

**Minutes of the  
North Carolina Charter School Advisory Board  
State Board Room 755, Department of Public Instruction  
December 6, 2021  
9AM**

Attendance – CSAB Members	
Jamey Falkenbury (non-voting) – absent Rita Haire John Eldridge Cheryl Turner Hilda Parlér Shelly Bullard – (remote beginning at 10AM)	Eric Sanchez Terry Stoops Bruce Friend (remote) Lynn Kroeger Todd Godbey
Attendance – Other	
<i>Office of Charter Schools</i>  Dave Machado, Director Ashley Baquero, Consultant Shaunda Cooper, Consultant Joseph Letterio, Consultant (remote) Melanie Rackley, Consultant Barbara O’Neal, NC ACCESS (remote) Claire Porter, Consultant	<i>Attorney General</i> Stephanie Lloyd Forrest Fallanca  <i>SBE Attorney</i> Allison Schafer – absent

**CALL TO ORDER**

- The North Carolina Charter School Advisory Board (CSAB) meeting was called to order at 9:05 am by Chair Turner who read the Ethics Statement and CSAB Mission Statement. Mr. Todd Godbey led the Pledge of Allegiance.
- Ms. Turner recused from discussion and voting on the GO BIG and Movement School applications.
- Ms. Turner stated that the November minutes need to be revised to show that her comment regarding National Heritage Academies (NHA) during the Centerpoint interview, included the statement that NHA assumes the liability and losses which is significant.

**Motion: Motion to approve the November 2021 minutes as amended.**

**Motion: Hilda Parlér**

**Second: Rita Haire**

**Vote: Unanimous**

**Passed**

**Failed**

- Ms. Ashley Baquero, OCS Consultant, stated the closed session can be removed from today’s agenda.

**Motion: Motion to approve the revised December agenda.**

**Motion: Lynn Kroeger**

**Second: John Eldridge**

**Vote: Unanimous**

Passed

Failed

### AMENDMENTS

#### The Franklin School of Innovation Weighted Lottery

- Ms. Ashley Baquero, OCS Consultant, explained that The Franklin School of Innovation is requesting approval to implement a weighted lottery. She gave a background on the school and the school has over 700 enrolled with over half educationally disadvantaged.
- Ms. Baquero explained that the school has set a goal of 50% economically disadvantaged student (EDS) population by the 2025 school year.
- Ms. Baquero explained that the school is prioritizing professional development for teachers, especially in math, with a goal of improvement achievement gaps in the subject. She stated the school provides transportation and meals.

**Motion: Motion to approve The Franklin School of Innovation's weighted lottery request.**

**Motion: Terry Stoops**

**Second: Lynn Kroeger**

**Vote: Unanimous**

Passed

Failed

#### Next Generation Academy Weighted Lottery

- Ms. Baquero explained that Next Generation Academy is seeking approval to implement a weighted lottery. She stated the school opened in 2018 and serves about K-3 students and currently enroll 329 students. She stated they already serve a very high number of EDS at 78% and have set a goal of serving 95% by the 2024 school year.
- Ms. Baquero explained that the school has been awarded over one million dollars through the DPI 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers grant.

**Motion: Motion to approve Next Generation Academy's weighted lottery request.**

**Motion: Bruce Friend**

**Second: Eric Sanchez**

**Vote: Unanimous**

Passed

Failed

#### 22-23 Enrollment/Expansion Requests

- Ms. Baquero explained how the CSADM system works. She stated this is where charter schools make projections for next year's enrollment. During this process schools may make requests for expansion that require State Board of Education approval (SBE).

- Ms. Baquero explained the statutory requirements for enrollment growth above 30%. She stated a school must meet these requirements, per statute, to make a request and then the SBE may approve the request.
- She explained the requirements as follows:

The State Board of Education (SBE) may approve such additional enrollment growth of greater than thirty percent (30%) only if it finds all of the following:

1. The actual enrollment of the charter school is within ten percent (10%) of its maximum authorized enrollment.
2. The charter school has commitments for ninety percent (90%) of the requested maximum growth.
3. The charter school is not currently identified as low-performing.
4. The charter school meets generally accepted standards of fiscal management.
5. The charter school is, at the time of the request for the enrollment increase, substantially in compliance with State law, federal law, the charter school's own bylaws, and the provisions set forth in its charter granted by the State Board.

Cardinal Charter Academy at Wendell

- Ms. Baquero explained the statutory requirements for enrollment growth above 30%. She stated this school was seeking approval to grow just over 32% with an additional 31 students. She stated the school meets all requirements to make this request. She stated the school opened in 2020 so there is no academic data and therefore has never been low-performing.
- Ms. Turner asked if they enrolled 900 students the first year. Ms. Baquero stated no, the ADM for 21-22 is 719 and they are allowed to grow to 934 without SBE approval, but are requesting 965 for an additional 31 students. Ms. Kroeger asked about grade levels. Ms. Baquero stated they are adding one grade, 8<sup>th</sup> per the original application.
- Ms. Baquero provided information about a strong waitlist at the school and development within the Wendell community. Ms. Turner asked if they are in Wendell. Ms. Baquero stated yes.
- Ms. Baquero stated the current facility has a max capacity of 765 students and they will expand on the same property to add capacity for an additional 400 students.
- Mr. Sanchez asked for academic data. Ms. Baquero stated there is no official data because they opened in 2020.

**Motion: Motion to approve Cardinal Charter Academy at Wendell's enrollment expansion.**

**Motion: Bruce Friend**

**Second: Hilda Parlér**

**Vote: Unanimous**

**Passed**

**Failed**

### KIPP Durham

- Ms. Baquero explained KIPP Durham is requesting enrollment expansion and grade expansion/modification. She stated KIPP Durham serves grades 5-8 with a current 321 ADM. She stated they would like to increase to 510 students which brings them over the 30% allowance.
- She stated the school would also like to modify the grades to serve K-1 and 6-8 and then grow into the grades 2-5 in subsequent years. She stated they would eliminate the current 5<sup>th</sup> grade offering but because they have no 4<sup>th</sup> grade this would not impact current students.
- Ms. Baquero confirmed that the school would like to request 510 students. Mr. Tim Saintsing stated that is correct, he put 550 in CSADM because he wasn't sure he would get approval to remove 5<sup>th</sup> grade.
- Ms. Turner stated the rationale seems strong and Dr. John Eldridge stated it's really just a one grade year level because they are eliminating fifth grade.
- Dr. Rita Haire asked how long they have operated. Ms. Baquero stated seven years.
- Mr. Eric Sanchez asked why the growth in 6<sup>th</sup> grade. Ms. Turner stated that's not unusual because there is more demand at 6<sup>th</sup> grade. Mr. Saintsing confirmed.

**Motion: Motion to approve KIPP Durham's enrollment and expansion/modification request.**

**Motion: Terry Stoops**

**Second: Eric Sanchez**

**Vote: Unanimous**

Passed

Failed

### Telra Institute

- Ms. Baquero explained that Telra Institute is requesting both enrollment expansion and grade level expansion. She stated the school opened this year and began its request by stating achievements made in the first year including exceeding weighted lottery goals and providing transportation.
- She continued that the school is requesting both grade expansion, enrollment expansion, and addition of National School Lunch Program which all require SBE approval.
- Ms. Baquero stated they are requesting an enrollment increase from 309 currently approved to 528. She reminded the CSAB that she works with the numbers in the CSADM system as that is what School Business utilizes and based on this the request is a 134% increase over the 21-22 ADM of 226. She continued that the school also seeks approval to add four grade levels over the originally approved K-4.
- Dr. Ronak Bhatt of Telra stated that families have shown great demand for a middle school. He stated they wanted to make sure they were off to a good start but realize it is very important to families that have siblings at the school or families with middle school aged children. He stated once they got off to a strong start, they launched a survey to get more data on demand. He stated he was surprised to find the demand for all grades and wanted to make a request to CSAB.

- He stated this allows the school to create a more robust program for all students.
- Ms. Turner stated she has mixed feelings because CSAB really gave the school a hard time in Ready to Open and previously denied growth requests, but the school met the numbers they said they could. She stated this, however, is a huge request.
- Ms. Turner asked about the academic program and staffing. Dr. Bhatt spoke about the academics and stated that they have about 3-4 faculty for grade levels. Ms. Turner asked about certification. Dr. Bhatt stated that in lower school certification is about 95%+ certified teachers and they would have a similar expectation in middle school. Dr. Haire asked if they will hire a middle school principal. Dr. Bhatt stated yes.
- Mr. Sanchez asked for clarification on growth. Ms. Turner clarified that the issue here is that they are requesting more than one grade level at a time, but schools can always grow by one year at a time.
- CSAB discussed the grade levels increase.
- Dr. Haire asked if the current facility has capacity. Dr. Bhatt stated no, but the new facility is scheduled for construction completion in July 2022. Ms. Turner asked what will happen if they recruit the kids and then the building is not complete. Dr. Bhatt stated that they would know before March or April if construction was not on schedule. Dr. Bhatt stated they also have a contingency plan with additional space in the current leased space.
- Mr. Stoops asked the capacity of the building being constructed. Dr. Bhatt stated full K-8 with 700 students.
- Ms. Turner and Ms. Parlér stated that the school definitely needs a contingency plan for the building due to building delay possibilities.
- Mr. Stoops asked about whether there could be a requirement for a facility contingency. Ms. Turner stated yes.
- CSAB discussed if the expansion request was too large and discussed evidence of demand. Ms. Turner asked where the data was derived. Dr. Bhatt stated surveying the existing school families and the wider community. Mr. Sanchez asked how many have siblings. Dr. Bhatt stated roughly half the demand is from siblings.
- Dr. Haire asked if there has been an expansion request this large before. Mr. Machado stated not to his recollection. He stated this would be a heavy lift to get through SBE. Ms. Turner wondered if they should just expand through 5<sup>th</sup> grade.
- Dr. Bhatt suggested removing the 8<sup>th</sup> grade as a compromise.
- CSAB discussed what types of stipulations to consider with the motion. Dr. Eldridge what the contingency plan is if SBE does not approve. Dr. Bhatt stated they don't do it. Dr. Eldridge clarified

what is the financial impact. Ms. Turner stated the contingency plan could be a requirement prior to submitting to SBE.

- Mr. Machado asked for clarification on grade levels. He clarified that the contingency plan would need to be submitted ASAP. Dr. Bhatt stated he will work on that immediately.
- Mr. Sanchez stated the change is only a difference in 24 students. Mr. Machado stated this is a very well-run board and school, but this is a heavy lift. He stated he would suggest fewer grade levels added in one year. Mr. Sanchez stated he likes adding 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>. He stated that seems more reasonable.
- Mr. Friend asked how the new building will be funded. Dr. Bhatt stated it would only become a question if they remove multiple grade levels from consideration. He stated he would have to start thinking about when it makes sense to make facility investments with a partial middle school program. He stated it is really about the program and having a robust program and staff.
- Dr. Eldridge stated it sounds like OCS has strong confidence in this school and board. He would feel comfortable with OCS reviewing the contingency plan and approving.
- CSAB discussed going a bit more conservative with the request to prevent an altogether denial. Ms. Baquero discussed timelines with Dr. Bhatt and stated that although you can withdrawal a request, you would need to wait another month to get it back on the agenda.

