

Response to the Initial Report of the Charter School Accountability Committee – May 12, 2016

Thank you for the opportunity to present additional information in response to the CSAC Initial Report. We are also providing information on outstanding questions addressed in the report. Among the questions and their related sections below:

- Section I.a. - Provide the number of teachers needed for next year (including required certifications) and the teachers who have been offered contracts (including actual certifications)
- Section I.a. - Confirm that teachers for special content (e.g. physical education, art, music, etc.) are included in the budget.
- Section I.b. - Clarify that professional development costs are included in the budget.
- Section I.d. - Provide cost estimates for related services.
- Provide a copy of the executed lease for the temporary site located at 1101 Delaware Street, New Castle, DE 19720. This has been sent to Catherine Hickey in early May.

We have included additional information on our marketing and enrollment activities (Section II), the financial viability of the school at various enrollment thresholds (Section III), fundraising activities (Section IV) and information relating to facilities (Section V).

I. Educational Program

a. Master Scheduling and Academics

In year one, with the 105 student scenario we will require five classroom teachers. Homerooms include four 9th grade and one 10th grade.

There will also be a dedicated special education teacher that will have a daily schedule that also allows to push in/pull out students as needed. The special education teacher will service students inclusively and provide small group instruction/flexible grouping to support implementation of the model and student needs.

Additionally, the special education teacher will have an advisory block each day to provide additional supports, monitoring of progress and growth of students within the educational model.

In terms of electives for year one, all students will be taking an Exploration in STEM class which is part of our CTE Pathway and Project Lead the Way that begins in year two. Additional electives will be taught by the ELA, Social Studies, Math, STEM and Science teacher. Electives will be determined by student's interests and need, along with teacher specialty and interest.

Due to the low number of registered 10th graders, Driver's Ed will be offered as a weekend program. We have already received a proposal, including cost for a certified Driver's Ed teacher to administer the program. The school community has been informed about the weekend program and are supportive.

Other graduation requirements will be offered for students beginning in year two. If enrollment increases, additional certified staff will be hired to teach graduation required courses.

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Block	ELA 1	SS 1	Math 1	STEM	Sci.1	SPED
1	9-1 & 9-2		IM II -1	STEM 1	Elec	ELA 9
2			Digital Media	STEM 2	Earth -1	Coordinator/Compliance
3	RTI	Elec	IM I -1	STEM 3	Prep	Math 9
4	9-3 & 9-4		RTI	STEM 4	Earth -2	Coordinator/Compliance
5			Prep	Elec	Earth -3	Coordinator/Compliance
6	Prep	Prep	IM I -3	Bio-Lit	Elec	Math 10
7	Bio-Lit	Model UN	IM II -2	Prep	Elec	ELA 10
Advisory	9-1	9-2	9-3	9-4	10-1	Mixed

DE STEM Academy: Teacher Certifications	
Teachers Required Certification Area:	Teachers Offered/Certification Area:
English/Language Arts: Required English Secondary 9-12; Preferred also Exceptional Children K-12	Offer made to teacher with English Secondary 9-12, Exceptional Children K-12 pending.
Social Studies: Required Social Studies Secondary 9-12; Preferred also Exceptional Children K-12	Offer made to teacher with Social Studies Secondary 9-12
Science: Earth Science, Biology or Physical Science; Preferred Exceptional Children K-12 and more than one science content area	Offer made to teacher with Earth Science, General Science 7-12, Dance Instructor
Math: Secondary Mathematics 9-12; Preferred also Exceptional Children K-12	Offer made to teacher with Secondary Mathematics 9-12
STEM: Earth Science, Biology or Physical Science; Preferred Exceptional Children K-12 and more than one science content area including Chemistry, Physics and/or Engineering background	Offer made to teacher with Physical Science, General Science 9-12 and previously taught Engineering.
Special Education: Required Exceptional Children K-12; Preferred additional content area and/or STEM background	Candidate identified for position as teacher with Exceptional Children certification, Math certification and Engineering background; pending offer and board approval.

b. Professional Development Budget:

Delaware STEM Academy has allocated \$10,000 in Year 1 and \$20,000 in Years 2-5 for professional development for staff. The New Tech Network will be providing two intensive training opportunities during June and July 2016, along with providing opportunities for our staff to visit other high performing schools within the network in the fall. Travel expenses for those trainings are included in our budget scenario. The New Tech contract with professional development support of an academic coach assigned to the school for year one and year two and is also included/outlined in the contract and not part of this budget line item.

