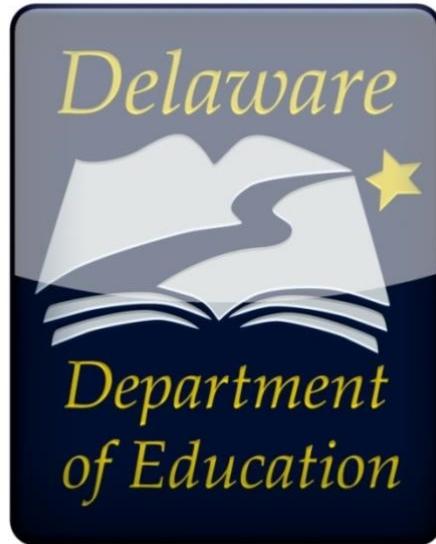


CHARTER SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE

DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



**EastSide Charter School
Major Modification Application
FINAL REPORT**

April 4, 2022

Under 29 Del. C. § 10006A(e) the Charter School Accountability Committee (CSAC) is permitted to hold a fully virtual meeting without an anchor location during a state of emergency. On July 13, 2021, the Governor of the State of Delaware issued a Declaration of a Public Health Emergency for the entire state. Governor Carney extended the Public Health Emergency on January 31, 2022.

Members of CSAC met with representatives from EastSide Charter School (EastSide) on March 29, 2022, for the final meeting to address the approval criteria set forth in 14 Del. C. § 512.

The following attended the Initial Meeting:

Voting Committee Members

- Kim Klein, Chairperson of CSAC and Associate Secretary of Operations Support, DOE
- Gregory Fulkerson, Education Associate, Academic Support, DOE
- Tiffany Green, Education Associate, Educator Support, DOE
- Brook Hughes, Education Associate, Operations Support, DOE
- Joyce Leatherbury, Education Associate, Academic Support, DOE
- April McCrae, Education Associate, Academic Support, DOE
- Brian Moore, Education Associate, School Support, DOE
- Tierra Fair, Community Member
- Ted Molin, Community Member
- Charles Taylor, Community Member

Ex-Officio Members (Non-voting)

- Kendall Massett, Executive Director, Delaware Charter School Network
- Vincent Lofink, Delaware State Board of Education

Staff to the Committee (Non-voting)

- Leroy Travers, Lead Education Associate, Charter School Office, DDOE
- John H. Carwell Jr., Education Associate, Charter School Office, DDOE
- Faye Schilling, Education Specialist, Charter School Office, DDOE
- Alicia Balcerak, Administrative Secretary, Charter School Office, DDOE

Representatives of EastSide Charter School

- Marco Alberti, Assistant Principal
- Aaron Bass, Chief Executive Officer
- Nick Medaglio, Director of Marketing and Development
- Jocelyn Stewart, Chairperson, Board of Directors
- Katelyn Whelan, Director of Student Support

Ms. Klein shared that this was the final meeting of CSAC relative to the major modification application submitted by EastSide, which includes requests to:

- Increase authorized enrollment by a total of 120 students. This represents an increase of 26%.
- Temporarily relocate students to the Teen Warehouse (TWH) while constructing a STEM Hub at the current location.

Ms. Klein stated that the initial CSAC report was issued March 2nd and the school submitted a timely response to that report. The initial public hearing was held on March 8th. Ms. Klein announced that the final report would be issued on April 4th.

Ms. Klein stated that the purpose of this meeting was for CSAC to continue its review of the major modification application with the applicant, review any areas of continued concern through a discussion with the applicant, and issue its recommendations to the applicant.

Discussion

Finance and Budget

1. Provide an update on the Bond Bill request. Has the request been submitted?
 - a. If so, what amount was requested?
 - b. If not, when will the request be submitted and for how much?
 - c. How confident is the Foundation that the funds will be appropriated in the FY23 Bond Bill?
 - d. What is the alternative funding source if no funds are included in the Bond Bill for this project?
2. Provide additional details regarding the proposed \$4.5M loan. Will this loan be the obligation of EastSide or the Foundation?
 - a. If the loan is the obligation of EastSide, does the school acquire any ownership in the new building?
 - b. If EastSide does not have ownership in the new building, how is the loan being secured/collateralized?
 - c. What are the terms of the loan?
 - d. Given the potential for multiple interest rate hikes in the coming months, how will increased lending costs affect EastSide's budget?
 - e. At what interest rate would the loan become unaffordable?
3. When will the various grants, contributions, tax credits, etc. be confirmed?
 - a. During the last CSAC meeting, it was mentioned that the funder that committed \$1.2M to the school would be announced in the coming weeks. Is that information available? Can documentation be provided?

