



**Department of Education  
Charter School Accountability Meeting**

**October 13, 2014  
Renewal Application Process  
Initial Meeting - Minutes**

**Delaware Academy of Public Safety & Security**

Mr. Blowman called the meeting to order. For the purpose of the record, introductions were made:

**Voting Committee Members of the Charter School Accountability Committee**

- David Blowman, Chairperson of the Charter School Accountability Committee and Deputy Secretary, DDOE
- Karen Field Rogers, Associate Secretary, Financial Reform & Resource Management, DDOE
- April McCrae, Education Associate, Science Assessment and STEM, DDOE
- Barbara Mazza, Education Associate, Exceptional Children Resources, DDOE
- Atnre Alleyne, Director of Talent Management, Leadership and Educator Effectiveness, Teacher and Leader Effectiveness Unit (TLEU), DDOE
- Chuck Taylor, Community Member, Retired Charter Head of School

**Staff to the Committee (Non-voting)**

- Catherine Hickey, Deputy Attorney General, Counsel to the Committee
- Jennifer Nagourney, Executive Director, Charter School Office, DDOE
- John Carwell, Education Associate, Charter School Office, DDOE
- Jennifer Carlson, Education Associate, Charter School Office, DDOE
- Michelle Whalen, Education Associate, Charter School Office, DDOE
- Brook Hughes, Education Associate, Financial Reform and Resource Management, DDOE

**Ex-Officio Members (Non-voting)**

- Kendall Massett, Executive Director, Delaware Charter School Network
- Donna Johnson, Executive Director, Delaware State Board of Education

**Representatives of Charter School**

- Charles Copeland, Board President
- Charles Hughes, Head of School
- Erica Holt, Assistant Head of School
- Sandy Hypes, Director of Public Safety Program
- Brent Waninger, Teacher, Board Member
- George Dennis O'Brien, Board Member
- Herbert Sheldon, Business Manager

**Meeting purpose:** To review the relevant statutory criteria for renewal and issue preliminary findings relative to the school's renewal application.

## **Meeting between the CSAC and Delaware Academy of Public Safety & Security:**

### **Section 1: Overview**

Mr. Hughes explained that the school's success was recently demonstrated on October 4, 2014 by a DAPSS cadet who administered Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) to a medically-distressed individual and helped save the person's life. He stated that this was one of thirty lifesaving events by DAPSS cadets.

Mr. Hughes noted that the school's mission is not only to prepare its cadets as first responders, but to ensure that they have academic skills to move forward to higher education. He stated that in the 2013-14 school year, 87% of ninth grade DAPSS cadets were either proficient or met their personal growth targets in English Language Arts (ELA) and 89% were either proficient or met the personal growth targets in math.

Mr. Hughes stated that the school has a challenging mission with a very important vision. He stated that the school's public safety training efforts include lifesaving experiences, 40 cadets as members of eight New Castle County fire departments, dozens of cadets participating in Junior Explorer programs (Delaware State Police and New Castle County Police) and partnerships with multiple first responder groups.

Mr. Hughes stated that the school compares favorably to traditional high schools that DAPSS cadets would otherwise attend. He stated that the school enrolls a diverse group of cadets that mirrors its community in race, economic status and special education identification.

Mr. Blowman asked Mr. Hughes to describe the school's demographics. Mr. Hughes stated that the school's demographics are: 60% Caucasian, 27% African American, 16% Hispanic, 12% Asian, 20% students with disabilities, and 40% low income.

### **Section 2: Academic Framework**

Mr. Blowman asked the school to reflect on the school's performance against the Academic Framework. Mr. Hughes noted that, for the 2013-14 school year, the school's overall academic rating came within three points of "Meets the Standard." He commented that high school is a difficult landscape. Mr. Hughes also noted the academic growth for the school's lowest quartile of students. He stated that the school focuses on helping non-proficient students meet their growth targets and proficient students increase performance on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT). He noted that low income students at the school perform better on the State assessment than students at surrounding traditional schools. Mr. Hughes noted that students with disabilities outperform the State average proficiency rate. He stated that African American and Hispanic students perform as well, if not better in some cases, than students at surrounding traditional schools.