**Motion: Motion to approve Telra Institute’s request to expand up of to 6<sup>th</sup> grade contingent upon submission of a building contingency plan, with construction timeline, to the Office of Charter Schools by December 15<sup>th</sup>.**

**Motion: Eric Sanchez**

**Second: Todd Godbey**

**Vote: Unanimous**

Passed

Failed

**Motion: Motion to approve Telra Institute’s request to implement the National School Lunch Program.**

**Motion: John Eldridge**

**Second: Todd Godbey**

**Vote: Unanimous**

Passed

Failed

#### Unity Classical Charter School

- Ms. Baquero explained that Unity Classical Charter School is requesting an enrollment increase over 30%. She explained that the school was approved for a similar request last year, but the building was delayed and the school was unable to enroll additional students. She explained that the school is making the request pursuant to a statutory exception that allows expansion in coordination with a capital expansion.
- Ms. Turner asked for current ADM. Ms. Baquero stated 359. Ms. Turner asked if they want to go to 700. Ms. Baquero stated yes.

- CSAB asked for more clarity from the school. Ms. Baquero stated she will get someone on the line from the school. In the meantime, CSAB moved to the next request.

#### United Community Charter School

- Ms. Baquero explained that this school has been continually low-performing (CLP) and as such, they must receive SBE approval to expand by a grade level. Last year, the CSAB denied this request. Ms. Baquero stated they have returned with a request to add both 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade.
- Ms. Baquero spoke about NC Check-In data and academic data presented in lieu of the official academic data that has not been available for two years and therefore the school has been unable to get off the CLP list. Ms. Baquero explained the enrollment and expansion numbers.
- Ms. Erika Hedgepeth, Head of School, spoke about the consideration taken from last year's request feedback. She stated they have developed a better and more thought-out plan. She stated they are going into year 8 and chose to expand slowly. She stated the school will no longer rely on NCVPS teachers and will instead add 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade. She stated they would have open enrollment in addition to the retention of the 8<sup>th</sup> graders.
- Ms. Hedgepeth stated that the core instruction would have four high school teacher and NCVPS used only for electives and supplemental classes. She spoke about other changes from last year's request.
- CSAB expressed confusion about how many new students would be enrolled. Members expressed concerns about the small class numbers. Ms. Turner asked about foreign language. Ms. Hedgepeth stated through NCVPS. Ms. Turner stated they must have two years of foreign language, if they want to go to NC colleges, so it's not exactly an elective.
- Ms. Turner stated she doesn't think the school understands the scope of high school. She stated it is really a bare minimum high school. Dr. Eldridge stated he's having a hard time understanding scheduling with so few students.
- Ms. Kroeger stated she is not comfortable because it would not provide what students need. Ms. Hedgepeth asked what is missing this time. Ms. Parlér stated a larger enrollment for each grade level. Ms. Turner stated the growth over time is confusing. Ms. Hedgepeth explained how they developed the enrollment growth chart. CSAB members discussed growth with Ms. Hedgepeth.
- Ms. Turner stated this doesn't seem sustainable to have an adequate high school program.
- Ms. Hedgepeth stated she understands the hesitancy because of the size, but families are attracted for the small size. Mr. Sanchez stated the school won't get to 48 per grade level for many years. Ms. Hedgepeth stated that's correct and they could enroll more students but chose to have 24 kids for grade level. Ms. Turner stated the suggestion is having two classes per grade level in middle to feed into high school.

**Motion: Motion to deny United Community Charter School's request to expand to high school.**

**Motion: Rita Haire**

**Second: Hilda Parlér**

- Mr. Sanchez stated it isn't about the numbers, it's about not understanding what is needed for a sustainable high school program.

**Vote: Unanimous**

Passed

Failed

Unity Classical Charter School, Continued

- Ms. Sheila Reddick, Head of School, explained the construction is near completion and move scheduled for Christmas break. She spoke about the new building.
- CSAB asked for clarity on the enrollment growth chart. Ms. Reddick stated they have built in attrition, so the numbers are true as the high school grows. CSAB members still expressed confusion about what grades have attrition and which do not.
- Ms. Turner asked current ADM. Ms. Reddick stated 367. She stated the waitlist was closed because they could not fit any more into the school building currently occupied.
- Ms. Turner confirmed they are essentially asking to double the ADM. Mr. Sanchez asked if this is to make budget for the capital campaign. Ms. Reddick stated yes.
- Dr. Haire asked what the plan is if not approved. Ms. Reddick stated go to the builder and they have the right to do something else with the building.
- Dr. Haire stated that is a really big leap with no commitment. Dr. Eldridge asked who is paying for the construction. Ms. Reddick stated Performance Charter. She confirmed they will pay rent with option to buy after so many years.
- Dr. Haire asked how many sixth graders were turned away due to capacity. Ms. Reddick stated about 27 to 35. Dr. Haire asked if 7<sup>th</sup> grade would be added due to the natural flow of the grade levels.

**Motion: Motion to table Unity Classical Charter School's request for one month.**

**Motion: John Eldridge**

**Second: Terry Stoops**

**Vote: Unanimous**

Passed

Failed

**VERITAS CHARTER SCHOOL**

- Mr. Michael Silver, Head of School, and Mrs. Erica Bowen, Board Chair, gave an update to CSAB. Mr. Silver explained academic data from MAP testing at the school.
- Mr. Silver spoke about attendance and enrollment. He stated they've consistently come very close to enrollment projections and this is connected to getting back to the community.
- Mr. Silver stated that the school has been extremely diligent with expenditures after going over in 2019. He spoke about grants and board donations.



- Mr. Silver presented goals and next steps the school is taking to improve. Mr. Machado stated he has been to the school and the board is strong and appreciates how much work has been done to turn the school around.

### 2022 RENEWAL COHORT

- Mr. Machado stated that there appears to be a mistake with Three Rivers Academy because its charter was granted for four years, so they have been pulled out of this cohort until further review.
- Dr. Shaunda Cooper, OCS Consultant, presented the 2022 renewal schools presentation. She reminded the CSAB that this is the renewal presentation, but no voting would take place at this point. She stated in January all schools that are not slated for a ten-year renewal will come into present.
- Dr. Cooper stated there are 26 renewal schools. She spoke about the legislation, policy, and administrative code that governs the renewal process. She displayed the renewal guidelines and the 2022 renewal cohort.
- She stated the first 10 schools are ten-year placements because they have financially sound audits, no significant compliance issues, met or exceeded growth, and are comparable academically to the local LEA. She stated the ten-year recommendations are:
  1. Bear Grass Charter
  2. Corvian Community Charter
  3. Cornerstone Charter Academy CFA
  4. Northeast Carolina Prep
  5. Phoenix Academy
  6. Research Triangle High School
    - She stated there have been some leadership changes, but nothing significant or a red flag.
  7. STARS Charter
  8. The Academy of Moore County
  9. Triangle Math and Science Academy
    - She stated there have been some staff changes, but nothing significant or a red flag.
  10. Water's Edge Village School
    - She reminded the school is in a special location with exception for lower enrollment.
- Dr. Cooper presented the seven-year renewals. She stated they have financially sound audits for last two years, have comparable academics for the last 2 of 3 years or have exceeded growth last 2 of 3 years.
  1. Emereau Bladen
  2. Guildford Preparatory Academy
    - She stated there was an issue with the enrollment application but that is being rectified.
- Dr. Cooper presented the five-year renewals. She stated they have no significant compliance issues the last two years, financially sound audits the last two years, and has comparable academics for the

last 2 of 3 years or have met or exceeded growth last 2 of 3 years. She stated they are not currently designated as continually low-performing (CLP).

1. College Preparatory and Leadership Academy
  2. Lakeside Charter Academy
    - She stated they have had previous enrollment issues.
- Dr. Cooper presented the three-year renewal recommendations. She stated these may have compliance issues for more than one year creating a pattern, inability to provide sound audits for the immediately preceding year, and academic outcomes have been comparable for at least one year or met growth two out of the immediately preceding three years. She stated many of these schools are here because they are designated CLP.
    1. ACE Academy
    2. Carter Community Charter
      - She stated the school has recently changed its name to Community School of Digital and Visual Arts.
    3. Charlotte Secondary
    4. Dillard Academy
    5. Discovery Charter
      - She stated this is a unique situation because the school had a two-year delay so have no official academic data whatsoever.
    6. Haliwa-Saponi Tribal School
      - She stated Accountability reported they requested to test outside of testing window.
    7. Johnston Charter Academy
      - She stated this school also does not have official academic data and had a one-year delay opening in 2018. She stated it is an NHA school.
    8. Movement Charter School
      - She stated they only have one year of official data.
    9. Rolesville Charter Academy
      - Dr. Cooper stated this school also has only one year of official data. She stated these schools mentioned above have good operations and governance but lack substantial data.
    10. Reaching All Minds Academy
    11. United Community School
- Dr. Cooper presented a nonrenewal recommendation for UpRoar Leadership Academy. She stated they are CLP and have financial noncompliance issues.
  - Ms. Alexis Schauss, Chief Financial Officer NCDPI, and Ms. Shirley McFadden, Manager of Compliance and Monitoring NCDPI, gave a financial presentation regarding renewal schools. Ms. Schauss stated that Ms. McFadden began about a year ago and is responsible for charter school compliance and audit resolution process, which is a large section.
  - She explained that in the recent budget, Financial Services received three more full-time employees, one of which will work specifically on charter school finances.

