b>critical (4)</b> 11:9<br>20:22 21:11<br>22:11<br><b>crucial (1)</b> 11:16<br><b>cultural (1)</b> 14:12<br><b>culture (1)</b> 11:4<br><b>currently (3)</b><br>18:24 19:11<br>22:4<br><b>curriculum (8)</b><br>9:22 10:5<br>11:5 15:9<br>17:6,23 18:13<br>24:18<br><b>cushioned (1)</b><br>8:11<br><b>cut (1)</b> 6:22<br><b>cutting (1)</b> 6:22 | <b>Delaware (39)</b><br>2:4,8,23 3:2<br>5:15,18 6:4<br>10:2,4,5,12<br>11:10,17,21,<br>24 13:14 16:2<br>17:21 18:2,5,<br>8,11,19 19:14,<br>21,24 21:15<br>22:16,21 23:6,<br>11,12,17,20,<br>22 24:11,15,<br>18 25:8<br><b>Delaware's (4)</b><br>12:6 20:13,<br>24 21:7<br><b>delivers (1)</b> 9:8<br><b>Department (8)</b><br>2:4,14 3:2<br>5:18 6:2 18:2,<br>14 20:24<br><b>design (35)</b> 6:6,<br>11 7:6,11,12,<br>19 9:3,4 10:9,<br>14,15,23 11:7,<br>7 12:10,22<br>13:18 14:14,<br>23 15:1,8,18,<br>18 16:2,3,7<br>18:20,21,23<br>22:1,3,6,10,<br>18 24:18<br><b>design-based (2)</b><br>16:11 18:10<br><b>designed (1)</b> 8:21<br><b>designers (6)</b> 7:4<br>9:2,6,12 10:6<br>15:11<br><b>designers' (1)</b><br>8:16<br><b>designer's (1)</b> 9:9<br><b>Design-Lab (27)</b><br>2:8 5:16,22<br>10:2,5,12<br>11:2,10,17,21<br>13:14 17:22<br>18:5,19 19:14<br>22:16,21 23:7, | 11,17,22<br>24:12,15,19<br>25:8,23 26:4<br><b>design-learning (1)</b><br>10:4<br><b>desires (4)</b> 5:2,8,<br>12 25:14<br><b>determination (1)</b><br>21:17<br><b>develop (2)</b><br>15:11 19:2<br><b>development (2)</b><br>10:20 21:13<br><b>difference (2)</b><br>14:18 25:1<br><b>different (3)</b> 7:20<br>13:6 14:21<br><b>directors (1)</b> 12:4<br><b>discussion (1)</b><br>25:21<br><b>document (1)</b> 3:20<br><b>documentation (1)</b><br>18:4<br><b>doors (1)</b> 19:23<br><b>downtown (4)</b><br>13:20,23<br>14:2,8<br><b>dozen (2)</b> 4:17,<br>18<br><b>DR (17)</b> 3:24<br>4:10,17 5:13,<br>14 12:14,15,<br>18,20 13:2,11<br>17:18,19,20<br>23:3,5 25:12<br><b>dream (4)</b> 13:22<br>14:9 17:3,13<br><b>dreams (2)</b> 18:22<br>20:2<br><b>drop (1)</b> 9:23<br><b>drug (1)</b> 9:18<br><b>Durable (1)</b> 8:10<br><b>during (1)</b> 6:16<br><b>dynamic (2)</b><br>10:13 11:4 | <b>easier (1)</b> 9:2<br><b>East (2)</b> 16:22,<br>23<br><b>easy (1)</b> 7:9<br><b>economic (2)</b><br>11:15 21:13<br><b>economy (1)</b><br>10:17<br><b>edible (1)</b> 6:22<br><b>educate (1)</b> 10:19<br><b>educated (1)</b> 12:2<br><b>education (33)</b><br>2:4,5,6,14,15<br>3:16,17 5:18<br>6:2 9:20 10:3<br>11:2,19 15:24<br>16:16,20 17:4<br>18:2,8,14<br>19:8,10,12,20<br>20:13,17,18,<br>22,24 21:15<br>22:1 25:16,17<br><b>educational (4)</b><br>19:16 23:19,<br>24 24:5<br><b>Education's (1)</b> 3:3<br><b>educator (1)</b><br>23:14<br><b>educators (1)</b> 17:2<br><b>effort (1)</b> 17:11<br><b>efforts (2)</b> 21:1<br>24:6<br><b>either (1)</b> 8:9<br><b>electronic (1)</b> 3:18<br><b>Elementary (1)</b><br>20:14<br><b>elliptical (1)</b> 8:8<br><b>else (3)</b> 5:2<br>25:14,15<br><b>encourage (1)</b><br>11:8<br><b>endorsement (4)</b><br>3:22 4:2,7,15<br><b>engaged (2)</b> 24:1,<br>24<br><b>engineering (1)</b><br>11:6<br><b>ensure (2)</b> 10:24 |