Mr. Blowman noted the school's significant improvement in math over the past school year and asked the school to explain any strategies to improve math performance. Mr. Hughes explained that getting the right teacher in the classroom is critical.

Ms. McCrae noted that proficiency data for African American students regressed significantly in math and ELA. She added that math performance rebounded by 14%, but not ELA performance. Ms. McCrae

commented that African American students seem to be a particularly vulnerable subgroup at the school and asked the school to explain how it would address those students' vulnerabilities going forward. Mr. Hughes explained that the school is looking at some cultural strategies to ensure that all students are engaged. Ms. McCrae also noted that the proficiency data for Caucasian students does not show a negative trend and is rebounding. She recommended that the school review its data for underperforming subgroups and look at strategies to address their vulnerabilities.

Mr. Taylor asked the school if it incorporates baseline assessments to track academic growth for all students since all incoming students will not start on grade level. Mr. Copeland stated that the Board discussed this topic during its recent meeting. He said that a board subcommittee has been formed to look at assessments like the Northwest Evaluation Association's (NWEA's) Measures of Academic Progress (MAP). Mr. Copeland also concurred that strategies are needed to improve African American proficiency rates.

Ms. Johnson asked the school to describe its use of any interim summative assessments provided by the State. Mr. Hughes stated that students in ninth and tenth grades will take interim assessments in January. He stated that students in eleventh grade will take the Smarter Balanced test and all students in tenth grade will take the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT). Mr. Hughes also noted that SAT scores are low statewide, so the school is building a culture around SAT performance.

Ms. Johnson asked about the school's articulation agreements for dual-credit programs as well as Advanced Placement (AP) coursework and any data for these programs. Mr. Hughes explained that the school's AP coursework is targeted for seniors and the school's first senior class began this year. He stated that an AP Calculus course was added this year and AP Physics is being explored for next year. Mr. Hughes also noted that Wilmington University provides a dual enrollment course, and that Delaware Technical Community College has inquired about enrolling DAPSS cadets in its fire science program (Tech Prep Delaware).

Ms. Johnson asked the school representatives if they had pursued any Career and Technical Education (CTE) pathways for the school's public safety certification programs. Mr. Hughes stated that the DDOE has denied its application because the pathway was too broad.

Ms. Johnson asked the school if any consideration had been given to adding a mission-specific goal to its Performance Agreement based on the school's unique mission. Mr. Hughes stated that mission-specific goals will be considered during the school's next charter term. He added that, as a start-up charter school, the school lacked the time and/or data. Mr. Hughes also noted that they are reviewing their hallmark certifications (e.g. CPR) to determine the optimal student completion rates. Ms. Massett noted that the school has worked with the Delaware Charter Schools Network and the DDOE to develop mission-specific goals, but the school currently does not currently have enough information to develop mission-specific goals.

Mr. Blowman noted that the school's overall academic performance rating has shown growth from 2012-13 to 2013-14. He noted that there was a dip from 2011-12 to 2012-13, but performance rebounded this year. He also noted that the school's overall rating has been "Does Not Meet Standard" for the past three years. Mr. Blowman asked the school to provide an explanation for the dip and subsequent rebound in student performance. Mr. Hughes explained that he would have to review the 2012-13 performance data to explain the dip, but surmised that since student performance in the school's initial year (2011-12) was reasonable (75% of students meeting their growth targets in ELA and

62.4% in math) and only required enhancements. As a result, he focused on the school's expansion and relocation. Mr. Hughes noted that the school's Annual Report for 2012-13 included an action plan to address the dip in performance. He also noted that the school's overall rating missed a "Meets Standard" rating by three points. He commented that the rebound in performance points to the school's resiliency. Mr. Copeland added that the first three years were focused on start up. He stated that cash flow tightened and the Board determined that the original facility located at Faith City would not be financially suitable long-term. He added that a certain amount of Mr. Hughes' time had shifted to finding a new facility. Mr. Copeland also stated that a number of steps were taken to address the dip in performance which included hiring Ms. Holt as Assistant Principal, replacement of several instructors, and a renewed focus on the educational program after acquiring the new facility.

