

In The Matter Of:
Department of Education
In Re: Camups Community School

Hearing
October 12, 2015

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STATE OF DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
AND THE STATE OF DELAWARE BOARD OF EDUCATION

PUBLIC HEARING

IN RE:

CAMPUS COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Department of Education
The Townsend Building
401 Federal Street
Dover, Delaware 19901

Monday, October 12, 2015
5:49 p.m.

TRANSCRIPT OF HEARING

BEFORE:

DONNA JOHNSON, HEARING OFFICER
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF STATE BOARD
OF EDUCATION

CATHERINE HICKEY, ESQ.
DEPUTY ATTORNEY GENERAL

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1 THE HEARING OFFICER: Good
2 evening. I declare this public hearing to be
3 open. My name is Donna Johnson. I'm the
4 Executive Director of the Delaware State Board
5 of Education. I will be acting as the hearing
6 officer for tonight's public hearing.

7 Campus Community School has
8 applied for renewal of its charter. As
9 required by law, the matter was referred to
10 the Charter School Accountability Committee.

11 This joint public hearing is
12 being held by the Department of Education and
13 the State Board of Education to assist in the
14 decision of whether the criteria set forth for
15 approval in the Delaware Code have been
16 satisfied. This hearing provides the school
17 an opportunity to receive public comment.

18 I will now ask the others with
19 me to introduce themselves.

20 MS. HICKEY: Good evening. My
21 name is Catherine Hickey. I am a Deputy
22 Attorney General with the Delaware Department
23 of Justice, and I'm here this evening serving
24 as counselor to the hearing officer.



1 THE HEARING OFFICER: I would
2 like the record to reflect that the notice of
3 the time, date, and place of today's public
4 hearing was published in The News Journal and
5 the Delaware State News. In addition, notice
6 was posted at the Charter School
7 Accountability Committee's official place of
8 business, on the Department of Education's
9 official website, and on the State Public
10 Meeting Calendar on the State's official
11 website. Further, the school was personally
12 notified of the time, date and place of
13 today's public hearing.

14 A court reporter is present so
15 that the record of this hearing can be made.
16 It will be necessary for each speaker to speak
17 clearly and identify his or herself before
18 beginning to speak so that the court reporter
19 will be able to note who you are. The record
20 of this hearing will be provided to the
21 Secretary of Education and members of the
22 State Board of Education, together with any
23 written or electronic comments received at or
24 before this hearing.



1 We will proceed in the following
2 manner. First, we will hear from any and all
3 representatives of the charter who wish to
4 comment. Then we will take comments from
5 anyone else who desires to speak.

6 There were sign-up sheets placed
7 at the front of the room. I've collected
8 those sheets. He there are three individuals
9 who have signed up to speak.

10 Are there any other individuals
11 who would like to sign up to speak at this
12 time?

13 MR. TRAVERS: Leroy Travers.

14 THE HEARING OFFICER: I'll check
15 your name. You've already signed in. I'll
16 check your name.

17 MR. TRAVERS: Thank you.

18 THE HEARING OFFICER: We will
19 now hear comments from representatives of the
20 school. If you are a representative of the
21 school and you will be giving public comment,
22 please approach the table and have a seat.

23 I intend to try to be as liberal
24 as time and reason allow in accepting



1 comments. However, I do reserve the right to
2 limit comment if it is purely repetitive or
3 cumulative.

4 At this point, I will accept
5 comments from the school. You have signed up
6 in the following order. If you'd like to
7 deviate from that order, please let me know.
8 Catherine Balsley; Patti Sandy; Nicole
9 Pennypacker; and Leroy Travers.

10 Would you like to go in that
11 order or a different order.

12 DR. BALSLEY: That's okay.

13 THE HEARING OFFICER: Okay.

14 Thank you.

15 DR. BALSLEY: Good afternoon.
16 My name is Dr. Catherine Balsley, and I'm the
17 current Head of School for the Campus
18 Community Charter School.

19 I must first apologize to each
20 of you, as our board president, Mr. Harry
21 Popaleo and past president, Mrs. Lisa
22 McMasters, had intended to address you, but
23 with the rescheduling of this meeting today,
24 neither was able to attend. They send their



1 gratitude to each of you for the opportunity
2 to share our amazing story through
3 participation in this rigorous renewal
4 process.