A- For questions 1-3, those were really questions directed to the First Community Foundation, and not the charter school; therefore, we asked the foundation to provide us with a response. Mr. Medaglio shared the letter with the committee for review. This document indicates that the First Community Foundation owns the land and buildings currently leased to EastSide Charter School. The foundation has received grants from

various sources and has grant requests pending with others, including a community Reinvestment Grant requests through the state of Delaware Bond Bill Committee. We are hopeful for this grant, but if that is not forthcoming, we will adjust the project with the resources we have. The security for any loan that the foundation must incur will be the property that the foundation currently owns debt free, cash on hand, branch pledges, and lease payments from EastSide Charter School. Our prospective lender has verbally committed to a 30 year 3.5% fixed rate loan. We would expect final commitments on tax credits, remaining grants, etc. by June 30th. Barclays has now committed \$1 million dollars rather than the \$1.2 million that was requested to be paid in installments in 2022, 2023, and 2024.

Ms. Klein inquired as to when EastSide anticipates completion of the building.

Mr. Bass shared that EastSide anticipates completion of the building would be in the fall of 2023. EastSide would like to begin housing students in this building by the Fall of 2023. In the event they do not hit that target, students can remain at the temporary space at the Teen Warehouse. Upon occupancy, the school would begin making lease payments. EastSide anticipates that the first lease payment would be within 30 days of occupancy.

Ms. Klein then also followed up with questions pertaining to how the timeline of the funding aligns with the information provided in the letter, how this would affect construction, and if those funds were being used for construction.

Mr. Medaglio indicated that he did not believe that it would affect construction, and that it is all part of the new market tax credits. Although, this is outside of Mr. Medaglio's expertise, he believes that throughout the entire process of financing, the money will be available.

4. Does the school anticipate any negative impacts on any of the metrics in the Financial Performance Framework?

A- EastSide has benefited from the foundation since we have been here, particularly with not having rent payments. Now suddenly, we will have rent payments, which is not something we are used to having, which could potentially impact the school. In the budget that was proposed there was a deficit for the first couple of years. We always try to balance our budget. Since 2012, our fund balance has slowly been increasing every year. We have also met the financial framework ratings every year. We have been very sound with our financial stability and viability, and we now have fund reserves in the bank, which we have always viewed as being funds we can reinvest into the school. Therefore, the initial goal is- if we are running on operating deficit the first couple of years before enrollment can catch up to a point where we can break even- we have these reserves that can help support our operations for those years. We look at this as an investment in the lease. In the preliminary budgets created every year, we show a deficit, and then we work to make it better. We are never going to put the school in financial jeopardy. EastSide is confident that based on its history, controls, and leadership, we have proven that we are sound financially and can make decisions that will be successful for the school.

Ms. Klein had a follow-up question regarding if she was correct in hearing that EastSide has not finalized the least amount yet.

Mr. Medaglio indicated that it has not been formalized in a document, but the amount has been discussed. There is a preliminary number but there is not a formalized written agreement.

Ms. Hughes also had a follow-up question- There is an amount in the facilities and maintenance line, but can you explain what the debt service is?

Mr. Medaglio indicated that was a mistake on his part. The debt service should not be listed as debt service. That is the amount EastSide is paying in rent, which should be moved into the facilities and operating budget.

For clarification, Ms. Klein wanted to be clear for that the record that the following statements were correct: the building is being constructed by the foundation and will be owned by the foundation. The school will not incur any long-term liability or debt because of the construction, and this will simply be a lease agreement between the school and the building owner of the facility.

Mr. Bass and Mr. Medaglio confirmed that all of Ms. Klein's statements were correct.

Facilities

5. If there are any construction delays that would prevent the middle school students from moving back to the EastSide campus, what impact (if any) would that have on the proposed expansion in FY24?

