



**Department of Education
Charter School Accountability Meeting**

**October 14, 2014
Renewal Application Process
Initial Meeting - Minutes**

EastSide Charter School

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 and Resource Management, DDOE
- Barbara Mazza, Education Associate, Exceptional Children Resources, DDOE
- April McCrae, Education Associate, Science Assessment and STEM, DDOE
- Tasha Cannon, Deputy Officer Talent Recruitment, Selection and Strategy, Teacher and Leader Effectiveness Unit (TLEU), DDOE
- Charles Taylor, Community Member and Former Charter School Leader

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

- Dr. Lamont Browne, Head of School
- Nicholas Medaglio, Director of Operations
- Thomas C. Humphrey, Board Treasurer
- Charles S. McDowell, Esq., Board Chair
- Katelyn Whelan, Special Education Liason

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 EastSide Charter School:

Section 1: Overview

Dr. Browne provided a general overview of the school, stating that the school has had its ups and downs since its inception in 1997. He stated that the school has demonstrated steady growth in student proficiency and students meeting growth targets. He noted that the school has had an influx of teachers, which has allowed for higher quality teachers and increased enrollment. He indicated that, as a result, the school will be requesting a modification to increase its enrollment if renewed. He said that the school has more students being retained. He noted that the school has a high low-income population and full minority population, with 10% of students being Hispanic. He also stated that the school has a drive to improve school culture among students as well as staff, which has led to gains that the school has had.

Section 2: Academic Framework

With regards to the success of the academic program, Dr. Browne discussed the school's proficiency and growth. Mr. Blowman asked what has driven EastSide's sustained growth over the last four years. Dr. Browne attributed the sustained growth to the professional quality of each staff member, the focus on supporting each staff member from its leadership team, and professional development. He stated that the main contributing factor to the school's growth has been sustained professional development for its staff, as well as instituting different climate protocol in terms of how it supports its students with severe emotional, behavioral and academic needs.

Mr. Blowman asked Dr. Browne to identify the school's biggest challenge in terms of growth. Dr. Browne noted that the school continues to have an influx in students, primarily in Kindergarten, with severe emotional needs. He stated that, for that reason, the school now has Ms. Whelan heading the Special Education team and utilizes statewide resources to help support the emotional needs of its students. Mr. Taylor asked if the school feels that its Pre-K Program will help with some of the emotional issues. Dr. Browne stated that initially the reason for starting the Pre-K Program was to get students academically on track, but now the school realizes that it needs to get the students emotionally on track as well. He stated that the school has placed some of the supports in place to help students as they enter the K-8 Program.

Ms. McCrae noted the school's low proficiency rates in Science and Social Studies. Dr. Browne said that, when you focus on one thing, there always seems to be something else taking a slide. He noted that the school instituted a Fifth Grade Academy to help transition students from lower school to fifth grade. He stated that the school did not see the same success in eighth grade, largely due to having a first year teacher in eighth grade. Dr. Browne noted that the school saw a big jump in seventh grade Social Studies. He stated that one change the school made this year was to give Science and Social Studies double block time, as with math and reading. Dr. Browne clarified that it's taught all year, whereas two years ago it was only half the year and helped contribute to the lack of success. Dr. Browne confirmed that the school was a member of the Science Coalition. Mr. Taylor and Dr. Browne discussed the effect that teacher training has on the amount of instructional time missed, noting that the amount of training and missed instructional time should decrease if teachers are retained.

Ms. Mazza expressed concern that, while there has been some growth in proficiency for students with disabilities, there are still some real delays. Ms. Mazza asked what the school was doing to target the

learning and skill gaps for reading and math. Dr. Browne discussed the school's inclusion model and stated that the school has identified one of the school's best middle school teachers to work with a core of students, some of whom are special education students and some of whom just have a lot of academic need. Dr. Browne stated that, this year, instead of having one teacher teaching math and reading in middle school, the school has one math teacher for grades six through eight and one teacher for reading for grades six through eight, allowing them to be experts in the academic content of special education. Dr. Browne stated that the school is also implementing small group instruction and deferred to Ms. Whelan to elaborate. Ms. Whelan stated that there is a special education teacher for each grade working side-by-side with the general education teachers. She described the school's small-group instruction model, stating that 45-55 minutes of each block are reserved for small group instruction based on six week cycles of data. Ms. Mazza asked if any students need more small group instruction. Ms. Whelan responded that a couple of students have paraprofessional support, and that she and a special education teacher have specialized schedules. She stated that there are also cases in which students work with a small group instructor for more time and are out of the room for more time. Dr. Browne added that the school has budgeted for extra pay funds for teachers who are doing tutoring after school.

