

D.C. PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL BOARD

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BOARD MEETING

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NEW SCHOOLS PUBLIC HEARING

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TUESDAY
APRIL 23, 2019

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The D.C. Public Charter School Board met in the Carlos Rosario International Public Charter School at 1100 Harvard Street, NW, Washington, D.C., at 6:01 p.m., Rick Cruz, Chair, presiding.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

RICK CRUZ, Chair
SABA BIREDA, Vice Chair
STEVE BUMBAUGH
NAOMI SHELTON
LEA CRUSEY

STAFF PRESENT

SCOTT PEARSON, Executive Director
KATHERINE DAMMANN, Manager, Equity and Fidelity

ALSO PRESENT

JANINE GOMEZ, I Dream Academy
DIANA BANKS, I Dream Academy
LEENSA FUFA, I Dream Academy
ZACHARY BUSCHMAN, I Dream Academy
NATALIA BOVKUN, I Dream Academy
BENJAMIN PAYNE, Anna Julia Cooper
DANIELLE PALMER, Anna Julia Cooper
SHARON CULVER, Anna Julia Cooper
ERICA JACKSON, Anna Julia Cooper
JAMISON WHITE, Anna Julia Cooper
SAYMAH NAH, The Garden Education
TREVOR BAISDEN, The Garden Education
DONNA WHITMAN, The Garden Education
MERCEDES EBANKS, The Garden Education
BRANDON JOHNSON, Social Justice School
MYRON LONG, Social Justice School
RAEL NELSON-JAMES, Social Justice School
JUSTIN JONES, Social Justice School
TAMMY TUCK, Social Justice School
MEGAN SHANAHAM, BOLT Academy
CHANDELL STONE, BOLT Academy
TRAVIS FOX, BOLT Academy
CARTER CORDELL, BOLT Academy
KRISTAL OWENS, Aspire to Excellence
STACIE BANKS HALL, Aspire to Excellence
CHARLES JONES, Aspire to Excellence
ROBYN MARBRAY, Aspire to Excellence
KRYSTLE THOMAS, Aspire to Excellence
MONICA GREEN, Capital Village
MARTRICE GANDY, Capital Village
MATT HARE, Capital Village
LATOYA TOLBERT, Capital Village
KRISTINA KYLES-SMITH, Capital Village
HANI ABO AWAD, Arabic Language
DANIEL CALLIS, Arabic Language
JAYME SHORES GUBARTALLA, Arabic Language
LEE DAVIS, Arabic Language

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1 P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

2 (6:01 p.m.)

3 VICE CHAIR BIREDA: Thank you. We're
4 going to get started. Welcome to the April 23rd,
5 2019 meeting of the D.C. Public Charter School
6 Board. I'm Saba Bireda, I'm going to be acting
7 in our chair, Rick Cruz's, stead tonight for
8 about an hour until he gets here.

9 The only thing tonight on our agenda
10 is the public hearings for eight new school
11 applications this year. We're very excited to
12 welcome our applicants and their supporters
13 tonight, and that will be the only thing, as I
14 said, that we will be discussing.

15 I'll go ahead and introduce the Board
16 members that we have here tonight. Starting on
17 my right, Lea Crusey, Steve Bumbaugh. As I
18 mentioned, Rick Cruz, our Chair, will be here
19 soon, and Naomi Shelton, as well as Scott
20 Pearson, our Executive Director.

21 So, as noted on our agenda, we will
22 get started first with public comments, and this

1 will be public comments relevant to our new
2 school applications. I'm going to invite three
3 people at a time who have signed up to comment on
4 our new school applications. There'll be other
5 opportunities later during the public meeting for
6 you to comment on other items on the agenda
7 before we take any votes.

8 So our first three witnesses tonight
9 will be Chelsea Joseph, Homere Whyte, and Inez
10 Stepman. Go ahead and take a seat. And before
11 we get started, we do have a lot of people here
12 tonight, so please limit your comments to two
13 minutes. There's a timer in front of you that
14 will turn yellow when you have 30 seconds left.
15 When it flashes red and beeps, your time is up.
16 If you speak longer than two minutes I may
17 interrupt you, just to make sure that we can get
18 through all of our public comment tonight. As
19 always, you're welcome to submit written public
20 comment to publiccomment@dcpcsb.org. Go ahead,
21 please state your name.

22 MS. JOSEPH: Chelsea Joseph. Good

1 evening. I'm Chelsea Joseph, and a proud member
2 of the Anna Julia Cooper community. I've worked
3 in almost every depth of a school. I strive to
4 provide students I encounter daily to receive the
5 same experience I had growing up as a child. My
6 story is just like any other student's story who
7 came from crucial economical background and need
8 an escape from home, and school was my escape.

9 Anna Julie Cooper is not only a future
10 school to education, educating our youth, but a
11 community that prides themselves on not leaving
12 any student behind. Nelson Mandela once stated
13 education is the most powerful weapon which you
14 could use to change the world. And Cooper
15 strives to give each student the weapon of
16 education to enter into this harsh world we
17 encounter daily.

18 Cooper provides students the
19 opportunity to learn Latin, Spanish in the early
20 years of education. This allows the student to
21 have dual language by the time they graduate high
22 school. I fully support Cooper, because their

1 school design model ensures all of their
2 children's needs are met. Also provides a
3 community for students who have crucial economic
4 backgrounds, and need another role to be just a
5 child, and not an adult.

6 The administrative staff is readily
7 available to assess anyone who needs help. Anna
8 Julia Cooper deserves a home in Washington, D.C.,
9 so our future doctors, lawyers, artists, or
10 teachers are given the opportunity to be a
11 student to their full potential and receive the
12 priceless weapon of an education. And thank you.

13 (Applause.)

14 VICE CHAIR BIREDA: Thank you. Okay,
15 our next three, Justin Jones, Gregory Woodward,
16 and Jenese Jones. Go ahead and state your name
17 for the record.

18 MR. JONES: My name is Justin Jones.
19 I've been working in D.C. education for the past
20 13 years supporting charter and DCPS schools with
21 data and assessment work, family engagement
22 strategies, and leadership development and

1 coaching. I'm a former board member of a D.C.
2 charter school, a former classroom teacher for
3 middle school aged students, a D.C. resident, and
4 a parent. And I come to you tonight in support
5 of the social justice school.

6 Since I moved to the District in 2006,
7 there's been a lot of change in the education
8 landscape, and in the school choices that are
9 available to students and families across the
10 city. But we as a city have made some
11 incremental strides in improving educational
12 outcomes for students, we're still not providing
13 all students with the opportunities they deserve.
14 The imbalance of academic achievement between
15 specific demographic differences has become
16 normalized. This is particularly true at the
17 middle school level, where through research and
18 deep conversations with families across D.C. the
19 Social Justice School's founding team learned
20 that families urgently want and need higher
21 performing schools where their students can
22 deeply engage in becoming collaborators,

1 communicators, and problem solvers. But there's
2 a lack of schools that exist to meet that need.

3 Now, imagine a school where students
4 come together across all forms of difference to
5 tackle the root cause of inequity, where they
6 engage in a comprehensive student centered
7 approach to becoming, in the words of the
8 school's core values, fearless in the face of
9 injustice, relentless in the pursuit of justice,
10 empathetic to the experiences of others, and
11 engage with themselves, their learning and their
12 roles. That school is a Social Justice School.

13 Social Justice School has a number of
14 core complaints that will ultimately make it
15 successful, including expeditionary learning.
16 I've seen several schools that use expeditionary
17 learning as part of their curriculum, and in
18 those schools the students are most engaged and
19 successful when they care deeply about the issue
20 for which they are trying to solve.

21 Social Justice School's unique
22 approach would embed those issues at the core

1 fabric of its academically rigorous expeditions
2 with the opportunities and needs of our local
3 communities at the forefront. In short, this
4 will provide students with the opportunity to
5 work and learn together across difference to
6 design the equitable world they would like to
7 inhabit.

8 I encourage and urge you to approve
9 the application of the Social Justice School,
10 which will ensure that D.C. students become
11 desirous of a more just world while ensuring that
12 all students are challenged academically, and
13 prepared for success. Thank you.

14 (Applause.)

15 MR. WOODWARD: My name is Gregory
16 Woodward. So I am a D.C. resident, and a parent
17 of two little boys, Ward 6 resident, and I'm here
18 to speak on behalf of the Anna Julia Cooper
19 Public Charter School. In addition to being a
20 parent, I'm worked as a teacher and a school
21 leader at Uncommon Schools in Boston, at KIPP.

22 I speak only for myself as a parent,

1 but I just learned about this proposal for Cooper
2 PCS, and was captivated by the idea that a team
3 of educators is making a plan to bring
4 effectively the core knowledge sequence to
5 elementary school. I found the cognitive science
6 research from folks like Dan Willingham and
7 others to be persuasive regarding the idea that
8 elementary school students need to build a broad
9 base of knowledge in order to be able to gain the
10 literacy skills to even access the true wisdom,
11 and to academic success in middle school, high
12 school, college and beyond.

13 I find the mission of the school to be
14 inspiring, and I think that we need more schools,
15 specifically elementary schools, in D.C. doing
16 this. I also find the team to be passionate, to
17 be dedicated. Had the chance to speak with Ben,
18 and I feel that he is an inspiring leader, and I
19 would just strongly encourage the Board to
20 consider this excellent proposal that is
21 specific, that is detailed, and could make a
22 strong impact on the city. Thank you so much.

1 (Applause.)

2 VICE CHAIR BIREDA: Thank you. Our
3 next three speakers will be Maggie Bello, Keina
4 Hodge, and Kristina Kyles-Smith.

5 MS. BELLO: Maggie Bello. Good
6 evening. My name is Maggie Bello, and I'm the
7 proud middle school principal at Two Rivers
8 Public Charter School, which has been a tier one
9 school every year the tiering system has been in
10 existence.

11 This is my 12th year Two Rivers, and
12 I have two daughters that have attended Two
13 Rivers since they were three, one in eighth grade
14 and one who is an alum of Two Rivers and
15 currently at a DCPS high school. I've also been
16 a D.C. resident for close to 20 years.

17 This school year I've had the great
18 honor and pleasure of hosting Monica Green, the
19 founder of Capital Village Public Charter Schools
20 as an EL education school design fellow. Monica
21 has been deeply embedded in our school the entire
22 year, acting as a school leader and learning

1 about leading a high quality EL education middle
2 school. Not only have I been able to share
3 resources, lessons learned, and on the ground
4 leadership experience, I've also had the unique
5 opportunity to get to know her as a leader.

6 Monica is visionary, thoughtful,
7 detail oriented, and knows just the right
8 questions to ask to help others learn and grow.
9 After working closely with her this year, I am
10 beyond confident in her ability to open high
11 quality EL education middle schools in D.C.

12 As a parent of children who are in, or
13 have been in middle school, and as a school
14 leader, I am well aware of the need in D.C. for
15 high quality middle schools, especially schools
16 that focus on developing the whole adolescent by
17 focusing upon rigorous academics, social and
18 emotional learning, communication, and
19 collaboration. I firmly believe that Capital
20 Village Public Charter Schools will offer more
21 adolescents in D.C. the opportunity for rigorous,
22 joyful learning that is critical to closing

1 achievement gaps, and opportunity gaps.

2 Capital Village Public Charter Schools
3 help fill a gap in our city for more high quality
4 options for middle school. I'd love for you to
5 approve their charter. Thanks for considering.

6 (Applause.)

7 MS. HODGE: Hi, good evening. My name
8 is Keina Hodge. First, I just wanted to thank
9 you guys for the opportunity to speak today. I'm
10 the new founding director of operations for
11 Capital Village Public Charter School, and I'm
12 just thrilled to be a part of this dynamic team
13 of leaders that's already working with Capital
14 Village. I know this school is going to have a
15 big impact on a lot of the students here in D.C.

16 What really drew me to Capital Village
17 was really just the overall mission to work with
18 students in smaller learning communities, and
19 that focus in on the whole child. In my
20 experience I've seen the difference that students
21 have when they are in those smaller learning
22 environments that has that student centered

1 learning. It really creates a difference in
2 their overall ability to succeed.

3 My experience has been --- I've had
4 years of experience working with start-up charter
5 schools. I've opened up a school here in D.C.,
6 I've opened up schools in California, as well as
7 in Delaware, so I know the work that's required
8 to open up a new school. I've done everything
9 from working on strategic marketing plans for
10 enrollment to working with contractors to make
11 sure that our spaces were built out to code for
12 schools. And just working with this team so far,
13 I know that this dynamic leadership, and this
14 dedicated Board we're going to have a successful
15 launch with your approval and support in fall
16 2020. So just want to thank you guys again for
17 the opportunity to speak today. Thank you.

18 (Applause.)

19 VICE CHAIR BIREDA: Next we have Zion
20 Dailey, Rael Nelson James, and Justin Jones.

21 (Pause.)