Ms. McCrae asked the school to explain how its teaching resources were scaled back as a result of budget cuts and to specify what was scaled back. Mr. Copeland explained that the school's second year was very challenging financially and that additional instructors were not available to provide academic supports beyond the regular classroom time. Ms. McCrae asked the school to describe any lessons learned from the challenges in 2012-13. Mr. Copeland noted that the school faced a 16% budget cut in 2012-13. He commented that the school handled it well and now that the school is in a permanent facility a lot of the uncertainty is behind them. Mr. Taylor noted that the school did not receive an anticipated \$300,000 grant from the U.S. Charter School Program (CSP).

Mr. Blowman asked the school to explain any changes to the educational program as a result of the budget cuts in 2012-13. Mr. Copeland stated that the educational program did not change, but additional student supports were not available. Mr. Blowman noted that the CSAC has to weigh whether the school's performance to date is indicative of future performance.

Mr. Taylor asked the school if staff were laid off as a result of the budget cuts. Mr. Hughes stated that layoffs did not occur but additional Paraprofessionals were not hired. Mr. Copeland noted that the school has a lean administrative staff. Mr. Waninger added that professional development was scaled back as a result of the budget cuts but was restored the following year.

Ms. Johnson asked the school to explain its efforts to address the student promotion rates in grade 9 (77%) and grade 10 (89%) as listed in the school's Annual Report. Mr. Hughes explained that ninth grade is a critical year for all high schools. He stated that the school's ninth graders are required to take two courses; the first, a summer orientation course, prior to the school year and a second course (Freshman Seminar) during the school. He added that students are not promoted if they fail a core subject. Mr. Hughes also noted that some students arrive from other schools where they were socially promoted without the earning the necessary credits. He commented that it's important to be honest with students.

Mr. Blowman asked the school for any comments on the school's mission. Mr. Hughes noted that the school is unique in its dual mission to prepare students for careers in public service fields and meet rigorous academic standards.

### **Section 3: Organizational Framework**

Ms. Nagourney noted that the school's Organizational Framework Report was recently finalized following a comprehensive analysis discussion with the school and posted to the DDOE's website. She also provided copies to the school and members of the CSAC. Ms. Nagourney noted that the school

received an overall rating of “Meets Standard.” However, two measures were rated as “Does Not Meet Standard” (4.b. Attendance and 4.c. Staff Credentialing Requirements). Mr. Hughes noted that the attendance rate was 93.5%. He added that additional capacity was added to improve this area, including a new Truancy Officer and office staff. Mr. Hughes stated that staff credentialing is trending upward. He noted that finding highly qualified Spanish teachers was a challenge. In addition, student ELA performance with a non-highly qualified ELA teacher was positive.

Ms. Nagourney noted that the DDOE’s Curriculum and Instruction Workgroup reviewed the school’s curriculum submission and it did not meet standard. She stated that the school will have the opportunity to address the deficiencies in its response to the CSAC’s Initial Report.

Ms. Mazza referenced page 30 of the renewal application, which lists the required members of the IEP (Individualized Education Plan) Team. She stated that the Team should include the CTE/Career Pathway teacher. Ms. Mazza also asked the school to explain its internal process for monitoring and ensuring that IEP’s are implemented by all staff with fidelity. Mr. Hughes explained that IEP’s are requested from the sending school when students enroll at DAPSS. Staff review IEPs within 60 days and students become part of a team led by a case manager. The case manager contacts all of the respective teachers and the teachers review IEP Plus for any active IEPs. Mr. Hughes also noted that student progress is monitored throughout the year on an ongoing basis. He also commented on the importance of working with parents and that the school has not received any administrative complaints regarding noncompliance.