|  | <b>D</b>  |   |  |   |
|  | daily (1) 24:23<br>date (2) 2:21 3:7<br>DCAD (1) 16:5<br>death (1) 21:23<br>decade (1) 14:6<br>deciding (1)<br>25:18<br>decision (1) 21:14<br>declare (1) 2:2<br>dedication (1)<br>18:7<br>deep (1) 16:19   |   |  |   |
|  |   |   | <b>E</b>   |   |

|  |   |  |  |   |
|--|---|--|--|---|
| 24:6<br>ensuring (3) 12:4<br>18:7 24:12<br>enter (1) 11:13<br>enterprise (1)<br>22:19<br>entitled (1) 3:20<br>entrepreneur (1)<br>6:24<br>environment (3)<br>11:4 16:10<br>17:7<br>envision (1) 11:18<br>envisioning (1)<br>21:3<br>ergonomic (1)<br>8:21<br>especially (1) 6:19<br>even (3) 8:12<br>21:16 22:14<br>evening (1) 2:1<br>everyone (6) 2:2<br>5:3 12:9 18:2<br>23:4 25:22<br>everywhere (1)<br>8:24<br>evidence (3) 4:20<br>13:9 26:5<br>exactly (1) 6:20<br>example (1) 6:6<br>examples (1) 9:1<br>exception (1)<br>16:12<br>exceptional (1)<br>19:23<br>Excuse (1) 25:22<br>executive (1) 5:15<br>Exhibit (8) 4:14,<br>19 8:4 12:16,<br>17 13:7,8 26:5<br>Exhibits (2) 4:20<br>13:9<br>exist (1) 11:17<br>exists (2) 18:24<br>22:4<br>expanded (1) 24:6<br>expectations (2)<br>9:11 10:10 | expenses (1)<br>13:23<br>experience (1)<br>10:24<br>experienced (1)<br>17:1<br>explain (1) 8:6<br>explored (1) 7:19<br>extend (1) 24:7<br><br><b>F</b><br><br>face (1) 9:16<br>fact (1) 6:10<br>factor (1) 20:19<br>fails (1) 9:22<br>families (1) 12:2<br>Far (3) 9:23<br>10:10 24:7<br>Farber (1) 6:24<br>feasible (1) 19:6<br>features (1) 11:3<br>feet (1) 15:3<br>female (1) 7:14<br>few (1) 19:9<br>filed (1) 2:9<br>fill (2) 19:2,5<br>final (5) 2:16<br>3:21 4:13 5:1<br>8:1<br>Fins (1) 8:9<br>First (4) 4:22<br>13:19 14:4<br>16:20<br>fit (1) 16:5<br>fits (3) 8:7<br>13:16,17<br>Five (2) 14:7,22<br>flex (1) 6:18<br>focus (1) 16:2<br>following (1) 4:22<br>force (1) 8:15<br>forces (1) 19:11<br>former (2) 23:8,<br>15<br>for-profit (1) 21:8<br>forward (1) 20:1<br>found (1) 15:2 | founders (2)<br>23:16 26:1<br>founding (2) 12:3<br>23:6<br>front (1) 13:22<br>fruit (1) 6:23<br>Further (1) 3:5<br>future (13) 6:4<br>11:20 12:2,7<br>13:22 14:24<br>15:1 17:3<br>18:17,21<br>19:19,24 22:19<br>futures (1) 10:16<br><br><b>G</b><br><br>gap (2) 18:23<br>19:2<br>generate (1) 19:1<br>generating (1)<br>21:3<br>generation (4)<br>5:24 19:7,12,<br>16<br>global (1) 10:17<br>globalized (2)<br>21:11 22:14<br>goals (1) 19:16<br>Good (9) 2:1<br>5:13 8:2<br>17:19 20:7,17,<br>18,22 23:4<br>Governor (1) 21:9<br>graduate (1) 