

Department of Education
Charter School Accountability Meeting

November 3, 2010

MOT Charter School
Providence Creek Academy Charter School

Attending Committee Members:

Dan Cruce, Jim Hertzog, Karen Field Rogers, Deb Hansen, Paul Harrell, Karen Jones

Mr. Cruce called the meeting to order. The purpose of the meeting was to meet with representatives from MOT Charter School and Providence Creek Academy Charter School to discuss the schools' renewal applications. For the purpose of the record introductions were made:

Dan Cruce, Deputy Secretary/Chief of Staff, Chair of Accountability Committee
Jim Hertzog, Education Associate, Student Assessment
Karen Field Rogers, Associate Secretary, Finances Reform & Resource Management
Deb Hansen, Education Associate, Visual and Performing Arts, Charter Curriculum Review
Paul Harrell, Director, Private/Public Partnerships
Karen Jones, Education Associate, Curriculum Access and Differentiation of Instruction, proxy for Jennifer Kline
John Carwell, Charter School Officer, Charter Schools Office
Scott Kessel, Education Associate, DOE
Judi Coffield, Policy Analyst, State Board of Education
Suzi Harris, Delaware Charter Schools Network
Patricia Bigelow, Education Associate, Charter Schools Office
Mitch Weiss, MOT Charter School
Elaine Elston, MOT Charter School
Jennifer Taylor, MOT Charter School
Linda Jennings, MOT Charter School
Ed Ide, Providence Creek Academy
Charles Taylor, Providence Creek Academy
Andrea Spence, Providence Creek Academy
Audrey Erschen, Providence Creek Academy

MOT Charter School was the first renewal application discussed.

Mr. Cruce opened the meeting and explained the process of the meetings. He asked the school representatives if they wished to make any comments.

Ms. Jennings made a brief statement.

Mr. Cruce opened the meeting to the committee members for discussion. He said he planned to discuss student achievement with each renewal applicant. Mr. Carwell distributed a student data analysis hand-out. Mr. Hertzog commented that the presentation of the data in MOT's renewal was excellent.

Mr. Carwell asked the school representatives what lessons were learned in the past few years. Ms. Jennings said it starts with the curriculum and keeping good teachers in the classroom. She said the goal is to give the students the best material and keeping the teachers happy.

Mr. Carwell asked what best practices the school representatives had learned over time. Ms. Taylor said when they started there were not a lot of role models. She said the board is good about documenting meetings and decisions and that Ms. Jennings is good at keeping 60 day, 90 day, 180 day and 5 year goals. Ms. Taylor said the school added a STEM class and that they consider themselves lucky to have a gifted staff and an administration that is popular with the staff. Mr. Cruce asked about the challenge of recruiting and retaining good teachers. Ms. Jennings said the teachers are often asked why they are at the school. Ms. Elston said they reinvest in their teachers and ask them what the school can do to help with professional development. Ms. Taylor said the school has developed good relationships between the parents and teachers.

Mr. Harrell asked what source they use to recruit new teachers. Ms. Jennings said they try not to hire brand new teachers out of college. She said they seem to attract out of state teachers.

Dr. Bigelow asked what strengths the school has in using quantitative and qualitative data to improve student learning. Ms. Jennings said they use the State testing as an outside opinion. She said she feels they are good at using qualitative data. Ms. Elston said they use NWEA and DIBELS.

Mrs. Hansen asked what the school is doing to help highly able learners reach their full potential. Ms. Jennings said the school offers on-line courses, independent study and have segregated some students into an advanced class. Ms. Taylor said the school requires a parent agreement at the beginning of the school year stating parent/teacher meetings are mandatory and the school creates a home and school partnership.

Mr. Harrell complimented the school's program for gifted and talented students.

Mr. Hertzog asked where the students go to school when they graduate from MOT's K-8 program. Ms. Jennings said many students go to Appoquinimink High School and some go to charter schools, private schools and the local Vo-Tech school.

Mrs. Hansen complimented the school on their technology curriculum. She said the preliminary report will have a rubric on the units of instruction.

Mr. Cruce explained the process of the remaining meetings and the purpose of the public hearing.

Brief recess.

Providence Creek Academy was the next renewal application discussed.

Mr. Cruce opened the meeting. Introductions were made for the record.

