



**Department of Education  
Charter School Accountability Meeting**

**November 12, 2014  
Renewal Application Process  
Final Meeting - Minutes**

**Family Foundations Academy**

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 of 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**

- Sean Moore, Co-Director and Chief Administrative Officer
- Dr. Tennell Brewington, Founder Chief Academic Officer
- David Alston, Board of Directors Teacher Representative
- Patricia Brooks, Satisfaction Officer
- Alan Wohlstetter, President of Charter School Renewals Consulting Firm

**Additional Attendees Noted**

- Elizabeth Lewis, Delaware Office of Management and Budget

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

### **Meeting between the CSAC and Family Foundations Academy:**

Mr. Blowman noted for the record that, at the Initial CSAC Meeting on October 14, 2014, the CSAC indicated that the Academic Framework and Financial Framework sections of the renewal application met standard, whereas the Organizational Framework section of the renewal application did not meet standard.

Mr. Blowman noted that the CSAC had requested the following information in order to inform its decision-making:

- Revenue sheets;
- Information about the foundation grant;
- Detailed plan regarding how the school addresses complaints, including trend information; and
- Information regarding how the school will address the non-compliant areas on the Organizational Framework over the next six months.

The CSAC confirmed that it had received all of the requested information.

Mr. Blowman asked the CSAC whether there were any questions, comments or feedback related to the supplemental information that the school had submitted. Ms. Nagourney stated that the Conflicts of Interest Policy was a two-page submission that appeared to be incomplete. She stated that the document did not provide clarification regarding how the policy is operationalized and used in employment decisions, particularly the decision to hire the spouse of the sitting Board President.

Mr. Wohlstetter stated that the school received board training, which resulted in the development of the Conflicts of Interest Policy. Mr. Wohlstetter stated that, consistent with Delaware law, there is a policy of disclosure and recusal in those types of situations. He stated that Ms. Brooks, who is married to the President of the Board, reports to the school's Chief Administrative Officer (Mr. Moore). He stated that there is also a Conflicts of Interest form from the Board President disclosing that interest, such that he could not vote on that contract. Finally, he stated that neither Ms. Brooks' contract, nor any other contract other than the school's Co-Directors, comes before the Board. Mr. Wohlstetter stated that Ms. Brooks' compensation came directly from the school's Chief Administrative Officer, who looked in other areas of the state and outside of the state to determine reasonable compensation for Ms. Brooks' service as the school's Satisfaction Officer. He stated that Ms. Brooks' contract did not raise to the board level.

Ms. Nagourney reiterated that the policy had not been provided in full and Mr. Wohlstetter replied that the school would be glad to follow up with the entire policy.

Mr. Taylor asked whether, if a Board member is in the business of providing services that would be of interest to the school, there is a dollar limit to such services. Mr. Wohlstetter stated that there was no such dollar limit. He clarified that, if that were the case, the Board member would not vote on such a contract, but would disclose and recuse. Mr. Taylor referenced his own experience, in which he was in the equipment rental business and also serving on a school board. He stated that, in that case, there was a \$200 annual limit for emergencies only.

Mr. Wohlstetter stated that the beauty of the policy is that there is now public disclosure. He stated that there are currently no such contracts with any Board members. Mr. Taylor stated that he understood, but that his concern is about prevention.

Ms. Johnson asked for more information regarding the school's use of the iSAFE curriculum and how it is being implemented in the school. Dr. Brewington stated that the school just received the iSAFE curriculum this year with the Internet Safety Policy that the school finally completed. She stated that the school is taking the iSAFE concepts and beginning with the school's lower level, grades K-4. She stated that the students are using the iSAFE protocols, such as how to properly use information, which sites to avoid, how to properly shut down, and safe content. She stated that the students are also receiving the curriculum through a technology class, which has become part of the school's "Specials." She noted that the school has two teachers in the middle school – the school's Business teacher and Technology teacher – whose materials come from the Perkins Grant, which was received through the school's Consolidated Grant Application. She stated that the Technology teacher naturally uses the concepts in his curriculum, and that she (Dr. Brewington) saw this in a recent observation.

Ms. Johnson asked for clarification regarding why the school just received the iSAFE curriculum this year. Dr. Brewington replied that it is a requirement in the rubric for the Internet Safety Policy. She stated that the school was doing technology before, but was not necessarily using iSAFE. She re-iterated that the school was teaching the concepts, but not specifically under iSAFE. She stated that, last year, the school received iPads through the state grant and, as they have been moved into the curriculum, the school integrated lessons learned about Internet safety into the use of the iPads. She noted that none of the iPads have been damaged since they were received.

Ms. Johnson asked whether Dr. Brewington or the school's technology supervisor attend the digital learning cadre. Dr. Brewington replied that Christopher Cook is on the distribution list and receives information to attend trainings. She stated that Mr. Cook also attends the ISO (Internet Safety Outreach) meetings, maintains the school's wifi, and maintains all of the school's monitors and desktops.

Ms. Johnson asked whether it would be possible to receive confirmation from Wayne Hartschuh of the DDOE that the school is in compliance with all of the eRATE and CIPA (Children's Internet Protection Act) requirements. She noted that both are federal requirements. Mr. Blowman replied that this could be done and that the process for obtaining this information could be addressed "offline." Dr. Brewington noted that Mr. Cook would be the individual logging in on the school's behalf.

Mr. Blowman asked Ms. Field Rogers whether she had any questions regarding the financial information that was provided. Ms. Field Rogers replied that she did not have any questions, as it was very clear what was provided in the foundation grant.

