



**Department of Education
Charter School Accountability Meeting**

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

Gateway Lab 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 Gateway Lab School

- Catherine Dolan, Head of School
- Dorcell Spence, Financial Contractor
- Stacy Soloman, Principal

Representative of the Public

- Lindsey Lewis, Office of Management and Budget

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 Gateway Lab School:

Section 1: Overview

Ms. Dolan provided an overview of the school. She stated that the school is unique because 60% of the student population is categorized as special education and come to the school to find a place where they can learn.

Ms. Mazza asked if the 120 special education students include speech only. Ms. Dolan responded that currently there are 134 students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), 127 of whom don't have speech and 19 students with 504 Plans.

Section 2: Academic Framework

Ms. Dolan stated that the school's greatest area of concern and focus is academics. She explained that Gateway brought in the University of Delaware's Delaware Academy for School Leadership (DASL) group to complete a Comprehensive Success Review (CSR). The CSR report included the current status and areas for improvement and strategies of how to achieve the goals. She stated that, according to the CSR report, the school required someone to just focus on instruction, so Stacy Solomon was assigned as Principal of Instructional Focus. She said that the curriculum was changed for English Language Arts (ELA) and math. The calendar was changed as a result of transportation issue, but allowed time for teachers to work on PLCs and receive professional development.

Ms. Mazza asked the school to describe its RtI process. Ms. Solomon described the process and stated that the school has an Educational Diagnostician and two teachers on staff to coordinate grouping of RtI. She explained that the school is using Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) data and learning continuum to address skills. Ms. Mazza then asked whether the school has an Instructional Support Team and whether teachers are grounded in the Common Core State Standards. Ms. Solomon stated that the school has an Instructional Support Team and that teachers are part of Common Core 2.0 and utilize a development coach.

Ms. McCrae asked the school to explain why its Academic Framework Report does not support the strategies explained, as well as the school's greatest needs and hurdles. Ms. Dolan replied the referenced strategies were not in place last year and have been put in place as a result of reviewing the school's needs. She stated the greatest challenge is student learning and the school is giving it a full team effort.

Mr. Taylor asked if all the students enter at third grade and have IEPs. Ms. Dolan replied that incoming students have a number of issues when they arrive. She added that the school would like to have a Kindergarten program because early intervention is better. Mr. Taylor asked if staff is cooperative. Ms. Solomon explained that this is a year of growth and that the school is setting a culture.

Mr. Taylor asked about the teacher turnover rate. Ms. Solomon replied turnover rate is not high overall.

Mr. Taylor asked when the Delaware Academy of School Leadership (DASL) report was received and if a timeline was provided. Ms. Dolan responded that the report was received in the spring with timelines and that the school meets with the DASL development coach regularly and is on target.

Ms. Massett asked if students entered at all grade levels and Ms. Dolan confirmed that they do.

Ms. Mazza asked about the school's continuum of special education services. Ms. Dolan explained that the school has an Educational Diagnostician, Occupational Therapist, Psychologist, and Speech services.

Ms. Mazza asked if the school's special education model is an inclusion model. Ms. Dolan explained that, because the school's percentage of special education students is so high, an inclusion model is used, but some RtI is in small groups. Ms. Mazza asked if special education teachers co-teach. Ms. Dolan stated that all teachers are dual-certified with special education and must be certified within six months and Highly Qualified Teachers (HQT).

Ms. Johnson asked about the percentage of intense and complex students at the school. Ms. Field Rogers stated that there were 212 total units, of which 7 were complex, 41 intense and 71 basic.

Mr. Blowman noted that there is definitely growth, but it has not tipped many cells and the school is serving a challenging population and has articulated a solid plan/approach. He stated, however, that the CSAC needs to balance this information against the school's academic history. He asked the school to help the CSAC figure out how to evaluate. Ms. Dolan replied that school requested the alternate framework modification because the school does not want to use excuses. She explained that modification seemed appropriate, the alternate framework showed more improvement, and the goal is to see improvement in the regular framework.

Ms. Johnson noted that the Alternate Framework shows concerns around growth and subgroups and asked what is being done specifically with teachers based on data from last year. Ms. Solomon explained that the school has implemented an Instructional Leadership Team and is using the Delaware Performance Appraisal System (DPAS) II tool.

Ms. Johnson asked how teachers are using interim testing data. Ms. Solomon replied that there is more alignment with teaching and using MAP data to drive.

Section 3: Organizational Framework

Ms. Dolan stated that the Organizational Framework is an area of strength for the school that has not had as much focus as a result.

Mr. Blowman asked why the school did not meet standard on the teacher credentialing requirement. Ms. Dolan explained that one special education teacher was not certified and taught six classes.

Ms. Mazza expressed concern that the renewal application referenced the teacher using an outdated special education manual and stated that teachers need to use the Delaware Administrative Code. Ms. Mazza also inquired as to whether a Career and Technical Education (CTE) teacher was in attendance at IEP meetings and whether the special education teacher signs for both regular education and special education on the IEP. Ms. Dolan was not able to provide an answer at the time.

Ms. Mazza asked the school to describe its English Language Learner (ELL) assessment process. Ms. Dolan stated that only one student was identified and the school is using Back to Basics to provide extra support.

Mr. Blowman asked the school to discuss the stability of its student population in terms of attrition. Ms. Dolan stated that most attrition involves sibling movement.

Mr. Blowman asked the school to describe relationship between its Board and school leadership. Ms. Dolan described the relationship as excellent relationship and stated that a new member has been added.

Mr. Taylor asked if the Board has attended governance training and requested the number of members. He also stated that he would like to see the Board members at future meetings. Ms. Dolan confirmed that annual governance training is scheduled for October 18th and that there are eight Board members.

Mr. Blowman asked what the summer payroll obligation totaled. Ms. Spence indicated that it was approximately \$400,000.

Section 4: Financial Framework

Ms. Dolan stated that she was pleased with the audit, that there were no findings, and that past findings had been corrected.

Ms. Field Rogers asked the school to provide revenue sheets.

Section 5: Five-Year Planning

Mr. Blowman asked the school to discuss its plan for the next five years. Ms. Dolan stated that the school will continue to examine student performance outcomes in every group and subject. She stated that the school will continue to develop faculty as well as relationships with universities. She stated that the school is considering a balanced calendar and expansion to younger grades because the sooner the intervention occurs the more successful the student performance. Ms. Dolan confirmed that expansion would require a facility change.

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.
- Clarification regarding whether the CTE pathway teacher attends IEP meetings.
- Documentation regarding whether the special education teacher signs the IEPs for both special education and regular education.
- A change in paperwork to reference the Delaware Administrative Code for special education requirements.
- A copy of the DASL CSR report and the school's status as of October 15, 2014.
- Data points that reflect students' current status.

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.
- 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 10, 2014, at 1:00 p.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 10, 2014, in the 2nd floor auditorium of the Carvel State Office Building, located at 820 North French Street, Wilmington DE, and will begin at 6:00 p.m.

The meeting was adjourned.