A- We do not anticipate any delays. However, we would still be able to accommodate the enrollment with our increase approach. We just received a minor modification last year and right now we are over that current number. Where we expect to be next year, we can do that for the beginning of our move.

a. Would East Side still be able to accommodate the increase in enrollment?

A - Where we expect to be for next year, we can do that for the beginning of our move.

b. Have there been any discussions with Teen Warehouse about extending the arrangement should there be any construction delays?

A – Yes. The Teen Warehouse is fine with EastSide students remaining at that temporary location for the time that is needed.

6. Provide a written plan to secure student medications and records.

A – Yes, we have a written plan to secure records and medications. We have that to share with the Committee.

7. Has any progress been made on a written school nursing plan at Teen Warehouse in accordance with 14 DE Admin. Code §275.4.5.3 (appendix A)?

A - We will be following through with the same plan we have for our nurse here at the North Claymont Street building and using that at the Teen Warehouse. We have posted for a nurse but are also still in conversation with different contractors to make sure they meet the

qualifications of a school nurse in a building, working with students. We will comply with 14 DE Admin.Code to 75.4.5.3 appendix. A. We also have our current nurse, who has been with EastSide for several years, to support our new nurse

Recruitment and Enrollment

8. Provide a history of waitlist information for the last three years.

A - Historically, EastSide has not been a school that needed a waitlist. We have never had to run a lottery. We have never received more applications than we have open spots. We have been able to accept whoever applied. This past year, as we went through the summer, that started to change. It was the first time. We had five students on our current waitlist for this school year.

9. Provide a current enrollment breakdown by zip code.

A – EastSide displayed a chart with a breakdown by zip code. Most of our students are from Wilmington. We do have a couple of students out of state, who are not counted in the unit funding (They are children of faculty).

10. Provide district of residence information for current EastSide students. Provide in both number and percent form.

A – Mr. Bass shared with the Committee a chart indicating the number and percent of students representing each school district of residence. Most students, 47%, come from the Christina School District.

CIPD

11. It is recommended the EastSide works with the Department of Education’s Career and Technical Education workgroup to partner with local high schools and/or vocational schools to develop aligned feeder middle school programs of study. EastSide is focusing on a STEM framework and there is a significant focus on computer science. Not aligning with local programs of study would be short sighted and to the detriment of students matriculating through the course sequences.

A - EastSide has been asked to join Luke Ryan’s steering committee, therefore, we have been working not only to involve EastSide more, but also for the entire state. Also, we are in collaboration with everyone willingly possible. We are working with the Wilmington public library since this will be a satellite location for them. We have engaged with several public groups- particularly the First Community Foundation for the STEM Hub. The STEM Hub is something that is run through the foundation. EastSide is not running the STEM Hub.

EastSide will be a part of the building that the Wilmington Library will be running. To be clear, this is not a school-specific project, but an agreement between the Wilmington Library and the First Community Foundation to run a STEM Hub that will be servicing a lot of other people.

We are not part of a district, so once our 8th grade students graduate, they scatter all over the state. We do partner with several independent schools such as Sandford, Tatnall, and Wilmington Friends for curriculum alignment. In addition, we also have students that head to vocational schools such as Hodgson and St. George. There has been a lot of work that we have been doing through conversation with them about programs that they have in place. Also, our teachers go to those different schools to take part in professional development.

EastSide does not have a particular program, but we are working with Luke Ryan to strength and add partnerships. We are not aware of programs within the state that are not open non-district schools, however we are open to share and learn from others.

12. According to Coalition records, EastSide left the Science Coalition in 2020. Since EastSide is already using Amplify, provide a schedule of time allotted for science instruction in each grade.

A- Mr. Bass shared two documents, one for k-3 and the other for grades 4-8, showing the allotted scheduled time for science in each grade.

a. What is your professional development plan to support continuous three-dimensional learning along with your instructional resources?

A- All staff have been trained through Johnson and Research for Better Teaching. Through a partnership with Achievement First, we trained using the Acceleration Program. EastSide will also be piloting DTGSS for staff evaluations. For science, we also have a mentor from DuPont collaborating with us. During follow-up questions, Ms. McCrae indicated that Amplify is not being used in middle school.

Ms. McCrae also inquired if there was any professional development being done with Amplify.

