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EXCELLENCE IN ACADEMICS AND DECORUM

February 17, 2020

Dr. Chuck Longfellow,
Chairperson, Charter School Accountability Committee
Associate Secretary, Operations Support
Delaware Department of Education
401 Federal Street, Suite #2
Dover, DE 199801-3639

Dear Dr. Longfellow:

Thank you and the members of the Charter School Accountability Committee (CSAC) for your review and consideration of Newark Charter School's request for a modification to our charter as outlined in the document submitted in December, 2019. Unfortunately, we were unable to meet as scheduled due to the cancellation of the initial CSAC meeting on 27-January-2020. NCS was eager to share the story of our school with your committee and detail our successful 19 year history as well as our positive results and outcomes academically, organizationally, and financially. The school looks forward to engaging in a dialog with you and your committee at the final CSAC meeting on this matter scheduled for 27-February-2020.

As you are aware, a **Major Modification Application Initial Report** was issued from your committee dated 31-January-2020. The document consisted of a multipage report with 3 attachments. The Conclusion section of the report included specific requests for additional responses from the school. Our responses are included on the pages that follow.

The students, parents, staff and Board of Directors are proud of what NCS has accomplished. Additionally, Newark Charter School is grateful to the Delaware Department of Education and the State Board of Education for having faith in the school from the start, and for being an essential part of its growth and continuing success over the last 19 years. Working together, we have created something special, and in doing so, we have changed the lives of literally thousands of young people. Authorizing the school's current request will allow more Delaware children the opportunity to benefit from all we have created together.

We look forward to meeting with you as this process continues.

Sincerely,



Franklin A. Newton, Ed.D.
School Director

copy: Mr. John Carwell; Education Associate, Charter School Office-DDOE
Mr. Adrian Soyer; Chairperson, Board of Directors, NCS

**Newark Charter School's
Responses to the Questions
from the Charter School Accountability Committee's
Major Modification Application Initial Report**

In their report dated 31-January-2020, the CSAC requested that Newark Charter School provide the following information to the Charter School Office on or before February 17, 2020:

- 1) A more complete, data-supported answer to question 2 in Section B related to impacts of expansion on surrounding DE schools.
- 2) A detailed recruitment plan that will illustrate your commitment to serve a more representative sample of students from your community.
- 3) A description of activities that you have utilized to share successful practices with other Delaware schools
- 4) A plan to address a scenario in which the Christina operating referendum scheduled for June 9, 2020 does not pass, to include:
 - a. The projected impact on NCS finances (estimated dollar amount and when)?
 - b. What steps will NCS take to mitigate that risk?

Our responses to each item are included below. Data sources used for these responses include the Delaware Department of Education, United States Census Bureau, United States Postal Service, Yahoo, Google, FedEx, and UPS and obtained through <https://www.doe.k12.de.us>, <https://datausa.io/>, and <https://www.unitedstateszipcodes.org>.

1) A more complete, data-supported answer to question 2 in Section B related to impacts of expansion on surrounding DE schools.

The question on the Modification application states: ***"If your proposed modification involves an expansion of greater than 15% of your currently approved enrollment and the change will be effective within 18 months of the date of this application, identify the impacts of this expansion on the surrounding school districts and community for consideration."***

Newark Charter School's response of "This proposed enrollment plan will not be in effect until 33 months after this application (August 2022)" was not intended to be evasive. As the major modification will not add new students to our school until 33 months from date of application, NCS interpreted the question as not applicable because the enrollment increase did not fall into the specified criteria that would indicate the need for a response.

It is difficult to accurately predict 18 months into the future in the best of circumstances. It is even harder to predict 33 months into the future of the Christina School District given the variables of the proposal for themed high schools in CSD, current issues with the CSD Board of Education, the upcoming Superintendent, Finance Director and other district administrator searches, the impending recommendations of the Redding Consortium including some form of redistricting that will change the composition of CSD, and approaching operating and capital referenda whose outcome is unknown.