5 Russell Conwell, the founder of
6 Temple University, which is located in
7 Philadelphia -- and my alma mater, hoo, hoo --
8 in 1869 wrote a most brilliant lecture titled
9 Acres of Diamonds. Oftentimes since then it
10 has been repeated or retold as the Field of
11 Diamonds. The heart of this lecture is really
12 a parable about a farmer who lived in Africa.
13 One day, a visitor comes to his home, telling
14 him very large tales of finding great riches
15 in diamonds. The farmer became so excited
16 about looking for these diamonds -- so much so
17 that he sold his farm, and wandered all around
18 the continent in search of these jewels, these
19 magnificent and precious diamonds that would
20 bring him great riches. However, they were
21 never found.

22 Meanwhile, the farmer, who
23 bought his farm, working the land unearthed
24 the biggest diamonds ever to be found, and



1 they were spread all over the ground, the farm
2 ground, right under his very feet. Each of us
3 is right in the middle of our own acres of
4 diamonds. If only we could or would develop
5 the ground we are standing on.

6 To members of the board, to
7 colleagues and friends, Campus Community
8 School has gone unnoticed as Dover's acres of
9 diamonds.

10 For more than 15 years, Campus
11 Community School has been unrelenting in its
12 commitment to providing all children in the
13 Dover area who enter our doors with a free
14 quality education. In the beginning years,
15 supported financially and with faculty from
16 Wesley College, Campus Community School served
17 students in grades 1 through 8. Ambitious as
18 we were, we then added a high school and a new
19 building on Pear Street. Today, many
20 graduates are productive Dover citizens
21 serving our community prepared with a Campus
22 education.

23 Over the years, there is no
24 doubt, Campus has experienced some rough and



1 troubling times. However, during this charter
2 term, Campus has reorganized itself, closing
3 our high school, changing our administration,
4 adding a kindergarten and moving our entire
5 school to Pear Street. We are now a 1400
6 strong K to 8 community of student learners
7 and dedicated staff who remain unwavering in
8 our responsibility and allegiance to serve
9 this community.

10 We are, as some would say,
11 "diamonds in the rough." We are located on
12 the other side of Loockerman, just in front of
13 the railroad tracks, and right next to where
14 the city houses its sanitation trucks. Our
15 children cross streets where empty bullet
16 casings are kicked as likely as empty soda and
17 beer cans, and police car siren screech at any
18 moment, night or day. We are surrounded by a
19 community of blight, poverty, drug abuse and
20 crime.

21 Our students are represented by
22 72 percent racial and ethnic minorities, and
23 two-thirds receive free and reduced lunch, an
24 afternoon snack, and on weekends last year,



1 over 100 students took meals home for the
2 weekend.

3 Our community partners are not
4 bankers or builders, but instead, the Delaware
5 Food Bank and Communities in Schools. Our
6 smaller community partners give us a hand out
7 so that we can provide our students with a
8 hand up.

9 Through all of this, our
10 children are resilient, diamond brilliant and
11 diamond strong. We have earned meets or
12 exceeds standards on the academic,
13 organizational and financial frameworks in
14 2013 and 2014. The 2014-15 have yet to be
15 published, but we are feeling confident that
16 we will continue in this positive trend.

17 In 2013-2014 school year, our
18 middle school won three first places at the
19 Kent County Science Fair -- Botany, Chemistry,
20 and Medicine and Health. We also won first
21 place in the National History Day competition
22 representing the State of Delaware at the
23 Smithsonian National History Day celebration.

24 We have a small community



1 garden, and we devote many days and many hours
2 to community service, to such things as
3 Honoring Our Veterans program, making monthly
4 birthday cards for seniors at Modern Maturity
5 Center, collecting money for breast cancer,
6 Special Olympics, and children victims of the
7 war in Syria.

8 Our academic performance has
9 shown significant improvement, and our results
10 from 2014-2015 Smarter Balanced State Testing
11 places us at about state average in math and
12 10 percentage points above the state for
13 literacy ELA, 15 percentage points higher than
14 Capital District.

15 As Head of Campus Community
16 Charter School, this is what I know: Our
17 "acres of diamonds" are sparkling, and our
18 teachers are farmers that continue to nurture
19 and help our diamonds grow.

20 During the next few months, as
21 you read about us, learn about us, and
22 consider the decision of charter renewal,
23 please come to visit us, too. Our precious
24 little diamonds will certainly amaze and



1 inspire you.

2 Thank you very much.

3 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you.