22 MS. DAILEY: Hi everyone. My name is

1 Zion Dailey, and I'm here to speak about the
2 Social Justice School. To start off, Mr. Long
3 and Mr. Johnson are both really good, loving and
4 caring people who've come a long way to be here.
5 Mr. Long was my principal at Arrowhead Public
6 Charter School. When I first came to Haines I
7 instantly knew that Mr. Long would be a good
8 leader for the school. Since I found out Mr.
9 Long is opening the Social Justice School, I was
10 excited, because I know how much he cares about
11 students, and speaking out.

12 I've known Mr. Johnson since the
13 summertime where I attended their Social Justice
14 Camp. Since the first day of camp I noticed how
15 passionate he was about what goes on in the world
16 daily. In my opinion opening the Social Justice
17 School is a good idea, because us scholars,
18 especially black and brown scholars, don't learn
19 enough about the world, and educational system
20 has lied to use about our history. This school
21 will teach us a lot about what we don't know,
22 thanks to Mr. Long and Mr. Johnson. To start

1 off, students and parents should have the option
2 to attend the Social Justice School, because the
3 staff members teach you a lot about everyday
4 worldwide problems. One example is mass
5 incarceration, and this unit along with other
6 units provides you with all four subjects all in
7 one. So your scholar will learn about the world.
8 The staff also gives children a say in certain
9 situations because it's our education, and
10 teachers are just helping us get it. Mr. Long
11 and Mr. Johnson are the right people to lead the
12 Social Justice School, because they care for and
13 love each and every scholar, and make sure they
14 are receiving the attention that they need.

15 Also, both Mr. Long and Mr. Johnson
16 build relationships with students and give them
17 the attention that they need to succeed. Mr.
18 Long makes sure the rules are in place while
19 being a strong leader, and Mr. Johnson makes
20 engaging lessons even more engaging. I will
21 assure you if you let your child come to the
22 Social Justice School they will feel safe, have

1 fun, and will succeed as very intelligent young
2 men and women.

3 (Applause.)

4 VICE CHAIR BIREDA: Thank you. And our
5 final four speakers Kerron Kalloo, Aisha
6 McMillan, Sherri Watkins, and Esther Wetherbee.

7 MR. KALLOO: Good evening. My name is
8 Kerron Kalloo. For the past nine years I've
9 served as a director for the Boy's and Girl's
10 Clubs of Greater Washington. I currently work in
11 Southeast D.C., and we serve 160 kids, ages 5 to
12 18 daily.

13 I began working with I Dream Academy
14 D.C.'s founders in early 2017. Together we held
15 events to get feedback from students and families
16 about an education that works for them. Since
17 then we have partnered to hold camps, community
18 events, and other educational opportunities. My
19 time as a Boy's and Girl's Club director has
20 shown me some of the challenges families face
21 with schools and educating their children.
22 Challenges such as poverty, violence and lack of

1 support can create stressful environments that
2 take away a child's growth and learning.

3 Too often children are distracted by
4 their circumstances instead of focusing on their
5 dreams. It's on a regular day that we hear about
6 violence happening on the four square blocks from
7 my site, and that has to do with young people who
8 do not have a place to go after school, it has to
9 do with lack of parental supervision. Frankly,
10 in my perspective it's a lot to do with a lack of
11 focus, and pursuit of their ambitions.

12 I Dream Academy D.C. presents an
13 opportunity for members to start to dream, to
14 start to really work with community partnerships
15 and families to make those dreams become a
16 reality. We'll be focusing on the barriers that
17 prevent them from dreaming and pursue the
18 education the way that their hearts desire really
19 wants to.

20 I Dream Academy, D.C. supports all
21 factors involving a child's learning and growth,
22 and allows the student to control their

1 education. The school's focus on collaborating
2 with families, community, empower students, and
3 reduces the pressures that they face. I strongly
4 recommend D.C. Public Charter School Board to
5 approve I Dream Academy D.C.'s Charter
6 application. Thank you for considering.

7 (Applause.)

8 MS. McMILLAN: Good evening. My name
9 is Aisha McMillan, and I am here in support of I
10 Dream Academy. I am a former educator in the
11 D.C. area. I met one of the founders, Janine
12 Gomez while teaching at a charter school. She
13 reached out to me for community walks, and to
14 share ideas. When I was a teacher there were
15 three key areas that I believe greatly supported
16 my ability to be the best teacher I could be,
17 culture, safe space and coaching.

18 It take a village, a common saying
19 that resonates with the constituents of Ward 8.
20 I remember going on community walks and members
21 of the community would mention a desire to see a
22 school that accounts for the needs of the

1 community. They wanted their voices to be heard,
2 and engage and partner with the school.

3 The founders of IDA D.C. has taken
4 into consideration this sentiment by creating a
5 sort of justice committee that will have members
6 of the community. They are partnering with
7 parents, offering opportunity for them to engage
8 with the school and employees.

9 Students don't come to school as a
10 blank slate, their experiences, emotions,
11 thoughts, patterns, processes and behavior behind
12 their smiling faces. It's important that this is
13 considered when creating a school. The use of
14 restorative justice practices, small classroom
15 size, time for students to dream their wildest
16 dreams, and built-in play at IDA D.C. gives
17 students the space to excel, grow, and learn.

18 There will be experienced educators,
19 and educators new to the profession working
20 collaboratively with each other. At IDA D.C.
21 educators will receive professional development
22 once a week, with one week a month being

1 dedicated to teacher working on the dream
2 project. Each educator will have an advisor to
3 receive feedback and coaching to support
4 professional learning and development.

5 The small class size gives educators
6 the opportunity to work closely with struggling
7 students. For these reasons I strongly recommend
8 that the Board approve I Dream Academy D.C.

9 Thank you.

10 (Applause.)

11 MS. WETHERBEE: Hello. My name is
12 Esther Wetherbee, and I'm a Ward 8 parent and
13 advocate. And one of the children that I work
14 with is a pre-K student who attends a charter
15 school in Ward 8. And his mother came to me and
16 relayed the fact that the teacher said that he
17 was advancing far ahead of the other students in
18 his class, and jokefully said he needs to slow
19 down. And I said, wait a minute.

20 So I started doing some research and
21 discovered that in the District of Columbia there
22 are no programs such as gifted and talented for

1 elementary school students. Once you get to the
2 high school level there's all kinds of programs
3 available. And I was very surprised to learn
4 that at one point several chancellors back. A
5 program was actually created, but no funding for
6 it was created, so it didn't --- never take up
7 off the ground. And I was very surprised to find
8 that we have a lot of funding for special
9 education children, which is very essential, but
10 nothing on the other side for gifted and talented
11 children who also have a need for a special
12 education.

13 And I met Janine because she did a --
14 IDA did a workshop, a two-day workshop, over
15 Christmas break, and I took the child I'm
16 referencing and two of his cousins to it, all
17 four years old. And I had to stay there with
18 them, and I observed how Janine and the others
19 interacted with the children. And I was very
20 impressed with how their school plan is to learn
21 each child, what their particular needs are, and
22 craft an educational program just for that child,

1 which will be the only program in Ward 8 which
2 touches non-gifted and talented, which I think is
3 an essential need that we have.

4 And the other thing I wanted to say,
5 on a personal note, is I've gotten to know
6 Janine, and she's a very kind person, which is a
7 trait that is often overlooked and underrated,
8 but is very essential in my experience to create
9 a safe and calm environment for children. So I'm
10 here today to support their charter, and I hope
11 that you approve them, because I think it's
12 something that Ward 8 really needs for our
13 children.

14 UNKNOWN: Ma'am, just to confirm,
15 you're testifying -- ma'am you're testifying on
16 behalf of I Dream Academy?

17 MS. WETHERBEE: Yes, I am. I'm sorry.

18 UNKNOWN: Thank you.

19 MS. WATKINS: Good evening. My name is
20 Sherri Watkins, native Washingtonian, Ward 7
21 resident, mother of three, and a solid community
22 leader in Ward 8. Also the co-founder of a non-

1 profit organization serving homeless children and
2 families and working full time with another non-
3 profit organization in D.C. serving at risk
4 homeless families, healthcare and housing
5 services. And I say all of that to say I am
6 heavily invested in my community, know the needs
7 of our community, and also know what is missing,
8 and that is I Dream Academy.

9 I'm confident that I Dream Academy
10 will be the game change in education. I'm
11 confident that I Dream Academy will foster the
12 growth and development in our children. I am
13 confident that I Dream Academy will help our
14 children dream again, learn who they are in this
15 world, and become what they are destined to be.
16 To add, I Dream Academy is invested in
17 relationship, purpose, collaboration, and most
18 importantly equity. All the elements that has
19 been ripped away from the education system for
20 far too long, as we have unfortunately shifted
21 more towards teaching to pass the test, rather
22 than coaching, mentoring and being innovative in

1 learning to help our young people find their
2 purpose in life, and most importantly make them
3 want to come to school.

4 In closing, I'm confident that I Dream
5 will bring all these elements back to the table,
6 as they have set the tone for how to dream
7 amongst our community by being active listeners
8 at various community meetings and events, but how
9 to learn in terms of knowing what is already
10 present and what the needs are by simply talking
11 with folks. And now it's time to become. We now
12 need our dreams to become a part of our
13 community, become a part of our future, and
14 become a part of our history. Thank you.

15 (Applause.)

16 VICE CHAIR BIREDA: Sorry. Last two
17 speakers for tonight, just a reminder, if you
18 wish to submit a written public comment, you are
19 welcome to do so at publiccomment@dcpcsb.org.

20 MS. JONES: Good evening, and thank you
21 for the opportunity to speak. My name is Jenese
22 Jones, I'm one of the founding Board members of

1 Capital Village Public Charter School. You know,
2 as I think -- as I was driving here and I thought
3 about what wonderful things I could say, what
4 came to mind is the Tenacity of Monica, the
5 strength of our Board, the fact that the last two
6 years that I taught were at Two Rivers in the
7 middle school expeditionary learning model. And
8 as I thought about the work that I did as an ANC
9 commissioner here in the city, what really needs
10 to take place in terms of student learning is
11 opportunities for students to really explore it
12 in a different way. And I think that
13 expeditionary learning is certainly the way to
14 go.

15 I'm very hopeful, this is our second
16 time around. I think we have spent tremendous
17 time looking at our application, making sure that
18 we have taken heed to the advice and feedback
19 that you provided. And I think the team that
20 we've put together is exceptional. And I know
21 that my colleague here from EL will certainly
22 share more about the model, but I certainly

1 believe in our team. And I think as you've seen,
2 the growth over the past year and, again, the
3 recommendations you've provided we have been very
4 thoughtful, and really hopeful that students and
5 families in this city can certainly take part in
6 the great things that expeditionary learning has
7 provided for many families.

8 When I was at Two Rivers in the
9 program, I worked with special education
10 students, and I can certainly say that that was a
11 turning point for many of them, and many of them
12 are now in college. So when we talk about
13 learning models that work, I can certainly get
14 behind this, and will certainly go all the way
15 with Monica and our team to the end. So thank
16 you for the opportunity, and certainly hope that
17 you will look favorably at our application.

18 Thank you.

19 (Applause.)

20 MS. KYLES-SMITH: Good evening. My
21 name is Kristina Kyles-Smith, and I'm a regional
22 director for EL Education. EL Education is

1 excited and humbled to speak on behalf of two
2 fantastic schools, Capital Villages, and Social
3 Justice School. We believe that learning should
4 be challenging and joyful. We've partnered with
5 all kinds of schools to create productive
6 environments. We elevate teacher learning, and
7 student achievement by providing professional
8 development, coaching, and open access
9 educational resources. But one key to our
10 ongoing success, is our national network of
11 school partners, who have a very unique and
12 tenacious vision for what's possible.

13 Neither EL, nor our schools are
14 perfect, but they span a diverse range of
15 schools, they reflect the diversity of our
16 nation, they promote inclusion, they strive to
17 shift instruction, assessment, and school culture
18 by implementing 38 core practices that foster
19 cohesion, and a shared vision.

20 Our approach to curriculum and
21 instruction makes standards come alive for
22 students. Our teachers develop the skills to

1 link learning to real world issues, design
2 engaging lessons, implement compelling
3 curriculum, and create classrooms where all
4 student strive. Students in our schools engage
5 in projects that yield real work for real
6 audiences, and they meet rigorous standards,
7 refine ideas, and develop perseverance.

8 EL schools create cultures of respect,
9 responsibility, courage and kindness.

10 Fundamentally transforming relationships across
11 the schools, our approach directly supports the
12 academic mindsets, habits, and care for the
13 students we serve.

14 So, therefore, I hope you look
15 favorable on Capital Villages, and the Social
16 Justice Schools, which are helping students
17 become critical thinkers, problem solvers,
18 effective learners, and designers, and active
19 citizens. They're helping students learn to
20 tackle complex problems, ideas, and texts while
21 developing character and habits needed for
22 success in college career and life.

1 Because of their strong passion, and
2 their high capacity to fulfill their missions
3 that EL stands in strong support of these two
4 schools. Thank you.

5 (Applause.)

6 VICE CHAIR BIREDA: Okay. We're going
7 to move right into our public hearing. Katie
8 Dammann from our team is going to come up and
9 introduce each school team. We're going to break
10 at 8:15 for dinner for both the audience and for
11 the Board, So I think we can get through about
12 three schools by then. If we stay around our 30
13 minute mark, which that means I encourage the
14 schools to give a brief presentation, but to
15 leave the rest of the time for Board discussion.
16 We'll start with I Dream Academy.