Mr. Blowman asked whether there were any questions regarding how the school addresses complaints. Ms. Nagourney reported that the school's website still does not contain the Grievance Policy. Ms. Nagourney stated that this raises concerns about how the Grievance Policy that was provided in paper form is operationalized at the school level. Mr. Moore replied that the school will again address the issue of having the policy available on the school's website and noted that the policy is in place. Dr. Brewington asked for clarification regarding whether having the Grievance Policy available to parents online is being required as a CSAC expectation. Mr. Blowman confirmed that it is an expectation. Mr. Moore asked for

confirmation that this was not required as a matter of compliance. Ms. Nagourney noted that the school offered the information to CSAC and the question is how parents know about the policy. Mr. Moore stated that the information is provided to parents, but asked for clarification regarding whether having the policy available on the website is a DDOE requirement. Ms. Nagourney replied that it is not legally required. Mr. Taylor noted that there are a lot of things that the DDOE asks to be made available on a school's website that are not legally required. Mr. Blowman added that, at the last CSAC meeting, the school volunteered that the information was on the website and the link does not go to the Grievance Policy. Ms. Brooks and Mr. Moore stated that they agree that the policy should be on the website. Mr. Moore stated that the Grievance Policy had been on the website for months and that he will make sure that it is placed back on the website.

Mr. Taylor stated that the school's report indicates that the school has drastically reduced the amount of complaints and commended the school. Ms. Brooks replied that the school is very proud of that fact. She stated that the school has had a total of nine complaints since August 2013 and, for the most part, they have been resolved. She stated that it has taken a lot of hard work from the school's Co-Directors and team to make sure that the school is addressing parent concerns immediately. She added that the school is there to support its families.

Ms. Johnson noted that the school has an FAQ document on its website and the last question says: "What do I do if I don't agree with an administrative consequence?" She noted that the reply states: "You may file a grievance. Click here to view our grievance policy." However, she reported that the link provided re-directs to a page not found.

Ms. Nagourney noted for the record that the DDOE's Curriculum and Instruction Workgroup had reviewed the school's math unit revision and concluded that the revision did not meet standard.

Ms. Johnson asked for clarification regarding the school's school choice enrollment period. She noted that the school lists its enrollment period as November 1st through September 15th and asked why the period runs through September 15th. Dr. Brewington responded that it should be November through January, but if the school is not full, then it can continue to enroll. Ms. Johnson stated that the implication is that, even if the school has not reached its full enrollment number, the school is not accepting applications beyond September 15th notwithstanding the fact that the website says "enrollment." Ms. Johnson stated that she would like to see clarification regarding the school's application and enrollment process. She noted that, as for the enrollment process, the implication is that the school immediately enrolls students, rather than have the application process before determining whether the school needs a waitlist or a lottery.

### **Conclusion of the meeting:**

Mr. Blowman noted that the school's performance is somewhat interesting, as the school has been clearly "green" on the Academic Framework for the last two years, solidly "green" on the Financial Framework for the last two years, and solidly "Does Not Meet" on the Organizational Framework for the reasons discussed in the CSAC meetings. He noted that it is unusual for a school to have the organizational difficulties that the school has had, yet still meet academic standards for the last two years. He noted that the academic standard is still, by far, the most important of the overall Performance Framework. He stated that the CSAC remains deeply concerned about the school's organizational capacity. He acknowledged

that the school is headed in the right direction in terms of complaints, but stated that there are still some underlying concerns regarding board and school leadership relationships.

Mr. Blowman then requested a motion to recommend renewal of the charter of the Family Foundations Academy with the following specific conditions:

1. All Board members must participate in the Delaware Alliance for Nonprofit Advancement (DANA) board training and provide verification of such participation by the end of February 2015;
2. All Board members must participate in training offered by the Public Integrity Commission in the area of conflicts of interest best practices and provide verification of such participation by the end of February 2015;
3. The school shall resolve all outstanding compliance issues articulated by the DDOE by the end of February 2015;
4. The school shall attain a rating of "Meets Standard" on the Organizational Framework for the 2014-15 school year; and
5. The school's math curriculum shall be approved by the DDOE's Curriculum and Instruction Workgroup shall be approved no later than the close of the public comment period on December 10, 2014.

Mr. Blowman stated that if the above conditions are not met, then the school's charter will not be renewed. He noted that the time period is intended to allow sufficient time for the trainings to take place and, if they do not take place, to address the needs of the parents.

Mr. Wohlstetter asked for clarification regarding the specific areas of non-compliance and Ms. Nagourney replied that the matter could be addressed "offline."

Mr. Blowman strongly encouraged school leadership to also attend the required board trainings.

The motion was made to approve the recommendation and the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Blowman reminded the applicant that the CSAC's recommendation was just that; a recommendation to the Secretary of Education on the renewal application.

**Renewal Application Process Timeline:**

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

- The CSAC will provide the school with a Final Report no later than November 20, 2014.
- A second public hearing will be held on December 10, 2014, in the 2nd floor Auditorium of the Carvel State Office Building, located at 820 North French Street, Wilmington DE.
- The public comment period also ends on December 10, 2014.
- Finally, the State Board of Education will hold a meeting on December 18, 2014, at 1:00 p.m. in the 2nd floor Cabinet Room of the Townsend Building at 401 Federal Street, Dover DE, at which point the Secretary of Education will announce his decision on the renewal application and, if required, the State Board will act on that decision.

The meeting was adjourned.