16:1<br>graduates (2)<br>11:12,22<br>graduation (1)<br>25:4<br>grandmothers (1)<br>6:10<br>granted (1) 22:21<br>grateful (1) 5:17<br>great (2) 4:11<br>5:5<br>grip (2) 6:17<br>8:11<br>Grips (1) 8:2 | group (6) 12:3<br>14:22 15:21,<br>22 17:2 23:6<br>grow (1) 14:4<br>growing (1) 15:24<br>growth (2) 11:1<br>22:7<br><br><b>H</b><br><br>Hanby (1) 20:15<br>hand (2) 8:7,9<br>handle (4) 6:13,<br>16 7:18 8:7<br>Handles (2) 6:18<br>7:20<br>hands (5) 5:7,9<br>6:16 7:3,8<br>hard (1) 7:1<br>Harlan (1) 20:14<br>hear (5) 4:23<br>13:11 17:18<br>20:6 23:2<br>heard (1) 22:5<br>hearing (13) 2:2,<br>7,13,22 3:7,<br>10,15,19 21:7<br>25:20,24 26:4,<br>6<br>held (2) 2:13<br>16:22<br>help (4) 14:11<br>15:5,11 19:19<br>helped (2) 18:3,<br>16<br>Hence (1) 9:12<br>herself (1) 3:12<br>Hi (1) 13:13<br>HICKEY (7) 4:6,<br>12,18 12:15,<br>19,24 13:5<br>High (29) 2:8<br>5:16 10:2,5,<br>12 11:10,17,<br>21 13:15,21<br>17:22 18:5,10,<br>19 19:14<br>20:15,15 | 22:16,22 23:7,<br>11,17,18,22<br>24:12,15,19<br>25:4,8<br>higher (1) 15:24<br>highest (1) 18:7<br>hired (1) 7:3<br>holds (1) 24:16<br>homelessness (1)<br>9:17<br>hones (1) 22:10<br>honestly (1) 14:17<br>honored (1) 17:8<br>hopes (2) 5:23<br>13:21<br>house (1) 13:23<br>housewares (2)<br>7:1 8:19<br>human (1) 9:15<br>hundreds (1) 7:20<br>hurt (2) 6:16 7:8<br><br><b>I</b><br><br>idea (1) 4:15<br>ideas (2) 7:21<br>21:3<br>identify (2) 3:11<br>7:17<br>identifying (1)<br>18:23<br>ills (1) 9:17<br>illustrated (1)<br>16:19<br>imagination (1)<br>24:22<br>imaginative (1)<br>24:24<br>imagine (9)<br>10:15 21:2,2<br>24:21,21,21,<br>23 25:3,5<br>imagined (1) 25:6<br>imagining (1)<br>18:21<br>immediately (1)<br>15:14<br>impact (1) 14:14 |
|--|---|--|--|---|

|  |   |  |  |   |
|--|---|--|--|---|
| <p>implementing (1) 21:5</p> <p>importance (1) 16:16</p> <p>important (3) 6:1 21:16 22:13</p> <p>improve (1) 11:15</p> <p>improvement (2) 9:8 10:8</p> <p>improves (1) 9:4</p> <p>inauguration (1) 16:22</p> <p>included (1) 3:23</p> <p>includes (1) 3:20</p> <p>including (3) 4:8 16:2 21:9</p> <p>inclusive (2) 12:9 24:17</p> <p>increases (1) 25:4</p> <p>incredibly (2) 16:9 17:1</p> <p>incubator (1) 11:19</p> <p>indicates (1) 6:8</p> <p>industrial (7) 6:8 7:4,5,17 9:15, 19,20</p> <p>industry (4) 7:1 8:18,19 22:19</p> <p>inefficient (1) 6:21</p> <p>inequities (1) 9:18</p> <p>injury (1) 8:22</p> <p>innovation (5) 8:5, 6,17 22:8 24:22</p> <p>innovations (2) 9:13 21:5</p> <p>innovative (5) 10:14 11:5 17:5 24:1 25:3</p> <p>innovators (5) 5:24 9:13,13 10:11 11:11</p> <p>insightful (1) 14:9</p> <p>intellectual-challenging (1) 24:13</p> <p>interacted (1) 7:16</p> <p>into (8) 4:20</p> | <p>6:22 11:13 13:9,16,17 18:22 26:5</p> <p>intractable (1) 9:16</p> <p>invest (1) 