



**Dr. Martin Rayala**

**Co-Founder of Delaware Design-Lab High**

Public Comments for the Minor Modification of the Charter for Delaware Design-Lab High School

June 5, 2017 – Public Hearing, Dover, Delaware

Hello, I'm Dr. Martin Rayala. I'm the Co-Founder, along with Dr. Cristina Alvarez, of Delaware Design-Lab High School. This public hearing is part of the review process for a minor modification to the charter for the school we created. The purpose of the minor modification is to clarify the changing roles of Dr. Alvarez and myself in the school as it transitions from the planning and startup phase to an operational school. We contributed to writing the modification but, when it was submitted, changes had been made by one new board member that we believe were designed to remove us from the school we created. When we asked to see the changes that were being made we were told by that Board member, in the presence of a representative of the Charter School Office, that we had no right to see the application before it was submitted because we were not members of the Board. When the Charter School Accountability Committee held it's first hearing regarding the minor modification to clarify the relationship between the Founders, Dr. Alvarez and myself, to the school, we were not allowed to speak or asked for our input under the pretense of some Departmental protocol.

Speaking today as a member of the general public is the only remaining venue available to us to present the original intent to modify the charter.

After four years of hard work to create and fund Delaware Design-Lab High School, during the heavy lift of opening the school in its startup year, we were also writing an application to become an XQ Super School. We were excited to learn that after a year of vigorous national screening our XQ Super School application was selected as one of ten winners from 1500 applications to receive a \$10 million XQ Super School Grant. We were pleased to have the model upon which the school was built be nationally validated and acknowledged, not to mention how having an additional \$10 million over the next five years would contribute to the future development of the school.

You can imagine what a shock it was to us to then receive communications drafted by that new board member terminating our relationship with the school and telling us we were not to enter the building or communicate with other board members, school personnel, students or families.

Dr. Alvarez and I seek a fair and humane acknowledgement of the ingenuity, intellectual property and endless hours we spent over several years as Founders of Delaware Design-Lab High School, and as authors of the winning Design-Lab High XQ Super School application. We have been assured by a majority of the Board members that there is no intent on their part to remove us from the school we created or the leadership of the XQ Super School Grant we wrote.

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We expect to be able to continue developing these two innovative projects with the ongoing support and collaboration of the majority of the Board, the parents, the administration, staff, teachers, students and community. We ask that the Department of Education stop this effort to steal the school from its Founders, and the leadership of the XQ Super School project from its authors, and that the language that was added surreptitiously to the minor modification, designed to throw us out of our own school, be removed.

The idea that the mission and vision of Delaware Design-Lab High School and the XQ Super School project can be fulfilled without Dr. Alvarez and myself is based on a couple of faulty premises.

One is the contention that vendors can be found who would be able to do the same work that the Founders do and for a more reasonable cost. Even if that were true the question is “Why?” Why, when the original creators of the vision and mission for both the school and the XQ Super School grant are right here, is there an effort to put their roles out for bid? Supporting the creators of the School and the authors of the grant to carry out the mission and vision of Delaware Design-Lab High School and the Design-Lab XQ Super School project is the smart thing to do.

The other mistake is to look at the plan that has been developed and claim, “We can run the School and implement the XQ grant without Dr. Alvarez and Dr. Rayala. They created the school and brought in a \$10 million grant to support the work. Thank you very much, we can take it from here.”

Implementing the plan that has been developed *IS* the responsibility of the Board, the school leadership team, and faculty. But this is just the plan for the first year. Dr. Alvarez and myself are doing the research, working with other experts, holding brainstorming sessions and doing the hard work of developing the vision for upcoming and future years. The innovation and insights needed to carry out the work have not ended. It is more than a matter of turning the crank to make it work.

Delaware Design-Lab High School and the XQ Super School are not run-of-the-mill projects that can be carried out by people selecting off-the-shelf solutions developed by the usual suspects in past traditional school reform efforts. Dr. Alvarez and I are highly qualified professionals who are committed to making Delaware Design-Lab High School, through the support of the XQ Super School Institute, one of the most effective and innovative schools in the world that helps students meet the extraordinary challenges of the uncertain future that is the 21<sup>st</sup> century.