- Ms. Schauss stated that we review the financial statements of the schools going through renewal. She stated Shirley does a very good analysis of these schools.
- Ms. Schauss spoke about Lakeside Charter (61J) and its history of disciplinary noncompliance. She stated through 2015 to 2020. She stated the school was placed on probationary noncompliance, a step up, made better, in 2020, and will continue on that status based on the 2020 audit. She stated the 2020 audit presented enough evidence of improvement. She stated probationary status so it is still a significant concerns related to their financials. She stated they are being bolstered by loans and the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP). She stated the 2021 has been received and it is pretty much flat, with no continued improvement.
- Ms. Turner asked if probationary puts you on month-to-month allotments. Ms. Schauss stated no.
- Ms. Kroeger asked if their history is in relation to a specific loan. Ms. Schauss stated that loan forgiveness and PPP loans have helped the school improve, there is no going concern, but they remain a concern. She stated there was an increase in their working capital loan in 2021.
- Ms. Schauss stated that Movement School (61T) did get its audit in on time this year, but the previous two years those audits were significantly late.
- Ms. Schauss stated that Carter Community were on probationary and are currently on cautionary. She stated they appear to be back on track.
- Ms. McFadden stated that UpRoar (61U) was placed on financial disciplinary status on December 3, 2021. She stated the primary concerns are a going concern with a deficit and unassigned fund balance of \$111,228.00. She stated that is a decrease of over 200k the prior year. She stated there was a significant decrease of fund balance. She stated the expenditures exceeded revenue by 369k. She continued that other areas of note are a low cash balance of about 2k by end of year.
- She stated the school borrowed funds with very high interest rates, one at 25% and one at almost 50%. She stated they paid back 152k on a 114k loan in a 32-week period. She stated they have had four other loans in two years. The first one was forgiven. She stated the school took a 171k PPE loan last year and expect forgiveness on that one. She stated there were two other loans for 150k for 30 years term and another 350k loan. She stated they are experiencing a decline in enrollment with a current ADM of 92. She stated they will be funded at last years ADM of 132 due to held harmless. She stated last year they received state funds of 450k and are eligible for 740k ESSER funds.
- Ms. Turner asked for the loan count. Ms. McFadden stated she identified six loans. Ms. Kroeger asked for total amount due this next year. Ms. McFadden stated the current liabilities are \$175,669. Ms. Kroeger asked for total long-term debt. Ms. McFadden stated she would need to go to report for that.
- Ms. Friend asked who is loaning the money at such high rates. Ms. McFadden stated the audit does not state.

- Ms. Turner asked who would be liable for those loans if the school is closed. Ms. McFadden stated the nonprofit board. CSAB stated that is why there is a state indebtedness clause. Mr. Machado stated the loans would be between the nonprofit board and the vendor.
- Ms. McFadden confirmed the PPP loans have been forgiven and they anticipate forgiveness on the other.

**2021 CHARTER SCHOOL APPLICATIONS**

<b>Interview Time</b>	<b>Committee (Lead)</b>	<b>Applicant Name</b>	<b>Applicant Type</b>
12:15	Performance (BF)	GO BIG – Great Opportunities and Boundless Innovation for Girls	Standard

\*\*Ms. Turner recused from discussion and voting on this application.

- Ms. Melanie Rackley, OCS Consultant, presented the application interview reminders to the CSAB. She explained the statutes and policies regulating the charter school application process. Ms. Rackley explained the time guidelines and an overview of this month’s interviews. She stated the applications this month are all first round applicants, and all located in Mecklenburg County.
- Ms. Rackley gave the applicant introduction. The applicant proposes a K-6 charter school in Mecklenburg County. She stated the school will open as K-2 and at capacity at year five with 700 students. She stated the school will use the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), transportation, and will use a weighted lottery. She stated there was no LEA impact statement submitted. She stated this is a repeat applicant and is not using an EMO/CMO.
- Ms. Rackley displayed a map of school’s currently operating in a six mile radius of the proposed zip code.
- Ms. Crystal Pemberton Howe, Board Vice Chair, gave the board’s opening statement. She introduced the board members in attendance. She spoke about each board member’s professional experience.
- Ms. Sharrell Howard, Board Chair, stated the board is whole-heartedly committed to serving its scholars a STEM education. She stated the school will provide an alternative in the Charlotte area. She spoke about the importance of STEM education for girls. She spoke about the research behind all girls schooling, STEM, and immersive education. She stated the school will focus on academic achievement focused in STEM, entrepreneurial, social responsibility, and charter. She spoke about curriculum and strategies including CKLA, Amplify, and Teach Like a Champion.
- Ms. Howard gave an overview of the instructional plan including an entrepreneurial focus. She stated the school will use Leader in Me and a daily GO BIG bounce program. She spoke about community involvement.
- Mr. Friend began the questioning phase of the interview. Mr. Friend stated he would like to know how this application is different from last year’s application. He would like to know more about the facility and demand for the school especially in a saturated area. Finally, he would like to know more about the professional development (PD) that will be offered.

- Dr. Eldridge stated he liked the name and would like to know more about responsive classrooms.
- Ms. Parler stated she would like to know how the board will market and if they will conduct informational sessions. She suggested some changes to the conflict of interest policy and auditor selection.
- Dr. Haire stated the application was very thorough but her concerns are whether there is exceedingly persuasive justification for excluding boys from this education. Dr. Haire stated she is not sure the data of all girls school graduates is as persuasive here because the school is K-5. She has concern about the PD offered and whether there is a strong focus on curriculum. She also has concerns about demand and whether the data supports the demand. She also stated the budget doesn't seem to support the programming.
- Mr. Stoops wants to know how the school will compete with the incredible number of schools in the area for high quality staff. Ms. Kroeger stated she also has this question, especially because the day is extended.
- Ms. Kroeger stated the 1:1 devices are not in the budget. She would like to know what the influx of income in year five of 200k consists of.
- Ms. Parler suggested increasing the marketing budget and separating expenses for the EC and EL departments. She stated there should be clarity in terms of how often the board meets.
- Ms. Howell stated the application last year included boarding, but they've removed that component. She explained this application includes many of the goals a boarding school would have accomplished, but in a day school. Ms. Pemperton Howe stated they have improved the STEM curriculum. Board members stated the capacity at the school will be K-8. A board member stated that is the funding that will come from adding middle school at year five. Board members stated the school has been partnered with Charter Success Partners since last year. They explained that American Charter Development (ACD) is the design build partner.
- Ms. Kroeger asked what the "other funds" in the budget consist of. She stated it is about 197k. The applicant board pulled up the budget to find that information.
- Board members spoke about property identified and stated construction would start at that point, upon approval of the application. Ms. Howell spoke about the design build process and that ACD would purchase the land and build, the school would lease back.
- Mr. Friend asked for information about recruitment of students and staff. He stated there is a lot of choice in that area. Board members spoke about recruitment efforts in the community including day cares and Boys and Girls Clubs. Ms. Howe stated that there has been some reluctance on the part of individuals to provide personal information when surveying community members. Ms. Howe stated face to face interactions will matter in the community and they plan to engage in that way.
- Board members spoke about professional learning for teachers including Project Lead the Way and curriculum focused training. Applicants stated that they plan on hiring a STEM expert for school leader. They spoke to staff pay and stated the average salary rate is similar to other schools they've researched and hope to increase salaries as per pupil funds increase.

- Applicants spoke about school culture plans and beliefs surrounding the need for single gender schools.
- Ms. Howard gave the board’s closing statement. She reiterated the passion and dedication of the board. She stated staff will be well compensated and given many PD opportunities. She stated they will use responsive classrooms to create a school culture with academic success. She stated the board believes single gender schools are needed and especially in the Charlotte area and with a STEM focus. She stated they want to ensure all students succeed and have planned for an EL director and an EC director. She spoke about the marketing budget and reaching all potential families. She spoke about interest seen in contact with families.
- Ms. Howe stated there is a disparity, especially with disaggregated data showing populations overlooked for STEM careers, especially females and females of color.
- Ms. Pemberton stated there is a disparity among girls and boys in STEM and females of color in STEM fields is even lower. She spoke extensively about females being underrepresented in STEM careers. She spoke about research in lower grades and the impact of STEM education on females.
- Ms. Kroeger stated she feels there are still a lot of unanswered questions and her biggest concerns are teacher recruitment and student demand. She stated there is a lot of professional learning and training that will need to be done on top of extended year and extended day. She stated she feels the budget needs work as well. She stated that is really one of the biggest reasons charter schools fail, financial issues.
- Dr. Haire stated she wants to see more data about the reasoning for excluding boys. She wants to see data on underserved males and females. She stated her biggest concern is the lack of evidence of student support that would be necessary to sustain the school’s finances.
- Mr. Godbey asked if this applicant would need to make material changes to the application. Mr. Friend stated this is a unique concept and there are a lot of questions. He would be inclined to bring them back for a second interview. He reiterated the need to be focused in the second round interview.

**Motion: Recommend to the SBE that Great Opportunities and Boundless Innovations for Girls (GO BIG) return for a second-round interview.**

**Motion: Bruce Friend**

**Second: Hilda Parler**

- Dr. Haire stated that at this point some of the things that need to be evident cannot be changed at this point. Mr. Stoops stated he thinks we should request the information and if the answers depart significantly to create a material change, we have our answer as to whether it’s viable this round.

**Recused: Cheryl Turner**

**Vote: Unanimous**

**Passed**

**Failed**

- Ms. Baquero explained the next steps to GO BIG applicants and told them to keep an eye out for instructions and deadlines from OCS.

**\*\*\*CSAB adjourned for lunch**

**2021 CHARTER SCHOOL APPLICATIONS**

<b>Interview Time</b>	<b>Committee (Lead)</b>	<b>Applicant Name</b>	<b>Applicant Type</b>
1:45	Policy (LK)	Myrtis Simpson Walker Academy for Boys	Standard

- Ms. Rackley gave the applicant introduction. The applicant proposes a K-12 charter school in Mecklenburg County. She stated the school will be at capacity at year eight with 520 students. She stated the school will use local vendors for meals, transportation, and will use a weighted lottery. She stated there was no LEA impact statement submitted. She stated this is not a repeat applicant and is not using an EMO/CMO.
- Ms. Rackley displayed a map of school’s currently operating in a six mile radius of the proposed zip code.
- Ms. Cynthia Johnson, Board Chair, spoke about the school’s mission of educating boys in the Charlotte area. Additional board members in attendance spoke about their professional experience and passion for serving boys.
- Dr. Haire commended Ms. Johnson for what she is already doing in the community. Dr. Haire stated she would like to know more about the evidence for excluding girls from this environment. She also expressed concern with several areas of the budget including expenses for musical instruments.
- Ms. Parler would like to know more about the entrepreneurial component.
- Mr. Friend would like to know more about the evidence of demand in a saturated area.
- Dr. Haire stated there is no raises for the teachers and staff in the first five years and that will need a second look.
- Ms. Kroeger would like to know why there is no guidance counselor in the budget. Ms. Kroeger would like clarity on the facility expenses, particularly the utilities which seem to be a low estimate.
- Ms. Kroeger asked for information about the start-up funding in the budget. She stated the transportation budget seems low as well.
- Mr. Sanchez would like to know the rationale behind the education goals in the application. He stated he did not see goals related to entrepreneurial program and he wondered how PBL fit into the educational program because it was unclear. He also wanted clarity about the nutrition program.
- Mr. Stoops asked the board to explain what the board would tell a high-quality teacher to encourage the teacher to work at Myrtis Simpson Walker.
- Ms. Johnson stated the school would apply for the national school lunch program and that would provide additional funds. She stated there is no raise for teachers because there is no increase in revenue but if there is an increase in per pupil, they will do raises.