Mr. Blowman next asked whether there was anything that the school wished to add to what was reported in its application regarding school mission. Dr. Browne stated that the school's mission is to catch students up and hopefully accelerate them. He stated that the school's mission-specific goal is more than one year of growth per year. He explained that school knows that, if students are starting out below grade level, then one year of academic growth per school year is never going to catch them up. He said that the school set a 1.1 target, with exceed being 1.3. He noted that the school exceeded both of those targets last year.

Ms. Massett asked if the school is changing its testing next year. Dr. Browne noted that the school has used a MAP (Measures of Academic Progress) test as its mission-specific test, as well as its alternative test for educator evaluations. He said that the school is now using Amplify and is hoping to use that rigorous and Common Core aligned test as its mission-specific test. He stated that one thing was noted in the school's modification application was the intent to use that, though it is currently difficult because there is no baseline, similar to how it is for Smarter Balanced this year. He noted that he has been speaking to Ms. Nagourney about that and will be making the request at some point.

Section 3: Organizational Framework

Ms. Nagourney noted for the record that the school's Organizational Framework Report had been finalized and added to the record. She noted that the final rating is "Meets Standard."

Dr. Browne stated that, over the last couple of years, the school has had a change in leadership of the school's operations. He noted that Mr. Medaglio was a teacher at the school for two years, teaching five years overall, and was the teacher representative on the Board. Dr. Browne said that Mr. Medaglio is now the school's Director of Operations. He stated that Mr. Medaglio has added increased oversight, attention to detail, and an overall plan to help the school shore up areas that were not strong.

Mr. Blowman asked the school to speak about credentialing, which was "the one red cell on the framework." Dr. Browne stated that the school does have a few teachers who were not certified and there were two teachers who did not pass the test last year in time. noted that one of those two has since been replaced. He said that the school also has an interesting situation in which it designated a

member of its business team to teach World Languages. He explained that, although she has taught before, she was not certified in teaching, resulting in every class she taught being registered as not being taught by a highly-qualified teacher. He stated that it was a great use of a great resource that did not affect the core classes, but was reflected in the report. He noted that it was one way in which the school maximized the potential of its staff that just did not fit the credentialing requirements.

Ms. Mazza noted that the school's application stated that all team members and staff that work with identified students are included in the development of the IEP (Individualized Education Program) and the implementation of the IEP with fidelity. She asked the school to identify its internal monitoring system to ensure that this occurs. Ms. Whelan stated that she oversees every IEP meeting and that general education and special education teachers have co-planning time every day. She noted that she oversees the logistics and makes sure that everybody gives input through input forms. Ms. Mazza asked whether related arts teachers receive the IEP and Ms. Whelan stated that they do, especially when the students need supports in those classes.

Ms. Mazza asked what the school was doing to ensure that a career planning or CTE (Career and Technical Education) Teacher is attending meetings for students of transition age. Ms. Whelan stated that she is attending, as well as one of her eighth grade teachers. With respect to career pathways, she indicated that she does not designate anyone specific to attend the meetings. Ms. Mazza told Ms. Whelan that she may want to review the regulations on transition, because it is a new regulatory requirement to have that person at the IEP meeting for students who are either turning 14 or are in the eighth grade during the IEP year. Ms. Whelan stated that anybody that had a part, including the School Counselor who does the applications or does the high school prep courses, or the Business Teacher if the student is in a business course. Ms. Mazza reminded Ms. Whelan to make sure that person at meeting signs "Career."

Ms. Mazza then asked how the school is ensuring that its Special Education Teachers are well-grounded in the Common Core State Standards. Ms. Whelan responded that all teachers are held to the same expectations regarding professional development and are rated on the same observation scales and categories. Ms. Mazza invited Ms. Whelan to the DDOE's upcoming Standards-Based IEP trainings.

