

Department of Education
Charter School Accountability Meeting

July 13, 2011

Family Foundations Academy Charter School
Initial and Preliminary Meeting

Voting Committee Members

- Dan Cruce
- Karen Field Rogers
- Karen Jones
- April McCrae
- Debora Hansen
- Cliff Coleman

Mr. Cruce called the meeting to order. The purpose of the meeting was to meet with representatives from Family Foundation Academy to discuss the school's Modification and take such action thereon as the Committee deemed appropriate including, without limitation, the drafting of a Preliminary Report on the Modification Request. For the purpose of the record, introductions were made.

Attending Committee Members

- Dan Cruce, Deputy Secretary, Chief of Staff, Chair of Accountability Committee
- John Hindman, Deputy Attorney General, Counsel to the Accountability Committee
- John Carwell, Charter School Officer, Charter Schools Office
- Karen Field Rogers, Associate Secretary Finance Reform & Resource Management
- Karen Jones, Education Associate, Curriculum Access & Differentiation of Instruction
- April McCrae, Education Specialist, Science Assessment, proxy for Joanne Reihm
- Debora Hansen, Education Associate, Visual and Performing Arts, Charter Curriculum Review
- Clifton Coleman, Member, Charter School Accountability Committee
- Patricia Bigelow, Education Associate, Charter Schools Office
- Scott Kessel, Education Associate, Department of Education

Charter School Members

- Tennell Brewington, School Leader, Family Foundations Academy
- Sean Moore, Family Foundations Academy
- Pete Davisson, Family Foundations Academy
- Takashi Rhoulac, Family Foundations Academy
- Gary Carter, Board Member, Family Foundations Academy
- Damien A. Ross, Board Member, Family Foundations Academy
- LaMar Boyce, Board President, Family Foundations Academy

Mr. Cruce asked Mr. Carwell to give an overview of the modification. Mr. Carwell stated that Family Foundations Academy is seeking to add an additional location to their campus. The school was previously approved for a modification to expand its grade configuration from grades 1-5 to grades K-8. During the 2010-11 school year, Family Foundations Academy began serving grades 6 and 7. The school reconfigured their multi-purpose room to accommodate the

new grades. Their current facility cannot accommodate their rising 8th grade students. Family Foundations has identified a Diocesan school which is part of St. Matthew's Parish (located at 1013 E. Newport Gap Pike in Wilmington, Delaware). Family Foundations Academy intends to use this site as their middle school location. The school has submitted a ratified lease with St. Matthew's RC Church for this property and financials which have been reviewed by the Charter School Office.

Mr. Cruce explained that for new applications and renewals the Committee reviews the fourteen approval criteria as stipulated in the charter school statute (14 *Del.C.*, Ch. 5, § 512). He added for modification requests the Committee narrows its focus on the criteria that pertain to the request. In this case, the Committee's discussion would focus on the two that pertain to this modification request; Criterion 8 and Criterion 9.

Criterion 8 (Economic Viability): Mr. Cruce asked Mr. Kessel to start the Committee's discussion on this criterion. Mr. Kessel stated that Family Foundations Academy provided a budget for their finances and a narrative. His review of the documents was positive and satisfactory so that the Department could move forward with the request.

Mr. Cruce asked Mr. Kessel if he shared the site visit with other committee members; and Mr. Kessel's response was no he had not. Mr. Cruce asked him if he was prepared to discuss the information about the site visit with the committee.

Mr. Carwell stated that Mr. Marinucci, the Department of Education Facility Officer, visited the site months ago and identified there were religion items that needed to be removed before the start of school from the site. The school is aware of this and is in the process of having those items removed and otherwise the facility is sound. Family Foundations Academy also has a certificate of occupancy because it will be servicing students this year.

Ms. Jones asked if the facility has handicapped accessibility. Mr. Carwell said since this is a preliminary meeting he would have Mr. Moore answer that question.

Mr. Moore asked Ms. Jones if she was referring to ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) requirements and she replied yes. Mr. Moore stated that the school will be adding a ramp in the rear of the building later on and it is budgeted in the financial report. He also stated that any modifications that need to be added to the building, because of DOE compliances, have already been factored in to their finances. He went on to state that it is also mentioned in the lease as to who is responsible for removing any items or making modifications to the building. Mr. Carwell asked Ms. Jones if she have any further questions on that piece; and her reply was no.

Dr. Bigelow asked if the classes will be held on one floor or multiple floors. Mr. Moore stated that it is a multi level building. Dr. Bigelow asked if children in wheel chairs would be on one floor. Mr. Moore stated that they do not have that kind of population at this point, but if they did they would make the necessary modification. He also stated that they did not have that problem at the current building either.

Ms. Jones stated that the issue was compliance not only ADA, for example, because any child could break a leg and could require a wheel chair. What would happen when they came back into the school and there was no accessibility available? She said this is why such access is needed in case of such problems arising.