That said, applying census data from the main zip codes where NCS students reside (19702, 19711, 19713) shows that there are presently 8271 children under 5 years of age and 25,726 school aged children distributed relatively evenly in the following clusters:

7974 children aged 5-9 (31 %)
8256 children aged 10-14 (32%)
9496 children aged 15-19 (37%)

The area also shows that of students age 3-17 in those zip codes, 71% attend public schools, 20% attend private schools, and 9% are homeschooled or not enrolled in school. The local traditional public district currently enrolls just over 14,000 students and annually has ~9000 choice applications submitted. This modification request beginning August 2022 (33 months after application) would bring in 526 students distributed ages 5-14 and would take 53 additional students per year for the following three years for a total of 685 additional students total. Given those numbers, the impact on local schools should be negligible.

2) A detailed recruitment plan that will illustrate your commitment to serve a more representative sample of students from your community.

Newark Charter School remains committed to the school's Diversity Mission Statement:

Newark Charter School desires to create and sustain an environment that prepares our students for citizenship in an increasingly global society, living and learning among peers whose perspectives and experiences differ from their own. We embrace differences and commonalities across race, nationality, gender identity, religion, physical appearance, sexual orientation, learning ability, and socioeconomic backgrounds. We value every student and consider their contribution significant.

We have had a detailed outreach plan in place since 2012 when it was approved by the Delaware Secretary of Education. At the outset, that plan included demographic enrollment targets to be used by the school to evaluate the effectiveness of implementation of the outreach efforts. The targets established in 2012 focused on a five-year period, from 2013 through 2018. The specific demographic categories to be monitored were: Racial (African American, Hispanic and Multi-Race), Low-Income and Special Education. The Plan called for the data to focus on "newly-enrolled, non-sibling enrollees." This is because it is impossible for the school to alter the demographics of already-enrolled students or their brothers and sisters joining the school.

In her letter approving the Outreach Plan, the Secretary clarified the use of demographic enrollment targets:

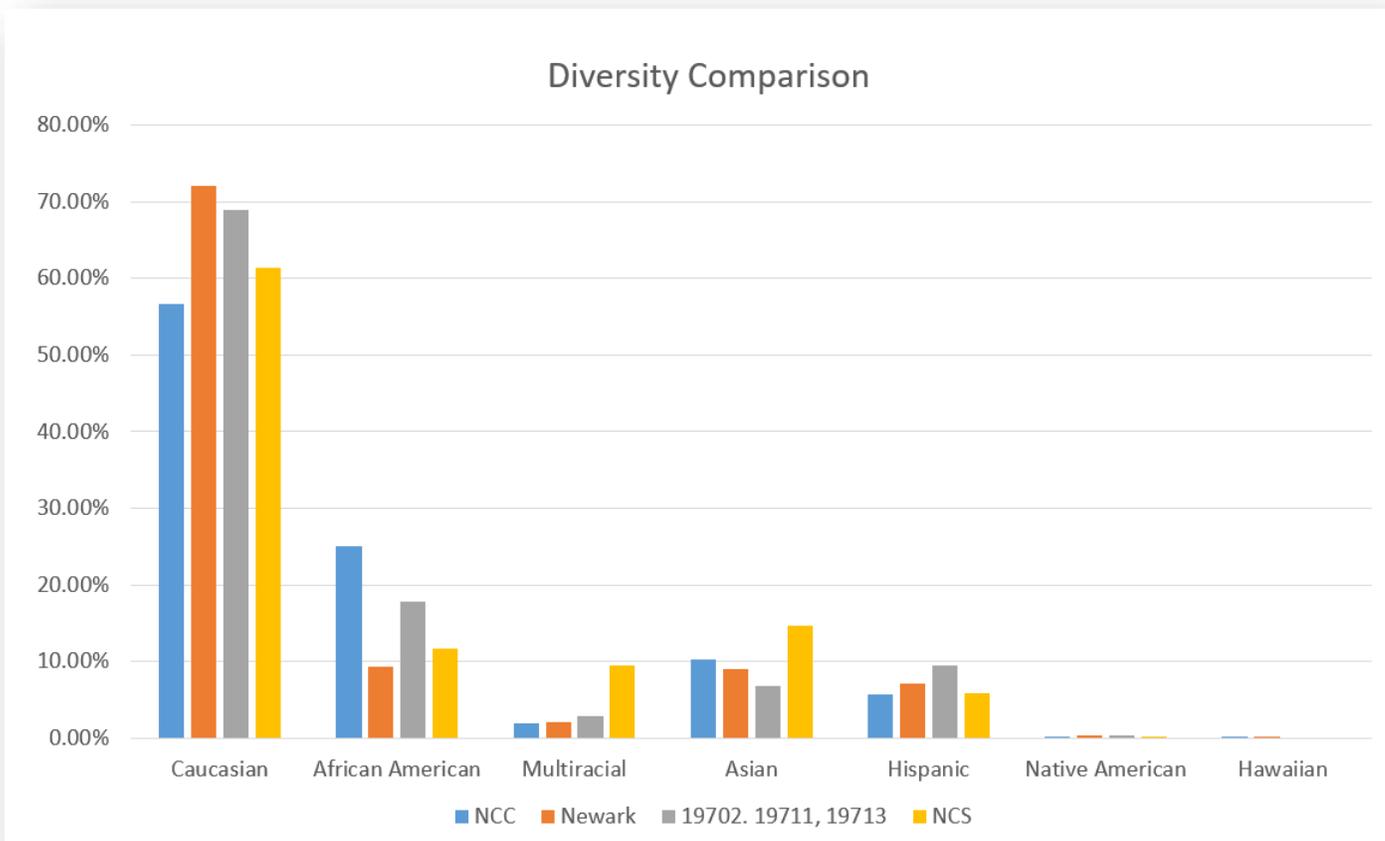
"Our understanding is that the enrollment 'targets' set forth in your Outreach Plan are intended to be used by the school's Board of Directors only to assess the effectiveness of the Outreach Plan on an annual basis and to provide data to revise the plan as necessary. We do not view the 'targets' as enrollment quotas, but only as an expression of the school's desire to achieve greater racial diversity through the use of its Outreach Program. We recognize that the school's actual enrollment process must be nondiscriminatory and that, in the case of over-enrollment, admission will ultimately be determined through the lottery process mandated by law."