17 MS. DAMMANN: Thanks, Saba. Hello, my
18 name is Katie Dammann, I'm a manager on the
19 Equity and Fidelity team. Tonight you'll hear
20 from eight founding groups that are applying to
21 open public charter schools in Washington, D.C.
22 Their applications have been reviewed by a D.C.

1 PCSB review team, including expert external
2 consultants when needed.

3 Each founding group has had an
4 opportunity to explain more about their program
5 during the capacity interview portion of the
6 application process. The purpose of tonight's
7 hearing is for the public to hear from each
8 applicant group, and for the Board to ask any
9 questions that remain unresolved. Each group has
10 two to three minutes to introduce themselves and
11 their proposed school, and then the Board has 30
12 minutes to ask questions.

13 The Board will vote on each
14 application at our regularly scheduled May Board
15 meeting. The full applications can be found on
16 D.C. PCSB's website. At this time, I would like
17 to welcome I Dream Academy to the table. They
18 will be followed by Anna Julia Cooper, the Garden
19 Education, The Social Justice School, BOLT,
20 Aspire to Excellence, Capital Village, and Arabic
21 Language. I Dream Academy.

22 (Pause.)

1 VICE CHAIR BIREDA: Welcome. Go ahead.

2 MS. GOMEZ: Hi, I just want to
3 introduce myself. I'm Janine Gomez. I'm one of
4 the co-founders, and I will be head of school.

5 MS. BANKS: Hi, my name is Diana Banks,
6 and I'm Board Chair.

7 MS. FUFU: Good evening. My name is
8 Leensa Fufa. I'm also a co-founder, and will be
9 director of inquiry and instruction.

10 MR. BUSCHMAN: I'm Zachary Buschman.
11 I will be the community school's coordinator, I
12 Dream Academy, D.C.

13 MS. BOVKUN: Good Evening. My name is
14 Natalia Bovkun, and I'm Board treasurer.

15 MS. GOMEZ: And on behalf of everyone
16 introduced here, and our Board Members Candice,
17 Atia (phonetic), Vicky, Shantay (phonetic) is
18 watching live, and our many advisors and
19 advocates. I want to thank you for this
20 opportunity to share our inspiring vision, and
21 the work that we've done thus far to create I
22 Dream Academy, D.C.

1 Leensa, Zach and I have over 40 years
2 of experience as educators and instructional
3 leaders. More than half of that experience in
4 high demand D.C. charter schools. We listened to
5 dozens of children and families, mostly in Ward
6 8, to find out what school is like for them now,
7 and what they want school to be. Children want
8 active meaningful learning. Families want
9 teachers who know and understand their children.
10 We incorporated their voices into the design of I
11 Dream Academy D.C., and our core values of
12 relationships, collaboration, purposeful work,
13 and equity.

14 We are creating IDADC with the Ward 8
15 community to provide a unique school option that
16 values each child's brilliance. Our theory of
17 change is that we, as educators have yet to fully
18 tap into the power of children directing their
19 own learning of what matters to them. I Dream
20 Academy D.C. is an educational space for three to
21 ten year olds to realize their power.

22 Our learner centered strength based

1 approach is a collaboration between the learner,
2 staff, and the family incorporating the assets of
3 the community, and to teaching and learning. We
4 do this in three powerful ways. Number one, each
5 learner experiences customized learning through
6 engaging and complex curriculum. IDADC Learners
7 co-create learning plans with their coaches and
8 families to master common course standards,
9 social emotional competencies, and dreamer
10 ambitions. Coaches plan differentiated
11 instruction with their teams using the learning
12 plans to challenge each child.

13 Number two, IDADC learners have weekly
14 dream time. A structured class where their
15 coaches question and guide them to explore a
16 curiosity or passion through research,
17 experiments, and construction. Family and
18 community members with expertise in the learner's
19 area of interest become volunteer dream
20 collaborators in person or virtually. It's here
21 in dream time that learners decide what and how
22 they will learn. Applying skills and concepts

1 learned in content classes.

2 And finally, number three. In
3 advisory, and throughout the day, IDADC learners
4 develop the emotional intelligence to build
5 healthy relationships and understanding of
6 themselves and the world around them through
7 social emotional learning our dreamers discover
8 who they are and who they are becoming.

9 We have a robust founding group with
10 expertise as educators and talent recruiters in
11 D.C. charter schools, and in school finance,
12 business and law. Every founding group member
13 has demonstrated a commitment to our mission
14 through the intense work that brought us to this
15 day. We are grateful for the support of private
16 funders like CityBridge Education, Camel Back
17 Ventures, and most recently, New School Venture
18 Fund. To date we've raised almost half a million
19 dollars to build our team, and our school model.
20 At I Dream Academy D.C. learners learn how to
21 learn, they are motivated to think deeply by
22 engaging in Joyful and rigorous learning of

1 content standards through exploration of their
2 curiosities and passion. We do this so that even
3 our youngest learners can fall in love with the
4 challenges of learning, and pursuit of their
5 dreams. Thank you.

6 (Applause.)

7 MEMBER CRUSEY: Thank you so much for
8 coming to us tonight and sharing that. I had the
9 chance to visit with you during your capacity
10 interview, and appreciated all of that as well.
11 I am interested now in having you share with the
12 other members of Board. Talk us through how the
13 --- this learner centered model is going to
14 provide a continuum of services for students who
15 may be coming with some kind of intellectual
16 disability, or who may be requiring additional
17 English language support.

18 So our learner centered approach is
19 one that is based on the belief that every child
20 deserves a special education, and that every
21 child deserves a customized education to meet
22 their needs, but also their strengths. And we --

1 in our experience we know that children come into
2 our school with differing needs, and differing
3 abilities, but also that their needs and
4 abilities are ever changing. So that -- we have
5 created a model that focuses on --- in the
6 general education classroom we're focusing on
7 differentiating instruction, and focusing on
8 customized learning for each child based on what
9 their needs are, but also based on their
10 strengths. And I'll let Leensa talk more about
11 the universal design for learning strategies that
12 we are planning to use in the general ed
13 classroom.

14 But then after that, we are monitoring
15 very closely every child, and one of the
16 structures we've put in place is consults with
17 the school leaders and the coaching team. So
18 every two weeks this consult team will look at
19 where each child in that class is, where they are
20 --- how they're progressing, where they're
21 strong, where are the areas that they need to
22 grow. And that's every child.

1 And as we're monitoring their
2 progress, we can also take a look at where
3 children need additional support, supplemental
4 supports, where children need enrichment. And we
5 have a supplemental class period called skills
6 block and all block, and that's where we can
7 provide those differentiated supports. And ---
8 but also continue to monitor and to continue to
9 assess progress for each child. And, again, we
10 could --- that support is fluid, but that support
11 is also very closely looked at on a regular
12 basis.

13 MS. FUFA: She was mentioning the
14 principals of UDL that we are employing that's
15 just really at a tier one level, just really all
16 of our curriculum selections utilize this
17 approach, which really aims to remove barriers
18 across representation and engagement. And so
19 just from a very baseline differentiation is at
20 the root of our core program.

21 MEMBER CRUSEY: I was hoping to field
22 a little bit more, especially in the EL aspect of

1 this. So is it during that skills block that
2 there will be coaches that has training and
3 expertise in supporting language development?

4 MS. GOMEZ: Yes, we're also hiring
5 special education coaches, or coaches that have
6 expertise in English as a second language. And,
7 yes, that would be a time, one of the times,
8 where a child who needs additional supports for
9 language development, it would happen there. But
10 also we are training our general education
11 coaches in SIOP, in the sheltered --- in the SIOP
12 model so that they -- again, we can also provide
13 additional support and accommodations in the
14 general education classroom, as well as the tier
15 2 supports if needed, or more intense supports in
16 the skills block.

17 MEMBER CRUSEY: One more before I share
18 with my colleagues. In your application you
19 mentioned this kind of three --- the three models
20 that you're taking best pieces of to create
21 something new. You've started Montessori, EL,
22 and project-based learning. Also you have an

1 ambitious plan to open with several grade levels
2 at the onset. Can you speak to us --- can you
3 talk us through how -- the rationale for starting
4 with such a broad base of age cohort, as well as
5 aspects of each of those three learning models
6 that from the onset --- what aspects were you
7 scaffolding, and why starting with such a broader
8 approach?

9 MS. GOMEZ: Opening with pre-school to
10 second grade is based on our commitment to our
11 model, the multi-age cohorts, and also to our co-
12 teaching model. And what we saw was if we
13 started off with preschool, kindergarten, then
14 year two we would have a single aged grade, first
15 grade, and what we decided was let's start off
16 with first and second. We have a smaller cohort
17 of first and second graders, so that we can
18 begin, just full out, we can begin developing a
19 multi-aged cohort, the culture, a multi-aged
20 cohort, and also the co-teaching models. We want
21 to just start with that from the beginning.

22 We also wanted to open with 120

1 students so that our budget could afford us the
2 staffing model that we want to achieve the
3 smaller class sizes that we're also committed to.
4 And then, third, we wanted to be committed to our
5 community school model, and so allowing ---
6 having sibling preference, and having the
7 opportunity for families who have young, you
8 know, children in early childhood will also maybe
9 have first and second graders that they can
10 enroll their --- the siblings in one school.

11 What we heard when we talked with families was
12 that is a struggle to have more than one child in
13 different schools. So it's also a recruitment
14 strategy for us to start with those grades.

15 And then the scaffolding about the EL,
16 he said EL, and project based learning, and
17 Montessori. So focusing on multi-age cohorts is
18 a practice of Montessori. It also was a practice
19 when I was a principal at Capital City, so we are
20 suited in both EL school and Montessori, but
21 that's one thing that, again, we're going to
22 focus on starting in year one, because we want

1 that to be at the core of our model.

2 And then we are implementing EL's ELA
3 curriculum in the first and second grades, and
4 having --- starting with first and second in the
5 first year is going to enable us to have the
6 coaches in first and second grade cohort focus on
7 this complex, engaging, beautiful curriculum, but
8 in a smaller cohort, so that they can learn how
9 to implement this curriculum with integrity,
10 starting in year one. I think that's, yes.

11 MEMBER SHELTON: That's a great segue
12 to the question I wanted to ask about the
13 coaches. And what supports will be provided to
14 attract the coaches and to keep them from burning
15 out?

16 MS. GOMEZ: Yes, burnout is an issue,
17 and as, a former principal, as a former teacher,
18 and then working, Leensa and I both have
19 experience working with and coaching teachers.
20 We understand that burnout. And what we have put
21 in place in our model, one is developing this
22 community having co-teaching.

1 The co-teaching model creates the
2 collaboration, and also creates the sharing in
3 the community that we know that many teachers
4 want, and teachers want to be supported, but
5 teachers also want to belong to an inclusive
6 community. That's one way that --- that's one
7 thing that keeps teachers in a school. And so we
8 have the co-teaching model, but we also have
9 coaching. We are going to provide coaching and
10 support for each team.

11 We have planning time, collaborative
12 planning time, which is every other Thursday of
13 our early release days, that's devoted
14 collaborative planning. So we won't have PD
15 every Thursday, every other Thursday will be
16 professional development. And then the other
17 Thursdays will be an opportunity for teams to
18 plan together. Again, planning time, having time
19 to plan, having time to think through lessons,
20 think through instruction, that is also something
21 that if you don't have it that attributes
22 burnout.

1 And then one thing I think is
2 important, just as our learners have customized
3 learning plans, our coaches will have customized
4 development plans, and that each -- when we look
5 at professional development, we're looking at how
6 to grow each coach, and what they need
7 professionally. And then we've also built in
8 personal self-care goal that we will support each
9 coach in, because life balance is another thing
10 when you don't have it it leads to burnout. So
11 we built that into that as well. But coaching
12 for everyone is something we're committed to.

13 MR. BUSCHMAN: Just kind of speak more
14 specifically about that from the community's
15 school strategy standpoint we are currently kind
16 of vetting inside psychology and psychology today
17 to provide resources to our teachers in the
18 classroom so they would be present at the charter
19 school to provide group sessions, individual
20 sessions, so the teachers are really getting what
21 they need to be able to serve students, and to be
22 able to feel comfortable in what they're doing.

1 MEMBER SHELTON: Just to back up into
2 how you plan to recruit coaches.

3 MS. GOMEZ: In our recruiting we are
4 already finding that our I Dream Academy D.C. is
5 attractive to coaches, or to teachers because we
6 are doing school differently in a way that values
7 teachers, learners and families. And so just to
8 start off we already have a distribution list of
9 perspective teachers that want to come and work
10 with our school for that very reason that we're
11 providing another option that is inspiring. We
12 are going to recruit like most other schools
13 recruit, where we are going to go to, you know,
14 fairs, and college fairs and talk with teachers,
15 some teacher preparation programs. We're going
16 to advertise as everyone else will do. But I
17 think something that we're going to do
18 differently is we're teaming with Urban Teachers.
19 They are looking for a permanent space just like
20 we are, and so we are in talks of partnering so
21 that we have a partnership that provides their
22 Urban Teacher residence to our program, and then

1 we also can provide a space for them to actually
2 --- as a demonstration school in some ways. So
3 though we're in the beginning stages of that
4 partnership, that to us is going to be a solid
5 resource for our staffing.