Ms. Mazza asked the school to explain its RtI (Response to Intervention) process and specific interventions that the school utilizes to address skill gaps. Mr. Hughes explained that the school day is 30 minutes longer than most schools, which provides an elective period during the third block for targeted intervention. Ms. Mazza asked if there is a data review, similar to RtI. Mr. Hughes stated that the case managers drive the data reviews. Ms. Massett noted that the school collaborated with Positive Outcomes Charter School to learn best practices for working with students with disabilities.

Ms. Field Rogers noted that ninth grade enrollment in 2013-14 was 147, but this year’s tenth grade enrollment is down to 104 and asked the school to explain the decrease. Mr. Hughes stated that ninth grade retention has been an ongoing challenge. He added that increased attrition was due in large part to fallout from last year’s incident involving a former teacher’s sexual misconduct with a student. Ms. Field Rogers noted that the school’s total current enrollment is 363 students, which is under the required 80% of authorized enrollment. Mr. Hughes stated that the school is seven students under the 80% threshold and plans are in place to increase enrollment. Mr. Blowman noted that the 80% threshold is an important benchmark for financial viability. He added that the CSAC will need to see a budget that is tied to actual enrollment to ensure that any risks have been mitigated.

The CSAC did not have any comments regarding governance and reporting requirements.

Ms. Field Rogers requested the school’s summer pay amount and asked if the school has set aside sufficient resources to cover school closure requirements. Mr. Sheldon stated that summer pay is approximately \$480,000. Ms. Field Rogers noted that the school currently does not have sufficient funds in its contingency to cover summer pay.

#### **Section 4: Financial Framework**

Ms. Nagourney distributed copies of the Financial Framework Report to the CSAC and the school. She reported that the school received an overall rating of “Falls Far Below Standard” for the 2013-14 school year. Ms. Nagourney also noted that the school submitted additional information clarifying the school’s financial position, which will be added to the record.

Ms. Field Rogers noted that the school’s submission did not include revenue sheets. She also noted that the FY15 budget lists enrollment at 420 and that the numbers on the preliminary budget do not match the FY15 budget. Mr. Sheldon explained that the preliminary budget is for this year and the FY15 budget, which lists enrollment at 420, is for the 2015-16 school year.

Mr. Copeland stated that the Board originally planned to locate the school in the City of Wilmington. He stated that the Board spent \$100,000 to pursue this objective, but was not successful. He stated that a charter modification was requested for a delayed opening and relocation to the Faith City site. In year two, the Board realized that it would cost over \$1,000,000 to fit out the facility. He noted that this was the same year that the school lost its federal startup grant. In year three, the remaining obligations to Faith City had to be satisfied along with the new lease at the school’s current location at Our Lady of Fatima. The remaining Faith City lease obligations will be satisfied at the end of this school year. In addition, the Board spent \$280,000 in capital improvement expenses to fit out the Our Lady of Fatima site. Mr. Copeland stated that, once the school reaches an enrollment of 400 students, its financial position will greatly improve. Mr. O’Brien also noted that one-time expenditures related to start-up costs during the initial charter term will not be an issue going forward.

#### **Section 5: Five-Year Planning**

Mr. O’Brien noted that prior budget constraints limited the school’s marketing ability. He also noted that Mr. Copeland paid for marketing materials. Mr. O’Brien added that the school recently launched a new marketing campaign which the Board is financing that incorporates social media. Thirty cadets have contributed stories about DAPSS that will be posted on YouTube. The stories are categorized by various careers (e.g. law enforcement, firefighting, etc.). Mr. Copeland noted that the school has added student athletics programs, which increase the school’s visibility. Mr. Hughes also noted that outreach to feeder middle schools is helping to increase enrollment.