A - Mr. Alberti indicated that EastSide has taken part in individualized professional development offered through Amplify. Further, EastSide was informed by Tonyea Mead that Amplify was being offered in middle school.

Ms. McCrae reinforced that Amplify has not been adopted by the coalition at the middle school level- further, conversations about this have not occurred in over a year and a half. Ms. McCrae indicated that through 502 alignment, EastSide may adopt the Amplify curriculum, but most show professional development plan that supports Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS).

b. How do you ensure accessibility for all students in science?

A- Our special education team uses all the tools accessible to assist special education students. We service students to their IEP. Our special education team is integrated into all the work we do for our core content.

c. How are your administrators monitoring science instruction to ensure the shifts in science are occurring?

A- We look forward to DOE (Delaware Department of Education) and the Science Coalition moving towards Amplify Science. We look forward to catching back up with the Coalition. Monitoring has been done through individual coaching. Mr. Bass also works with the teachers. Instruction and intervention are also monitored through MTSS (Multi-Tiered System of Supports).

Academic Achievement

13. What are your short- and long-term goals to increase proficiency scores in Reading and Math for students with disabilities?

A- First, we are looking at some baseline information right now. We have been assessing our students after having two years of many students being away during the pandemic. We are using interims to figure out where our students are starting off compared to DESSA.

a. What steps will be taken to achieve these goals?

A – We are working with MTSS. We have been diligent as a pilot across the state. We have seen increase in enrollment and retention, including students with disabilities. We are also tracking data using MAP. Teachers are tracking data across all points and are using data to make decisions, especially around grouping and with our afterschool support, tutoring, and enrichment. Data is also used in our weekly parent conversations. We have been working with our teachers to provide supports and have also added a Reading Specialist and Math Coach. Ms. Whalen shared that the goal is to increase proficiency levels for all students, not just students with disabilities. Since the pandemic, we are focusing on the whole child and making sure we honor time in and out of the classroom setting, working on high level needs, while also adjusting time spent on extra reading and extra math for students based on their individual levels. EastSide continues to focus on the inclusion model as much as possible, while also honoring the time for special education teachers and regular education teachers to have common planning. Every student in the building is everyone’s responsibility- it does not matter if you have an I.E.P. (Individualized Education Plan) or not. EastSide works to consistently check on goal progress and celebrate incremental growth. EastSide follows MTSS practices for all students, regardless of if they have a disability or not, and regularly monitors data throughout the 6-8-week period to determine an action plan and interventions.

b. How will the proposed modifications affect progress towards reaching these goals?

A- The modification of the enrollment and temporary move will not shift that focus or the working being done. Through our partnership with REACH and community support, we are investing \$ 250,000. We expect to see a positive increase- particularly the improvement plan which is external to EastSide.

14. Decisions utilizing data need to be made by using valid comparisons. Data was shared during the initial meeting from 2021 detailing the “outstanding growth” of students at EastSide. The data that was referenced was based upon a student participation rate of 21% and is not comparable to performance metrics from other school years when participation rates at the school were as high as 95-97%. Some examples of data that was shared is below:

YEAR	Subject	Percent Proficient	Percent Participation
2019	ELA	Gr 5= 25% Gr 8=29%	Gr 5= 88% Gr 8=100%
	Math	Gr 5= 12.5% Gr 8=18%	Gr 5= 88% Gr 8=100%
	Science	Gr 5= 12.8% Gr 8=19%	Gr 5=88% Gr 8=81%
	Social Studies	Gr 4= <9.8% Gr 7=18%	Gr 4=91% Gr 7=87%

2021	ELA	Gr 5= * Gr 8= *	Gr 5=12% Gr 8= 12.5%
	Math	Gr 5= * Gr 8= *	Gr 5=<11% Gr 8= 15%
	Science	Gr 5= * Gr 8= *	Gr 5=12% Gr 8= 20%
	Social Studies	Gr 4= * Gr 7= *	Gr 4= 9% Gr 7= 23%

Follow-up Discussion

Tiffany Green

These questions are from my colleagues. The first is from Ms. Socorso about your application for the alternative evaluation system- When can she expect to receive it?

A- Mr. Alberti asked if Ms. Green could repeat the question from Ms. Socorso? Is she referring to the alternative application for leaders? I have been working with Ms. Socorso on that and just received an email from her yesterday.