6 MS. FUFA: Add to that. That potential
7 partnership is really exciting for me. In
8 particular, I currently work part time with Urban
9 Teachers, and so I've learned a lot about how
10 their program works, and I've had this year to
11 sort of really find the alignment and their focus
12 around culturally relevant curriculum really
13 aligns with our vision and values for I Dream
14 Academy D.C.

15 On another sort of vein around teacher
16 recruitment, something that we've already been
17 doing, and I think Janine kind of spoke to this a
18 little bit, just is having opportunity is to
19 engage with learners in the community, and then
20 from that having, you know, day long or week long
21 events. So there are opportunities for educators
22 to have a taste of what it's going to be like

1 actually to work at I Dream Academy D.C. as we
2 also designed with the community.

3 MEMBER SHELTON: And then another
4 component of that zero model is to have dream
5 collaborators, and how are you going to recruit
6 the collaborators, and is the management of the
7 collaborator something that the coaches will do?

8 MS. FUFA: That's actually some really
9 exciting work that I will be taking on as the
10 director of inquiry and instruction. In this
11 design year I really found a new passion around
12 sort of community engagement, and organizing, and
13 have been battling a little bit with Zach on
14 doing some of that work. He's going to be our
15 community school coordinator, but one of the ways
16 that we reconciled the shared passion is that I
17 will be taking on sort of that academic piece,
18 right, because both community connections are
19 going to be leveraged towards academic learning.
20 And so that has been something that we're, as I
21 mentioned, already developing now, you know, with
22 the various organizations that we've already

1 partnered with. Zach, you can speak to that if
2 you'd like.

3 MR. BUSCHMAN: Sure. So, like Leensa
4 said, I think that her role is going to be more
5 primarily around those academic partnerships that
6 can further, you know, academic outcomes, and my
7 role is more to build or expand networks within
8 the community and build assets, and let our
9 school serve as a hub for those assets to kind of
10 like meet and connect and then provide kind of
11 holistic services. Kind of like neighborhood
12 schools do to all of the residents, because we
13 really believe, I think all of us, that unless
14 the holistic needs of families and communities
15 are met. There's no way that you can learn in
16 school. And I think that's an equity issue I
17 think that you find in different areas needs are
18 being met much more succinctly than in other
19 areas, and I think that part of our big mission
20 is making sure that assets and needs are being
21 kind of met in an equitable way across D.C.

22 VICE CHAIR BIREDA: So thank you so

1 much for the work you have obviously put into
2 assessing the desires of families for schools in
3 Ward 8 as someone who lives on that side of town.
4 I really appreciate that. I think it would be
5 really helpful for our audience, and for it to be
6 on the record to talk about the work that you've
7 done. We have received critiques and public
8 comment and ongoing that we just don't need more
9 schools. And so there's more scrutiny as to why
10 we need to give the charters more schools, and so
11 we'd love to hear just how you have assessed and
12 arrived at the conclusion that this is a school
13 that there is a trust and a demand for.

14 MS. GOMEZ: We started out in 2017
15 talking to students, and to families. We went to
16 community centers, and libraries in northeast and
17 southeast, and when we went to the boys and girls
18 clubs on Mississippi Avenue the number of
19 families that completed permission slips for us
20 to take to their children was overwhelming. I
21 mean, out of --- most of them, I would say maybe
22 80 percent of the permission slips came from Boys

1 and Girls Club. So we knew then that this was a
2 place where we should spend some time. So we
3 spent a couple of months coming and interviewing
4 children during their after school program, and
5 also sitting and talking with Kerron Kalloo about
6 our vision and our mission. And he even gave us
7 opportunities to talk with families. And I just
8 --- one thing that ---

9 (Pause.)

10 VICE CHAIR BIRENDA: Okay. Sorry about
11 that.

12 MS. GOMEZ: School is school no matter
13 where you go. School is school. So I'll shorten
14 our --- so I just wanted to say what resonated
15 with me in this focus group was a group of
16 parents who were angry, I mean, just angry. And
17 what they said was that, look, if you're going to
18 come and do this, you need to do what you say
19 you're going to do, because we've had so many
20 schools come in here and say they're going to
21 have this program and that program, and we enroll
22 our children and then that is not the program

1 that happens, or what I thought the school was
2 going to be is nothing like it. Now my child is
3 behind, or my child is, you know, unhappy, or my
4 child is struggling. And that was something that
5 out of everything, out of all the work that we've
6 done that's what has sat with me, and that is why
7 we are working so intentionally with the
8 community to make sure that whenever we open, and
9 however we open, that we open with the
10 community's voice and with the community's
11 blessing.

12 So since then we've been, as Aisha
13 mentioned in the comments, we've walked through
14 communities with a poster, a banner that says
15 what do you want in a school, and people came and
16 talked with us and wrote down what they wanted.
17 So we have this banner as a record. Remember we
18 want certified teachers, we want mental health
19 services for staff and for children. We want
20 hands-on learning, we want --- so there's a list
21 of things that we have taken into account as we
22 design this model.

1 We've run pilots, pop-ups, we've
2 tested our social emotional learning rubric that
3 we are designing with children so that when we
4 have advisory children can assess themselves on
5 how they're developing and self-awareness, and
6 social awareness, and responsibility, responsible
7 decision making and relationships.

8 And so we have also looked at can
9 children set goals, because as we're creating
10 this customized learning plan, what is it like
11 for a child to set goals. And so we had children
12 come in and do that. We've run a whole week at
13 the Boy's and Girl's Club. What is dream time?
14 What does that look like? And then noticed, oh,
15 dream time works well for older children, but
16 what does it look like in early childhood? So
17 that's why we ran the holiday family dreamer camp
18 that Community of Hope from Esther Wetherbee.

19 So we have been talking to --- and we
20 can also talk about ANC meetings we've sat in,
21 and, you know, community organizations we met
22 with. Zach and Leensa have been doing that

1 extensive work, so they can share a little bit
2 about that.

3 MR. BUSCHMAN: I think that something
4 that's come up over and over again in our
5 conversations, whether it be a pilot, or the ANC,
6 is that there are certain kind of themes that
7 parents and families, I think, that kind of
8 speaks to demand in Ward 8 right now too. And,
9 again, these are anecdotal, this isn't like
10 evidence that we've been, like, tracking in that
11 way. But just things we've been hearing over and
12 over again.

13 We hear that there is a demand for
14 programs that allow learners to move through
15 material at their own pace. There is a demand
16 for learning that engages learners, both inside
17 and outside the classroom. And there is a demand
18 for programs that address social, emotional needs
19 of learners and their families. Those were kind
20 of three overarching themes that we heard over
21 and over again in Ward 8 and in Ward 7.

22 And so I think that was a driving

1 force for us, and kind of, like, in this co-
2 design process with the community how can we make
3 these things happen. And I think that's kind of
4 what led to, you know, where we are at right now
5 with our model, the model of our school. And we
6 were also very aware of more of these general
7 overarching kind of demands in D.C. What are the
8 highest demand programming in D.C. right now,
9 Montessori, dual language, expeditionary
10 learning, project based learning, and we are very
11 aware that those do not exist in Ward 8 right
12 now.

13 And so for me that's kind of an equity
14 issue, and it's also an equity issue that more
15 than 39 percent of Ward 8 students currently have
16 its travel out of bounds to access other
17 educational opportunities, as well as, I think it
18 is 29 of the public schools in Ward 8 right now.
19 Our traditional model public schools, meaning
20 they don't offer the highest demand programming.
21 So I think that's kind of driven our desire to
22 make a more equitable experience for Ward 8

1 members, their families, the community. And we
2 see that being done best through a community
3 school model too.

4 MEMBER BUMBAUGH: So your approach to
5 getting community input is robust. And you all
6 are experienced educators. Is there anything
7 about some assumptions you had going into this
8 process that changed? Is there anything about
9 your model that's specific to the intense, two-
10 year interaction you had with folks who might be
11 consumers of your school?

12 MS. FUFA: I'll speak to sort of one
13 component. We are looking at an extended day
14 program, but not like most where it's sort of to
15 get that extra math block or that test prep block
16 in.

17 And what we heard from our many
18 conversations with children in D.C. is that they
19 just need time to breathe. They need downtime.

20 And so we've built in, we've extended
21 the day, not to cram in more instruction, but to
22 actually allow, you know, some entry time into

1 their school day doing something they love. We
2 call that me time. And that's also embedded in
3 the afternoon, just to let them recharge so that
4 they really can take on that really demanding
5 work of learning at I Dream Academy.

6 MS. GOMEZ: I'm going to say the other
7 thing that struck me as we were interviewing
8 children, we were asking children, you know, what
9 is school like for them now, and then asked what
10 do you want school to be.

11 And then asking that question or even
12 asking what do you want to do or what are you
13 into, what do you do, what is the thing that puts
14 you in the Zen zone when you are doing it, there
15 were a number of children who said what they
16 thought I wanted to hear, which was math, you
17 know, or reading or --

18 And they started talking about what
19 their teacher tells them and what their teacher
20 does in the room and where I sit and then this is
21 what they tell me to do. They tell me to sit
22 here. Like that became what was on their mind.

1 And so that showed me that the
2 opportunity to learn, but through creating and
3 exploring curiosity and exploring passion, that
4 was something that we needed to dig deeper into.

5 And so, in doing the research to write
6 the charter application, saw, I came across
7 studies about that, that there are in, typically
8 in education the adults are asking the questions.
9 The adults are kind of showing how to think and
10 how to, the children don't get an opportunity to
11 be curious and to wonder. And I saw that in
12 those interviews.

13 So that's something that, while it
14 didn't necessarily change our minds, it made me
15 see that this is something that must be a part of
16 our model.

17 VICE CHAIR BIREDA: I wanted to switch
18 gears a little bit and ask about your decision to
19 adopt the PMF as goals, just given the fact that
20 you have a model that is very robust and there's
21 lots of things you could be measuring as goals.

22 But I also want to link that to a

1 conversation we've had previously around your
2 community school program and how you will be sure
3 that those community resources that you're
4 marshaling are actually contributing to academic
5 success.

6 MS. GOMEZ: So we decided to adopt the
7 PMF, especially looking at how it is, what it
8 measures during the early childhood years. It
9 seemed to be in line with what we're doing. The
10 class observations and everything, that fit. So
11 we didn't see a need to change.

12 But we do know that, in addition to
13 adopting the PMF, we are going to have internal
14 goals that we instill, establish, and also
15 monitor that are in line with our mission and our
16 values. So we'll do both.

17 MR. BUSCHMAN: Yeah, so I've been in
18 pretty frequent contact with Roses in Concrete,
19 which is also a charter school in Oakland. It's
20 kind of in a similar boat to what we would be in
21 because Oakland is doing a whole neighborhood
22 schools policy thing. They're doing community

1 schools all over.

2 And so Roses in Concrete is kind of
3 like out on the sidelines because they aren't
4 able to access necessarily funds that other
5 neighborhood schools are accessing because
6 they're a charter school.

7 So I've had conversations with her and
8 working on conversations with a similar situation
9 in Tulsa, and then speaking with IEL, and really
10 just trying to figure out ways that we can make
11 this work. Everyone has been so accommodating in
12 doing that.

13 I do believe that we can make this
14 successful. That means like fully implementing
15 this community school strategy and kind of making
16 sure that we're -- I actually think that they can
17 complement each other, you know, the resources
18 that we're able to bring into the school.

19 And if they're strong resources and if
20 they have like a daily influence in the school,
21 whereas they're not like showing up once a month
22 but if we have someone there every day as a

1 mentor person, if we have someone else there
2 every day as kind of a person to talk to or a
3 psychotherapist, like if we have kind of all
4 those resources that are actually in our space, I
5 think that that just only bolsters the ability
6 to, you know, come out on the top with, you know,
7 PMF scores and all these other things that we're
8 looking to make sure that we reach.

9 MS. BOVKUN: And just to add to that,
10 I think that, as Zach has mentioned, the
11 community schools model and the resources that we
12 provide certainly will contribute to academic
13 outcomes for our children.

14 I think, as we said right in our
15 introduction, we believe that particularly in the
16 community that we're working in, but in any
17 community, children cannot learn unless their
18 basic needs are met. And so that's why we're
19 committed to that model.

20 But even looking at outside of the
21 academic measures of the PMF, you know,
22 reenrollment is driven by the relationship that

1 families and students have with the staff. And
2 that's something that we're so committed to.
3 Attendance is driven by the type of experience
4 that they have at school and by wanting to come
5 to school.

6 So we actually think that the various
7 measures of the PMF align very nicely with what
8 we're trying to do.

9 MR. PEARSON: I had a quick question.
10 I actually asked it last time. I'm wondering if
11 you've given it any more thought.