- Dr. Haire asked for the demographics projected.
- Board members stated that teachers would like the character education program and workshops offered to teachers.
- Ms. Johnson stated PBL will be a core part of the educational program. She stated middle and high school students will be able to choose curriculum in language arts. Ms. Johnson stated in the application there was not a curriculum chosen and of course will use Standard Course of Study. She stated teachers will have the opportunity to select curriculum. She spoke about the entrepreneurial curriculum and that high school students would need three CTE classes to graduate.
- Mr. Hunt spoke about the musical program. He stated that a recorder is very inexpensive and can teach the foundations of music. He stated that will improve motor skills. He spoke about connections that could provide instruments and partner with the school. Dr. Haire stated she would like more elaboration on that because she doesn't see how that would work on a daily level especially given the teacher needs. Mr. Hunt stated music helps organizational skills. He spoke about connections with other organizations. He continued to speak about other types of musical instruments the students will learn like percussion and self-made instruments.
- Mr. Sanchez asked about the board's understanding of the momentous task of educating underserved young men. Ms. Johnson stated character education will support that and stated a board member, Melinda Bell, will work with families on the trauma piece. Ms. Johnson stated that the drop out rate is very high in the Charlotte area for boys.
- Mr. Sanchez stated he wants to know the mindset of the board in taking in 240 boys who could be behind – who do we need to recruit and how will they be trained. Ms. Johnson stated that when she started this work thirteen years ago, she realized there were few people working with boys considered at-risk. She stated a plus was bringing in men from the community, a rites of passage ceremony, mentors, and community partnerships.
- Ms. Turner stated she hears a lot about wrap around services, but not a lot of support academically. She stated the detail is not there for academics and she doesn't see it on the board. Ms. Johnson stated she is a counselor and there is a previous high school teacher on the board and an EC director. Ms. Turner stated the EC director works at Sugar Creek but told Ms. Turner she is no longer on the board.
- Ms. Johnson gave the board's closing statement. She spoke about her work with boys as a counselor and mentor. She gave anecdotal evidence about success she has seen with boys in the Rising Stars Boys program.
- Mr. Hunt spoke about his obstacles growing up in inner city in Washington, D.C.
- Ms. Turner stated the wrap around services built into this application are clear, but she did not hear the specificity around the educational plan and in the end that is the critical piece.
- Mr. Sanchez agrees and believes there were a lot of components and ideas thrown out today, but questions that should have specific answers did not have the detailed plan and vision needed to build a program like this.



- Mr. Eldridge stated he believes it sounded like a great support program, but he didn't hear the academic components.
- Ms. Kroeger stated she believes the wrap around services are good, but she does not see those budgeted. Dr. Haire concurred.
- Dr. Haire stated she believes there needs to be more work done to tighten up the academic pieces with the musical and entrepreneurial components and this should all be reflected in the budget.
- Mr. Stoops stated we ask so much of our teachers and he believes the framework needs to be there for teachers, rather than starting from scratch. Mr. Godbey agrees and stated that all parts of a program need to be on point to work in single gender education. He believes the core needs work to support all the big ideas of the program. Dr. Haire stated the interest appears to be there.

**Motion: Recommend to the SBE that Myrtis Simpson Walker Academy for Boys not be moved to Ready to Open status.**

**Motion: Rita Haire**

**Second: Lynn Kroeger**

**Vote: Unanimous**

Passed

Failed

<b>Interview Time</b>	<b>Committee (Lead)</b>	<b>Applicant Name</b>	<b>Applicant Type</b>
2:50	Performance (BF)	Movement School Northwest	Standard

\*\*Ms. Turner recused from discussion and voting on this application.

- Ms. Rackley gave the applicant introduction. The applicant proposes a K-6 charter school in Mecklenburg County. She stated the school will open as K-1 and at capacity K-6 at year five with 645 students. She stated the school will use the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), transportation, and will not use a weighted lottery. She stated there was no LEA impact statement submitted. She stated this is not repeat applicant and is not using an EMO/CMO.
- Ms. Rackley displayed a map of school's currently operating in a five mile radius of the proposed zip code.
- Mr. Tim Hurley, Board Chair, gave the board's opening statement. He spoke about the impact of the pandemic and academic data from Movement School during the pandemic. He displayed academic data for the currently operating Movement School and stated that Movement School outperformed the county and nearby schools.
- Mr. Hurley stated the board has taken CSAB's advice to build capacity and have added three board members. He stated two are focused on academics and one on operations. He spoke about their professional experience.
- Mr. Hurley spoke about student recruitment including 175 signed letters from parents specifically supporting Movement School Southwest.

- Ms. KeriAnn T. Thomas, CEO of Movement Schools, spoke about the academic progress at Movement School. She stated the students need to compete not just locally, but nationally. She spoke about the school's curriculum and recruitment of strong talent through Principal and Director of Operations in Residence. She stated that 25% of staff at a new school must come from an established Movement School. She stated that is for leaders, operations, and teachers.
- Mr. Stoops stated he is glad that the board has already addressed recruitment and leveraging the resources of the network.
- Dr. Haire stated she must ask about the grammatical errors of the previous application because she was not here at the last meeting. She stated she must express her confusion given the fact the board is so credentialed. Mr. Hurley stated he understands and agrees with her concern. He stated he wrote the application himself and somewhere between preparing in another program and cut/pasting into the application, something happened.
- Mr. Sanchez asked what other Movement Schools exist. Mr. Machado stated there are two in operation and one recently approved as accelerated.
- Dr. Haire asked about support for this school. Mr. Hurley stated they have 175 interested families specifically for Northwest.
- Mr. Sanchez asked why only focus on K-5. Mr. Hurley stated they may go into middle and high school down the road, but right now the focus is on K-5 due to the need in the area. Mr. Hurley stated they start with K-1. Ms. Thomas stated they are also focused on Pre-K.
- Ms. Kroeger asked if the new board members are on the other schools' boards. Mr. Hurley stated they have one board that govern all the Movement schools and they are not on the board of any other school. Dr. Haire confirmed that Ms. Thomas works for the foundation, but is not a voting board member.
- Ms. Kroeger confirmed that one board would govern four schools if the two applications are approved. Mr. Hurley stated yes, and the board is exploring becoming a charter management operation.
- Ms. Thomas spoke about Livinia curriculum.
- Mr. Eldridge asked about the budget for teacher assistants. Mr. Hurley stated they have budgeted for two full-time teachers in each classrooms, so they didn't have a separate line item for teacher assistants. He spoke about elective teachers, who they contract with independent contractors to teach those classes.
- Dr. Haire asked about tech support and other specific line items in the budget. Mr. Hurley stated the tech support contract is with Steven Joiner Consulting and he spoke about what that fee includes. He also spoke about the financial services contract.
- Ms. Kroeger asked about the contingency plan for the facility. Mr. Hurley stated the Movement School would have the space if needed because it includes a community center that could be transitioned into academic setting. He stated they do not expect that to be necessary, but that is the contingency plan. He stated Movement Southwest is progressing very well and they have no concerns.
- Mr. Hurley spoke about the vendor Movement Schools partners with to provide meals to students, Two Guys and a Kitchen.

- Mr. Hurley gave a closing statement. He stated this board has a goal of creating a network of schools that can leverage and pool resources.
- Ms. Kroeger stated her initial concern was the demand for the school, but that concern has been addressed well by the board.
- Mr. Sanchez stated he believes they have the right people with the right talent and are expanding the right way with pooled resources and scale.
- Mr. Stoops agrees and believes the questions were answered. He believes it probably is time to have more structure with a management organization overseeing all four schools if approved.

**Motion: Recommend to the SBE that Movement School Northwest be moved to Ready to Open status.**

**Motion: Eric Sanchez**

**Second: Todd Godbey**

**Recused: Cheryl Turner**

**Vote: Unanimous**

Passed

Failed

### ADJOURNMENT

- Ms. Turner made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 3:30 pm. Ms. Kroeger seconded and the meeting adjourned unanimously.

**Minutes of the  
North Carolina Charter School Advisory Board  
State Board Room 755, Department of Public Instruction  
December 7, 2021  
9AM**

Attendance – CSAB Members	
Jamey Falkenbury (non-voting) Rita Haire John Eldridge Cheryl Turner Hilda Parlér Shelly Bullard – absent	Eric Sanchez Terry Stoops – absent Bruce Friend Lynn Kroeger Todd Godbey
Attendance – Other	
<i>Office of Charter Schools</i>  Dave Machado, Director Ashley Baquero, Consultant Claire Porter, Consultant Darian Jones, Consultant (remote) Melanie Rackley, Consultant Jay Whalen, NC ACCESS	<i>Attorney General</i> Stephanie Lloyd Forrest Fallanca  <i>SBE Attorney</i> Allison Schafer

**CALL TO ORDER**

- The North Carolina Charter School Advisory Board (CSAB) meeting was called to order at 9:00 am by Ms. Cheryl Turner who read the Ethics Statement and CSAB Mission Statement. Ms. Parlér led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Motion: Motion to approve the December 7, 2021 agenda.**

**Motion: Hilda Parlér**

**Second: John Eldridge**

**Vote: Unanimous**

**Passed**

**Failed**

**CARTER G. WOODSON**

- Mr. Benjamin Harris, Head of School, presented CSAB with a review of the school’s challenges and progress. Mr. Harris spoke about the school’s mission. He reviewed academic data from 2020 to the current academic year and spoke about the impact of the pandemic.
- Mr. Harris presented the school’s academic goals and supports. Mr. Harris explained the school’s strategic plan. He explained the school’s top five priorities including improving academic achievement

and maintaining a supportive school culture. Finally, Mr. Harris addressed the school’s current challenges (learning loss, teacher recruitment, and social emotional support) and the school’s areas of opportunity (partnerships, family engagement, student programs).

- Dr. Haire asked whether the school was tracking data regarding the family engagement and student programs to determine success. Mr. Harris stated that yes, they are keeping data and making informed decisions regarding what is working well.

**NC VIRTUAL ACADEMY (NCVA)**

- Ms. Marcia Simmons, Head of School, presented NCVA’s quarterly update to CSAB. She spoke about outings the school organizes for students including social events, clubs, and other extracurriculars. She stated the events are organized and attended by staff and over 900 students participate in club classrooms.
- Ms. Simmons spoke about the school’s goal of improving math proficiency on state assessments, which is an area of challenge for the school. She stated classrooms are using exit tickets, aligning standards, using curriculum and instructional coaches. She also stated that remediation sessions are built into every schedule.
- Mr. Friend stated that it’s nice to see how virtual students are getting outside experiences. He stated there is this misconception that virtual students are locked away in bedrooms, when in fact a good program is well rounded with different experiences for students.
- Mr. Friend asked if it is necessary to continue to have updates from the virtual schools at this point. Ms. Ashley Baquero, OCS Consultant, stated at this point it is written into the previous legislatively mandated report to the General Assembly. She stated there are additional reports, per statute, forthcoming, and we can revisit those decisions. She stated it will also depend on whether there is any further legislation regarding the same.
- Ms. Simmons stated they are in the renewal process and she is making sure to follow that process.