Mr. Coleman asked if the school would be able to deal with this in case these problems arise. Mr. Moore said again stated they would. He went on to explain that each level of floors would house different grades. The school is prepared to make arrangements for any student to get to the necessary floor level if needed.

Mr. Cruce stated that if needed they could attach a condition to the Preliminary Report in regards to ADA requirements. That way the school would be able to address their comments in the response to the Preliminary Report.

Mr. Hindman said that the school cannot guess what might happen to a student, but it sounds like they know what is needed in case they have a disabled student who would attend the school. He stated that if he was sitting at the table where Mr. Moore was sitting he wouldn't know how to respond to the preliminary report. He also said he would be surprised if there were any public schools that had an elevator for all their floors. He went on to mention that there are a lot of schools that are pre-ADA that are accommodating in other ways. He added that the Department's oversight and monitoring visits have the ability to ensure that students have the ability to be accommodated by law and that Mr. Marinucci is very thorough when he does his site visits.

Mr. Cruce said that he would have this information put into the report to resolve this issue with ADA requirements.

Mr. Carwell asked if Mr. Moore could share with the Committee his long term plan is for the facility since they already know about the short term plan.

Mr. Moore mentioned that the current lease is for one year with St. Matthew's and they negotiated an additional two year option that will make it a three year lease. The reason they had the lease agreement set up like this was that they were looking to buy their own building and in the event that they found something during the second or third year they wouldn't be obligated to stay the in the lease. He stated their long term plan is for them to purchase land and have a building that could house all the grades under one location.

Mr. Carwell wanted the committee to know Mr. Moore's long-term plan of Family Foundations Academy so they were aware of the school's goal in buying their own property within the three year plan.

Mr. Cruce made a recommendation that Criterion 8 is met. A vote was taken. All ayes; none opposed.

Criteria 9 (Financial and Administrative Operations): Mr. Cruce asked the Committee for any comments on Criterion 9. Mr. Carwell indicated that Criteria 8 and 9 blend together for this modification request. He added that Family Foundations Academy has remained true to its original modification approval that permitted the school to expand its grade configuration and enrollment. This year, the school has demonstrated that it can manage expanded grades by effectively serving students in grades six and seven. Next year, the school is simply adding another grade and relocating middle school operations to a new site. Mr. Cruce noted that the modification does affect financial and administrative operations, but it does not do so in an

adverse way. He said that any concerns about serving the expanded grades were previously addressed with the school's previous modification request.

Mr. Carwell stated that he wanted to add for the Committee the structure of how the Family Foundations sites will run for both schools since they will not be housed in one building. He asked Mr. Moore to explain the administrative structure.

Mr. Moore responded that for this school year the Dean of Instruction and Director of Curriculum and Instruction will have a dual role for both schools until next year when they plan to hire another Dean of Instruction and Director of Curriculum and Instruction for the elementary school. He also stated that the school plans to hire a team of new people the next school year, but financially it wasn't in their budget for this year to do so. Mr. Moore and Dr. Brewington will work between both schools.

Ms. Field Rogers asked if there were any changes in the transportation costs since the school will be having two locations. Mr. Moore stated that they have a contract with Advanced Student Transportation for 8 buses and the school will add 2 additional buses so that they will have a total of 10 buses, 5 buses each for both sites. Also, the State's current reimbursement rate has been factored into the budget.

Ms. Field Rogers asked Mr. Moore to describe the school's plans for food services at the two locations. Mr. Moore stated that there will be dedicated part-time staff at the new site. He added that the school is currently revisiting its food service contract and anticipates a savings for next year. He added that food service costs are not funded out of the school's operations budget, but are covered entirely by federal lunch program funding and is self sustaining. Ms. Field Rogers asked if additional staff will be added for food service. Mr. Moore indicated that two additional part-time staff will be dedicated to the new site and these costs are factored into the budget.

Ms. Hansen asked about staffing for health and physical education, and the arts. Mr. Moore stated two health and physical education teachers will be added next year. He added that art, music, and computer technology will be offered as well. Ms. Hansen noted that the allocation for textbooks seemed low. Mr. Moore indicated that the budget reflects average costs for textbooks and does not expect a major change because the eighth grade will have 40 students.

Mr. Coleman asked if the school will have a nurse at the second site. Mr. Moore stated there will be two nurses; one at each site.

Mr. Cruce made a recommendation that Criterion 9 is met. A vote was taken. All ayes; none opposed.

Final Recommendation

The Charter School Accountability Committee recommended that Family Foundations Academy Charter School modification request be approved with the following condition:

- The Board provides an affirmative statement that it will insure program accessibility and compliance with Section 504 and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) at the St. Matthew's location.

A vote was taken. All ayes; none opposed.

Next Steps:

Final Meeting: 7/22/11 1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Public Hearing: 7/26/11 3:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

The meeting was adjourned.