Newark Charter School strives to ensure that all families in the Newark area are aware that Newark Charter is an educational option. The outreach strategies implemented throughout the years and are ongoing include:

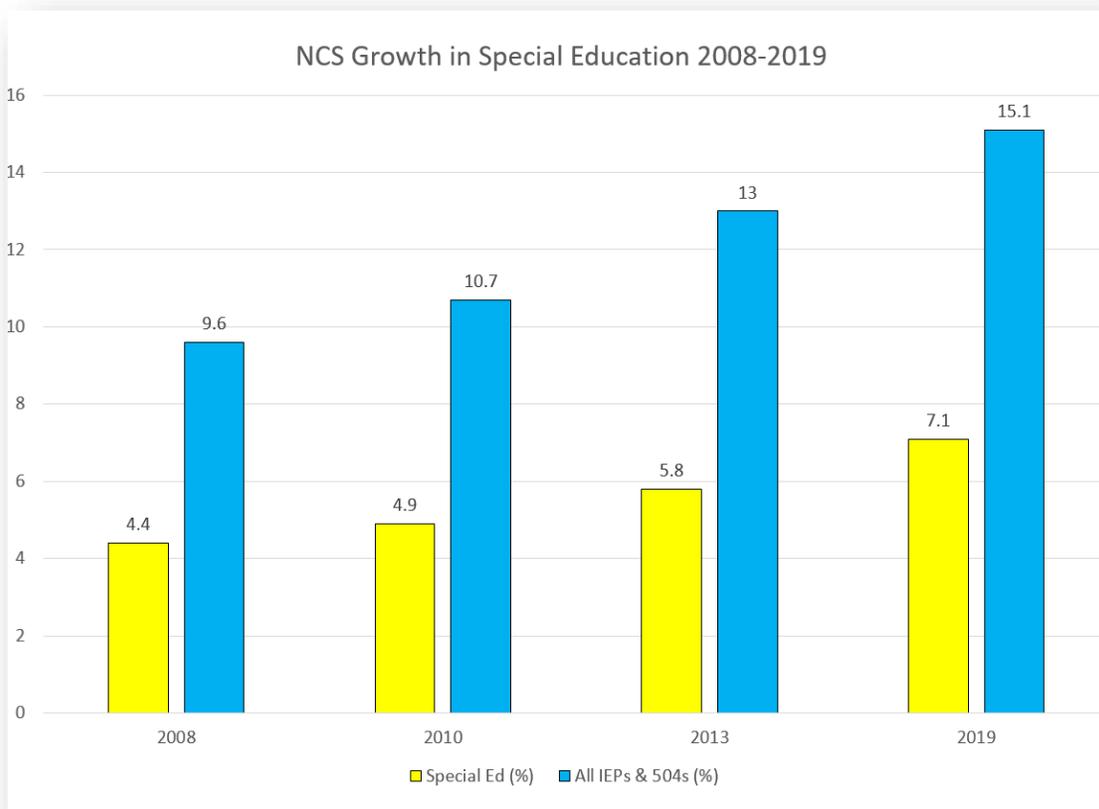
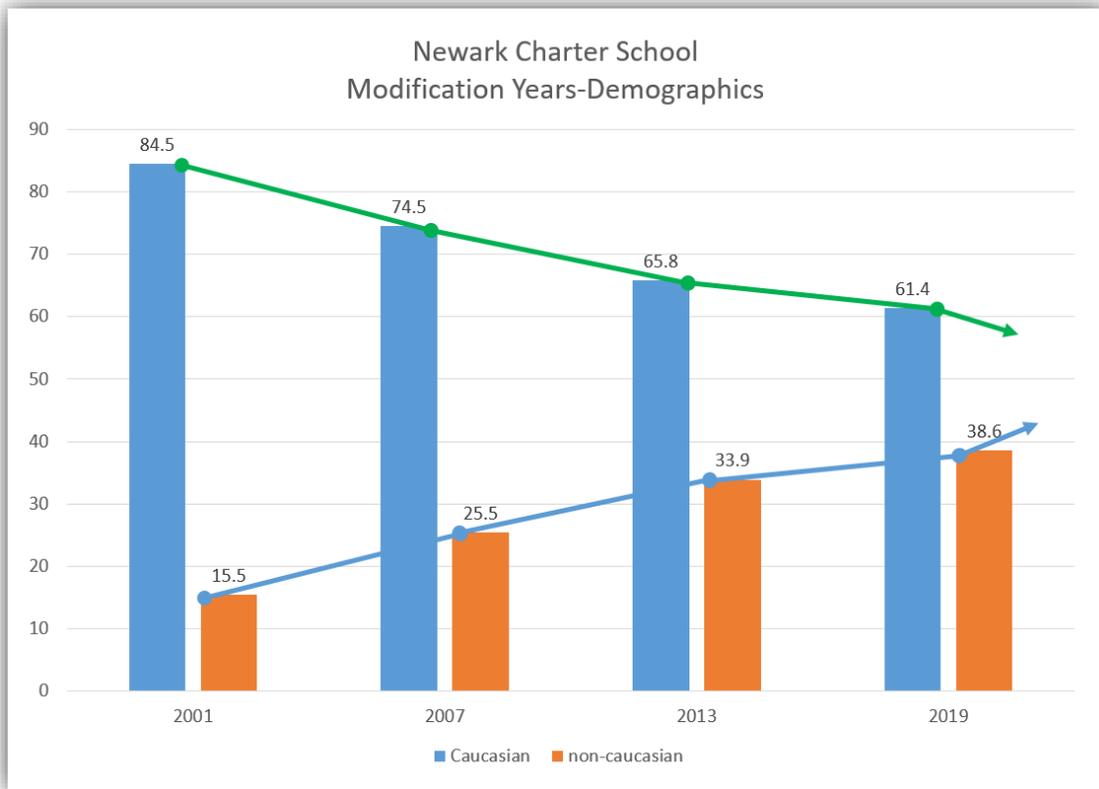
- ✿ The Outreach Committee, comprised of staff and parents, is charged with increasing awareness of NCS offerings and the application process amongst the targeted populations. This group regularly reports on its work, as well as related demographic data and trends related to the Outreach Plan, at School Council meetings and with the Board of Directors.
- ✿ Continually recruit diverse parents and staff to meet regularly to plan and execute outreach efforts (internally and externally).
- ✿ Provide awareness of the annual application process with an aggressive Open Enrollment and Open House campaign including: providing assistance with the completion of the application process; making enrollment materials available in Spanish; inviting Early Education Centers to the annual Open House; and print ads in The Newark Post, MetroKids, El Tiempo Hispano, The News Journal, as well as NCS social media, website, weekly bulletins to current families.
- ✿ Participate at Community Events that involve under-represented populations. Events include Newark Community Day, Head Start Meeting, Charter School Expo, and High School Exploratory Fairs.
- ✿ Utilize Outreach Members to meet and greet potential families during the NCS Open House.
- ✿ Utilize Outreach members to meet and greet new Kindergarten families during the Kindergarten Assessments.
- ✿ Continue to promote student and faculty successes and diversity via social media, including the NCS website.
- ✿ Continue school-wide initiatives to improve awareness of diversity, adversity and inclusion including morning meetings, No Place for Hate campaign, and Anti-Bullying assemblies/efforts.
- ✿ Host an annual Multicultural Festival to celebrate cultural diversity.
- ✿ Host a Title I Reading/English as a Second Language Family Night.
- ✿ Provide Spanish translation at Back to School Nights, Parent Conferences, etc...on an as needed basis.
- ✿ Organize and execute three gently used uniform sales throughout the year. To assist families with the greatest need, first preference is given to the free/reduced lunch families.