12:6</p> <p>investigation (1) 2:12</p> <p>investment (2) 6:3 20:20</p> <p>involve (1) 24:2</p> <p>iPhone (1) 13:3</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>J</b></p> <p>job (1) 6:14</p> <p>John (1) 2:3</p> <p>joint (1) 2:13</p> <p>Journal (1) 2:23</p> <p>Jr (1) 2:3</p> <p>Junior (1) 20:15</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>K</b></p> <p>keeps (1) 8:8</p> <p>kept (1) 13:23</p> <p>kids (1) 12:22</p> <p>kitchen (3) 7:2,7 8:18</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>L</b></p> <p>labor (1) 18:12</p> <p>large (1) 8:6</p> <p>last (1) 14:22</p> <p>late (1) 14:3</p> <p>later (1) 8:20</p> <p>law (1) 2:10</p> <p>leader (1) 19:15</p> <p>leaders (3) 11:20 21:8 24:9</p> <p>leadership (1) 17:11</p> <p>learn (5) 10:6, 11 11:11</p> <p>12:23 25:6</p> <p>learning (8) 10:15,18</p> | <p>11:4,7 24:1,6, 18,23</p> <p>lefties (1) 7:15</p> <p>letter (2) 3:22 16:4</p> <p>letters (3) 4:2,7, 14</p> <p>level (2) 10:16, 20</p> <p>liberal (1) 5:6</p> <p>licensed (1) 18:17</p> <p>life (4) 9:1,2 15:2,12</p> <p>lifelong (1) 10:18</p> <p>line (1) 17:10</p> <p>literally (2) 7:13 9:4</p> <p>little (3) 8:6,15 13:15</p> <p>live (1) 12:1</p> <p>lives (3) 9:5 11:15 25:2</p> <p>locate (1) 21:14</p> <p>long (1) 15:6</p> <p>look (8) 8:24 20:1 21:19,20, 20,21,21 22:3</p> <p>looped (1) 6:13</p> <p>love (1) 18:12</p> <p>low (1) 13:23</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>M</b></p> <p>major (1) 16:18</p> <p>making (2) 19:17 25:1</p> <p>male (1) 7:14</p> <p>man (1) 14:9</p> <p>manner (1) 4:22</p> <p>many (11) 4:15 9:1,19,21,23, 24 16:2 19:1 21:7 23:7,15</p> <p>marketplace (1) 22:9</p> <p>Martin (2) 17:18, 20</p> <p>material (1) 8:11</p> | <p>materials (2) 6:18 7:20</p> <p>Matt (2) 13:11,13</p> <p>matter (1) 2:10</p> <p>matters (1) 24:17</p> <p>maximum (1) 8:22</p> <p>maybe (1) 21:16</p> <p>mayor (2) 16:15, 19</p> <p>McCormick (1) 15:21</p> <p>meaning (1) 8:21</p> <p>means (3) 17:22 18:21 22:1</p> <p>media (6) 11:6 14:14 15:8,18, 20 16:7</p> <p>meeting (3) 3:4, 21 4:13</p> <p>member (1) 23:6</p> <p>mentally (1) 24:24</p> <p>mention (1) 20:16</p> <p>mentioned (1) 12:16</p> <p>metal (1) 6:12</p> <p>Miller (4) 20:6,7, 8 23:1</p> <p>minimum (1) 8:14</p> <p>missing (1) 5:8</p> <p>mission (2) 5:23 10:19</p> <p>Mobius (1) 15:19</p> <p>modern (1) 9:24</p> <p>moments (1) 15:7</p> <p>more (9) 7:24, 24 8:21 9:3 12:8 13:21 18:3 22:14,20</p> <p>most (2) 21:8 22:22</p> <p>mothers (1) 6:10</p> <p>motivate (1) 9:22</p> <p>moved (5) 14:5, 7,8,16,20</p> <p>much (3) 4:5 5:10 13:21</p> | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>N</b></p> <p>name (5) 2:3 5:14 17:20 20:8 23:4</p> <p>nation (1) 19:21</p> <p>national (2) 19:7, 12</p> <p>natural (1) 