12 So we talked earlier about concerns
13 about how much work the coaches would have. And
14 one thing that I focused on was that, you know,
15 they were expected to make three home visits to
16 each of their students. So that was like 45 or
17 50 home visits a year on top of all the other
18 things they were doing. And I'm wondering
19 whether you think that's a sustainable part of
20 the job.

21 MS. GOMEZ: Your question kept me up
22 at night, many nights. I'm very happy you asked

1 that again.

2 So home visits, why we have
3 incorporated home visits into our practice is
4 because we believe that, while we ask families to
5 come to school very often, having us go and have
6 some of those meetings in the community and in
7 people's, in families' homes, that builds trust.
8 And that also builds the relationships. And
9 relationships are one of our core values. So
10 that, home visits, is something that we are going
11 to do.

12 What we have done, though, is home
13 visits -- when you asked that question, I thought
14 about it a lot. But, you know, the home visits
15 are already built in. Two of them are already
16 built into what we're doing.

17 In the summer, everyone is conducting
18 home visits. Staff, coaches, and school leaders,
19 we're going to, as part of the summer start to
20 the year, during our professional development, we
21 have time to attend for people to conduct home
22 visits as a kickoff, because that, the home

1 visits kick off the customized learning plans.

2 When you're in the, when we're in
3 homes during the summer, we're building that
4 learner profile. So that's the first home visit.

5 A home visit can also be a, one of the
6 learner-led conferences that are scheduled during
7 the year. They can also be done in the home. So
8 that would count as another home visit.

9 But you could, we actually give an
10 option and help coordinate this. We could also
11 meet at a community center. You could have a
12 cohort team meet their families at, say, the Boys
13 & Girls Club, you know, in the evening and have
14 their learner-led conferences there. That's
15 considered, being at a community center would be
16 considered a home visit.

17 So, while it seems like it would be a
18 lot more work, it's actually blended into the
19 engagement, the interactions that we are asking
20 coaches to already have with families.

21 But if there, if a home visit has to
22 happen in addition to those, that we have put

1 into our budget compensation for home visits that
2 are conducted after hours or outside of school
3 hours.

4 MR. PEARSON: Thank you.

5 MS. GOMEZ: Thank you.

6 MEMBER BUMBAUGH: So I was really
7 thrilled to see the emphasis on home visits. And
8 if this application is approved, I think this
9 body should take a very close look at how and if
10 that ties to things like daily attendance and
11 reenrollment and behavior management.

12 And I say that because many, many
13 years ago my experience working in the
14 neighborhood that you guys are looking at, that
15 was the thing more than anything else in our
16 program that dramatically led to improved
17 graduation rates.

18 So I'm surprised that we see it,
19 there's a dearth of that as a tactic in these
20 applications that we read. And I find that
21 surprising actually, because the ROI, if it's
22 done well, is so demonstrable.

1 So I just wanted to say, you know,
2 picking up off what Scott said, I was actually
3 happy to see that in your application.

4 MS. GOMEZ: Thank you. As a fourth
5 grade teacher in Silver Spring in, as they call
6 it, Downcounty, Montgomery County, I, we did home
7 visits.

8 And that, the going in and sitting in
9 a child's home and spending time with their
10 family, I know how it transformed my
11 relationships with not just the students, because
12 I knew who they were and I knew how to
13 incorporate their culture, their values into my
14 instruction, but also my part and my
15 relationships with their family.

16 I could connect with the family when
17 I had issues with a child, which was rarely, but
18 also celebrating and talking with them and
19 keeping in touch with families, who I kept in
20 touch with people even after I left the school.

21 So I understand the power of home
22 visits. And we will understand that it is work,

1 but it's work in a different way. And it's work
2 that lays a foundation that eases some of the
3 work later on when you have to call a family for
4 something that's not so pleasant, you know, that
5 you have to tell them about or when you want to
6 call them and invite them to an event, because
7 they know you've spent time with them. So I
8 agree.

9 MEMBER SHELTON: Just one more
10 question from me about the advisory team and how
11 they'll continue to be engaged in the school if
12 the application is approved.

13 MS. GOMEZ: Which advisor -- are you
14 talking about the advisory we have every day or
15 the community action group?

16 (Off-microphone comments.)

17 MS. GOMEZ: Oh, I'm sorry. So say the
18 question again, Naomi. Sorry.

19 MEMBER SHELTON: How will they
20 continue to be engaged with the school if the
21 application is approved?

22 MS. GOMEZ: Oh, the advisors. Okay.

1 (Off-microphone comments.)

2 MS. GOMEZ: Yes. So the advisors,
3 I'll start with the advisors. We have John
4 Boochever, who is actually in the audience today,
5 is working with us to find a facility. And so we
6 have already hit the ground running looking for a
7 facility. And once the charter is approved, when
8 the charter is approved, we will, he will
9 continue to work with us to identify that.

10 I will continue working with Jessica
11 Wodatch, who has been invaluable to me as a
12 mentor, as we go into our planning year, continue
13 to learn from her and to receive just advice and
14 wisdom.

15 And then the board itself, I don't
16 know if you want to speak on that.

17 MS. BANKS: So we have the opportunity
18 to have a really dynamic board. They've been
19 extremely helpful as we've worked through just
20 helping the founding team create the governance
21 structure for the organization, a very talented
22 group of individuals from many walks of life, who

1 bring with them capabilities in both hands, so
2 including operations experience, educational
3 experience, a lawyer, business experience, so
4 just a well-rounded group of individuals who are
5 dedicated to helping the founding team, keeping
6 them accountable to the goals and the obligations
7 that they have set forth in the charter.

8 We're very proud of the work that they
9 have done and very committed to helping them move
10 the work forward.

11 MS. BOVKUN: And many of us have
12 committed to staying on beyond just this
13 application process. So there will be continuity
14 in the board members and what we've contributed
15 so far to IDADC.

16 MS. GOMEZ: I'm going to add everyone
17 that's on this board this year has committed to
18 continuing on with us next year as we add
19 additional board members in June.

20 VICE CHAIR BIREDA: Okay. I think
21 that's it. Thank you very much.

22 MS. GOMEZ: Thank you.

1 (Applause.)

2 VICE CHAIR BIREDA: I'm going to
3 invite our Chair, Rick Cruz, to take over. And
4 then Anna Julia Cooper will be up next.

5 (Pause.)

6 CHAIR CRUZ: All right. Apologies for
7 being delayed, but looking forward to this next
8 conversation. So I think, give each of you an
9 opportunity to introduce yourselves, and then
10 similar to our last, a few minutes to provide an
11 overview. And then we'll get right into
12 questions.

13 MR. PAYNE: My name is Benjamin Payne.
14 I'm part of the founding group for Anna Julia
15 Cooper and planned head of school.

16 MS. PALMER: Hello, everyone. My name
17 is Danielle Palmer. And I'm the chairman of the
18 founding board for Anna J. Cooper.

19 MS. CULVER: Hello. My name is Sharon
20 Culver. I'm a part of the founding group. And,
21 if approved, I will be director of student
22 supports.

1 MS. JACKSON: Good evening. My name
2 is Erica Jackson. I'm a founding board member.
3 And I would be the assistant principal.

4 MR. WHITE: Hello. My name is Jamison
5 White. And I will also be a founding board
6 member.

7 MS. PALMER: Before getting started,
8 I wanted to just thank our future Cooper parents
9 and students in the audience, as well as our
10 other board members who supported us in this
11 effort and all of the community who are hereto
12 support us today.

13 (Applause.)

14 MS. PALMER: Good evening, esteemed
15 board members of the D.C. Public Charter Board.
16 Thank you for your public service in working to
17 create more high quality options for D.C.
18 families.

19 My name is Dr. Danielle Palmer. And
20 I'm the chairman of the founding group of the
21 Anna Julia Cooper Public Charter School. I am
22 also a full-time school psychologist at a Tier 1

1 public charter school in Ward 7.

2 I know the impact of trauma on a
3 student's academic success and well-being
4 firsthand. I was drawn to Cooper because I know
5 we can do better as humans, as schools, and as
6 communities, in valuing and cultivating what our
7 namesake, Anna Julia Cooper, calls the celestial
8 kernel in every child.

9 In this day of age of testing and
10 accountability, we sometimes forget that each of
11 us is born with a unique purpose to make the
12 world a better place. And it's our job as
13 educators to help students figure that out.

14 If our application is approved, Cooper
15 will be a small classical liberal arts K through
16 12 public charter school with an intentional
17 focus not on what our children would do but on
18 who they are.

19 To give you a little background, Anna
20 Julia Cooper was born into slavery in 1858. And
21 through a pursuit of a classical education, she
22 was the fourth African American woman to earn a

1 PhD.

2 She spent most of her life as an
3 educator in D.C. at the M Street School, which is
4 now known as Dunbar High School, particularly
5 advocating for the rights of women, people of
6 color, and all who have been writhed under a
7 mighty wrong.

8 At Cooper Public Charter School, we
9 are committed to this for all children through a
10 constant, rich education rooted in the study of
11 primary sources of history, great works of
12 literature, and the how and why of math and
13 science, Latin, and the influence of beauty of
14 the art and music throughout the story of the
15 world.

16 We believe children are more than a
17 sum of a test score. Character matters. Our
18 ultimate goal is to develop the intellectual and
19 personal habits, virtues, and skills of our
20 students so that they might grow into
21 responsible, caring, independent, and flourishing
22 adults knowing that such citizens are the basis

1 of a free and just society.

2 We view social and emotional learning
3 through the lens of moral character and civic
4 virtue in our trauma-informed and trauma-
5 responsive school that uses mindfulness,
6 conscious discipline, and restorative justice
7 practices to always see and develop the good in
8 our students.

9 Our commitment to each student is
10 reflected in our intentionally small student body
11 with classes capped at 22 students and grades
12 limited to 44 students so that every adult can
13 get to know every student and their personal and
14 emotional needs.

15 At Cooper, we understand that within
16 our students knowledge abounds and that knowledge
17 is not culture free but is culture deep. We
18 understand that students enter our building with
19 their own experiences and ways of thinking.

20 And we're committed to creating an
21 environment based on moral character and civic
22 virtue in which students and teachers can dig

1 deeper into learning who they are and who they
2 share a classroom with.

3 Perhaps most importantly, we want
4 Cooper to be a home away from home where all
5 students know they are safe, held to high
6 expectations, loved for who they are in a place
7 where they will find great joy in doing what is
8 right and not what is always easy. Thank you.

9 MEMBER BUMBAUGH: Okay. So I'll jump
10 right in with questions.

11 There was a heavy emphasis on
12 partnerships in your application. And I'm hoping
13 you can spend a bit of time talking about how the
14 partnerships would work, specifically with
15 Hillsdale College, Barney Family Foundation, and
16 BCSI.

17 MR. PAYNE: Yes. Thank you. That's
18 a very good question.

19 For the, the Barney Charter School
20 Initiative is inside Hillsdale College. And
21 basically it's, through a shared mission, the
22 Barney Charter School Initiative provides support

1 for faculty in instruction and curriculum
2 development, for leadership coaching and support,
3 and also board governance training, which is
4 fantastic. So all of that is for free for the
5 school.

6 There are 20 Barney Charter School
7 Initiatives right now in 9 states. Each one is
8 autonomous. Each one looks very different.

9 There are no, there's nobody from
10 Hillsdale on our, that would be on the board.
11 There's no ties and no money is ever exchanged.
12 So it's all entirely free support.

13 In addition to the Barney Charter
14 School Initiative, what's exciting about Anna
15 Julia Cooper is, because it's here in D.C., is
16 the robust supports that exist for students in
17 D.C., not something I'm used to, but being able
18 to have some folks like EdOps and Charter Board
19 Partners and Flamboyant and Kindred, and
20 especially SchoolTalk DC and Restorative DC, and
21 being able to draw from all their expertise and
22 partnership with all those folks, Jubilee

1 JumpStart, if our building has it, has the space
2 for it, all those things.

3 It's just fantastic. So we're very
4 excited about all those partnerships.

5 MEMBER BUMBAUGH: So the application
6 seems to stress the autonomy of the schools in
7 the Barney Charter School Initiative. What do
8 they have in common?

9 MR. PAYNE: So what they have in
10 common is the mission, the moral character, civic
11 virtue, self-governance. And that has several
12 components. One of them is the study of Latin,
13 specifically that it's a K-12 school, and other
14 components like that.

15 So there's a lot of support for
16 teachers within the initiative to draw from other
17 teachers at one of the other 20 schools to
18 support each other and help each other out in
19 teaching the literature and the history and
20 Singapore Math and those sorts of things. So
21 that's the primary commonality.

22 And then every school adapts to the

1 unique circumstance where that school is. We
2 have a school right outside of an American Indian
3 reservation. We have a school at, just outside
4 of IU. There's one in Jacksonville, one in
5 Atlanta. So they're all over the place. And
6 each one has to be different depending on the
7 students there in the community.

8 MEMBER BUMBAUGH: So one of the
9 enviable aspects of the ed scene here in D.C. is
10 that we have publicly-funded pre-K. And I'm
11 wondering what sort of discussions you all had
12 that led to a K-12 as -- what we typically see
13 are schools that start at pre-K3. And I'm
14 wondering, if you can walk us through the
15 decision-making process not to do pre-
16 kindergarten.