Mr. Blowman next turned to attrition rates and enrollment. Dr. Browne stated that the great thing about the trends is that the school has not had a marketing plan. He attributed the school's enrollment stability to the satisfaction of the school's current families and word of mouth about the quality of the school. He stated that this has led to an increase in Kindergarteners every year and the ability to create the Pre-K Program this year. Dr. Browne noted that the school's growth led to the request for a minor modification two years ago to get the school to where it is now. He stated that the school anticipates it being high this year and, as a result of the expected growth, plans to seek another minor modification to allow the school to accept approximately 40 more students.

Mr. Blowman asked how the school's waiting list has trended over time. Dr. Browne stated that a lot of parents don't apply until after January 30th, which is why the school has not had a lottery. He noted that a lot start applying after January 30th and it grows over the course of the year. He stated that the school starts adding students to the waitlist around August. He stated that the waitlist, which is at 56 for the 2014-15 school year, has increased substantially over the last couple of years and the school expects that to increase as well.

With respect to governance and reporting requirements, Mr. Blowman asked the school to speak generally about relationship between the Board and the school leadership. Dr. Browne stated that, from the school's perspective, there is a strong relationship in terms of the Board holding the school leadership accountable and supporting them. Mr. McDowell noted that the school has a very strong and talented Board with representation in the community that has been particularly important for fundraising. He noted that the school has raised over \$8 million over the last eight years. He stated that the Board's approach to governance and management has been to do a thorough job in hiring a Head of School and charge him with the responsibility of running the school. He stated that the Board sets goals every year with metrics. He also noted that there is incentive compensation involved. He stated that the Board monitors the performance throughout the year and receive fairly detailed monthly reports. He stated that different teachers and staff members representing different aspects regarding the operations of the school come to the Board's meetings to educate the Board. He stated that the Finance Committee is the most hands-on committee and turned to Mr. Humphrey to speak as Chair of the Finance Committee. Mr. Humphrey added that he has been involved with the Board for a little over one year and has been very pleased with how Dr. Browne engages with the Finance Committee. Mr. Taylor commented that the aspirational goals set by the Board are outstanding and that the Board has set the targets in realistic fashion.

With regards to closure requirements, Ms. Field Rogers noted that the school stated that it had sufficient funds to pay all employees and other obligations. She asked what other obligations the school considers. Mr. Medaglio stated that this was the first year that, by the close of the year, the school got most of the obligations into the fiscal year. He noted that, for this year, the school didn't have as much to factor into it and the biggest concern was the salaries. Ms. Field Rogers asked how much the school estimates the summer pay to be. Mr. Medaglio stated that he did not have that information but could provide it.

Section 4: Financial Framework

Ms. Nagourney stated that the school's Financial Framework Report had been finalized and entered into the record. Mr. Blowman noted that the overall rating is "Meets Standard" for the third year.

Mr. Medaglio noted that the two areas to look at are the unrestricted days cash and the cash flow. He noted that the school had a lot of control over each and were still within the 30 to 60 days cash on hand. He said that the one-year trend was not positive and attributed it to a decrease in liabilities. He stated that the school paid down outstanding accounts payable. He noted that the school also has an increase in receivables. He stated that the school had \$63,000 that was to come from the foundation, but delayed it purposefully to help out with the school's 2014-15 surplus. He noted that the school also pre-paid some expenses because they were seeing that, at the end of this current year, they had to start paying the surplus. He noted that the school also decided to start paying for some curriculum and professional development ahead of time because of that surplus. He said that these decisions affected the school's cash flow which, consequently, also hurt the school's unrestricted days cash.

Ms. Field Rogers stated that it would be helpful to have a date on the preliminary budget. She said that what she is looking for on projected revenue and budget sheets are the revenue worksheets to be able to determine where students are coming from and tie that out to the school's local funds. She noted that she was looking for a 5-year projection on budget.