DE STEM Academy staff will be provided with a ½ day of weekly collaborative planning time included in the school calendar as a ½ day adjusted schedule. The daily class schedule will operate as normal, but with adjusted times for classes as an early dismissal day each Wednesday. Those days will be used to support staff with professional development opportunities as needed and data driven by the needs of the academic program, student development and culture.

c. Special Populations Action Plan – Year 1

Action Step:	Resources Needed:	Staff:	Timeline:	Notes:
Hold Parent Enrollment Conferences for all students	Enrollment documents and student records	School Leader, Parent, Student and other identified staff	January-September	Conferences will be held to review school information, academic program, expectations and respond to parent questions/concerns
Request student records from district schools	Current school district contacts	School leader/CMO support staff	April-August	Documentation of requests/follow up will be supported through the CMO.
Hire Staff-Special Education Teacher	Job posting: TalentEd, Join Delaware Schools website ads	School Leader, HR Committee, CMO support staff, New Tech Planning Coach	Advertisement-Feb.-until filled Interview: until filled	Also interviewing content area teachers with dual certification in special education
Training of staff in New Tech Model to support PBL classroom	New Tech Network support materials	New Tech Planning Coach	June 21-22, July 11-15	Training and support from New Tech will be continuous and available throughout the school year

and special populations				
Establish a calendar of meetings for 60-day review requirements for transitional IEP's	Parent contact information, student records	Special Education Teacher/Coordinator, School Leader, CMO support	Calendar complete by August 15, 2016 Goal completed by September 15, 2016	-Ensure Special Education Teacher is coordinating with Dale M.-DOE to meet compliance with all transitional IEP'
Review all required services and adjust schedules as necessary to ensure full implementation	Work with CMO to adjust individual schedules as necessary	Special Education Teacher, School Leader, CMO	Goal completed by Sept. 30th	Ensure contracted services are in place and can begin Sept. 6, 2016 "Boost Learning" quote received, waiting on Therapy Services of DE and EBS.

d. Cost Estimate: Related Services

All quotes are from Boost Learning (contract included):

Related Services:	Cost:	Projected hrs. per student/Total estimated cost
Evaluations	Initial Evaluation-\$1020.00 Re-Evaluations-\$965.00	5 re-evaluations and 3 projected new evaluations/\$7885.00
School Psychologist	\$70.00 per hour	2 hours/total of \$1400.00
Occupational Therapist	\$68.00 per hour	2 hours/total of \$1360.00
Speech and Language Therapist	\$70.00 per hour	2 hours/total of \$1400.00

Physical Therapist	\$85.00	1 hour/\$850.00

We have a total estimated cost of \$12, 895.00 out of the initial budgeted amount of \$20,475.00

II. Marketing Efforts to Increase Enrollment

Efforts are on-going to recruit additional students – including door-to-door outreach to students who have registered but not completed official enrollment – in order to increase the number of students.

Our marketing plan involves the use of many initiatives to ensure a multi-faceted approach to communicating the benefits our school has to offer and opportunities to further discuss the project based learning teaching method with parents and students. The following list details our recent and ongoing outreach efforts:

- Digital Marketing Campaign –
 - a. Retained a marketing firm to provide information to parents of 8th and 9th graders living in New Castle County
 - b. Accesses our target audience as they search internet sites, providing them an advertisement about the school and upcoming open house events (see attached)
 - c. Provides direct link to our website and Facebook page
Note: Received first year contract on Saturday from a parent who received our information though this campaign via her cell phone
- Open House Events –
 - a. We continue to hold open house events for parents and students to meet our Executive Director, Principal and Board members
 - b. Announcements of these events occurs through post card mailings, emails to contact lists, digital marketing and distribution of flyers to local businesses and student oriented establishments such as Junior Achievement, libraries, YWCA sites, PAL centers, etc.
 - c. We have held 20 open houses since February and will continue until enrollment is met
 - d. Daily office hours for one-on-one parent meetings are ongoing
- Outreach Efforts to Undecided Students –
 - a. Phone calls by Board members to parents who have submitted applications but have not submitted a contract to answer questions
 - b. Door-to-Door campaign to unreachable parents will be completed by 5/27
 - c. Similar efforts will continue to help bring closure to signing 1st year contracts
- Targeted Outreach –