17 MS. CULVER: So there were a couple of
18 things that went into that decision. One, being
19 a parent and having to place my child in the
20 lottery, we're not often afforded the opportunity
21 to get placed or get matched with our first
22 choice or our second choice or sometimes even our

1 third choice school.

2 And so then we end up putting our
3 children in kind of a holding school until we're
4 able to get to that, our first choice until we,
5 you know, see a better school that kind of comes
6 along.

7 And so what is good about Cooper is
8 that we offer the opportunity for all of the
9 children who come in at kindergarten to be on the
10 same playing field. So they don't need to have
11 had a pre-K3 or a pre-K4 experience in order to
12 be successful.

13 Additionally, while we do understand
14 that pre-K3 and pre-K4 is in high demand, again,
15 like I said, the way that the school is set up,
16 they don't need to have that experience in order
17 to be successful with the academic portion or
18 within the school culture.

19 And then lastly, because we know that
20 it does make sense, as we've heard before, to
21 have all of our children go to, to be able to
22 have your children in the same place, we've

1 partnered with organizations or we're seeking to
2 partner with organizations like Jubilee JumpStart
3 to be in the same location with us.

4 And so then they would be able to kind
5 of be a feeder for our school, as well as some
6 other organizations as well if we're not able to
7 have that space to accommodate Jubilee JumpStart
8 in the same building.

9 CHAIR CRUZ: So I'll jump in with a
10 question. Are there aspects of, or design
11 decisions that you might make in D.C. that would
12 put you, I'll just use the term out of compliance
13 with what the expectations are by the initiative?

14 So, if you decided that pre-K was a
15 key component, if you decided or we were not
16 supportive of a K through 12, which is a very
17 sort of unusual choice for us to make at least at
18 the initial authorizing, what would the support
19 from your external partners look like or how
20 might that change?

21 MR. PAYNE: We believe strongly in K-
22 12 in particular that the school is a home away

1 from home so that the school community is not
2 seeking to try to get to know a child or get them
3 somewhere just in a year, not that short-term
4 success, but that it's about that long-term
5 growth of the child and getting to know their
6 family over time, and also for, very practically
7 for a family to be able to have all their
8 children in the same place and create that home
9 away from home feel.

10 We've had talks with AppleTree and
11 other folks in town about pre-K3 and pre-K4.
12 It's nothing philosophically against that, and
13 just very strong support in the K-12 model that
14 wouldn't deny us, you know, the support from the
15 Barney Charter School Initiative if it were
16 something other.

17 So, if we were not, if there was some
18 reason we could not be approved as a K through
19 12, then we could still operate within the Barney
20 Charter School Initiative.

21 CHAIR CRUZ: Okay.

22 MEMBER BUMBAUGH: So your approach to

1 curriculum stands out. It's very different from
2 what we often see. There's an emphasis on the
3 Western canon. So what does that include? What
4 does it exclude? And why do you think it will
5 work?

6 MS. PALMER: The liberal arts
7 curriculum that we are proposing is, as you said,
8 a very unique model. And one thing that really
9 stands out for this model is the ability for
10 students to bring themselves into the learning
11 environment.

12 Often times in the classroom, a
13 traditional classroom environment, you, there's a
14 teacher kind of standing at the front kind of
15 directing the learning, and students are just
16 taking in the information and not always being an
17 active participant. And their voice is not
18 always kind of allowed or welcomed in that space.

19 Within this model that we are
20 proposing, we encourage student voice and we
21 encourage student participation to bring their
22 unique selves into the learning environment and

1 really help them to think about developing those
2 critical thinking skills that often times are not
3 pushed in your traditional classroom setting
4 where there's like a lecture style in the
5 classroom.

6 Do you want to add?

7 MR. PAYNE: Yeah. So I think in terms
8 of the Western tradition, you know, we're all
9 living in the Western tradition, which is not
10 just one culture, just one tradition, things like
11 that.

12 So you'll see in our literature study
13 we have various authors and poets included. I
14 think specifically that Anna Julia Cooper I would
15 argue is one of the greatest Americans that's
16 come out of this and her understanding of the
17 education that she has had and how that came
18 through this Western philosophical tradition, the
19 study of epic that belongs to everyone, the
20 foundation of where we are that's based in truth
21 that belongs to everyone in here.

22 So, from Plato to Du Bois, from, you

1 know, including James Baldwin and all these other
2 folks, that it's all part of this rich heritage
3 that we have and to empower all of our students
4 to know that they're on the leading edge of this
5 human story and to equip them with all that's
6 come before them is of utmost importance.

7 MS. JACKSON: To piggyback off of what
8 Ben said, we also have Socratic seminar. So, in
9 order for our students to know where they're
10 going and how they want to lead and make change
11 in this world, they need to know the history that
12 has come before them.

13 So, with Socratic seminar, we want our
14 students to be curious. We want them to ask the
15 questions why and be able to converse with people
16 about, and question what it is that they're doing
17 if they're in a classroom.

18 So being able to -- well, let's go
19 with the social media route, right. So we're
20 talking about technology. Students are always on
21 computers, laptops, phones, so on and so forth.
22 We want our kids to be able to talk and to

1 verbalize what it is that they're learning in
2 their own words, because then that is applicable
3 for our young children to be able to actually
4 learn and use that.

5 VICE CHAIR BIREDA: I wanted to ask
6 more about the emphasis on the Socratic method,
7 of which I'm very familiar. It is not a method
8 that works for all kids given its emphasis on the
9 ability, as you were just saying, to
10 extemporaneously provide answers.

11 And so just wondering just given the
12 open enrollment, the amount of varied learning
13 styles that you're going to get, like how will
14 you adapt that model to make it -- I mean, the
15 Socratic method just from my own experience was
16 terrifying in law school, right. Like so how
17 will you make it a more welcoming, friendly
18 environment for kids who will be very unfamiliar
19 with it?

20 MS. JACKSON: For sure. So, during --
21 we have something that's called Anna's hour,
22 which is throughout, it's during the day. So

1 it's not an after-school program. Every single
2 student in the building will be receiving Anna's
3 hour, K through 6. And during that time, we're
4 able to cater to all of our students.

5 We have the belief that students, no
6 student is special but every child is unique.
7 So, for students who are terrified by the
8 Socratic method, they are able to have the
9 teacher before them to be able to provide them
10 those tools to verbalize why or to question
11 themselves and be able to verbalize what's
12 happening in the classroom, along with gifted
13 students as well, our SPED population, as well as
14 EL.

15 (Off-microphone comments.)

16 MR. PAYNE: Yeah, so, and obviously
17 over K-12, the Socratic seminar looks a little
18 bit different than the Socratic method. But it's
19 about the idea of intentional inquiry and
20 reflection.

21 And so in classrooms where the
22 Socratic seminar is going on, again, there are

1 various levels of prep that can go in depending
2 on student support. And then not every child has
3 to participate verbally. So it's not, hopefully,
4 it's not the same environment you had in law
5 school.

6 But it's, what we've actually seen in
7 practice is that students who may be struggling
8 in reading or struggling in other areas, this is
9 their time to shine, that this is actually the
10 time where they can participate. They take
11 notes. They can get a sense of the bigger
12 picture. And they can actually have an equally
13 strong voice as someone who is, you know, several
14 grades above their reading level at the time or
15 some other way.

16 So done properly, it's actually a
17 great equalizer among the students, that when
18 you're watching a Socratic seminar done well,
19 everybody's on the same plane, which is great.

20 VICE CHAIR BIREDA: I'm curious,
21 though. All right. You guys are all educators.
22 You understand that some of these methods and the

1 emphasis on the Western canon, there are people
2 in education who believe that that is actually
3 alienating for some populations of kids.

4 And so I guess I'm curious. Have you
5 seen success in some of the schools that you
6 would be emulating in the initiative? Do you
7 have standardized test assessment, you know,
8 measures that would show you that this is working
9 with the population of kids that you would get in
10 D.C.?

11 MR. PAYNE: Yeah, as you know, coming
12 from Savannah Classical Academy, which was
13 majority free lunch, majority minority
14 population, our ELA growth numbers actually
15 exceeded the district's outside of the first
16 year, even before the curricular alignment. So
17 that growth was there.

18 And then, with lessons learned, paying
19 a little closer attention to aligning things with
20 the PARCC state tests, as happened at Savannah
21 Classical in the fifth year, then we'll see the
22 growth go through the roof. So, yes, we have

1 seen that.

2 VICE CHAIR BIREDA: Is Savannah the
3 most similar school in the initiative?

4 MR. WHITE: One thing that I will say,
5 so I'm a researcher by trade. And actually I
6 study school models. And one of the things that
7 we have done at the National Alliance for Public
8 Charter Schools is we've looked at across a lot
9 of different school models, and so one of the
10 things that's unusual about the classical model
11 is typically it only caters to specific students.
12 Historically, it has been a school model that has
13 not served all students.

14 One of the unique things, and that's
15 actually what drew me into this particular
16 school, was that you don't often see schools that
17 bring Shakespeare and Tony Parsons into the same
18 classroom. That's just not something that
19 happens. And so you don't get the Virginia
20 Hamilton and Homer and talking this in the same
21 way.

22 And so one of the things that this

1 school has done, which I think is quite
2 admirable, is it really has tried to change what
3 is considered the classical canon to be
4 considerably broader to really bring in a lot of
5 different cultures.

6 And in terms of its efficacy, there's
7 a number of really high performing schools in
8 Indianapolis, Miami-Dade. There's --

9 MR. PAYNE: South Bronx.

10 MR. WHITE: In the South Bronx,
11 there's the Icahn Schools. In Miami-Dade,
12 there's the Archimedean Academies. And they've
13 done the same thing. And it's been extremely
14 successful.

15 So it is unfortunately not as common
16 as I think it should be. But the few examples
17 that we do have have been very successful.

18 MR. PEARSON: Could you send us that
19 list of schools?

20 MR. WHITE: Sure.

21 MR. PEARSON: Thank you.

22 MEMBER CRUSEY: I understand that no

1 one on the founding team has direct
2 administration experience in a fully implemented
3 high school. Can you talk us through how you
4 anticipate a plan to build that capacity and
5 expertise?

6 MR. PAYNE: Yes. For the high school,
7 again, we have a lot of support from the Barney
8 Charter School Initiative that has several high
9 schools going and what the classical model looks
10 like there. We have drawn from their resources
11 and what that looks like.

12 I know, I certainly know high school
13 is a different animal in terms of requirements
14 and college entrance and SAT and ACT and those
15 sorts of things.

16 Starting with K4 or some lower grade
17 level and getting a sense of where our school
18 community is and that that will govern and shape
19 sort of where things go with the high school.

20 Just as you saw in the charter, just
21 like with proper world language instruction that
22 we want to have start in sixth grade, it's not

1 mission central in what that looks like. So
2 we're going to have the school community provide
3 input and analysis on what that's going to shape.

4 So same with our high school, outside
5 of the core curriculum and those supports, then
6 we're going to continue to work in D.C. and in
7 this environment with our families to see exactly
8 what all the other components need to be.

9 I will place emphasis on the senior
10 project and that capstone project as a really
11 effective way to provide students with the
12 opportunity to show that they have what it takes
13 for the next step moving forward. I don't know
14 if I answered it.

15 MEMBER SHELTON: So the staff
16 mentioned inconsistencies in your budget when it
17 was submitted. And the revised budget is still
18 incorrect.

19 And is it possible, can you walk us
20 through how you all intend to have the right
21 financial support, the right financial expertise
22 to focus on making sure that you're able to

1 operate the school?

2 MR. PAYNE: Yeah, certainly. I have
3 a meeting with Kenny and Brad on Thursday. So
4 EdOps is somebody we definitely want to continue
5 to partner with.

6 And then that would certainly be
7 somebody that we want to bring on as when we
8 bring in the director of ops and someone in
9 finance, that someone that has more expertise in
10 that area to support the work with EdOps during
11 the first couple years.

12 MEMBER CRUSEY: I'm going to bring it
13 back to the partnerships piece. The relationship
14 is the 20 or so schools are fully autonomous such
15 that, but they are all charter schools. So their
16 boards are who holds the charter, not this
17 partnership entity.

18 Are there any instances where an
19 independent school has elected to go a different
20 path or to change its model and its practice in a
21 way that no longer fits with BCSI, if I get the
22 letters right?

1 MR. PAYNE: No. Up through now all
2 the schools have maintained an agreement with the
3 Barney Charter School Initiative. And again,
4 some of those schools are actually managed by a
5 separate charter management organization and
6 still have an affiliation in the initiative.

7 So there are quite a few different
8 arrangements. Also, as you know, in different
9 states there are different authorizing
10 situations.

11 CHAIR CRUZ: Ben, you touched upon
12 this earlier. But I'd love for you to offer up
13 your reflections on your time at Savannah
14 Classical and the challenges and, in particular,
15 what you learned from some of the
16 underperformance there.

17 MR. PAYNE: Yeah, certainly. Savannah
18 Classical Academy where I was the head of school
19 for five years, as you know, after four years we
20 had to come in and we had to change the model to
21 address the Georgia Milestones Assessment at the
22 end of the year.