Ms. Field Rogers sought clarification on the foundation's steady contribution of \$310,000 to the operating budget and whether there is a plan or an agreement that it will continue. Mr. McDowell replied that the foundation has to operate exclusively for the benefit of the school, such that it can't do anything other than funnel benefit into the school. He said that the long-range plan is for the school to decrease the need to have philanthropic support for the operating budget to concentrate more on the capital side. He stated that there has been a strong, steady base of support and, for a number of years, the foundation has been able to reliably provide a grant of over \$300,000 to be used for operating expenses, plus they've spent approximately \$5.5 million on capital. Dr. Browne commented that, on the one hand, the school has met its goal in being able to decrease operational expenses, but they've also created another opportunity to replace that financial need.

Mr. Blowman asked if there is a financial impact on the shift from MAP to Amplify. Dr. Browne stated that the school was fortunate to receive the high-performing charter fund to help fund this year. He noted that the cost moving forward will be less because it's been purchased.

Mr. Taylor asked whether the school's income, state and local, minus the grant that the school receives from the foundation is enough to "hang on." Mr. Medaglio replied that the school has a little carry over, but is able to operate with mostly state, local, and federal funds. He stated that the school does have a lot of surplus in local and that the hope is to continue with that in case of emergency or closure.

Dr. Browne commented that, on the one hand operationally, it's not nearly enough due to capital expenses. He stated that the reason the school has a Pre-K Program is that there are so many students coming in with severe emotional or academic needs. He said that a lot of students have IEPs but don't have the funding unless they're at the highest level. He noted that the school has the funds for certain Paraprofessionals, but the school has a need for Paraprofessionals in Kindergarten that the school does not have the funds for. He stated that, in any given year, the school has been able to adjust the budget for that, but it's not something that the school can not necessarily count on. Mr. Medaglio noted that the Pre-K Program has had a lot of uncertainty regarding the amount of funds coming in and that the school was extremely conservative in projecting its budget.

Mr. McDowell stated that, as the school improves the academic quality, the school should be able to increase the number of students per class, which would improve the school's economics overall.

Section 5: Five-Year Planning

Mr. Blowman asked the school to speak about the school's enrollment projections. Dr. Browne stated that the school tries to be conservative, because the school does not want to lack room for the students. He noted that the enrollment projection was the school's best guess by looking at students in the previous grade and the school's entry points. He stated that, with a Pre-K Program, the school now has a strong entry point for Kindergarten as well as sixth grade. He stated that a number of charter schools opening up next year also impacts the school's enrollment projections.

Mr. Taylor asked whether, because of other schools opening up, the school thinks it would need a marketing plan moving forward in order to compete. Dr. Browne stated that, as of right now, the school feels very comfortable with its enrollment and future enrollment in grades 1-8, as long as it maintains in Kindergarten enrollment. He acknowledged that the school has had fears of losing fifth grade students to a new opening school that has sixth grade, but that it is confident in the satisfaction that its families

have in the school. Ms. Massett noted that the school is part of a group of charter schools working together to get students.

Ms. Johnson stated that the school mentioned that it was doing four rounds of Common Core and Smarter Balanced assessments that are designed and published by Amplify, then referenced later on that it has mission-specific goals using MAP testing. Ms. Johnson asked about the use of Amplify versus Smarter Balanced interim assessments designed by Smarter and whether there was consideration if the school is using an interim secondary assessment to replacing the MAP assessments so that the school wasn't doing testing upon testing. Dr. Browne stated that the goal is to use Amplify as the school's mission-specific test. He said that, instead of having an overall average, the school wanted to make it student-specific, but in order to do that, there is a need for a one-year baseline. Dr. Browne noted that the school is hoping that, as of June of this year, the school will have that baseline to make goals for next year. He said that the challenge is that, in order to apply for the minor modification, the school would have to do it next fall for the following year. Ms. Johnson clarified that the school would need to amend its Performance Agreement and informed the school that it would be a major, not minor, modification. Dr. Browne stated that the school wishes it could do that for year one of its charter, but the timing doesn't work out. Otherwise, he explained, the school has an additional year in which it's doing Smarter Balanced, Amplify, and MAP simply because the school said that was what it was going to do, even though the school has a better test. Ms. Johnson noted: "unless you went one year without a mission-specific goal."

Ms. Johnson also noted that the school states a five-year goal of implementing the Common Core State Standards and asked the school to clarify whether they are already being implemented. Dr. Browne stated that the Common Core State Standards have been implemented for two years, with this being the school's third year. He stated that he should have added "with excellence."

