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At the close of the meeting with the Charter School Accountability Committee (“CSAC”), Reach was asked to produce the following: a copy of the Claremont Project Plan with an explanation as to how Reach has been implementing the Project Plan, a copy of the Turnaround Handbook that Reach prepared with the assistance of School Turnaround from Albany, New York, supplemental information regarding its 6th grade math curriculum submissions, supplemental information regarding its plans to improve performance in science and social studies and more detail regarding its plan for improving the performance of its special education students. The requested documents are enclosed as well as the resumes of the new Reach Board members with backgrounds in education. We believe that the attached documents, as well as the discussion and explanation of those documents set forth herein are responsive to the requests from CSAC. If you or any members of CSAC need additional information, please let us know.

## **THE UPWARD ACADEMIC TREND AT REACH**

During the course of the hearing, Chairman Blowman asked a critical question. “Is the fact that Reach achieved AYP last year indicative of an upward trend or are these scores simply an up-down data point as observed in previous years?” Reach is confident that the trending upward will continue. In addition to the changes that have been made to the academic program as explained in more detail below, Reach wants to stress that the revised disciplinary policy implemented last year resulted in a drop in the suspension rate from 25% to 12%. Reach included a report regarding its disciplinary policy and suspension rate at the October 15, 2014 hearing. Additionally, it is important to note that during the 2012–2013 school year, Reach experienced a severe overcrowding problem at a facility that was outdated under the best of circumstances. During the 2012–2013 school year, Reach ordered temporary classroom trailers to address its space problems but there was a several month delay in the installation of those classroom trailers, which resulted in Reach being forced to convert the cafeteria into temporary classrooms for a period of time. Reach believes that the relocation to Lukens Drive, in addition to its revised disciplinary policy, has resulted in permanent improvement in the behavior of Reach students. Students are spending more time in the classroom as opposed to serving suspension. Thus, teachers are able to devote more time to teaching and less time addressing behavioral problems. Often the physical relocation of a school will result in a temporary drop in performance as students and faculty adjust to their new environment. Thus, Reach’s relocation to Lukens Drive coincided with an increase in performance. This surge addressed the overcrowding and related problems that existed at Reach’s previous location, and boosted the morale plus motivation for both teachers and students alike.

Reach will discuss components of its academic program below, in order to provide greater clarity as to why Reach is confident that it is trending upward. Additionally, targeted remediation was needed for students in primary grades in Language Arts. The National Reading Panel recommends phonics and phonemic

work for all students in grades K-2. Reach restructured its phonics instruction to be better aligned with the common core. Accordingly, beginning this school year, for grades K-2, Reach has been using the Phonics Lessons: Letters, Words, and How They Work phonics curriculum developed by Gay Su Pinnell and Irene C. Fountas. This includes phonics mini-lessons, which last approximately 10 -15 minutes a day. Grades 3 through 8 are using the word work and vocabulary study from the same authors.

## **CLAREMONT PROJECT PLAN**

With respect to the attached Claremont Project Plan, there were recommendations for changes at both the Reach Board and Reach Administration level. Highlights of various steps that Reach took after receiving the Claremont Project Plan follow. Also, attached hereto is a table which provides when and how Reach addressed each of the tasks that Claremont recommended.

### **1. HIGHLIGHT OF BOARD CHANGES PURSUANT TO CLAREMONT PROJECT PLAN**

At the Board level, Claremont recognized that there were an insufficient number of board members with a background in education. To address this concern, Reach added an additional teacher representative to the Reach Board. Now there is teacher representative from both the upper and the lower grades on the Board. Reach also recruited new board members from outside the Reach community, all of whom are committed to Reach's mission and are inspired by Reach's recent successful efforts to improve performance. Four noteworthy new board members include: Carol Roth, Thelma Hinds, Doctor of Education, Martha Buell, Ph.D., and Cherese Winstead, Ph.D. The resumes of these new members are attached and as reflected in those resumes, all have had successful careers in education. Professor Winstead is the Chair of the Chemistry Department at Delaware State University; Doctor Buell is the Director of the Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood at the University of Delaware; Professor Hinds is the Statewide Practicum Placement Coordinator for the College of Education at Wilmington University; and Carol Roth retired from the Philadelphia School District after a long and distinguished career in the classroom, curriculum development and professional development for both administrators and teachers. These board members are already performing outstanding service by reviewing and in some cases participating in developing plans and activities that enhance the teaching and learning process.

### **2. HIGHLIGHT OF ADMINISTRATION CHANGES PURSUANT TO CLAREMONT PROJECT PLAN**

At the Administrative level, Claremont recommended and provided leadership coaching for Reach's school leader with Kirsten Olson providing this coaching. Claremont recommended that Reach hire an Assistant Principal and Blase Maitland has been hired as Reach's Assistant Principal. Claremont recommended that Reach transition the instructional leadership position to a full time position and to clarify this position's role and importance. Reach did engage Maria Banks, who previously worked with Reach on a contract basis, as a full-time instructional coach for grades 6 through

8. Reach also hired Denise Luce to serve as an instructional coach for lower grades K through 5. To stress the importance of the instructional coaches and the critical role that they play in implementing Reach's academic program and avoid confusion or disconnect about the Administration's support of the instruction, Reach modified its organizational structure to create a Leadership Team comprising of Ms. Banks, Ms. Luce, the Assistant Principal, Mr. Maitland and the School Leader Ms. Allen.