- a. Charter Middle Schools – contacts with FFA, Eastside, Thomas Edison, Kuumba, Campus Charter, Aspira, and Prestige to educate counselors on benefits of our school
 - b. Boys & Girls Clubs – coordination with the Bear location to introduce school and meeting with potential interested students
 - c. Charter High Schools – encouraged counselors at DMA, First State Military, Newark and Wilmington to inform wait listed parents of their status
 - d. Boys and Girl’s Scouts – coordinating speaking opportunities at upcoming events
 - e. FAME – working with Don Baker to collaborate on upcoming events
 - f. Parents – engaged parents of enrolled students to seek out other parents/students
 - g. Student Ambassadors-engaging other students to attend school socials and learn more about our school.
 - h. YMCA – distributed information and coordinating to participate in youth programs
- Community Outreach –
 - a. Met with Wilmington City Council members
 - b. Distributed information through state PTA website
 - c. Attended public events such as: STEM Expo, Christiana Mall/Microsoft info table, Hagley Invention Connection
 - d. Emailed NCC Council members
 - e. Contacted local churches and civic associations to distribute information
 - Student Socials –
 - a. Invited students to become part of our Student Ambassadors Organization and held a meeting in February to sign up and meet other student leaders.
 - b. Held movie and pizza night in March for students to socialize and bring a friend
 - c. Ice Cream social held on 5/24 for students to bring a friend; assist undecided parents in decision making process resulting in 3 new contracts plus 2 being submitted
 - d. June social – to be determined
 - Social Media –
 - a. Continue to communicate information via website, Facebook, twitter, Instagram
 - Billboard – existing I95/Wilmington billboard advertisement (donation of space made by board member)

III. Financial Viability at Lower Enrollment Thresholds

The Academy recognizes the need for the school to be financially viable at lower enrollment thresholds. We have prepared financial projections at three different thresholds: 105 students (the official May 1 count), 135 students and 160 students.

The three scenarios demonstrate that, with changes in both revenue and expenditures, we are able to obtain modest surpluses in Year 1, including ensuring the 2% contingency and not using restricted funds

for operational needs. The Longwood Foundation grant and the Welfare Foundation grants conditioned use of their funds on furniture, fixtures and equipment only.

Management Fees: Since our last submission, we have negotiated lower management fees for the Innovative Schools and the New Tech Network contracts. While the services have not changed dramatically, portions of the fees were scalable based on lower student enrollments. A number of duties were also shifted from these agencies to staff within the school. No services to students nor operational activities were eliminated.

Facilities: The Academy has entered into a lease a 1101 Delaware Street (former Family Foundations Academy Middle School) so that school can start in September 2016. During this time, our permanent facility at 109 Lukens Drive, New Castle, will be renovated for a potential January 2017 opening. This shift will occur only if it is deemed prudent for the students. The Academy has negotiated a lower rent for the Delaware Street facility, which is reflected in these scenarios.

Fundraising: We acknowledge the Charter School Accountability Committees concerns over the optimistic projections for foundation, corporate and individual support. Therefore, we have lowered our estimates for fundraising by over half. We have applied for an operating line of credit through NCALL to help support our cash flow requirements. We are asking to structure the repayments of the line of credit over three years. With the help of our professional fundraiser, we are still pursuing our aggressive capital campaign strategy, outlined below.

Please see the attached Projected Budgets (APPENDICES 1-3):

IV. Summary of Fund Raising Objectives, Plans to Achieve Them, and Results to Date

To fully fund the start-up of Delaware STEM Academy, in January 2016 in consultation with a capital campaign consultant, the Board of Directors established a Major Gifts Initiative to raise funds for the Planning year and the 2016-2017 school year. After a lengthy evaluation of the upcoming school year's most compelling needs, the Board established the following five components as the school's highest priority:

- Technology - STEM Academy's problem-based learning model requires technology and equipment to be current with industry standards. Types of technology needed include interactive smart digital media (e.g., Smart Boards), 3-D printers, laptops and tablets for students and licenses for software.
- Lab Equipment - The school is planning for two laboratories in the first phase. Not only are standard laboratory utensils, safety equipment, glassware, lab furniture and equipment needed, but also the more sophisticated STEM-related equipment found in industry (e.g., electrical, chemical, imaging and diagnostic) would greatly enhance the students' experience.

- **Project Prep** - This is an afternoon program held once a week over 6 weeks during the summer to establish the proper social climate for the school. Students will interact with fellow classmates, participate in STEM projects to understand project-based learning, and build the academic skills needed to succeed in high school. Project Prep will also provide an opportunity for teachers to get to know the students and better determine their academic needs.
- **Marketing** - To achieve the enrollment goals for both the 2016 – 2017 and 2017-2018 school years, we will need marketing materials to enhance our student recruitment efforts and social media presence.
- **Operational Needs** - The State of Delaware provides limited funding for the start-up of charter schools. The majority of funds for the school start-up must come in the form of unrestricted gifts from outside sources.