1 Georgia and D.C. are two very
2 different places. The Milestones is a very
3 different assessment than the PARCC.

4 And obviously, the lesson learned is
5 that you do have to take measures to align what
6 you teach with the state assessment at the end of
7 the year. And that's, in Savannah we actually
8 used the iReady curricular resources and support
9 to come in. And that's why last year the school
10 was able to see such growth.

11 And the iReady, again, with all the
12 research they have with their alignment with
13 PARCC, to be able to bring those resources in
14 here will be exceptional.

15 The other thing is that there are lots
16 of lessons learned from there, which have been
17 great in designing this program for Washington
18 D.C.

19 CHAIR CRUZ: So I'm not a student of
20 Georgia standards. But in terms of how you build
21 a program for a school, you usually walk back
22 from the standards. So I just would love a

1 little bit of a better sense of the timeline from
2 how, what happened transpired.

3 MR. PAYNE: Certainly. That's a very
4 good question. So, for example, the first year
5 Savannah Classical Academy was open it was a
6 state test called the CRCT. And then it switched
7 to the Milestones.

8 And then the science and social
9 studies state standards switched in the middle
10 there. And then what grades were tested in
11 science and social studies also changed. And one
12 year they actually didn't use the science and
13 social studies scores because there were some
14 inaccuracies.

15 And so through all that, the board
16 there and I, we were just staying the course with
17 the Core Knowledge curriculum with Riggs and with
18 other things believing that over time our
19 students would get there.

20 And though we had the ELA growth we
21 needed, ultimately the way the social studies and
22 science standards were framed, there was such a

1 misalignment with what we were teaching that it
2 became, that obviously when we switched to -- for
3 example, in eighth grade without adjusting it for
4 any standards, the Core Knowledge curriculum has
5 you teach 20th century, 21st century world
6 history and the Constitution. And so that's what
7 our eighth graders were studying.

8 And in Georgia, eighth grade social
9 studies is Georgia studies. So our eighth
10 graders have been going into Georgia studies
11 having studied 20th, 21st century world history
12 and the Constitution. Once we taught Georgia
13 studies, our students, same population, the same
14 teacher, no turnover, our students exceeded the
15 district scores considerably and I believe the
16 state as well. And so that's just an example of
17 how significant that alignment piece was.

18 Again, lessons learned, the PARCC
19 currently is not, does not include the science
20 and social studies pieces. Core Knowledge has
21 now aligned their science curriculum with the
22 national science standards. So there is an

1 alignment there, which is nice.

2 And then if Washington D.C., if D.C.
3 began to test social studies and align those
4 things as well, then we would make those
5 adjustments as well.

6 CHAIR CRUZ: So I know you weren't the
7 sole decision maker. But is there anything you
8 would have done differently, because while I
9 don't anticipate that standards are changing
10 here, knock on wood, in the next few years,
11 environments, as you know, are very fluid and
12 there will be changes that occur from the day
13 you're potentially authorized to the day the
14 school opens that would necessitate some
15 flexibility in thinking and planning?

16 So I'd just love to know you, as the
17 leader of the school, which in hindsight, are
18 there any things that you would have done
19 differently?

20 MR. PAYNE: Yeah, make it like Cooper.
21 The charter that we've written has those
22 adjustments in it. And it's really going to be

1 exceptional.

2 So, taking the best parts from what
3 was and then taking all the inputs from all of
4 our founding group members and then taking those
5 lessons learned and adding those supports, adding
6 the iReady support, adding some other things,
7 yeah, if I could take this back to Savannah five
8 years ago, it --

9 CHAIR CRUZ: But that wouldn't answer
10 the misalignment, though.

11 MR. PAYNE: No, but again, that goes
12 back to the social studies and science. So this,
13 the alignment piece is what has been incorporated
14 with Coopers Charter that is different about
15 Savannah. And so that's the piece. If we had
16 had that down right from the get-go back then,
17 then that's what we've been able to apply here.

18 CHAIR CRUZ: Great. Thank you.

19 VICE CHAIR BIREDA: As you know, one
20 of our critical questions is whether there's a
21 demand for a school. So you've heard some of the
22 kind of discussion of that with previous schools.

1 I know that you cite the wait list at
2 three of our high performing charters as evidence
3 of demand. I don't think any of those would
4 describe themselves as a classical education
5 model in the way that you are. So that is, you
6 know, not totally an apples to apples comparison.

7 So can you just talk about how you
8 have assessed demand within D.C. for the K-12,
9 the full spectrum classical model school?

10 MS. CULVER: Well, I can speak to the
11 piece about, because we are seeking to serve
12 students east of the river. And so a lot of what
13 I found being a parent of Ward 7 is that we,
14 there is not an equitable distribution of schools
15 in our area across the city.

16 Often times our students have to
17 travel outside of our ward in order to get the
18 education that they should be able to receive
19 within walking distance of their homes.

20 And so, when talking to other parents
21 in Ward 7 and Ward 6 and Ward 8, we're finding
22 that they want the same things that the students

1 across the city are getting. And so, I mean,
2 like I said, that's just one piece that we've
3 seen in astounding numbers.

4 Like I said, just in talking to the
5 various parents and being, like I said, a parent
6 myself and going into various schools and being
7 an educator myself, I can see the difference
8 between what my children are getting in Ward 7
9 and what they're getting in Ward 1 or Ward, even,
10 you know, Ward 4.

11 VICE CHAIR BIREDA: I appreciate that.
12 I'm also in Ward 7, also have those same
13 concerns. But the specific question is, is there
14 a demand for this model? I wholeheartedly agree
15 with you that we need more equitable distribution
16 of quality education across the city. That's a
17 different question of is there a group of
18 families that want this particular school.

19 MS. CULVER: So then that's another
20 question. And I would say yes as well, because
21 what we find is when we focus more on who the
22 child is rather than what it is that they can do,

1 focusing on that character and moral development,
2 that is something that the children can take with
3 them across grade levels and even once they get
4 outside of school.

5 One of the things that I found in
6 talking to parents in doing my graduate research
7 is that having no skills is what employers look
8 for. More than the skills to be able to do the
9 job they want to see do you have good character.
10 Are you respectable? Are you respectful towards
11 your coworkers and your peers? Can you get along
12 with each other in those respects?

13 And so making sure, if we start that
14 now in a K to 12 setting, then they'll be able to
15 do those things long after they leave as well.

16 MR. WHITE: I would just like to add.
17 So one of the groups of students that is often
18 not talked about are the students who have opted
19 out of the public education system.

20 So there's two different areas where
21 I think we've done a good job of kind of
22 potentially offering them a chance to come back

1 into the public education sector, and that is
2 that the Capitol Hill is actually home to the
3 largest homeschool population in D.C.

4 And there's two very large classical,
5 what they call conversations for a lot of those
6 students who presumably haven't been able to find
7 a public school option for them. By offering
8 this classical school model, that does give them
9 a potential to come back.

10 And the other area is the Washington
11 Opportunity Scholarships Program. We've done a
12 lot of interviews and discussions with them. And
13 we found that one of the main reasons why a lot
14 of parents have chosen that is they really like
15 the idea of having kind of a virtue for base
16 education.

17 And that's also part of our core
18 curriculum. So I think that's another area where
19 there does seem to be a strong demand.

20 CHAIR CRUZ: Any other questions?
21 Scott?

22 MR. PEARSON: Just following up on the

1 question about the Socratic method. Did I
2 understand correctly that 100 percent of the
3 teaching is by Socratic method? Is that fair?

4 MR. PAYNE: No, that's just the
5 dominant philosophy about how to approach
6 instruction is the intentional inquiry and
7 reflection.

8 Again, being K through 12, there are
9 a variety of other instructional techniques,
10 whether it's bell ringers or whether it's I do,
11 we do, you do, a variety of techniques that are
12 applicable depending on the subject taught and
13 the age taught.

14 But that's the -- and there will be
15 some autonomy with teachers depending on who they
16 are and what grade they're teaching and things
17 like that, but that the overarching philosophy is
18 the Socratic.

19 MR. PEARSON: All right. Thank you.

20 CHAIR CRUZ: All right. Thank you
21 guys very much.

22 MR. PAYNE: Thank you.

1 (Applause.)

2 CHAIR CRUZ: All right. Can we bring
3 up The Garden Education team?

4 (Pause.)

5 CHAIR CRUZ: All right. You could
6 each take a moment to introduce yourselves and
7 then launch into your overview.

8 MS. NAH: Good evening, everyone. My
9 name is Saymah Nah. I am the founder of The
10 Garden Education, proposed head of school.

11 MR. BAISDEN: My name is Trevor
12 Baisden. I'm an instructional consultant. I'm
13 also a member of the founding team.

14 MS. WHITMAN: My name is Donna
15 Whitman. And I'm one of the founding board
16 members.

17 MS. EBANKS: Hello. I'm Dr. Mercedes
18 Ebanks. And I'm part of the team for
19 socioemotional learning.

20 CHAIR CRUZ: Yeah.

21 MS. NAH: Good evening, Board. And
22 thank you to the Board and to the PCSB staff for

1 this opportunity.

2 At The Garden, we took a hard, long
3 look at the traditional and non-traditional
4 approaches to education. And we thought, what
5 are we missing as educators? Through heartfelt
6 conversations, intense discussions, and
7 incredibly candid questions, and also action-
8 driven research, all roads led us to a holistic
9 approach.

10 We thought, how do we incorporate all
11 moving pieces of a student into a school that
12 closes both achievement and the opportunity gap?
13 Because we know that both exist.

14 My question, do you ever walk into a
15 charter school classroom and right away you can
16 pick up on all the T-Like skills, you know, those
17 Teach Like A Champion techniques and moves from
18 Radar to clear what-to-do direction. T-Like is
19 like second nature to educators, myself included
20 and I'm sure a lot of the educators in the
21 audience right now.

22 At The Garden socioemotional health,

1 mental well-being, and cultural competence are
2 our second nature. These ideas are what ground
3 our school and what will cultivate academic
4 gains. We believe that when we lead with that
5 mindset that we are setting students up for
6 success.

7 The Garden Education or TGE is a
8 culturally affirming community high school that
9 is proposed to open in Ward 7 or Ward 8.

10 TGE has four major components. We are
11 culturally affirming. We follow the community
12 school framework. We offer project-based
13 learning curriculum. And we have a year-round
14 school model that focuses on external
15 opportunities such as community service and
16 internships throughout the summer.

17 In choosing each component, it was
18 imperative that all components cohesively drove
19 towards academic growth, emotional intelligence,
20 and cultural competence.

21 Just like the old saying, it takes a
22 village to raise a child, the same can be said

1 about TGE and our comprehensive approach to
2 raising student achievement. The similarities
3 between TGE and the old proverb is that success
4 is determined by a collective effort and not by
5 one person or one factor.

6 At TGE, our approach is defined by
7 three Es, education, experience, and exposure.
8 Education, what a student can do cognitively and
9 what they can produce academically.

10 Experience, real world practice, our
11 PBL component shows students how they can apply a
12 math equation to, how they can apply a simple
13 math equation to building the fad of electronic
14 scooters or mastering the algorithms of Instagram
15 to increase their brand following.

16 And last, exposure, our year-round
17 model strategically utilizes typical downtime to
18 lay the foundation for our students to build
19 their network and increase their opportunities.
20 At TGE, we believe they can have all three.

21 Our mission at TGE is to equitably
22 transform student outcomes through rigorous and

1 relevant teaching, consistent socioemotional
2 support, and rewarding opportunities.

3 CHAIR CRUZ: Thank you.

4 MEMBER SHELTON: Thank you for being
5 here today. I enjoyed your capacity hearing.
6 And I know that the staff followed up with some
7 questions. And you guys provided responses to
8 those questions.

9 And I want to just cover a couple of
10 the things that we had concerns about, but also
11 noting that the concerns and the responses that
12 you provided will not necessarily be included in
13 the formal memos that come to the Board members,
14 just to reiterate that.

15 But in terms of the questions that we
16 had, and I think this is just in terms of your
17 founding team and some of the questions as we've
18 asked the other applicants, no one on your
19 founding team has experience with the project-
20 based learning or with high schools, leading high
21 schools.

22 So, one, how do you plan to be

1 successful, especially with the project-based
2 learning? And then, two, why did you select high
3 school?

4 MS. NAH: Absolutely. So I will
5 correct this. We actually have two founding team
6 members that have experience with high school.
7 We have Alexa Bernard, who has experience
8 teaching high school, and also Dwaine Carr, who
9 has experience being on a leadership team at the
10 high school capacity who's currently at WLA.

11 And we also just secured a board
12 member who, his name is Dr. Gemar Mills. He has
13 been coined the turnaround principal in Newark,
14 New Jersey. He also just opened up a new charter
15 school. So he has, he brings to the table
16 experience in start-up, as well as high school
17 experience, as well as project-based learning
18 experience as well.

19 Alexa Bernard also has project-based
20 learning experience as well. And she brings it
21 to the team. She also brings to the team
22 teaching, coaching teachers on project-based

1 learning, which is her capacity right now at
2 DCPS.