16:5</p> <p>necessary (2) 3:11 8:14</p> <p>need (3) 6:20 21:19 25:23</p> <p>needs (3) 7:16 19:5 24:10</p> <p>Network (1) 5:19</p> <p>new (12) 2:9 9:7, 7 11:13 13:24 14:24 15:1,20 16:15 19:23 20:11 22:4</p> <p>News (2) 2:22,23</p> <p>next (9) 5:24 13:11 17:18 19:7,9,12,16 20:5 23:2</p> <p>nice (1) 16:4</p> <p>non-profit (1) 21:9</p> <p>non-slip (1) 8:11</p> <p>norm (1) 16:12</p> <p>note (1) 3:13</p> <p>noted (1) 15:20</p> <p>notice (3) 2:21, 24 9:1</p> <p>noticed (1) 7:1</p> <p>notified (1) 3:6</p> <p>number (1) 4:2</p> <p>nurturing (1) 17:7</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>O</b></p> <p>off (1) 25:21</p> <p>offer (1) 14:13</p> <p>offerings (1) 14:12</p> <p>offers (1) 16:6</p> <p>office (3) 13:19</p> |
|--|---|--|--|---|

|  |  |   |   |   |
|--|--|---|---|---|
| 14:4,5<br>officer (2) 5:15<br>17:21<br>official (3) 3:3,4<br>16:21<br>officially (1) 24:20<br>often (2) 9:9 15:2<br>old (2) 6:11 7:15<br>one (11) 4:8 6:6,<br>12 12:21 13:7<br>14:20 15:7<br>16:11,15,17<br>26:1<br>one's (2) 8:7<br>10:21<br>only (6) 8:14,19<br>14:20 19:20<br>21:23 22:17<br>open (5) 2:3<br>15:5 18:10<br>19:23 23:12<br>opened (1) 14:5<br>operate (1) 9:20<br>opinion (2) 21:18<br>22:22<br>opportunities (2)<br>15:3 23:24<br>opportunity (3)<br>2:16 10:21<br>18:10<br>optimizing (1)<br>10:21<br>optimum (1) 11:1<br>option (1) 22:2<br>ordinary (2) 7:2,7<br>others (2) 15:22<br>19:5<br>ourselves (1)<br>21:20<br>out (2) 9:23 19:8<br>outgrew (1) 14:4<br>over (5) 9:8<br>10:8 18:17<br>19:8 24:20<br>oversee (1) 17:22<br>own (3) 17:9<br>21:9 25:2 | <b>P</b><br><br>packet (2) 4:14<br>16:5<br>pages (1) 18:3<br>paradigm (1) 9:20<br>part (6) 4:9<br>14:10 15:13<br>16:13 24:23<br>26:2<br>participating (1)<br>25:16<br>participation (1)<br>12:11<br>partners (1) 13:20<br>partnerships (1)<br>24:2<br>parts (1) 6:23<br>pass (1) 15:7<br>Paul (2) 20:6,8<br>peel (2) 6:20<br>8:14<br>peeler (9) 6:7,8,<br>9 7:5,17 8:2<br>9:15,19 13:1<br>peelers (1) 13:6<br>peeling (1) 7:18<br>people (8) 7:13,<br>15,22 14:23<br>15:11 17:3,9<br>18:8<br>perfectly (1) 19:15<br>personal (1)<br>21:18<br>personally (3) 3:6<br>12:4 20:12<br>persuade (1) 5:23<br>picture (1) 13:3<br>piece (2) 6:12<br>14:20<br>place (7) 2:21<br>3:1,7 14:19<br>17:15 21:6,21<br>places (1) 15:2<br>plan (2) 5:6<br>11:23<br>planned (1) 23:18 | platforms (1) 24:4<br>plays (1) 21:15<br>pm (1) 26:6<br>point (2) 5:11<br>25:13<br>poised (1) 19:15<br>poor (1) 6:21<br>population (1)<br>24:11<br>position (1) 18:15<br>positive (1) 11:19<br>positively (1) 6:6<br>possibilities (2)<br>21:4 22:5<br>possible (3) 5:6<br>19:2 20:11<br>possibly (1) 22:14<br>posted (1) 2:24<br>posterboard (1)<br>12:16<br>posterboards (1)<br>13:6<br>post-secondary (1)<br>10:22<br>potato (8) 