4 Next signed up to speak is Patti
5 Sandy.

6 MS. SANDY: My name is Patti
7 Sandy. I'm one of the 14 original teachers
8 that were hired when Campus Community School
9 opened in 1998 as one of the first charter
10 schools in Delaware. I'm a first grade
11 teacher, and I am a teacher representative to
12 our board of directors. I strongly support
13 our charter being renewed for several reasons,
14 which I wanted to share some of them with you
15 this afternoon.

16 In my opinion, the most
17 important reason to renew our charter is that
18 our academic program is a success. Our state
19 test scores, which were low several years ago
20 compared to the state average, has risen
21 dramatically, as Dr. Balsley has shared. We
22 determined the things that we needed to do to
23 raise student achievement which would then
24 result in higher test scores. Some of the



1 changes we made include some of these action
2 items.

3 First, as Dr. Balsley has
4 already shared, our board made changes to our
5 administrative staff.

6 We went from multi-aged
7 classrooms to single grade classrooms.

8 We made major changes in our
9 reading and math curriculums and in the
10 materials that we use to teach those
11 curriculums.

12 As a staff, we have examined the
13 Common Core State Standards to ensure that our
14 curriculum addressed all standards and that we
15 needed to make sure that there were no gaps or
16 weak areas.

17 We carefully wrote units and
18 lessons based on the common core standards and
19 made sure that our assessments reflected the
20 learning targets in the standards.

21 We identified students that had
22 low achievement in reading and math at their
23 grade level and were at a high risk to not do
24 well on the Smarter Balanced Assessment.



1 And then we provided extra help
2 to those at-risk students in small groups in
3 reading and math through Tier 2 and Tier 3
4 instruction.

5 We initiated Spring Academy for
6 those at-risk students to come to school
7 during their spring vacation to get extra help
8 in reading and math. We had a Saturday
9 morning tutoring session for at-risk students.
10 I might say our administrator came up from
11 Lewes to attend those.

12 CCS initiated a peer tutoring
13 program where older students in the school
14 provided help during the school day to younger
15 students.

16 We partnered with Communities in
17 Schools with a 21st Century grant to have an
18 after-school STEAM program where homework help
19 and tutoring are a main focus. We've
20 identified which students needed to be in that
21 program and have encouraged them strongly to
22 attend and made the means necessary for them
23 to attend.

24 All of these changes have



1 resulted in several important things that have
2 made our academic program a success.

3 Our achievement gap has
4 narrowed.

5 Our ELA and Math scores on
6 Smarter Balanced Tests were higher than the
7 Capital District, where our school is located,
8 and they were higher than our nearest charter
9 school that is in Dover.

10 Our scores on Smarter Balanced
11 Balance Assessment in ELA were 10 points
12 higher than the state average.

13 And our Math scores went from
14 well below the state average, within one point
15 of the state average, which was a huge
16 increase. And we will beat the state average
17 this spring.

18 At our last charter renewal, we
19 got a very clear message that our academic
20 program needed to improve and that our test
21 scores needed to be a lot higher. We heard
22 the state board loud and clear. We've met the
23 challenge by making changes at our school.
24 I'm very excited to see what's going happen in



1 the future at our school.

2 Thank you.

3 THE HEARING OFFICER: Next
4 signed up to speak is Nicole Pennypacker.

5 MS. PENNYPACKER: Yes. Hello.
6 My name is Nicole Pennypacker, and I'm also a
7 1st grade teacher at Campus Community School.
8 This is my eighth year at Campus. I was a
9 Wesley College graduate and did a lot of my
10 teaching at Campus Community. So when I heard
11 there was a position, I was very excited to
12 join on.

13 I'm speaking today to talk about
14 some of the challenges that we faced
15 throughout the last, you know, couple of years
16 and how we've worked together to support our
17 students and our families.

18 When the school first opened in
19 1998, we had less than 5 percent of our school
20 that was minority. We made a conscious effort
21 to reach out to our communities so that our
22 demographics would better reflect Dover and
23 the surrounding area. Today, we have
24 approximately 65 percent minority, and we are



1 a Title I school.

2 Dover has changed as well. It
3 has become more urban and with this has
4 brought new challenges that accompany an urban
5 community. This includes violence, poverty,
6 drugs and homelessness, which we see every day
7 brought into school. We as a school are
8 confronting these issues head-on by focusing
9 on the whole child. We are not looking just
10 at academics, but social and emotional needs
11 for our students. We are aware that when we
12 help nurture all needs of students and their
13 families, in turn, we are more likely to be
14 successful.