The second question was from Mr. Ray, who ho handles recruitment and retention. Will there be additional staff hired? And if so, what is your plan for that? How will you recruit?

A – It is the same as our current staffing recruiting plan, which is getting out there working with different organizations, talking to different universities, and being at different fairs. We have been in the state of Delaware as well, as Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Washington D. C. We are also building a pipeline program with our partners at Relay as well as working with other teacher programs to ensure that people who are not certified are able to engage in different roles, such as paraprofessionals. We can train them to become teachers and be our own pipeline. I have also been a leader in For Black Male Educators and so we have been recruiting through that process as well. We are open to every means of recruiting and retaining people.

Once we are full capacity we will need to hire 10 employees.

Brook Hughes

You did clarify that the debt service line should really be under facilities and maintenance, but I noticed it is the same amount. Has the foundation provided any indication that they will keep the rent at the same amount for that many years? Or do you anticipate there is going to be an increase in rent? Most leases have an escalation clause where it increases each year. Do you have anything from the foundation that indicates that?

A – Mr. Medaglio indicated that it is his understanding, at least for the first seven years, it should stay consistent, which is the nature of the new market tax credit.

Joyce Leatherbury

My goal is to ensure that outcomes are improving for students with disabilities. How are you measuring whether the steps that you are taking are working for your students? And if they are not working, in terms of the steps for the students with disabilities and students

that might be in Tier 2 or Tier 3, how are you measuring that? What would you do if they are not working?

A- It begins by consistently sending our new teachers out to trainings. For example, like writing I.E.P.s (Individualized Education Plans) that are aligned to common core, which is important because it allows us to make sure that the courses that we are using, and the progress monitoring tools we are using give us that data that matches I.E.P. goals and progress toward curriculum standards. Goal progress mirrors the RTI (Response to Intervention) process; therefore, it is important that we have the time to review this information. Through bi-weekly meetings, Monday meetings, and ongoing professional development, and at the end of every cycle we are looking at the support students are receiving and determining if we need to make revisions. We are also looking at I.E.P. goals and honoring the necessary time for interventions. It is important to really look at the data before moving students into the appropriate placement. We are also working hand in hand with parents to relay this information. We have increased the number of students with higher needs and still have more students remaining in the building compared to previous years.

April McCrae

How is your school thoughtful in planning for and identifying appropriate data collection for use in decision making relevant to curriculum and instruction and professional development?

A- We have three current cycles of interim assessments. We also give interim comprehensive assessments that mirror things that are standards based. We look at those very intensely. We also use DIBBLES. The thing that we are very intentional about is not getting analysis paralysis, where we just have so much data, we do not know what to do with it. We always start with the end in mind- What we have done well as far as the curriculum, what has the curriculum already covered, and how does that align? Further, we ask what is missing so we are not looking at a bunch of standards in red that have not actually been taught yet. We do a lot of formative assessments. Our teachers work with coaches to develop exit tickets. Leaders are aware of how students are being assessed. Typically, teachers send exit assessments along with their weekly snapshot. All those data points go into our 6-week cycles. We are also looking at classroom data and how things are going with individual students and plans. We also share all this data with students and parents to engage them and give them a sense of ownership.

Brian Moore

Have you located a space in the Teen Warehouse that can be utilized to secure student records and medication? Is it not the same space that is used by the Kingswood Nurse?

A- Yes, we have secured a location. Kingswood Academy is on the 2nd floor, and we are on the 1st floor, so we do not share space with them at all.

Are you going to hire a separate, certified nurse, who will be located the Teen Warehouse?

A – Yes, we will be hiring a separate nurse who will be working at the Teen Warehouse. Our current nurse will assist the new nurse to ensure that we are following all regulations set forth in the Delaware Code.

This is going to be a satellite location for the Wilmington Library. Are security measures in place to make sure EastSide students are safe, while members from the public are also in the building?

A – There will be no members of the public in the building during school hours. The architect has designed security doors. If there are after school activities it will be separated from the space being used by the library and a staff member will be present to monitor this separation.

Chuck Taylor

When will you know the final figure on your rent amount?

A – Once funding finalizes, within 3-6 months.

Was your testing participation rate in 2021 so low due to COVID?

A - Yes, testing was optional this year. We did not offer a virtual testing option.