6:7,8,<br>9 7:5 9:15,19<br>13:1,6<br>potatoes (1) 6:21<br>potential (1) 19:3<br>poverty (1) 9:17<br>practices (2) 11:7<br>24:5<br>precisely (1) 7:17<br>prepare (3) 18:3,<br>17 22:18<br>prepared (1) 9:24<br>prepares (1)<br>22:23<br>preparing (2)<br>20:19 21:10<br>present (1) 3:9<br>president (1) 16:4<br>pressure (2) 7:18<br>8:10<br>principal (1) 23:8<br>priority (1) 16:18<br>private (1) 24:3<br>problem (4) 8:17 | 9:8 16:11 20:1<br>problems (6)<br>6:15,15 9:3,<br>14,16 10:7<br>problem-solvers (1)<br>6:1<br>problem-solving (2)<br>15:10 22:12<br>proceed (1) 4:22<br>process (4) 5:21<br>7:12,12 19:4<br>produce (3) 5:23<br>9:13 10:7<br>product (2) 9:7<br>20:12<br>productive (1)<br>11:19<br>products (1) 8:20<br>professional (2)<br>15:8 17:10<br>professionalism (1)<br>5:20<br>professor (1)<br>18:16<br>programs (2)<br>16:7 24:14<br>promise (1) 19:22<br>proposal (1) 18:4<br>propose (1) 25:19<br>proposed (3)<br>5:15 10:3<br>17:21<br>prototypes (4)<br>7:22,23,24<br>19:3<br>prototyping (1)<br>21:4<br>proud (3) 17:8,9,<br>11<br>proudly (2) 14:17<br>25:5<br>provide (2) 8:22<br>24:4<br>provided (1) 3:16<br>provides (2) 8:11<br>22:1<br>public (18) 2:2,6,<br>13,19,22 3:4, | 7,19 10:13<br>18:12,18<br>20:13,17,18,<br>22 25:24,24<br>26:3<br>published (1) 2:22<br>put (5) 4:6,7 8:3<br>17:9 22:19<br>puzzle (1) 14:21<br><br><b>Q</b><br><br>quality (4) 9:4<br>18:7 19:23<br>23:18<br>quickly (1) 14:13<br>quo (2) 9:9 10:9<br><br><b>R</b><br><br>raise (1) 12:2<br>rate (1) 25:4<br>rather (1) 4:8<br>Rayala (3) 17:18,<br>19,20<br>real (1) 7:22<br>reality (2) 18:22<br>19:17<br>realize (1) 15:6<br>realty (1) 20:3<br>real-world (1) 21:5<br>reason (2) 20:16<br>25:7<br>receive (1) 2:19<br>received (2) 3:18<br>20:18<br>recommendation (1)<br>25:18<br>recommended (1)<br>2:17<br>record (6) 2:20<br>3:10,15 25:21,<br>23 26:2<br>redefined (1) 7:24<br>referred (2) 2:11<br>11:14<br>reflect (1) 2:20<br>reform (1) 23:16 |
|--|--|---|---|---|

|  |      |  |  |   |
|--|------|--|--|---|
| regional (1) 23:9<br>remarkably (1)<br>17:5<br>remove (1) 8:13<br>rented (1) 13:22<br>reopen (1) 25:23<br>repetitive (1) 6:17<br>report (3) 2:12,<br>16 5:1<br>reporter (2) 3:9,<br>13<br>representatives (1)<br>4:23<br>reputation (1)<br>17:10<br>required (2) 2:10<br>6:17<br>resign (1) 7:4<br>resources (1)<br>21:22<br>respond (1) 2:16<br>result (2) 8:20<br>20:17<br>resulting (1) 6:23<br>results (1) 22:8<br>review (3) 5:17,<br>21 18:1<br>revitalization (1)<br>14:10<br>revolutionized (1)<br>8:18<br>right (16) 4:9<br>13:24 14:16<br>15:3,15,16,17,<br>23 16:8,14,24<br>17:14,14,15<br>21:13 23:3<br>righties (1) 7:15<br>rigorous (1) 24:13<br>robust (1) 16:9<br>role (3) 17:11<br>21:15,16<br>roles (1) 23:7<br>rolled (1) 19:8<br>room (2) 13:23<br>20:21<br>rotating (1) 8:8<br>rubberized (1) | 8:10 | 9:16   | solutions (5) 10:7,<br>9 19:3,4 21:4<br>solved (1) 7:11<br>solvers (1) 20:1<br>solves (1) 9:3<br>solving (1) 16:11<br>source (1) 23:24<br>speak (7) 3:12<br>5:2,3,8,12<br>20:11 25:14<br>speaker (1) 3:11<br>special (1) 7:15<br>specific (1) 11:3<br>spoken (1) 26:3<br>spotlight (1) 23:23<br>stand (1) 17:12<br>standards (3)<br>19:8,13,17<br>Star (1) 15:21<br>start (1) 17:13<br>started (2) 13:20<br>14:4<br>State (15) 2:14,<br>23 3:3,17 6:4<br>11:24 12:7<br>18:1,14 21:15<br>22:17,21<br>23:20 25:17,19<br>statement (1)<br>17:12<br>State's (1) 3:4<br>status (2) 9:9<br>10:8<br>stayed (1) 14:6<br>still (1) 9:19<br>story (1) 6:5<br>strategy (1) 22:8<br>strength (2) 6:17<br>15:9<br>stress (1) 8:23<br>stressing (1) 8:9<br>strong (1) 16:7<br>struggle (1) 14:3<br>Stuart (1) 16:4<br>student (3) 10:20<br>24:10,16<br>students (18)<br>9:22 10:6,7,9, | 10,14,24<br>11:11 12:22<br>13:8 16:1,13<br>19:18,24 21:2<br>24:1,23 25:5<br>submit (1) 26:2<br>substantial (1)<br>22:14<br>suburbs (1) 14:5<br>succeed (1) 10:22<br>success (2) 12:5<br>21:12<br>successful (1)<br>10:16<br>successfully (1)<br>22:23<br>superintendent (3)<br>23:9,9,15<br>superior (1) 22:12<br>supervisor (1)<br>18:13<br>support (6) 6:18<br>12:10 15:19<br>20:11 23:10<br>25:7<br>supporter (1) 23:5<br>Sure (4) 4:4 5:7<br>9:6 12:18<br>surpass (1) 10:10<br>surpasses (1)<br>9:11<br>sustainable (2)<br>19:6 23:18<br>Swivel (1) 8:2<br>system (1) 20:13 |
|  | S    | send (1) 13:3<br>serve (2) 9:21<br>19:11<br>services (1) 24:8<br>serving (2) 20:8<br>23:24<br>set (1) 13:15<br>several (1) 11:3<br>shape (2) 8:8<br>19:19<br>sharing (1) 24:5<br>Sharp (1) 8:13<br>sharpness (1)<br>6:22<br>show (2) 5:7,9<br>showcase (1)<br>14:11<br>side (3) 8:9<br>16:22,23<br>signed (1) 5:3<br>significant (6)<br>6:23 8:12 9:8<br>10:8 15:13<br>21:8<br>significantly (1)<br>21:16<br>simple (1) 6:6<br>Simply (1) 22:19<br>single (1) 6:12<br>situate (1) 11:23<br>sketched (1) 7:21<br>skilled (1) 17:2<br>skills (4) 15:10,<br>12 22:10,12<br>slippery (1) 6:19<br>small (1) 6:15<br>Social (2) 9:17<br>11:1<br>society (2) 9:16<br>24:17<br>society's (1) 9:14<br>socioeconomic (1)<br>11:13<br>sold (1) 14:9<br>solution (6) 8:1,<br>16 9:7,9,10<br>10:3 | safe (3) 11:3<br>16:16 19:6<br>safer (1) 9:2<br>Sam (1) 6:24<br>same (2) 14:19<br>15:10<br>satisfying (1) 19:6<br>saw (4) 7:16<br>14:13 15:9,14<br>scheduled (1)<br>23:12<br>School (61) 2:8,9,<br>11,15 3:1<br>4:24 5:16,19<br>9:23 10:2,5,<br>12,14,23 11:2,<br>4,10,17,18,21,<br>24 13:15,16,<br>17 15:5,15,19<br>16:1,12,23,23<br>17:13,14,14,<br>22 18:1,5,10,<br>19 19:14,22<br>20:15 22:16,<br>17,22 23:7,11,<br>16,17,22 24:2,<br>7,12,13,15,19,<br>21 25:3,4,5,9<br>schools (4) 7:13<br>9:19 18:18<br>19:18<br>school's (3) 2:18<br>5:22 12:5<br>schoolteacher (1)<br>18:12<br>science (1) 11:6<br>scrapped (1) 7:23<br>SEC-registered (1)<br>20:20<br>Secretary (3) 2:6<br>3:16 25:16<br>sector (1) 24:3<br>seeking (1) 24:4<br>seemingly (1)  | T   |