15 Some of the ways we have helped
16 students and their families are through using
17 the Responsive Classroom model. All of our
18 teachers were provided training and resources
19 to support their positive classroom
20 environment.

21 We have partnered with
22 Communities and Schools and the Delaware Food
23 Bank. We participate in the backpack program
24 and provide nonperishable meals for children



1 to take home on Friday. We have developed a
2 program called Cougars Reaching Out Club,
3 where students go into the communities and
4 participate in a variety of service programs
5 that they can help reach out and bring into
6 our school some positive feedback.

7 PCS has initiated a program
8 through our after school STEAM called Girl
9 Talk, which allows young girls to be mentored
10 to leave a positive empowering light.

11 Our administrator has improved
12 communication with families by reaching out
13 through a Friday Focus phone call to all
14 families highlighting positive things that
15 happened throughout the week and sharing
16 upcoming events.

17 All of these initiatives that
18 I've just shared with you help support the
19 kids at Campus Community School and their
20 families as well. Our students have been more
21 successful academically with these
22 improvements. Our academic success was
23 demonstrated this past spring with our ELA
24 scores being higher than the state average and



1 Math test scores improving significantly.

2 This school year we have done a
3 really good job increasing all areas. Every
4 morning, our principal encourages us to make
5 our school go from good to great. We will
6 continue to implement these initiatives and
7 look forward to adding more support to go from
8 good to great.

9 Thank you.

10 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you.

11 Mr. Travers.

12 MR. TRAVERS: I'm Leroy Travers,
13 principal at Campus Community School. Thank
14 you for having us. It really means a lot to
15 us to be sitting here in front of you right
16 now.

17 Over the last several minutes,
18 you've heard a story of a little school that's
19 struggled for so long and pulled itself up and
20 has been able to completely turn around our
21 academics. It's a great story. It really is.
22 But the story that's most important to us is
23 the story of hope, the hope that we offer to
24 the students that come to our school. These



1 are students, as Dr. Balsley alluded to, that
2 don't know where their next meal is coming
3 from, that see violence on a daily basis. If
4 not for us, they would go to school and see
5 some of the same violent acts. We offer hope
6 to those students, hope that they would not
7 otherwise have.

8 We get parents of children who
9 really feel that having their children at our
10 school will save their lives, save their
11 academic lives and quite literally save their
12 lives. It's a really, really powerful feeling
13 to see a parent shed tears as you say your
14 child is next on the waiting list. It really
15 is. It just shows that parents really don't
16 just want their child to be just one of just
17 thousands, they want them to be part of our
18 community where they're one of a few. We know
19 their families. We know where they're coming
20 from. We know the struggles they've had at
21 home. We know the struggles they had the
22 night before.

23 And the academics are wonderful.
24 We've completely turned around the academic



1 program, but really we're offering hope to
2 these students who otherwise have very little.
3 And when they leave our school, they thank us,
4 they thank their teachers, and they realize
5 that they wouldn't be going on to these bigger
6 and better things had they remained where they
7 were. It really is a scene out of a movie
8 when you talk to some of these kids when they
9 say, you know, I'm so glad I'm not at such and
10 such school, I'm so glad that I'm here because
11 I don't know where I'd be without your school.

12 Our academic story is
13 phenomenal. Our community outreach is
14 phenomenal. Really, our story of hope is what
15 should continue us on for, really forever, as
16 long as there is a Dover, Delaware.

17 Thank you for the opportunity
18 today.

19 THE HEARING OFFICER: Thank you.

20 We've just heard from
21 representatives at the school. And at this
22 time, I will accept comments from anyone else
23 who desires to speak. We have no one else
24 signed up to speak. I will pause for a moment



1 to see if there is anyone else who would like
2 to register to give public comment at today's
3 hearing is.

4 If not, I want to thank you all
5 for participating today. The Secretary will
6 consider your comments as part of the
7 decision-making process. Your comments will
8 also be available for the State Board to
9 consider.

10 This hearing is now closed.

11 (Hearing concluded at 6:09 p.m.)