From the inception of the Initiative’s planning in late 2015, STEM Academy’s strategy has been to achieve its fund raising goals through securing a combination of contributed revenue and in-kind gifts. This strategy evolved from a series of interviews conducted in 2015 by STEM’s consultant during which a number of Board Members indicated their willingness to identify and solicit STEM- related industry colleagues and their companies for either cash gifts, contributions of materials, equipment and services, or both.

The strategy is succeeding. To date STEM Academy has raised \$200,000:

- In less than four months, the Board has secured cash gifts or written commitments from twenty (20) corporations totaling almost \$64,000. In addition, every Member of the Board has made a personal gift at an appropriate level.
- Board Members have contributed or secured in-kind gifts from Wilmington area corporations totaling an additional \$125,000. One \$25,000 in-kind gift has wholly underwritten current marketing efforts. A \$60,000 in-kind donation of exceptionally valuable equipment represents a substantial amount of the necessary equipment for our labs. A Board Member is underwriting thousands of dollars every month for soft costs, operating costs and professional fees for our Operational Needs.
- Since March seven members of the Board have made contact with, presented the Case for Support to, or solicited over 70 corporations within which they have a personal contact or colleague. The Development Committee, chaired by Joseph Corrado, meets monthly to review progress and solicitation strategies for every outstanding donor prospect.

In addition, while STEM Academy previously received \$325,000 from the Longwood and Welfare foundations in grants for restricted purposes other than the above priorities, two proposals totaling \$45,000 for Project Prep are currently pending before foundations which will make their decisions in June. It is hoped that that grants from one or both of these foundations will underwrite most the Project Prep’s cost of \$40,000.

While not applicable toward STEM Academy's fund raising goal, the school was incredibly heartened by its selection in April as a recipient of a \$608,000 federal Non-SEA grant. We would respectfully suggest that receiving over \$930,000 in highly competitive grant processes within 18 months from Delaware's two most rigorous foundation funders and the United States Department of Education is strong and reassuring testimony to the fund raising plans that STEM Academy has so strategically developed and which is so evidently succeeding.

V. Facilities

The Delaware STEM Academy (STEM) will be located at 1101 Delaware Street in the City of New Castle on a temporary basis for the first year of the school. The facility is a 40,535 SF building that is currently being used as a middle school by Family Foundations Academy (FFA). The building consists of 25 classrooms, 14 offices, one large assembly room and all typical ancillary facilities such as warming kitchen, equipment closets, janitorial room, etc. The classrooms range average around 700 SF with alternating non-load bearing walls separating the individual classrooms. Our walk through of the rooms has confirmed that under its current configuration the classrooms will be sufficient to hold project based learning (PBL) instruction. Consideration will be given to modifying one large classroom into a science classroom at a modest cost. The modifications will include adding proper safety equipment such as eye wash stations. Emphasis will be placed on portable science furniture, lab tables, etc. in order to have this investment transported to our permanent location. The size of the school exceeds the needs for the first year thus adequate space is available for secure storage of science chemicals, etc. The facility is fully wired for the technology needed to support the cloud based learning of the school.

STEM has negotiated a lease with FFA for the entire building at a cost of \$37,500.00 per month for six months (see attached copy of lease) with an option to extend the lease for another six months. Family Foundation has expressed some flexibility with this rent structure to accommodate lower enrollment. Variations of this cost have been incorporated into all budget scenarios for the school (multiple student enrollment numbers) showing that in conjunction with all other expenses and revenues that the school remains financially viable.

The permanent location of the school will be at 109 Lukens Drive in the city of New Castle. STEM will move into this facility at the beginning of the second year of the school with the potential of moving to this location during the winter break of the first year of the school. A lease with appropriate improvements has been negotiated with the owner of that facility. The City of New Castle has also approved the building as a special exemption for a school use. The leased space will provide all classrooms (varying sizes), labs, collaborative spaces, cafeteria, gym, and all support facilities necessary to support the full enrollment numbers of the school as outlined in the approved Charter. The expenses for this facility have been incorporated into the budget analysis showing that STEM remains financially viable and there is no overlap of payments between the two facilities.

With the location of the school for the first year at the FFA facility, the leadership of the school can concentrate on the opening of the school, and increasing enrollment while deferring efforts to oversee the fit-out of the permanent facility until after the school opens.