Reach completed many of the tasks that Claremont had assigned to the Administration by working with School Turnaround, an organization based in Albany, New York. For example, Claremont recommended that Reach hire a data coach. Claremont provides Reach data analysis during its evaluation and leadership coaching. School Turnaround has also been assisting Reach in collecting and interpreting its data essentially serving as a data coach for Reach. Claremont recommended that the Reach Leadership Team participate in a several day professional development seminar similar to the programs that are offered by the University of Pennsylvania and Harvard University. After consulting with Claremont, the Reach Leadership Team attended a professional development seminar that School Turnaround organized in Albany. Following the professional development seminar that School Turnaround organized, the Reach Leadership Team created a professional development program for the Reach teachers utilizing materials from that seminar.

The professional development at Reach Academy includes a three-pronged approach: local learning community (PLC), community of practice (CoP), and a personal learning network (PLN). The professional learning communities support reflection, data driven discussion and problem solving in order to develop a student centered learning environment. Realizing that learning occurs in social contexts that emerge and evolve when people who have common goals interact as they strive towards those goals, Reach Academy has become partners with model schools. In this respect Reach educators can watch, practice and discuss embodied experiences. As social media has become more predominate, platforms for collaboration, the need for creating and maintaining PLNs (Personal Learning Networks) for Reach staff arose. Thus PD 360/Edivation is also used to enhance teacher reflection and teaching.

The schools that Reach teachers have observed or are scheduled to observe include PS 173 in the Bronx, New York and the Folk Arts Cultural Treasures ("FACTS") Charter School in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Reach teachers observed PS 173 and FACTS because Reach's math curriculum for its upper grades includes components of the EngageNY math curriculum and PS 173 is a model school for that curriculum. Similarly, FACTS Charter School in Philadelphia was selected for a site visit because FACTS is a model school for Singapore Math, the math curriculum that Reach uses in grades K through 5.

## **SCHOOL TURNAROUND WORKBOOK**

In conjunction with School Turnaround, the Reach Leadership Team prepared the Turnaround Design Workbook, a copy of which is attached hereto. Changes that Reach made following its professional development training with School Turnaround included moving from a block schedule back to a standard schedule for the upper grades. Reach first used a block schedule for its upper grades starting the in 2012-2013 school year. DCAS scores dropped significantly that year and teachers expressed concerns, through meetings and surveys, that the students were unable to remain focused throughout the longer class period required in the block schedule. It

was determined that the Reach upper school students would benefit from fifty-five minute classes held daily.

## **MATH CURRICULUM**

With respect to the math curriculum, Reach submitted Unit 2: Ratios, Rates and Proportions as a sample of its Grade 6 math curriculum. Reach was asked to provide additional material in order to better allow its math curriculum to be evaluated. By way of some background, Reach was initially using Connected Mathematics as its math curriculum for its upper grades. In the 2011–2012 school year, Reach observed that its students had shown significant growth in their ELA scores but the math scores did not reflect the same level of growth. Reach determined that one problem was that Connected Mathematics curriculum was not meeting the academic need of Reach students, many of whom required significant remediation. In the 2012–2013 school year, Reach switched its math curriculum for its upper grades to SpringBoard Mathematics. While the math scores did not improve in 2012–2103 school year, teacher surveys did indicate that one explanation for this was more educator training was required to assist in transitioning to the new curriculum. Reach did provide additional teacher training during the 2013–2014 school year for the Springboard curriculum and did observe an increase in scores last year. Believing that additional remediation was still required, Reach has refined its math curriculum this year to include elements of the EngageNY math curriculum. Both SpringBoard and EngageNY are aligned to the common core. As referenced above, professional development this year includes sites visits to PS 173 which is a model school for the EngageNY math curriculum. Reach has also formally partnered with PS 173 so that the Reach teachers can utilize the PS 173 teachers as an additional resource.

## **SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS**

Regarding the performance of Reach's special education students, attached please find Reach's Plan to Increase Academic Achievement in Special Education. As was stated at the October 15, 2014 hearing, Reach does attribute the drop in performance of its special education students to the fact that the special education teacher with whom they had bonded and developed a close relationship changed jobs and left Reach. This year, the special education students do appear to be bonding with their new special education teacher and this teacher is focusing on collaboration with general education teachers, Common Core alignment of materials and IEP goals as well as professional development that supports engaging these students in the classroom with PBS and Responsive Classroom strategies. More detail regarding Reach's special education program is attached hereto.

## **SOCIAL STUDIES**

With respect to Reach's social studies program, attached hereto please find a detailed explanation of Reach's plans to improve performance in social studies. In addition to the attached explanation, Reach would add that it is a member of the Delaware Social Studies Coalition. Recognizing the need to improve the performance of its students in social studies, one tool that Reach has begun to implement to

improve the social studies skills is to integrate learning across different subjects. This is a strategy that the Reach Leadership Team developed following a professional development program at the Teachers College of New York. The Reach ELA units of study now include text partnerships, fictional or informational. A specific example of this subject integration is grade 5, where a mythology unit has been partnered with social studies and includes the study of mythology and the impact of democracy as we know it today.

## **SCIENCE CURRICULUM**

Attached, please find a detailed explanation of Reach's plans to improve performance in science. In addition to the attached explanation, Reach would add that it is a member of the Delaware Science Coalition. Reach's plan to improve the performance in science, in addition to the integration strategy that is being used to enhance the social studies program, includes partnering with a number of organizations through community outreach programs. The specific partnership arrangements differ for each grade level as set forth in the attachment. For the upper grades, this includes field trips by Reach students to its partners such as DNREC, the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control, to see actual science experiments. For the lower grades, Reach has formed a partnership with Delaware State University and, starting next month, engineering and science students from DSU will be coming to Reach on a bi-weekly basis to teach, model and assist in the science classes. Reach is also participating in a Science Fair this year with other Delaware schools.