|  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|
| 21:3<br>teaching (1) 24:6<br>team (6) 4:24<br>5:22 7:6,11,<br>19 18:1<br>technical (1) 5:19<br>technology (1)<br>11:6<br>telling (1) 6:5<br>test (1) 19:3<br>tested (1) 7:22<br>testing (1) 21:4<br>thanking (1)<br>20:10<br>Thanks (2) 4:19<br>13:10<br>thinkers (1) 11:20<br>thinking (9) 11:9<br>18:20,21,23<br>22:3,7,10,11,<br>18<br>thorough (1) 5:20<br>though (1) 13:4<br>thrilled (1) 18:9<br>thrive (1) 15:12<br>thrives (1) 16:11<br>thriving (1) 15:17<br>Today (3) 5:22<br>18:6 25:16<br>today's (3) 2:22<br>3:7 8:20<br>together (6) 3:17,<br>23 4:8 14:23<br>17:2 19:19<br>tool (1) 6:14<br>tools (4) 7:2,8,9<br>8:18<br>tradition (1) 16:21<br>traditional (1) 24:7<br>trained (1) 9:6<br>trajectory (1)<br>11:15<br>Trellis (1) 15:21<br>true (1) 24:16<br>truly (1) 12:17<br>trust (1) 13:1<br>tuition-free (1)<br>10:13 | turn (1) 18:22<br>two (2) 13:6<br>19:11<br>types (1) 23:15   |  |  |
|  | U  | waste (1) 6:23<br>watched (2) 7:13<br>14:2<br>ways (2) 19:2<br>23:20<br>website (2) 3:3,5<br>welcome (1)<br>12:10<br>wet (3) 6:19,20<br>8:12<br>What's (1) 14:21<br>whole (1) 11:13<br>whose (1) 5:16<br>wife (1) 7:2<br>Wilmington (20)<br>11:23 13:16,<br>18,20 14:2,10,<br>18,19,21 15:5,<br>14,17 16:1,6,<br>9,15 18:11<br>19:20 23:12,23<br>Wilmington's (1)<br>17:7<br>Wisconsin (1)<br>18:15<br>wise (1) 14:8<br>wish (1) 4:24<br>wishes (1) 5:3<br>wonderful (1) 7:9<br>wonderfully (1)<br>17:6<br>work (4) 7:23<br>12:1 15:12<br>17:8<br>worked (1) 14:23<br>workforce (1) 10:1<br>working (1) 20:2<br>works (1) 12:9<br>world (7) 6:1,7<br>12:9,9 20:1<br>21:6,11<br>worthy (1) 12:11<br>writing (1) 19:12<br>written (2) 3:18<br>26:1 | Y<br><br>years (8) 6:11,<br>12 8:20 13:21<br>14:7,22 18:15<br>19:9<br>young (3) 7:14<br>15:11 18:8<br>youth (1) 17:7<br>youths (1) 9:23  |
|  |  |  | 1  |
|  |  |  | 100 (2) 6:11,11<br>100-year-old (1)<br>7:4<br>17 (1) 13:21<br>1990 (2) 6:24<br>8:19  |
|  |  |  | 2  |
|  |  |  | 20 (1) 18:15<br>2013 (3) 2:24<br>3:5,8<br>2014 (2) 18:11<br>23:13<br>21st (3) 10:17<br>15:12 22:15<br>22 (2) 2:23 3:5<br>23 (2) 3:8 8:20 |
|  |  |  | 4  |
|  |  |  | 400 (1) 18:17  |
|  |  |  | 5  |
|  |  |  | 5:40 (1) 26:6<br>500 (1) 18:3  |
|  |  |  | 9  |
|  |  |  | 90s (1) 14:3   |
|  | V<br><br>vice (1) 20:9<br>violence (1) 9:17<br>vision (2) 12:8,11<br>visionary (1) 24:9<br>visual (2) 8:3,4<br>visualize (1) 19:1<br>vital (3) 6:2<br>11:22 12:6 |  |  |