**2021 CHARTER SCHOOL APPLICATION INTERVIEWS**

<b>Interview Time</b>	<b>Committee (Lead)</b>	<b>Applicant Name</b>	<b>Applicant Type</b>
10:00-11:00	Performance (CT)	Clara Science Academy	Standard
11:10-12:10	Policy (LK)	Honor Preparatory Charter School	Standard

**Clara Science Academy**

- Ms. Rackley gave the applicant introduction. The applicant proposes a K-6 charter school in Mecklenburg County. She stated the school will open as K-2 and at capacity K-6 at year five with 650 students. She stated the school will use the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), transportation, and will use a weighted lottery. She stated there was no LEA impact statement submitted. She stated this is repeat applicant and is not using an EMO/CMO.

- Ms. Rackley displayed a map of school's currently operating in a six mile radius of the proposed zip code. She stated there are over three dozen schools in this area. She listed the current operating charter schools in the area.
- Mr. Omar Muhammad, Board Chair, introduced Varsty Muhammad who gave the opening statement. She introduced those in attendance today include additional board members and the board's attorney. She spoke about board members unable to attend today. She explained the mission of the school to provide high quality STEM education to low-income students of color in the East Charlotte area. She spoke about the need for a STEM environment with self-actualization and self-fulfillment.
- Ms. Muhammad stated that their research shows a STEM school is desired by the families in the East Charlotte area. She stated there were over 1000 hits on the website and over 200 mailed-in surveys. She stated they have collected over 300 petitions at community events showing overwhelming support for a STEM school. She stated the message from the community was loud and clear.
- Mr. Friend gave an overview of the history of this application. He stated that the board interviewed two or three years ago and CSAB recommended approval, but the vote was split. The State Board of Education (SBE) sent the application recommendation back to CSAB due to the split vote. CSAB again recommended approval but SBE did not approve. Mr. Friend would like to know what has changed in the application since that time. He would also like to know more about the facility options and demand for the school. He stated he doesn't believe the data in the application is not persuasive as the website data comes from four years. He would also like to know what separates this school from the multitude of school options in the area.
- Mr. Eldridge also expressed interest in the demand because the area is currently very saturated.
- Ms. Parlér would like to know about the history of the school's name and the curriculum.
- Dr. Haire stated there is very low level of demand evidenced in the application, so she would like to know where the board is seeing demand.
- Dr. Haire would also like to know more evidence of the integration of STEM in the daily schedule. She stated the application does not support this. She would like to know about teacher recruitment and pay. She also expressed concern about the personnel budget and the budget for materials/technology.
- Mr. Sanchez expressed concerns with the budget.
- Ms. Kroeger was curious about the goal for the weighted lottery. She stated the narrative states there will be a school counselor, but it is not in the budget. She stated the narrative did not discuss the timeline for the facility. Ms. Kroeger stated she also has concerns with the budget.
- Mr. Sanchez would like to hear from the head of school if identified.
- Mr. Tariq Raheem introduced himself and stated he has been an educator for over 20 years. Mr. Raheem stated there were ideas in the last application about working with a specific person and they are now going in a different direction although with the same science theme. He stated the location will be different, but the curriculum will be the same and it will be Amplify. He stated the school will be competitive because it will be a community school. He stated he would like to see science fairs and civic fairs.

- Mr. Raheem stated they must go directly to the pipeline to get teachers – to newly graduated teachers.
- Mr. Raheem stated the salary will be competitive. He stated they can change the salaries if needed.
- Mr. Raheem spoke more about science projects.
- Mr. Friend stated if this is a 1:1 school with 250 students, the budget for technology (75k) seems very low. He would like to know how the budget was created. Mr. Muhammad stated they received assistance from the Acadia Northstar. He stated they can purchase fully loaded Chromebooks for students at \$400.
- Dr. Eldridge asked about the partnership with Amplify. He wondered if it will be a pilot program. Mr. Muhammad stated that Amplify will not charge them for the first two years.
- Mr. Muhammad stated 255k is coming from Charter School Capital as a loan. He stated 180k for the lease and the debt for the loan. Ms. Turner asked why the lease goes down and then goes up in the budget. Mr. Muhammad stated the initial cost includes the debt. Ms. Turner asked why it goes up in year four. Mr. Muhammad stated they put in a cushion in case the lease expenses goes up.
- Mr. Muhammad stated the name was chosen by looking at the diversity of the STEM field and noticed it was lacking women. Claire and Clara means light. They choose it to mean to shine a light on everyone.
- Mr. Raheem gave the closing statement for the board. He stated two months ago the White House launched an ideation challenge to collect ideas to increase diversity in STEM fields. He stated that is because they know we are trying to win the global challenges of science and STEM research. He spoke about science fairs and Olympiads. He stated they would go directly to the pipeline source.
- He stated we will make sure all children have a fair shot at STEM and be a contributor to NC and the world.
- Dr. Haire stated the evidence of demand in the application is minimal and a major concern. She stated she sees STEM more in the budget than in the actual daily schedule for students. She stated science fairs and robotics afterschool programs do not make a STEM school.
- Ms. Parlér stated she did not hear much about the curriculum and she stated more is needed.
- Dr. Haire stated that the language component is more innovative than the STEM component.
- Mr. Friend stated he is not convinced of the demand for this school and they have an uphill battle going in a very saturated area with dozens of choice. He stated he believes it is admirable to go to the colleges of ed for teachers, but he stated new teachers need mentors and experienced teachers. He stated the staffing plan raises red flags for him about whether staff will be able to work out of the gate.
- Dr. Eldridge stated he has concerns about the lack of concern for social emotional needs in the budget.

- Mr. Sanchez stated he wishes more information was given about demand and he details in general. He stated they have had a lot of time to gather that information. He reiterated what Mr. Friend stated about teaching. He stated new teachers are not always the latest and greatest.
- Mr. Sanchez stated the child nutrition answers did not show a good grasp of the child nutrition budgetary needs.

**Motion: Recommend to the SBE that Clara Science Academy not be moved to Ready to Open status.**

**Motion: John Eldridge**

**Second: Hilda Parlér**

- Mr. Friend wondered whether they could provide information in a second interview to rectify the issues. Ms. Kroeger stated she does not believe so. Mr. Sanchez stated the school needs to take more time to study gaps and get necessary expertise and support. He stated the gaps are resounding and he doesn't believe the application is close to where it needs to be.

**Vote: Unanimous**

**Passed**

**Failed**

- Ms. Turner suggested that the applicant gets very clear about the STEM integration and what that will look like on a day-to-day basis. She stated the applicant really needs to hear the advice of the board regarding staffing and hiring only new teachers is probably not the best idea. Ms. Kroeger added that the applicant must present better evidence of demand in the application.

*Honor Preparatory Charter School*

- Ms. Rackley gave the applicant introduction. The applicant proposes a K-5 charter school in Mecklenburg County. She stated the school will open as K-1 and at capacity K-5 at year six with 549 students. She stated the school will use the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), transportation, and will use a weighted lottery. She stated there was no LEA impact statement submitted. She stated this is repeat applicant and is not using an EMO/CMO.
- Ms. Rackley displayed a map of school's currently operating in a six mile radius of the proposed zip code. She listed the current operating charter schools in the area.
- Ms. Michele Mason, Board Chair, gave the board's opening statement. She introduced additional board members in attendance for the interview. She spoke about board member experience. She stated the board believes in the importance of bilingual education.
- Ms. Turner asked for more information about the co-teaching model and if both teachers need to be bilingual.
- Dr. Eldridge wondered if there is an upper school option for students after 5<sup>th</sup> grade.
- Ms. Kroeger asked how the class sizes over 30 students would be managed. She stated there was also no guidance counselor budgeted. She asked for more information about the budget and staffing with the extended day requirements.



- Mr. Friend wants to know there is a real demand in an area that is already saturated with school choice options. He stated there is survey data of about 100 but that is vague evidence. He wants to know how the board knows there is a demand.
- Ms. Turner stated that the admissions policy has illegal language in terms of targeting racial demographics.
- Mr. Godbey stated the applicant is targeting very specific qualifications in its staff and in this competitive market, the budget may not be high enough to recruit those teachers. He stated there is no budget for support staff. He has concerns with the personnel budgeting which appears under budget in many regards.
- Ms. Lewis, the academic chair, stated that both teachers will not be fluent. She stated that one teacher will be responsible to lead in English and the other will engage in Spanish. Ms. Turner asked who will be bilingual. Ms. Lewis stated the Spanish teacher will be bilingual.
- Ms. Lewis gave an overview of a language arts class. She stated the students will be in that space for four hours. She stated one teacher will teach a group of 16 in English and another teacher will teach in Spanish. Then the students will swap groups. She stated that for the remainder of the day, math is fully in English and social studies/science is taught in 30 minutes fully in Spanish.
- Ms. Lewis stated that the classes are large, but each teacher only teaches 16 at a time. Ms. Lewis stated there will always be two teachers to manage. She stated those two teachers will also handle assessments.
- Mr. Sanchez asked how to make decisions when seeing gaps in either Spanish and/or English. Ms. Lewis stated they will use MTSS as the universal system to make decisions and data-based instruction to make decisions.
- Mr. Sanchez wants to know how interventions will be made to support students struggling with English. Ms. Lewis stated there will be an intervention period.
- Mr. Godbey asked about Gomez and Gomez and how that works with the curriculum. Mr. Kelly Price stated he has experience dual language programs. He stated that traditional schools use a time-based model where you start with only a small percentage in Spanish and then work up to 50/50. He stated in the Gomez and Gomez method is not time-based, but content based. He stated both groups are learning content in their home language. He stated there is a language of the day that is used for morning meetings, electives, etc. He explained the hula hoop method of allowing students to step into a hula hoop and speak in their native language to ask for help or express themselves.
- He stated it is not like teaching foreign language because you are teaching content in the language. He stated it is not recommended to assess oral proficiency until the student has at least three years in the language. He stated the emphasis is on the content being taught. He stated we know that students that receive dual language instruction perform better on formative and summative assessments such as state assessments.