Leroy Travers

This may be a question for Ms. Hughes. When the final rent figures come in, would we need to collect a new budget?

A- Ms. Brooks indicated that this would be necessary.

Kim Klein

What happens if funding is not able to be secured and this facility is not able to be constructed- not just in the timeline that we are thinking about- but in general? What happens to your growth of students if you do not have the STEM facility?

A - As tenants of this location are also extremely interested in that answer. We are excited that the foundation has raised \$6 Million to this point for this expansion and are optimistic about their continued work. As far as our expansion, while we would not like to have the enrollment increase fully in our current location, the way it's currently configured, we do know that the architects are working to figure out how to make shifts, So if the foundation is not able to fully raise their desired amount, then they would shift back to how can we increase that with \$6 Million dollars currently on hand from the First Community Foundation- We have been assured that they are working diligently to solve that. But we do believe with the modest increase of 120 students that we will be able to fulfill that with the current \$6 Million. Also, we have been assured by the foundation that they have a phase approach for this. The new hub and the first phase have been green-lighted, and we have been assured that we can keep our rent where it needs to be. Even if they do not move to phase two, there is still going to be a significant increase in our enrollment that we can bring into the building.

Kim Klein

Regardless if this facility is constructed, you believe that the foundation does have the funding, and will use that funding to create space somewhere either in this new facility, or elsewhere to house students? While we say 120 does not sound like a lot, it is a 26% increase of your enrollment, which is substantial. Therefore, what we want to make sure of is that we (CSAC) do not support an application to grow your population by 26% and then something happens to that facility, and you are stuck in a situation where you are less than 80% enrollment because you simply do not have physical space for students.

A- The answer is Yes. Just for context, EastSide is above 80% of the increased enrollment right now, even though this phased approach is not until next year. We are committed to getting this done, even if that means we need modular units for our students.

Gregory Fulkerson

Do you plan to reengage with the Science Coalition? If so, what is your timeline?

A- Through conversations with Tonyea Mead, there is some confusion regarding Amplify. Our intention through conversations with Tonyea was to move ahead with Amplify and allow the coalition to catch up with us and then be on point together. Our goal was never to be out of compliance. We are excited about NGSS (Next Generation Science Standards) and the work that is happening at DOE (Delaware Department of Education), and do want to be a part of the Coalition. However, not until this is cleared up.

Conditions

1. By July 1, 2022, EastSide will submit a detailed plan to meet the state requirements of 95% participation on all mandated state assessments for the 2022-2023 school year.
2. Further, EastSide will meet the requirement of 95% participation on all mandated state assessments in the 2022-2023 school year.
3. EastSide will provide a detailed instructional and assessment protocol, outlining the school's instructional assessment system as intended to support a high-quality educational system.
4. By June 1, 2023, prior to expansion, EastSide will provide a written plan for student transportation, which includes a revised budget.
5. On or before July 1, 2022, EastSide will submit a written plan for securing student medications and records and a written plan for nursing services. That plan must be approved before the first student day of the 2022-2023 school year.
6. EastSide will provide a plan for the arrangement of housing students if construction is delayed on the STEM Hub, or that funding does not come to fruition for the new facility.
7. By August 1, 2022, EastSide will submit a revised budget, including the lease cost for the new facility and a copy of the fully executed lease.

Conclusion

The criteria for approving a modification to a charter are set forth in 14 Del. C. § 512. The criteria include that the charter school's educational objectives are consistent with the legislative intent of and restrictions set forth in 14Del. C. c.5; the charter school's educational program has the potential to improve student performance; the plan for the charter school is economically viable; the charter school's financial and administrative operations meet or exceed the same standards, procedures, and requirements as a school district; and the charter school's procedures to assure students', employees', and guests' health and safety are adequate.

Ms. Klein asked if there was a motion to recommend approval of EastSide's application, with conditions, for a major charter modification. The motion was made and seconded to recommend approval with the conditions noted above and was carried unanimously. Ms. Klein reminded EastSide that the CSAC's recommendation was just that, a recommendation to the Secretary of Education on the application to modify its charter.

Next Steps:

- The public comment period ends on April 11, 2022.
- The Secretary of Education will announce his decision at the May 2nd State Board of Education Meeting and ask the State Board for assent.