Finally, Ms. Johnson asked, knowing that the school has an alternate evaluation system for its teachers approved by the DDOE, whether the School Leader evaluation has also been approved. Dr. Browne responded that the evaluation system did not include the administrative team. Ms. Johnson commented that the school may want to go back to the DDOE's TLEU and ask about that. Dr. Browne stated that it is not approved by the DDOE, but something that the school would love to "pitch" to the DDOE.

Mr. Blowman asked the school to speak generally regarding how the evaluation system is working for the school. Dr. Browne stated that it was going very well and has created a very high bar regarding what excellence in instruction looks like. He noted that the rubric itself is very specific and takes the subjectivity out of the evaluation process. He said that, because the focus is on coaching, the evaluation of administrators looks at how they coach teachers. He noted that the school has seen almost a complete culture shift in that teachers look for and almost demand coaching. He stated that the quality of coaching and openness of staff has made them become better teachers, which ultimately is improving the students.

Ms. McCrae expressed concern regarding the school's five-year plan on the evaluation of student performance as it relates to Science and Social Studies. She stated that she recognizes that the Performance Framework has a strong emphasis on math and English Language Arts (ELA), and that she does recognize the school's strengths and gains in those areas, but noted that student outcomes in Science and Social Studies have been exceptionally low over the last three years. She stated that the school needs to put together strategic plan about to address that. She commented that, looking at the school's five-year plan where the school speaks about implementing the Common Core, Next

Generation Science Standards, and Delaware Social Studies Standards, she would like to see crossover in all of those areas. Dr. Browne noted that the school has designated funds for professional development to ensure that the school's lessons are aligned. He stated that the focus is cross-curricular.

Mr. Blowman asked whether, with regards for the school's expected growth in the ELL (English Language Learner) population, the school has plans or strategies in place to meet the needs of that population as it grows. Dr. Browne stated that he does not expect the population to grow significantly, as the current jump reflects a lot of students coming from one school. Ms. Whelan added that the school contracted Back to Basis for ELL students.

Mr. Hughes asked whether the teacher evaluation system has financial incentive or whether there are plans for that. Dr. Browne stated that the school has plans for that. He said that the plan is that, next year, the two-year results for each teacher will impact that student's band. He said that the school has had an individualized bonus plan, but the salary band will be individualized and the bonus school-based moving forward.

Mr. Blowman requested clarification on the request for modification and stated that there is precedent from last year to consider and rule on that as part of the renewal process. Ms. Hickey noted that three of the four requests are for enrollment preferences. She confirmed that the school does not have enrollment preferences and informed the school that changes in enrollment preferences is a major modification. She requested that the school provide confirmation to the Charter School Office that it is seeking enrollment preferences in conjunction with its renewal application. She noted that it should be a document to be included in the record. As to the minor modification regarding enrollment increases, she noted that the request for a 4.98% increase can be considered a request for a 5% increase. Mr. McDowell asked for clarification regarding incremental increases annually and whether that would be considered a modification. Ms. Hickey explained that, if the plan is to continue to grow, the school would be better served to request a minor modification at this time, because she really believes it is a 5% increase. Mr. McDowell stated that the school is asking to have its authorized enrollment to be increased to 426. Mr. McDowell asked, and Ms. Hickey and Mr. Blowman confirmed, that it could be considered during the renewal process.

Ms. Hickey asked the school to briefly discuss the reason for the modification request. Mr. McDowell stated that the request is Board-driven. He explained that the Board's view of the mission of the school is to be a hub for the community for a range of social services and described how the enrollment preferences would relate to the connection to the community. With respect to the preference to children of staff members, Dr. Browne added that the school's goal is for the school to be good enough for all students, "including our own."

Ms. Johnson requested that, when the school submits information about enrollment preferences, the school also provide information about how that will be reflected in the lottery process.

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:

- State and local funds.
- Five-year projection.

- Revenue Sheets.
- Targeted plan for improving Science and Social Studies outcomes.

Mr. Blowman then asked the voting members of the CSAC if there were any sections of the application that they felt currently warrant a “Does Not Meet Standard” rating based upon information currently provided. The result was a unanimous “no.”

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 11:30 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.