- Dr. Eldridge asked about students that leave the school after 5<sup>th</sup> grade and whether there are options for language instruction after 5<sup>th</sup> grade. Mr. Paul Barnhardt stated they are deliberately growing slow and strong. He stated if there is community support and demand to expand down the road, they would consider that.
- Mr. Barnhardt spoke about parent data and interest and agrees the data could be clearer. He stated they have spoken with many families in the zip code and bilingual preschools in the area to assess demand. He stated they are intentional about creating a school with a community, not for a community. He spoke about community connections.
- Mr. Sanchez wants to know how an immersion school came about with Mr. Barnhardt as a principal and his capacity to lead a school with this mission. He stated he has led a school that is predominantly lower-income and a large Latin-x population. He stated that he has consistently seen a desire for families to feel heard and seen. He stated he recognizes he is a white male, but they have built a board of very diverse members and will be very intentional in bringing onboard a diverse staff.
- Mr. Barnhardt stated they would hire a director of operations to assist. He spoke about the joint duties of head of school and the director of operations.
- Mr. Barnhardt gave the closing statement for the applicant. He spoke about the school's commitment to equity. He spoke about the school's core values. He spoke about community engagement and the team's experience and dedication to making this a reality.
- Ms. Turner stated she believes this application has merit and, in that area, there is not a dual language option. She stated that CMS has several dual language schools, but due to location they serve few low-income students. She believes there is a need but she still has concerns about the budget. She would support bringing them back next month.
- Dr. Eldridge stated he has concerns about the staffing. Mr. Godbey stated this is a unique model that could work in the area and he applauds the optimism, but there needs to be some reality as well. He spoke about the support that will be needed and teacher pay concerns.
- Mr. Sanchez stated there is always something to be said when the school knows who will lead. He stated he believes there will be capacity issues with staff and real expertise in Spanish immersion. He stated that board and staff would need to also validate the language of the students given the school seems to be focused on the validation of identity. He wonders what that looks like as a through line from board to school to students. He wonders where the leadership for the dual language component will come back.
- Ms. Turner stated that there are areas with outstanding options. She stated that there are dual language schools in CMS, but they are not located in areas where low-income students live, so this is needed. She does have concerns about the budget that need to be discussed.
- She stated that the identities of the non-Spanish speaking students will also need validation and consideration.

**Motion: Recommend that Honor Preparatory Charter School be moved to a second-round interview.**

**Motion: Bruce Friend**

**Second: Hilda Parlér**

**Vote: Unanimous**

Passed

Failed

*\*\*CSAB adjourned for closed session and lunch.*

**Motion: Move that CSAB go into closed session pursuant to NC General Statute section 143-318.11(a)(3) to consult with our attorneys in order to preserve the attorney-client privilege between the attorneys and the public body. 12:06PM**

**Motion: Lynn Kroeger**

**Second: Hilda Parler**

**Vote: Unanimous**

Passed

Failed

**Motion: Move that CSAB leave closed session pursuant to NC General Statute section 143-318.11(a)(3) and enter open session. 1:20PM.**

**Motion: Bruce Friend**

**Second: John Eldridge**

**Vote: Unanimous**

Passed

Failed

**TORCHLIGHT ACADEMY**

- Ms. Sherry Thomas, Exceptional Children's Division Director NCDPI, stated that the EC must provide assurances to the Department of Education, under IDEA, which is the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, that NC is ensuring compliance under the program.
- She stated that any public school unit (PSU) that wishes to apply for an IDEA grant can do so and must also ensure that the school is complying with IDEA programmatically and fiscally. She stated that today she is here to talk about noncompliance issues that have not been corrected for almost two years now and yet also receiving grant application assurances that compliance is taking place.
- Ms. Thomas directed the CSAB to the packet provided.
- Ms. Thomas stated there are always reports and closing letters sent after monitoring visit. She stated this applies to all PSUs on a monitoring cycle. She stated DPI has been on a five year monitoring cycle that we have just completed. She stated that the corrective action that is to take place should take place in partnership with the EC division and the regional consultant and EC regional coordinator assigned to the regions in which the schools reside.
- Ms. Thomas stated that Torchlight Academy (TLA) was monitored February 26, 2020. She stated that the report was issued on April 21, 2020 and included corrective action that was due by April 21, 2021. She stated that Ms. Shawntrice Andrews was the EC Director at this time. She stated in the logs provided, you will see some reference to Three Rivers Academy and that is because Ms. Andrews was the EC Director at both schools and the EC division was trying to handle issues at both schools. She stated the site visit was announced and a common time is arranged. She stated some are virtual and some are on-site. She stated at the exit conference the monitoring staff explained the corrections that were required and offered training. She continued that TLA denied that training in favor of resolving issues internally an independent of NC DPI.

- Ms. Thomas stated the report was issued on April 21, 2020 and itemized the corrective action that would bring the school back into compliance. She stated that TLA was notified of how the monitoring visit would be closed.
- She stated that there were eighteen emails or calls from EC Division staff to TLA to monitor progress of corrections and offer assistance between January 16, 2020 and September 20, 2021. She stated there were eight replies from the EC Director at TLA confirming receipt.
- Ms. Thomas stated that around August 24, 2020, links were sent to Ms. Andrews for her and the TLA EC staff to complete ECATS training.
- In April 2021, the EC Director at TLA confirmed that all EC staff at TLA had completed this training. Ms. Thomas stated that the EC Division can log into ECATS and verify this took place, but no evidence of training completion was found.
- Ms. Thomas stated that there were about 45 emails or phone contacts from NCDPI EC Staff to TLA regarding the EC noncompliance throughout this time January 2020 to September 2021.
- Ms. Thomas stated that ECATS is monitored regularly for corrective actions for all PSUs.
- Ms. Thomas stated that on June 15, 2021, EC Division staff observed altered documents in ECATS. She stated that previous IEP documents were altered to show new dates and new grades without holding an IEP meeting, to make old IEPs look like new IEPs. She stated the altered documents were associated with the user Shawntrice Andrews who held an LEA Admin 4 (superuser) permission type. She stated that superuser status is used to clean up errors such as a name typo or technical errors. She stated it is not to go into ECATS and input IEP meetings that did not take place.
- She continued that Ms. Andrews' user type was changed to EC Teacher 2 which restricted certain permissions so a further investigation could take place. She stated that this still allowed Ms. Thomas to conduct and complete IEP documents, but would not allow federal reporting, deleting IEPs or altering finalized IEPs. She stated that this occurred so the NCDPI EC staff could have time to do further investigations into the scope of alterations in the system. Ms. Thomas stated in addition, that Ms. Andrews' had not received ECATS training. Ms. Thomas stated numerous communications had been sent. She stated the EC Division sends out weekly communications to all PSUs. She stated there were many reminders through that vehicle and the regional coordinator assigned to TLA.
- Ms. Thomas stated that after finding the altered IEPs, the NCDPI EC Division decided to conduct announced visits at both TLA and Three Rivers Academy because no monitoring visit had taken place there previously.
- Ms. Thomas stated that during the visits, the EC records were in a locked cabinet and no one present had the key to unlock that cabinet. She stated that although records should be secured, at no time should there be no way to access those records if needed.

- Ms. Thomas stated the staff went back the next day as they were told that someone would be available at that time. Ms. Thomas stated at that time, NCDPI EC staff were able to review the documents.
- However, Ms. Thomas stated, they were unable to get any of the fiscal documents requested that day. She stated that Mr. McQueen stated he would get those fiscal documents, which he said were at TLA, the next day, but those were not provided. She stated that Mr. McQueen stated that all Three Rivers fiscal documents were at TLA.
- Ms. Thomas stated extensive training with the TLA EC Director began on September 27, 2021.
- Ms. Thomas stated that on or around October 21, 2021, they were able to confirm the staff had completed ECATS training.
- Ms. Thomas stated it is very rare that the EC Division doesn't find some type of mistake because of human error during a monitoring visit, but they do expect cooperation and response in a timely manner because that year is a very long time to not be able to confirm students are being serviced adequately.
- Ms. Thomas stated they have not approved as of yet a high admin level for TLA because there has been a shift in the EC staff at TLA and they are working with TLA to submit their December 1 Child Count. She stated they have not been delayed in doing that.
- Ms. Thomas stated that Mr. Dustin Squibb is the new EC Director for TLA. She stated that TLA alleges that Mr. Squibb did not have sufficient access to complete duties. She continued that ECATS data shows that Mr. Squibb was the LEA representative for 11 IEP Team meetings that were allegedly held between November 24, 2021 to December 3, 2021. She stated those dates in ECATS correspond to Thanksgiving break for TLA so there are some questions about whether those dates are accurate.
- Ms. Thomas pointed out documentation of other errors found in IEPs that show a pattern of noncompliance.
- Ms. Thomas stated they cannot tell whether EC teachers at the school are being paid with federal dollars, they cannot tell where those payments are coming from.
- Ms. Thomas stated that maintenance of effort is a very important aspect that IDEA requires the EC Division to monitor. She stated that means you can not expend more federal monies than state and local funds.
- She stated that for 17-18, 18-19, and 19-20, TLA has not made maintenance of effort. She stated they are waiting to get documentation for the 20-21 year.
- Dr. Haire asked about maintenance of effort. Ms. Thomas stated in the 2017 through 2019 school years the school did not meet maintenance of effort so did not meet ratio of state/local to federal dollars and had to repay federal monies.
- Dr. Eldridge asked who the EC Director was at the time ECATS training completion was indicated as completed. Ms. Thomas stated Ms. Andrews.

- Mr. Friend asked if he is correct in understanding that fiscal documents were unavailable at one school because they were held at another school. Ms. Thomas stated yes. Mr. Friend asked if she has seen that before with other PSUs. Ms. Thomas stated no, never. Mr. Friend asked what was the response from TLA or Ms. Andrews when information was brought to their attention about altered IEPs. Ms. Thomas stated she doesn't have that information because she didn't make that communication, but she can obtain that. Mr. Friend asked if the IEP team meetings that took place during the Thanksgiving break would have parental involvement. Ms. Thomas stated yes, parents are required to attend and typically they are not held during school breaks.
- Ms. Turner asked for specific examples of alterations to IEPs. Ms. Thomas stated one IEP for a Wake County student that had been altered to make it a current IEP that was in fact a year old. She stated there was also another similar change for a student in Harnett County.
- Ms. Thomas stated they cannot withhold federal EC funds, but they have withheld state funds. Ms. Turner inquired about the federal EC fund amounts. Ms. Thomas will look into that and get that for CSAB.
- Mr. Sanchez asked if the word "altered" is used because of the unorthodox nature in which the IEP was changed. Ms. Thomas stated that a previously completed compliant IEP date was changed to make it look like a new meeting took place when in fact it had not. Mr. Sanchez asked what response was given to EC about this issue. Ms. Thomas stated she could paraphrase. She stated that the implication was that we need help and are struggling with the EC program. Ms. Thomas stated her division had offered training many times. She stated that is why they decided to do a site visit to see what was actually occurring at the school.
- Mr. Sanchez asked if there were observational notes from the site visit to TLA. Ms. Thomas stated that her team had grave concerns about the level of EC services being delivered at TLA. She stated there was little direct instruction. She stated staff was unable to identify the EC students. Ms. Thomas stated they returned the next day after being told that the files would be accessible then, and the following day, staff was able at both TLA and Three Rivers to access the EC files. She stated the EC documents were able to be accessed but fiscal documentation was not provided for either school.
- Mr. Sanchez asked how severe these violations are relative to her experience. Ms. Thomas stated very severe, especially the continuing noncompliance. She has been at DPI for fourteen years and has rarely seen cases as severe as this.
- Mr. Sanchez asked where they are today. Ms. Thomas stated they are still waiting for compliance to be met stemming from the February 2020 visit.
- Mr. Friend asked if Ms. Andrews the EC Director for both TLA and Three Rivers Academy. Ms. Thomas stated no, she was not present. Mr. Friend asked if she was the one with the key. Ms. Thomas stated yes, that is what they were told.
- Ms. Turner asked for clarification about the coding. Ms. Thomas stated there was no coding because no budget was submitted. She stated when you apply for an IDEA grant, you must provide a budget with funding codes to know where the payments come from – line item and type of funding. She stated

typically a PSU will give you a budget and break it down with the funding codes. She stated this is true for all PSUs including charter schools and all charter schools receive monitoring the first year of operation to make sure they understand, and errors can be corrected.