Mr. Taylor reviewed a slide show presentation of past history, growth, and what the school hopes to accomplish in the future. He commented that the school has a balanced budget, teacher retention for teachers who have been with the school over 3 years is 81%, the September 30th enrollment was 104% of the approved enrollment and, the re-enrollment rate is 96%.

Mrs. Erschen said the school's two interventions for school safety are a security system with includes video cameras and a badge system and, a partnership with the Smyrna Police Department. Mrs. Erschen reviewed other programs at the school such as Service Learning, the Visual and Performing Arts annual show, and student mentoring.

Mrs. Spence discussed the school's academic achievement. She said they are making progress in grades K-6 by closing the gap in math, science and social studies. She said the target improvement areas in the middle school are math and reading and the target group are the economically disadvantaged students. Mrs. Spence said student performance in the economically disadvantaged students group has shown consistent improvement since 2006, however, in 2010 the group did not meet the AYP target. She reviewed graphs from the slide show presentation that demonstrated the progress from 2006-10.

Mrs. Erschen said they have noticed less parent involvement as the students move up in grade level in the middle school. She said they have a young staff and have had a turnover problem with ELA and Math teachers at the middle school level. Mrs. Erschen said they reviewed the curriculum pacing. She said the school opened after Labor Day which made them a week behind and then in January/February there were massive amounts of snow which did not allow instruction to be completed prior to the DSTP test dates. She noted that, by their calculations, they were approximately 3 weeks behind where they should have been when the tests were given. Mrs. Erschen said the school has implemented a mandatory parent meeting at the first part of the school year and they are looking into virtual classrooms on the school's website. Mrs. Erschen said the school has installed smart boards in all the middle school classrooms and hope to expand to all classrooms as funding becomes available.

Mrs. Spence reviewed a comparison of data from two different periods based on how many A to F grades were achieved. There was discussion on what the data covered and how it reflects student achievement.

Mr. Cruce asked if the school is using any formative evaluations other than DCAS. Mrs. Spence said they were using DIBELS with RTI and STAR and the Early Literacy for progress monitoring. She said they wanted to see what they can get from DCAS and determine if that is enough information, if not, they may purchase other programs but at this point it was a financial decision. She said grade wise they are in a better place than they were last year.

Mrs. Erschen said they developed a plan for a discovery lab. Mr. Taylor said the lab would be a place where students can do their projects and they plan to build a facility on their property by 2012.

There was discussion about the student achievement data for 2008-09 to 2009-10 and how the scores went down. Mr. Cruce noted that the student achievement data is a concern. He asked if the school had done any root cause analysis around why these drops have occurred in the longitudinal data.

Mrs. Hansen had a concern around who developed the scope and sequence documents and units of instruction. She said 8th grade social studies were at the wrong benchmark, it was not appearing at the same level as students were being tested. She said a rubric on the curriculum will be provided with the preliminary report.

Mrs. Spence said they did not foresee that moving to a new facility would impact the school as much as it did, including the content pacing.

Mr. Hertzog asked if they had looked at the demographics of the students and if they are losing high end 8th graders. Mrs. Erschen said their demographics have changed. Mrs. Spence said they have looked at the demographics and have tried to implement courses of study to build a higher track for math. She said in 2008 they started with pre-Algebra in 8th grade for the higher level math students and offered a pre-Algebra in 7th grade and Algebra in 8th grade. Mrs. Spence said they have had some middle school math teacher retention issues. She said the Science Coalition requires the middle school teachers to attend training during the school day throughout most of the school year.

Mr. Harrell asked what source they use to recruit new teachers. Mr. Taylor said they participate in recruiting fairs in Philadelphia, Teach Delaware, Wesley, and Delaware State University. Mrs. Erschen said the majority of the staff is first year teachers; however, after they provide training the teachers have been going to another school district. She said the school now has a retention program in place.

Mrs. Harris asked about the school's evolving population. Mrs. Erschen said the population from 2006 to current has evolved because, previously, they enrolled a larger amount of special education students. Mrs. Jones asked if RTI has been an effective model in helping the students get early intervention and if there is a possibility to invest in the RTI effort beyond the 5th grade population. Mrs. Erschen said it is a possibility.

Mr. Cruce explained the process of the public hearing.