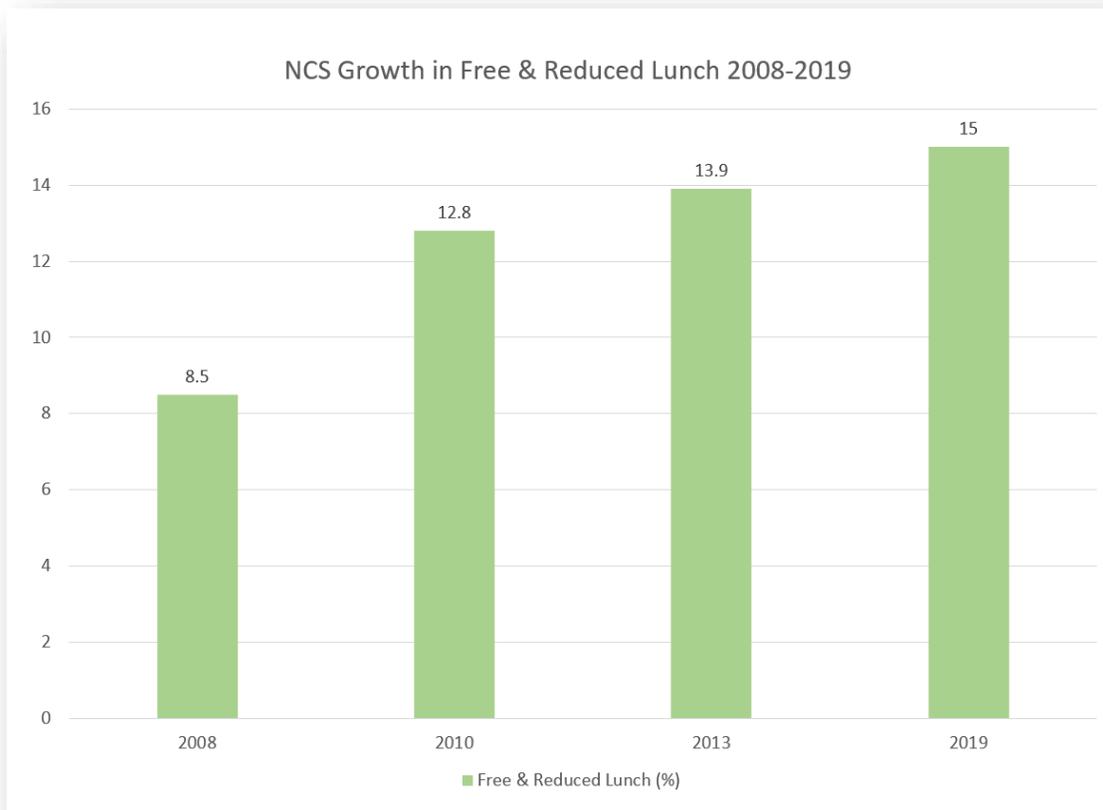
- Maintain a Patriot Pantry filled with gently used uniforms, school supplies and weather related items for all families.
- Special Services Parent Council – meets quarterly. Council is run by parents in partnership with the special services department. Provides parents with fellow parent mentors, opportunities to learn from one another, opportunities to learn from experts in the field, and focuses on increasing the strength of collaborative partnerships between school, families, and service providers. Meetings occur face to face, via zoom, and lunch and learn.

Our percentage of minority students has increased every year for 19 consecutive years. Our student diversity is more than representative of the Newark area and is approaching the population of New Castle County, Delaware.