- Ms. Turner clarified that a budget must be submitted with the application, but there was no way to determine where the funds were pulled. Ms. Thomas stated yes that is correct.
- Dr. Haire asked how many students receive EC services at TLA. Ms. Thomas stated she will get those numbers, but they know at least 20 students are not compliant and that is a significant number.
- Ms. Parlér asked for clarification on head count. Ms. Thomas stated that is a count of all students that have been made eligible for exceptional children services.
- Ms. Turner asked what her obligations are from the EC Department relative to this and what type of consequences are we talking about from a department or state level. Ms. Thomas stated they must respond to the general supervision obligations under IDEA. She stated they must ensure supervision of compliance that EC services are being delivered. She stated that now she has a charter school with three years of not meeting maintenance of effort and have not met egregious compliance corrections. She stated she is not able to release federal dollars until that noncompliance is corrected. She stated ultimately, as a state, the federal government could withhold the entire state's EC funding. She stated they could reduce or not release NC's EC federal funds for next year.
- Ms. Turner asked what recourse the EC Division has when noncompliance continues uncorrected. She stated there is an option to sanction under IDEA which means that the board of a school that has been found significantly out of compliance would go before the SBE and if sanctioned, all federal funds are withheld, not just EC funds.
- Mr. Sanchez asked if there have been any family complaints. Ms. Thomas stated there was one a few years ago, but it was withdrawn.
- Dr. Pamela Banks-Lee introduced herself as the Board Chair for TLA. She stated she has been with the school for 23 years. She stated in the twenty years they have worked with the McQueens, they have made many accomplishments and have been a force in the community.
- She stated the school has had high growth scores and serve 90% at risk kids and make progress with those kids. She stated they are rated top ten in charter schools in NC. She stated they have exceeded growth every year since 2016.
- She stated she needs everyone to understand that this occurred during two years where everyone was in a panic during the pandemic. She stated when the pandemic hits, it hits us differently and I need you to understand that. She states they recognize they have issues and are trying to rectify those issues. She stated they want to be in compliance just as much as DPI wants us in compliance and we are not being obstinate.
- She stated that the new EC Director has level 4 admin access to ECATS, so they have hired an experienced director. She stated they were told that this person couldn't get level 4 admin access to

ECATS because he held several other EC Director jobs and they are not aware of anything prohibiting that.

- Dr. Banks-Lee stated they have committed to try and straighten out their EC problems. She stated things have put them behind, but they were on track for almost 20 years. She stated they were trying to survive and get things done for students during this time period, they were not being obstinate.
- Dr. Cynthia McQueen, Head of School for TLA, stated that TLA has served the community for 20 years. She stated during that time, they have taken kids to China several times and have a sister school in China. She stated they have exceeded growth and hosted government officials. She spoke about serving 600 plus students and how it is her life's work. She stated that the EC Division requested documentation in the October 18<sup>th</sup> report and believed they had done what was needed because they received no feedback. She stated that they have worked diligently to correct problems and have hired Mr. Squibbs to lead the EC Department.
- Dr. McQueen stated she is in the school every day for ten plus hours and students are serviced. She stated that for eighteen years everything is fine and for two years during the pandemic, things are not going well because they were trying to make sure students had food and access to the internet. She stated every child was being serviced and that cannot be refuted. She stated that it was user error that led to the IEP alterations.
- Mr. Squibb gave his presentation. He stated he began six weeks ago as the EC Director for TLA. He stated he has seven areas of focus. He stated there was an initial review of current services on October 18, 2021 and a new student support schedule was developed. He stated his focus was ensuring that all Students with Disabilities (SWD) had a schedule that reflected the child's IEP.
- He stated that included IEP meetings that have taken place over the last few weeks. He stated that as IEPs have been updated, schedules are modified and reflected in the new student support schedule. He stated all students have an EC schedule matching the needs found by the IEP team and this has been submitted to NCDPI from both TLA and Three Rivers.
- Mr. Squibb stated he has only administrator view only access in ECATs but he has constant collaboration with the two consultants for the two schools. He stated his responses have been timely. He stated he conducted an initial audit for the program. He stated there are 45 students on the TLA headcount. He stated currently in the ECATS system, 42 of those are compliant and three are in the referral process.
- He spoke about IEP folders. He stated the initial on-campus review began on November 3, 2021 and conducted an IEP folder audit to identify needed action items. He stated at this time, all folders are fully compliant. He stated he can guarantee that all students have an active IEP, prior written notice, and all students have an IEP folder for both schools.
- He stated he has identified contracts for related services. He stated that all students that require primary speech-language or related services, have a schedule of service at both schools. He stated he will oversee the referral process to make sure they met the ninety day timeline. He stated he would be the LEA rep for all IEP meetings and be the point of contact for all related services. He stated he will conduct weekly ECATS reviews and he will handle all grant applications and federal documentation



such as head count. He will provide full program oversight. He stated the case manager will provide direct support and have a specific case load. He stated they will be responsible for data entry into ECATS. He continued that he will provide oversight of this data entry. He stated EC teachers will provide co-teaching support.

- Mr. Squibb displayed the chain of command with Dr. McQueen as head of school overseeing the Compliance Director, April Broadway, who is awaiting ECATS access, and grade band principals. Under this chain is Mr. Squibb overseeing the Case Manager, Dee Tendale.
- Mr. Squibb spoke about the EC professional development schedule. Dr. Haire confirmed that he was in attendance at these sessions displayed on screen. Mr. Squibb stated yes.
- Ms. Turner asked how many schools Mr. Squibb works with. Mr. Squibb stated he is the EC Director at five schools, and all are in compliance across the board.
- Mr. Friend asked if he is a direct employee of the school or the EMO. Mr. Squibb stated he believes the school. Mr. Friend asked about the former EC Director. Mr. Don McQueen, Torchlight EMO, stated that Mr. Squibb is an employee of the EMO. Mr. Squibb apologized; he did not know that.
- Mr. Friend asked if the eleven IEP meetings previously mentioned took place during the Thanksgiving holiday. Mr. Squibb stated yes. He stated some of the ECATS notes are taken on paper and then input into the online system so there could be typographical errors. Mr. Friend clarified that those meetings took place with families present and you. Mr. Squibb stated yes, at least nine of those had parent participation and that they were arranged prior to the break. Mr. Squibb stated that this will be an ongoing process. Mr. Squibb stated he calls these meetings transition meetings to allow families to meet new EC staff. Mr. Squibb confirmed that these meetings took place between November 24 and December 3. Mr. Turner asked who participates in the meetings. Mr. Squibb stated himself as the LEA rep, family, general education. Ms. Turner asked if those people all agreed to do that during Thanksgiving break. Mr. Squibb stated they had agreed and having virtual meetings helps.
- Mr. Friend asked Dr. McQueen why the previous EC Director, Ms. Andrews indicated to the EC staff that she had completed the ECATS modules but had not actually done so. She spoke about how the modules are long and they were read, but if you miss anyone of the assessment questions, you could not continue. Dr. McQueen stated it is her understanding that she began the training and read the material but did not complete the assessment required to pass. Mr. Friend stated, then it was not completed. Dr. McQueen stated well yes, it was read, but not completed.
- Mr. Friend asked for clarification about what emails Dr. McQueen received indicating noncompliance in ECATS. Dr. McQueen stated she is not sure how many emails came in. She stated if she said hundreds previously, it was an exaggeration, and she apologizes. She stated she heard Ms. Thomas say many went out. She stated when she receives an email, she just scans it, so in some cases she remembers seeing emails about “Nonuser ECATS” and she figured they just need to get trained and get familiar because they never had any issues with the former system. She stated she text messaged other charter leaders like Jennifer Lucas at Voyager Academy and asked for help.
- She continued that she called and text messaged other charter school directors for help to get her EC Director trained in ECATS. She stated that she did not read the email, but she scanned and saw the

subject line and knew she needed to look for assistance for ECATS. She stated she did not read the email to understand the severity and she tried to get help from other sources.

- Mr. Friend asked who is responsible for making sure the EC Director knows how to do her job. He asked shouldn't it be the EMO's responsibility since the EMO is getting paid to make sure the EC program operates correctly. Mr. McQueen stated he is not aware of all issues at the schools he manages and did not understand the severity. He stated that he knows ECATS has had issues and been shut down before. Mr. Friend stated that is not the issue, it is about an employee of yours not doing the job. Mr. Friend asked if Ms. Andrews is still on staff. Dr. McQueen stated yes, but not on the EC team any longer. Mr. Friend asked if Ms. Andrews is a family member. Mr. McQueen stated yes, she is his daughter.
- Mr. Stephen Bows stated he is the attorney for the school and that you are missing the forest for the trees. He stated the actions on the part of the schools and EMO show they are trying to make corrections. He stated he could characterize these things in a legal light, but he won't do that today. He stated the school is working diligently to make sure these issues are resolved. He continued that the willingness of the staff and school are clear. He stated he has been in education law for 27 years and he can speak to the school's impact on students. He stated he has worked with students in Wake County schools with significantly more problems than here at TLA. He continued to reiterate the steps TLA is taking to get into compliance.
- Dr. McQueen stated it will not take a long time to come into compliance because they are already in compliance today. She stated they were not aware of the severity of the issue and they had no idea of the severity. Mr. Friend stated that he is struggling with this statement because you've said you received so many emails, so how would you not know the severity. Dr. McQueen stated she received zero. She stated she did not know. Mr. Friend asked if she is suggesting she didn't understand the severity because she didn't get direct communication from NCDPI or that Ms. Andrews was not communicating this to you. Dr. McQueen stated right, but she was not clear on the severity. She stated Ms. Andrews was under the impression everything was fine. Dr. McQueen stated no, no she did not receive the communications Ms. Thomas referenced.
- Mr. Friend asked where fiscal documents are kept. Mr. McQueen stated that records are kept electronically and not at Three Rivers Academy (where he was present) because they feel the building is not secure enough for that. He stated there are no regulations regarding where they store financial documents. Mr. McQueen stated one of the reluctances about finances is that he didn't want to provide wrong information during this unannounced visit and wanted to make sure information was accurate. He stated some of the characterizations did not fit.
- Mr. McQueen stated since that time they have submitted all financial documentation and received no response from NCDPI.
- Mr. McQueen stated that they have not had an EC violation in twenty years. He stated they are the only school in the neighborhood serving black and brown children successfully.
- Dr. Haire asked if they are currently in fiscal compliance. Mr. McQueen stated he doesn't believe they have ever been out of fiscal compliance. Dr. Haire referenced the coding issues Ms. Thomas spoke about. Mr. McQueen stated that because federal funds are being received later and later, we are using

state and local funds to cover expenditures because every dime of 060 funds go to salaries because it is easy for us to track those numbers. He stated that means there is some reclassification required after expending state and local funds.