Mr. Blowman asked the school to explain any lessons learned about marketing the school’s unique educational program. Mr. Hughes stated that plans are underway to better communicate student success stories and the duality of the school’s mission and expectations so that students understand the school’s unique culture. Ms. Johnson noted that the school will have more competition than ever with student recruitment based on the number of new charter schools opening next year. She asked the school to explain any additional engagement opportunities to recruit students beyond its social media strategy that are more face-to-face in nature. Mr. Hughes noted that last year a teacher managed student recruitment, but this year an administrative position has been added to focus on student engagement. Mr. O’Brien noted that the school has a unique selling proposition which must be communicated more clearly.

Mr. Hughes stated that the school plans to build on its Tactical Operations Program, which Mr. Waninger started three years ago. He said that the program provides opportunities for 30-40 cadets interested in gaining public safety and security experiences. Mr. Waninger also noted that Wilmington

University is interested in supporting the development of the school's computer science course in cyber security. The Tactical Operations Program also provides community service to over 65 events statewide annually and supports the school's fundraising initiatives. He noted that students have to apply to the Tactical Operations Program. Mr. Hughes also noted that, in the next five years, the school will build its cadre of instructors to include career professionals (e.g. police officers, firefighters, etc.).

Dr. Alleyne asked the Board to explain how it evaluates the School Leader and leverages the State's evaluation system. Mr. Copeland stated that the Board does not use the State's evaluation system, but provides oversight through board meetings and Mr. Copeland's regular meetings with Mr. Hughes. Mr. Hughes added that the school uses the State's evaluation system for its educators.

Mr. Taylor asked Mr. Copeland if the school's Board has completed the required board governance training. Mr. Copeland stated that board finance training was completed, but not the board governance training. Ms. Massett noted that Mr. Hughes has been in contact with the Delaware Charter School Network regarding the training.

Ms. McCrae commented that the DDOE's Curriculum and Instruction workgroup will be rolling out a computer science program that includes two Advanced Placement courses and dual enrollment which could support the school with its plans for dual enrollment plans.

**Conclusion of the meeting:**

Mr. Blowman asked the voting members of the CSAC if there was any additional information that they required in order to inform their decision-making. The following information was requested:

- Revenue sheets.
- Revised budget sheets based on current actual enrollment with the preliminary budget added to the budget worksheet.
- Additional curriculum materials.
- Recruitment plan with timelines through September 2015.
- Plan to improve overall student achievement.
- Analysis of baseline academic data for incoming students.
- Action plan for addressing minority student performance.

Mr. Blowman then asked the voting members of the CSAC if there were any sections of the application that they felt warranted a "Does Not Meet Standard" rating at this time based on their review of the application and the discussions at the meeting:

- Academic Framework warranted a "Does Not Meet Standard" rating.
- Financial Framework warranted a "Does Not Meet Standard" rating.
- Organizational Framework (curriculum only) warranted a "Does Not Meet Standard" rating.

### **Renewal Application Process Timeline:**

Mr. Blowman discussed the renewal application process timeline as follows:

- The CSAC will provide the school with an Initial Report no later than October 22, 2014.
- The applicant will have the opportunity to submit a written response to the CSAC Initial Report, which is due by close of business on November 7, 2014. Mr. Blowman recommended that the school not wait until the issuance of the Initial Report to begin preparing its response.
- The final meeting of the CSAC will be held on November 12, 2014, at 10:45 a.m., in the 2nd floor Cabinet Room of the Townsend Building at 401 Federal Street, Dover DE.
- The CSAC's Final Report will be issued no later than November 20, 2014.
- A second public hearing will be held on December 9, 2014, in the 2nd floor auditorium of the Carvel State Office Building, located at 820 North French Street, Wilmington DE, and will begin at 5:00 p.m.

The meeting was adjourned.