12 -- -- -- --

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1 State of Delaware)
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2 New Castle County)

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CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER

I, Lucinda M. Reeder, Registered Diplomate Reporter, Certified Real-time Reporter and Notary Public, do hereby certify that the foregoing record is a true and accurate transcript of my stenographic notes taken on October 12, 2015 in the above-captioned matter.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and seal this 14th day of October 2015 at Wilmington, Delaware



Lucinda M. Reeder, RDR, CRR



A	afternoon (3) 5:15 8:24 11:15	Attorney (1) 2:22 available (1) 21:8 average (7) 10:11 11:20 14:12,14,15, 16 17:24 aware (1) 16:11	breast (1) 10:5 brilliant (2) 6:8 9:10 bring (2) 6:20 17:5 brought (2) 16:4, 7	changing (1) 8:3 charter (13) 2:8, 10 3:6 4:3 5:18 8:1 10:16,22 11:9, 13,17 14:8,18 check (2) 4:14,16 Chemistry (1) 9:19
able (3) 3:19 5:24 18:20 above (1) 10:12 abuse (1) 8:19 academic (9) 9:12 10:8 11:18 14:2,19 17:22 19:11, 24 20:12 academically (1) 17:21 academics (3) 16:10 18:21 19:23 Academy (1) 13:5 accept (2) 5:4 20:22 accepting (1) 4:24 accompany (1) 16:4 Accountability (2) 2:10 3:7 achievement (3) 11:23 12:22 14:3 Acres (4) 6:9 7:3, 8 10:17 acting (1) 2:5 action (1) 12:1 acts (1) 19:5 added (1) 7:18 adding (2) 8:4 18:7 addition (1) 3:5 address (1) 5:22 addressed (1) 12:14 administration (1) 8:3 administrative (1) 12:5 administrator (2) 13:10 17:11 Africa (1) 6:12 after (1) 17:8	after-school (1) 13:18 ago (1) 11:19 all (13) 4:2 6:17 7:1,12 9:9 12:14 13:24 16:12,17 17:13,17 18:3 21:4 allegiance (1) 8:8 allow (1) 4:24 allows (1) 17:9 alluded (1) 19:1 alma (1) 6:7 already (2) 4:15 12:4 also (3) 9:20 15:6 21:8 amaze (1) 10:24 amazing (1) 6:2 Ambitious (1) 7:17 anyone (3) 4:5 20:22 21:1 apologize (1) 5:19 applied (1) 2:8 approach (1) 4:22 approval (1) 2:15 approximately (1) 15:24 area (2) 7:13 15:23 areas (2) 12:16 18:3 around (3) 6:17 18:20 19:24 ask (1) 2:18 Assessment (2) 12:24 14:11 assessments (1) 12:19 assist (1) 2:13 at-risk (3) 13:2,6, 9 attend (4) 5:24 13:11,22,23	B backpack (1) 16:23 Balance (1) 14:11 Balanced (4) 10:10 12:24 14:6,10 Balsley (7) 5:8, 12,15,16 11:21 12:3 19:1 Bank (2) 9:5 16:23 bankers (1) 9:4 based (1) 12:18 basis (1) 19:3 beat (1) 14:16 became (1) 6:15 become (1) 16:3 beer (1) 8:17 before (3) 3:17, 24 19:22 beginning (2) 3:18 7:14 being (3) 2:12 11:13 17:24 below (1) 14:14 better (2) 15:22 20:6 bigger (1) 20:5 biggest (1) 6:24 birthday (1) 10:4 blight (1) 8:19 Board (9) 2:4,13 3:22 5:20 7:6 11:12 12:4 14:22 21:8 Botany (1) 9:19 bought (1) 6:23	builders (1) 9:4 building (1) 7:19 bullet (1) 8:15 business (1) 3:8	child (3) 16:9 19:14,16 children (7) 7:12 8:15 9:10 10:6 16:24 19:8,9 citizens (1) 7:20 city (1) 8:14 Classroom (2) 16:17,19 classrooms (2) 12:7,7 clear (2) 14:19, 22 clearly (1) 3:17 closed (1) 21:10 closing (1) 8:2 Club (1) 17:2 Code (1) 2:15 colleagues (1) 7:7 collected (1) 4:7 collecting (1) 10:5 College (2) 7:16 15:9 come (3) 10:23 13:6 18:24 comes (1) 6:13 coming (2) 19:2, 19 comment (5) 2:17 4:4,21 5:2 21:2 comments (8) 3:23 4:4,19 5:1,5 20:22 21:6,7 commitment (1) 7:12 Committee (1) 2:10
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