- Mr. McQueen stated he believes the references by Ms. Thomas from 2017-2020 happened due to data loss through LINQ because the system went through a revision and a lot of data was lost. He stated he had communicated with School Business about this data loss and the maintenance of effort.
- Ms. Turner asked if there is documentation of reclass. She stated all schools must expend state and local before federal. Mr. McQueen stated there should be. He stated that when they took over as EMO they wanted to ensure that they knew how federal funds were being spent. He stated two accounts were created in LINQ to make sure it was accounted for and in doing so, created what looked like an imbalance.
- Dr. Haire asked if she is correct that Mr. McQueen was not at the school the second day because he didn't want to disclose financial information. He stated no, he wasn't sure if he was personally asked to be there. Dr. Haire asked where he was on the 21<sup>st</sup>. He replied he didn't think he was to be there and there must have been miscommunication. He stated these are financial records that cannot be change and have been submitted and have received no response. He stated it is important that the communication be a two way street so they can move forward.
- Dr. Haire asked if the compliance director is here today. Mr. McQueen stated no, she is in Kentucky. Dr. Haire stated she believes that would be important. Mr. McQueen stated yes he agrees, but her access level in ECATS is thwarting their efforts.
- Mr. Sanchez stated that he believes, as a school leader, the buck stops with the leader. He asked what the initial response was to the noncompliance. Dr. McQueen stated that her initial notification was in October 8, 2021 and she immediately formed a task force and hired Dustin Squibb and a compliance director.
- Mr. Sanchez asked if Dr. McQueen was there at the unannounced visit. She stated no. He stated so you weren't there, and the EC Director was not there, so they could not access files. She replied yes. He asked if she was there the following day. She stated yes, but they had just left when I arrived. She stated Ms. Broadway was there and they accessed what was needed.
- Mr. Sanchez asked if the unannounced visit sparked a major concern for Dr. McQueen. She stated yes and that is why she started to look for EC assistance and hired people. He asked if she contacted the EC Division at DPI. She stated yes. Mr. Sanchez asked what happened between that time and February 2020 and why none of this demonstrated severity to Dr. McQueen.
- Dr. McQueen stated they believed everything was fine until September's unannounced visit.
- Mr. Sanchez stated that in his experience as a school leader, he has been on this side and when EC Division conducts monitoring and reports, the school receives emails and he believes, paper copies. He stated that immediately after, his EC Director will run up to his office to let him know what they have to work on. He stated despite all of this, you are saying you never say the report or any other information.

- Mr. McQueen stated that she is actually referring to the “NonECATS User” email previously mentioned.
- Mr. Sanchez asked if Dr. McQueen had seen the February 2020 report prior to September 2021. Dr. McQueen stated no. Mr. Sanchez asked if she knew it existed. Dr. McQueen stated no because there would be no reason not to act on that. Mr. Sanchez stated you must understand how difficult that is to understand given the fact you stated you have had numerous communications with the EC staff at NCDPI. She continued that she never received a hard copy. She stated she has been in constant contact with EC staff since September of this year.
- Ms. Turner stated that report would go to whomever is listed in EDDIE as Director and EC Director. Dr. McQueen stated that was her and Ms. Andrews. CSAB members stated that they even have a meeting with staff prior to leaving the visit.
- Dr. McQueen spoke about the fact that this was all happening around the pandemic beginning and schools closing and her mom dying. She spoke about what she was dealing with and stated her mom lived with her and went to the school everyday to tutor students. She stated she was trying to get her 600 students fed and broadband, and all of those things.
- Ms. Turner asked how EC services were handled during the pandemic. Dr. McQueen stated it was virtual. Ms. Turner asked how the paperwork was handled during that time. Dr. McQueen stated virtually, docusign, and paper. Ms. Turner asked if things were done on paper and then input in ECATS. Dr. McQueen stated yes.
- Mr. Friend stated that there are 10k+ schools going through the pandemic at the same time. He stated that he will be the first to admit the pandemic hit TLA harder than it hit his school, but they all faced challenges and it can’t be an excuse for not meeting deadlines or compliance. Mr. McQueen stated the pandemic impacted every single person and now, you’re right, maybe our EC Director misunderstood, but we have no record of lying. He stated that saying “altered records” is inflammatory language. He stated that they have 100% compliance, award-winning, compliance with Indicator 11.
- Mr. McQueen pointed out a communication from 4/16/20 that EC department recognized thanks and will follow-up and then there is a four month gap from NCDPI.
- Mr. McQueen stated if you’ve been in charter schools, the last thing we do is call DPI because you never know what you will get, some type of rebuff. He stated he will call anybody before he calls DPI. He referenced a dissertation by Dr. Swinson that it is a well-known fact that black charter school operators are treated differently. He stated there was no technical assistance, but a raid. He stated wouldn’t a phone call be a common courtesy. He continued to stated DPI conducted a raid to find errors.
- Dr. Haire stated you were notified to appear on the 21<sup>st</sup> and you didn’t show up. She stated respect goes well. He stated he can’t tell you what happened on that specific date, but we have responded with all things required and we’ve received no response. He stated should that be mutual respect.

- Ms. Turner stated her experience with monitoring from DPI, before they leave there is an exit interview and you receive some sense of what the findings were. She stated also at that time, you are told how long you have to make a correction and that is followed up with a report that arrives about 30 days later. She stated that document is very clear about what to fix, how to fix it, and how long you have. She stated once you correct, you are notified that everything is corrected and clear. Ms. Thomas stated, yes, that is the correct process that takes place with all monitoring events.
- Ms. Thomas submitted evidence of emails sent to TLA in April 2020 and in November 2020 with the PCR report and the ECATS memo previously referenced.
- Ms. Thomas referred the CSAB to the EC technical assistance log. She referenced the debriefing meeting that took place with TLA after the initial monitoring visit, just as Ms. Turner described. Ms. Turner stated she can understand how Dr. McQueen would possibly not understand the severity at that point, but how long between the initial letter and EC follow-up from DPI?
- She referenced pages of communication notes between NCDPI EC staff and TLA that took place between the initial February 2020 visit up to a week ago.
- Ms. Turner asked what the current compliance status is for TLA. Ms. Thomas stated staff is going into ECATS daily to check all schools for noncompliance ahead of federal child count. She stated that as of today there are 18 student records that are not in compliance and 18 that are compliant. She stated the 11 IEP meetings we heard about are not compliant because they are missing items. She stated that EC staff has communicated multiple times, yesterday, with Mr. Squibb about errors.
- Ms. Turner asked about the fiscal documents received. Ms. Thomas stated she has the document through Google Docs, and EC staff have been furiously trying to get through IDEA grants and they are working on reviewing those materials. She stated that between grant reviews, a week of conference, and Thanksgiving, staff have been working as quickly as possible. She stated that TLA has not been notified yet because the review is not complete.
- Ms. Thomas stated in regard to the school stating they have never been out of compliance, the school was in a monitoring program five years ago and they were noncompliant at that time. She stated that was corrected.
- Ms. Thomas stated that the school was given grace during the pandemic. She stated the original February 2021 deadline was changed to an April 2021 extension and here we are in December 2021 and the issues still remain.
- Ms. Thomas stated that the Canvas courses must be completed in that system, and no staff at TLA had even accessed Canvas prior to the September site visit. She stated you must enroll in Canvas. Mr. Friend asked what they would have been talking about when saying the staff read a module. Ms. Thomas stated she is unsure. She stated you must enroll in Canvas to complete the ECATS modules and no one at TLA was registered until October 2021.

- Ms. Thomas stated ECATS has never been fully shut down since its operation began in 2017. She stated there may have been down time for maintenance, which is minimal and is noticed far in advance, but it's never been shut down completely or inaccessible.
- She stated she wants to clarify that EC has not sanctioned TLA, they have delayed funding. She stated the IDEA grant application was submitted in late November (it opened in May) and funding is just starting to go out due to the budget delay.
- Mr. Sanchez asked if the noncompliance issues are the same issues seen earlier. Ms. Thomas stated yes. She explained they are not seeing the data necessary when completing a reevaluation and writing a new IEP.
- Mr. Friend asked if this unannounced visit was conducted the same way that other unannounced visits to schools. Ms. Thomas stated yes. She explained there is nothing prohibiting such visits, they have happened before, and probably will continue to happen as needed.

**Motion: Move that CSAB go into closed session pursuant to NC General Statute section 143-318.11(a)(3) to consult with our attorneys in order to preserve the attorney-client privilege between the attorneys and the public body. 4:08PM**

**Motion: Lynn Kroeger**

**Second: Hilda Parlér**

**Vote: Unanimous**

**Passed**

**Failed**

- TLA requested to speak before CSAB entered closed session. Mr. Squibb stated that in his ECATS account, he can see 46 students and three are showing the compliance indicator of a red stop sign with a "E" and those are the three currently in referral. He stated there are five with a caution sign, but they are still a compliant IEP, it's about to expire. He stated he wanted to clarify.
- Mr. Adam Wezell stated that they did not go in today with the intent to state that no errors have been made. Mr. Wezell stated we cannot discount the fact that the school has twenty years of operating success. Mr. Wezell stated that New Dimensions has been out of compliance for over a year, but they just presented at your conference. Dr. McQueen stated that she was at TLA yesterday with a new hire, whose name is Dee, and a licensed EC teacher. She stated she went over all the documents and in previous schools, the way she conducted IEP meetings was the same way TLA conducts meetings and yet those files are marked noncompliant. Dr. McQueen stated that Dustin only sees three stop signs. Mr. Squibb stated he sees bullet points in ECATS which they have no control over.
- Mr. Bowers stated you have heard what happened and what is being done about it. Torchlight is asking for the opportunity to resolve those issues.

**Motion: Recommend to the State Board of Education that Torchlight Academy be placed on Level 2 Governance Probationary Status and that if the noncompliance detailed by the Exceptional Children's department of NCDPI is not completely cured within thirty days that more severe action be taken up to and including revocation of Torchlight's Charter.**

**Motion: Cheryl Turner**

**Second: John Eldridge**

**Vote: Unanimous**

**Passed**

**Failed**

- Ms. Turner stated that Torchlight will receive a letter that will detail everything that needs to be in compliance in the next thirty days and this recommendation will go to SBE. She stated that she is not sure exactly when that will be. She stated that that this point it goes to the SBE, but Torchlight has thirty days to get it done.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

- **Mr. Friend made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 5:22PM. Ms. Kroeger seconded and the meeting adjourned unanimously.**