When we opened our doors in 2001, our overall student body was 84.5 % Caucasian, this year, it is 61.4%. As stated previously, due to our commitment and outreach, our entering classes continue to become more diverse and fully representative of our communities. This year, the entering Kindergarten cohort was 50.8% Caucasian. We have seen increases in our special education students as well as our low income students (as measured with Free & Reduced Lunch numbers). We believe these numbers will continue to grow.





It can be stated with confidence that the strategies and targets established in the approved Outreach Plan have been closely monitored and successfully achieved. These strategies will continue to be implemented and enhanced with the input of our outreach committee and school community.

3) A description of activities that you have utilized to share successful practices with other Delaware schools

Newark Charter School's educational community has always been ready, willing and eager to work collaboratively to enhance the education system throughout the state. Throughout our 19 year history, NCS has reached out to schools and educational partners in the area to both share our successful practices and to learn from them. Often our offers went unheeded and sometimes were refused. For example, a local traditional district refused to schedule athletics with NCS when we were beginning our athletic program and refused to rent facilities. Additionally, NCS attempted to work with local district administration regarding school finances, yet no support or willingness from that district. Through curricular activities (i.e. Project Citizen, Global Leadership Capstone, AP Research) our students partner with community leaders, organizations and schools to provide service or collect data. Partners range from the mayor, legislators, Food Bank, Red Cross and schools just to name a few. Projects may provide service, education to the community or data collection. Some of this work has resulted in new legislation in Delaware. We have experienced some situation where the local districts have not welcomed our students or have not been

hospitable to our students when permitting them to give service/partnership. We have continued to reach out and attempt to partner despite all this and continue to actively find willing partners.

While collaborations and partnerships have occurred throughout our time, the current school director has reinforced and encouraged staff and others to continue to form partnerships and collaborations throughout the state and region to work with willing partners. Dr. Newton worked closely with UD's Partnership for Public Education, specifically with Dr. Dan Rich (UD), Dr. Freeman Williams (Newark NAACP and former CSD Superintendent), Dr. Keely Powell (Vice President of the CSD Board of Education) to host a forum on the future of public education in Newark. We have continued to work with schools directly, with leadership and policy makers throughout the state to discuss, inform shape and develop policies, pedagogies and practices designed to improve the education system in our state as well as share and learn best practices academically, operationally and financially.

Some of our school's work in these areas is detailed below. This is by no means an exhaustive listing, but gives an indication of the depth and breadth of our collaborations.

Collaboration with Districts, Charter, Private Schools and community at large:

-  MOT peer observation and collegial curricular sharing
-  Collaboration with leadership of Sussex Academy and Charter School of Wilmington to share resources
-  Colonial – Collaboration regarding policy development to support inclusive schools specific to transgender students
-  Building partnership to serve 18-21 programs with CSD, RCCSD, Project Search, Brandywine, NCCVT. All based on personal/professional relationships.
-  Las Américas ASPIRA Academy – met with Board Chair and Development Director to discuss capital campaign thoughts and ideas.
-  MOT Charter & First State Montessori Academy – thought partner to discuss Open Enrollment policies and procedures
-  Las Américas ASPIRA Academy – met with Board representatives to discuss major fundraising ideas
-  NCS staff and the staff of other schools visit our school to collaborate in the areas of Math, Science, Social Studies, and Inclusion. School/districts include: Brandywine Springs, Cecil County Schools, MOT Charter School, Silver Lake Elementary School
-  We participate in the statewide Charter Schools Network
-  Leadership committed to organize and deliver first Charter School Network professional Development Day serving all charter schools in DE.

- ✿ Supported peer observations, school and classroom visits and collaboration regarding academic programming with Padua, Ursuline, and Wilmington Christian
- ✿ Established global connections with schools through French and Spanish exchange programs
- ✿ Odyssey Charter has visited to observe how we manage our Patriot Pantry Program
- ✿ Served on CSW Finance Committee
- ✿ Mentored Las Américas ASPIRA Academy from conception through opening and currently as needed resource.
- ✿ Provides guidance and resources to all Charter School Business Managers throughout the state

Collaboration with DEDOE to share practices and expertise throughout the state:

- ✿ Our Director of Learning Support leads the Charter Special Education Director PLCs where they, as a collective group, share resources, procedures, and best practice with each other. As part of the PLC, she leads and/or schedules trainings each quarter.
- ✿ Charter School Instructional Committee: NCS staff are on this committee with other instructional leaders in Charter School. The group collaborates and shares ideas regarding assessments, programming, curriculum, RTI, inclusion. NCS shares our best practices as well as bringing back pertinent ideas with the appropriate staff members.
- ✿ EL Lead Team – NCS has been a part of the DOEs EL Lead Team group for the past three years. During EL Lead Team meetings, schools across the state share best practice and resources with one another to build a resource bank of best practice. NCS presented their work and focus at the spring EL Lead Team Meeting.
- ✿ Teachers from NCS presented at the DOE Transition Cadre Meeting. During this meeting, NCS teachers shared transition planning resources and the process they use to ensure students play an active role in planning their post-secondary goals/activities.
- ✿ Additionally, we have participated in the following:
 - Common ground for the Common Core Initiative
 - Measure B assessment development
 - Data Forum Representation
 - CTE Pathway implementation and participation in all state events
 - Presentation at Pathways Conference
 - Communication and Collaboration Network attendance/participation
 - NCS established Chinese Sister School through DEDOE partnership
 - High level of student participation in Chinese exchange program and NCS staff willing to support by chaperoning

Collaboration with University of Delaware:

-  Dual Enrollment E110, Marine Science and Entrepreneurship (Our staff partnered with the Horn Entrepreneurship Program to take their curriculum and build unit/lesson plans for easy implementation state-wide)
-  English Language Institute – Host visitors
-  Host many faculty, Dean Gary Henry and other UD personnel
-  Partner with the Biden Institute to provide educational and leadership opportunities to NCS students
-  Host Khbrat teacher visitors
-  Host student teachers and practicum students
-  UD Lib Search Advisory Committee: This committee is comprised of librarians, curriculum specialists, literacy coaches, etc. We collaborate and look for ways to infuse UD Lib Search more into classrooms and libraries

Leadership collaborations. NCS Staff provide leadership professionally as they:

-  Serve on boards and as members in professional organizations like Delaware Association of School Administrators and School Principals
-  Serve on DASA Board and on DASA Special Education Director group
-  Collaborate and educate DASA leadership to support greater membership on several topics over the years
-  Served on Component 5 subcommittee DPAS at Leg Hall
-  Served on DAPPS Board of Directors
-  Presented at the Delaware Academy for School Leadership's Policy and Practice Institute
-  Leverage personal connections to collaborate with administrators state-wide
-  Serve on the Inclusion Conference planning committee and the Charter School Conference planning committee.
-  Director of Learning Support presented MTSS framework used at NCS at the Charter School Conference.

- 4) A plan to address a scenario in which the Christina operating referendum scheduled for June 9, 2020 does not pass, to include:**
- a. The projected impact on NCS finances (estimated dollar amount and when)?**
 - b. What steps will NCS take to mitigate that risk?**

Throughout Newark Charter School's 19 year history, it has experienced and managed swings in local receipts up to \$300 per student from failed CSD referendums. NCS has successfully managed financially through multiple failed CSD referendums since 2015 (with only one passing in 2016). NCS has record of only 3 CSD passed operating referendums since its 2001 inception year – 2005, 2010 and 2016.

In Year 1 (FY 21) of this model, NCS did project a \$300 per student decrease in local funds due to the FY 19 failed CSD referendum. It is projected that if the FY 20 CSD referendum does not pass, NCS will see at least a \$740,000 decrease in local receipts in FY 22.

As in the past year's NCS utilizes the following management strategies to negate a loss in local revenue:

-  Ensure class sizes are maximized in all grades – KN to 3rd grade at least 22 to 1 ratios and in grades 4 to 12 a 28 to 1 class size ratio.
-  Ensure support staffing and management staffing is utilized to their fullest potential. Restructure responsibilities as needed to ensure optimal utilization of resource.
-  Analyze strategic projects in the annual budget to determine if one time projects can be spread out over time, deferred or handled in another fashion without spending funds.
-  Re-evaluate merit pay policy.
-  Evaluate need for replacing vacant positions.
-  Evaluate management annual increases.
-  Utilization of reserves, as needed, to assist with operations.
-  Additionally, if needed, re-finance existing bonds during call period if rates are favorable to existing issue.