3 And that fulfills our high school
4 capacity on the team.

5 MEMBER SHELTON: And in terms of the
6 project-based learning, there seems to be a lot
7 of different things that your teachers are going
8 to be focused on, especially trying to understand
9 and really wrap around this method.

10 So the demands that you have for the
11 teachers in terms of creating projects aligned
12 with PBL, grade, leave restorative practice,
13 justice circles, like how are you going to ensure
14 that you can retain teachers but also minimize
15 their burnout?

16 MS. NAH: Absolutely. First, I want
17 to answer the PBL approach. So we did realize
18 that, and one thing that we came to the
19 conclusion is hiring a PBL coordinator. So
20 amongst our, instead of having four academic
21 interventionists, we will have one PBL
22 coordinator that targets all PBL.

1 And then for the second part of the
2 question, and let me make sure I'm answering it
3 right, you asked about the capacity of teachers.
4 When it comes to the restorative approach and all
5 those, everything else that you listed, it's
6 actually a collective effort.

7 So our behavior interventionists will
8 actually spearhead restorative justice practices,
9 our discipline approaches, as well as like our
10 peer groups. And then also in collaboration with
11 that our culture and affairs team, which is our,
12 all our mental health professionals, they will
13 also take part in peer groups as well.

14 So teachers will actually be focused,
15 solely focused on teaching. But they will also
16 have some type of capacity, but not necessarily
17 leading those efforts, but some type of capacity
18 in all those efforts as well.

19 MEMBER SHELTON: So can you speak a
20 little more about the restorative practices and
21 the training? Like how are you, are you planning
22 to recruit teachers who are already trained in

1 the sort of justice practices or how do you
2 intend to manage that?

3 MS. NAH: Absolutely. So, one, we are
4 working with Turnaround DC for their restorative
5 practices and their development practices as
6 well.

7 But with teachers and hiring teachers,
8 yes, we are, that is a preference that you are,
9 that you have been trained in restorative justice
10 practices. But we will offer restorative justice
11 practices development within our school.

12 CHAIR CRUZ: The application speaks to
13 the creation of two community schools. I'd love
14 to hear more about both your vision for that and
15 also what early work has been done to build
16 partnerships, engage the community of Ward 7 that
17 you're looking to locate in.

18 MS. NAH: So partnerships, we really
19 wanted to focus on partnering with the community
20 organizations within the community and also
21 mapping out what the influence will look like for
22 our students. We know that students are either

1 in school or out in their community, and we know
2 that the community has a heavy influence on
3 students. And what we wanted to do is bring that
4 influence into our building in ways that it will
5 impact and improve student learning and also our
6 culture as a school.

7 Partnerships that we have already
8 started to develop are some of "Cure the Streets"
9 D.C., Manpower D.C. We've also worked with -- we
10 are also working with LGC, which is a security
11 company but they will not be -- instead of
12 securing our building, they will actually be
13 working in the capacity of our -- one of our
14 internships. So LGC is actually a Southeast
15 native that developed its business and really
16 respected in the community, and we wanted to make
17 sure that we were not only contributing but also
18 providing those opportunities for our students as
19 well to see business management and someone from
20 their community and business management. We're
21 also working with a fashion designer who is also
22 a native Washingtonian, Southeast as well.

1 Eat DC -- just to tell you guys a little
2 story about the guy that founded Eat DC, he -- at
3 Rocketship, the school that I work at right now,
4 we had our Black History Month performance last
5 year, and he came in and helped the students
6 design t-shirts. Before he could even announce
7 who he was, the students already knew who he was
8 as a person. They knew that he was a designer.
9 They knew what he created. They talked about how
10 their parents wear it, which means like he just
11 has an influence over these kids. And the
12 respect that they gave him was commendable. And
13 we -- I saw that and I thought to myself, you
14 know, this is a guy that's respected in this
15 community, this is somebody that I want to bring
16 into our school. And he will be working with us
17 in the capacity of an internship as well.

18 So we're working with different, I would
19 say, native Washingtonians, Southeast businesses
20 to incorporate inside our school on an internship
21 level but also in an influence level as well.

22 CHAIR CRUZ: And the application also

1 speaks to a number of services that you intend to
2 provide to the community. What's the thinking on
3 that? How are you planning for -- it's a pretty
4 lengthy list of things that you want to provide.

5 MS. NAH: Absolutely. So we will be
6 working with different organizations such as UPO,
7 Martha's Table. Right now we're actually -- I'm
8 actually in the process of developing that
9 relationship right now. UPO offers free mental
10 health services to families. They offer family
11 therapy. They also offer student therapy. They
12 provide Medicaid services. They also provide for
13 families that don't have health insurance. They
14 provide that as well. So it's actually pairing
15 up with the organizations like VET, that already
16 deliver these services and partnering up with
17 them to deliver it to our students and our
18 families as well.

19 CHAIR CRUZ: Thank you.

20 VICE CHAIR BIREDA: Okay. Beating a
21 steady drum on demand, you are hoping to locate
22 in Ward 7 or 8 and you know that we have a number

1 of under-enrolled high schools, both charter and
2 DCPS. And so the goal of opening with 120 ninth-
3 graders is ambitious just given the fact that no
4 one is opening with the numbers that they would
5 like to at this point. So how do you -- so the
6 first question is how are you sure that there is
7 sufficient demand for this school, and then just
8 given the realities of the population, how are
9 you sure that you could get 120 kids?

10 MS. NAH: So to answer the demand
11 question, we've talked to families, we've talked
12 to community members, we talked to -- we've had
13 listening sessions with just going to events and
14 hearing what the families are saying. And I did
15 hear your earlier comment about the saturation in
16 Southeast, and it's weird because you know, you
17 hear -- you do hear those comments. But then on
18 the other side, you hear we need high schools or
19 we need middle schools or we need this type of
20 school. And I think it's the range of schools
21 that families want instead of a certain type of
22 model, and I think when we talk about the

1 saturation piece, I think that's maybe what they
2 may be referring to. We say that, you know,
3 there are a lot of charter schools in Ward 7 and
4 Ward 8, but we've heard -- like we've heard from
5 families, we've heard from students, and I think
6 the student piece was probably the most
7 impactful, and they're interested in project-
8 based learning.

9 And I think that also, when it comes to
10 schools opening with -- under-enrolled, when we
11 looked at the numbers, we did see that there was
12 a difference in how many students they're
13 enrolling in 9th grade, and it's in -- or the
14 number of students that are -- the gap basically,
15 the gap between enrolled students and the under-
16 enrolled number. And what we saw, that the
17 largest number came from 10th and 11th grades.
18 So our thought process is, you know, it may not
19 be a recruitment effort but more so a retention
20 effort, that we're not keeping our students.

21 And we also did a lot of work on like
22 retention, how are we going to keep students and

1 why are students leaving, why are families
2 leaving after year one or school. And we've --
3 from that, we've realized that one, of course,
4 broken promises; right? Two, they didn't like
5 their experience there for one reason or another,
6 and it may not have been the best fit for them.

7 And I think the last one is, and what
8 we've heard a lot of from our families and
9 students, is unaddressed problems. I think that
10 when we allow families or situations to boil over
11 and we don't address them, it becomes -- it
12 becomes a thing and families leave. And one of
13 the ways that we are going to alleviate that
14 issue is our surveys throughout the school year
15 and evaluating how our families feel and what our
16 challenges are as a school and what our strengths
17 are and so we can work on them together.

18 Also, we will be implementing a very
19 strong and very strict 24-hour rule. We've seen
20 that -- well, I've seen that at the school that
21 I'm currently at, we enforced that this year, and
22 it has changed drastically the, I would say,

1 amount of anguish families may have for a certain
2 situation that may have occurred.

3 VICE CHAIR BIREDA: Thank you and then
4 the other question I have is around your
5 graduation requirements. Your graduation
6 requirements exceed what's actually required by
7 DC. Given just the reality we have difficulty
8 getting many kids just to the floor, how will you
9 have kids persist to that higher level?

10 MS. NAH: Absolutely. So we also,
11 within -- our two board members that just came on
12 also talked to us about that as well. And what
13 we decided as a collective group effort, also
14 because these board members will be leading us as
15 a school and also into our planning year, what we
16 decided was to amend that. So we are going to --
17 we will actually drop to 26, which is the
18 average, 26-27. But we did not remove any core
19 classes. So what we did was removed the weight
20 from the summer session, so there's three credits
21 for each summer that a student is at the garden
22 and then first term, so that's four credits that

1 we removed from the total amount. And then also,
2 we changed our electives, too, from one to .5, so
3 it will bring us down to 26.

4 VICE CHAIR BIREDA: You do understand,
5 though, there is a high probability that kids
6 would move to schools that would require less of
7 them if they are behind credits, right? I mean,
8 how will you deal with that issue? We have -- I
9 mean, it happens all the time where kids move to
10 lesser schools.

11 MS. NAH: You're asking me with how
12 would we deal with students transferring with
13 less credits?

14 VICE CHAIR BIREDA: Transferring to
15 schools where less credits are required of them.

16 MS. NAH: With-- so transferring to
17 schools that require less credits of them. Are
18 you saying with our -- with us amending or?

19 VICE CHAIR BIREDA: Yes. Even with
20 amending, because it's still higher than the next
21 school down the street.

22 MS. NAH: Yes. I think also -- so one,

1 working with the school. I will say that we have
2 not -- we have not addressed that yet. I'll be
3 completely honest. We have not addressed that
4 yet, but what I will say is that in our
5 conversations and in planning, right, what is --
6 and in planning, we've seen that the typical
7 charter schools is 26-27. We did not address
8 DCPS.

9 MEMBER CRUSEY: You just mentioned a
10 Saturday session -- or summer session. I
11 understand there was a reference in your
12 application to a Saturday academy. For a second,
13 I was thinking those were the same thing.
14 Clearly not. Can you talk us through what the
15 Saturday academy is?

16 MS. NAH: So Saturday academy --
17 academically, Saturday academy will be if a
18 student is behind, they will receive extra
19 intervention support during Saturday academy.
20 It's something that we've taken up in a few of
21 the schools that I've been a part of and it's
22 been successful.

1 MEMBER CRUSEY: So this is to catch up
2 on things like during the week -- is this for
3 remediation and credits --

4 MS. NAH: Yes.

5 MEMBER CRUSEY: -- and course recovery
6 -- credit recovery?

7 MS. NAH: No. This is not for -- this
8 is not course recovery. This is strictly for
9 mastery of content, so intervention, yes.

10 CHAIR CRUZ: There are several pretty
11 critical components of the program that will need
12 to be developed should you be authorized. You
13 have a year to do that. How are you thinking
14 about prioritizing some pretty big bodies of
15 work?

16 SM: Is 'll speak to it a little bit and
17 then I'll have the people that's actually
18 developing -- helping me develop those bodies of
19 work. We've already started to develop the
20 academic program, and what we'll work on -- what
21 we'll start to work on next is the social-
22 emotional piece, but I'll let Trevor talk to

1 that, to the academic program.

2 MR. BAISDEN: So a little bit about the
3 academic programming, I think this question came
4 up a little earlier when asked about how we'll
5 make project-based learning feel less
6 overwhelming, particularly for new teachers or
7 teachers that don't have that experience and sort
8 of what to reassure that we're looking
9 particularly in our first one to three years and
10 we're not starting from scratch with a curriculum
11 approach but finding partnerships with folks like
12 PBL Works, or we can take things that have proven
13 true, then align to our instructional vision and
14 then use that and modify it to fit out approach.

15 So in terms of prioritization, that's
16 the number one curricular goal for the academic
17 program, is to work with the PBL Works
18 partnership. I think the decision -- the amended
19 decision to bring on a PBL coordinator is going
20 to be incredibly important to have someone
21 dedicated full-time on staff to doing that so
22 that teachers are not -- the burden in the first

1 year is not what are you going to teach, that
2 that's answered with a curriculum that we feel
3 confident about, but it's how are you going to
4 teach it.

5 MS. WHITMAN: I'll speak to the social-
6 emotional learning piece and with that, there's
7 several components. One would be a multi-tiered
8 system of support to address any disciplinary
9 concerns, and that will start from a peer
10 mediation as well as looking at individual needs
11 in terms of therapy as well as working with the
12 family in terms of parental outreach, so that is
13 a system that is currently being developed as
14 well as looking at curriculums that have been
15 very successful. Many of the social-emotional
16 learning curriculum has focused on elementary
17 schools and middle schools. However, there is
18 the need for it to continue in high schools, and
19 that is where we are looking to incorporate those
20 that have been successful. Stanford has done a
21 study looking at three urban high schools and how
22 they have used -- so basically, looking at what

1 they have done and looking at what their
2 recommendations are to help build our program.

3 CHAIR CRUZ: Thank you. Any other
4 questions?

5 (No response.)

6 CHAIR CRUZ: All right. Thank you very
7 much.

8 (Applause.)

9 CHAIR CRUZ: We are giving you the
10 promised break for food, which is downstairs. So
11 we are going to aim to come back in, let's say,
12 25 minutes. So we'll have food and then come
13 back in 25 minutes.

14 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter
15 went off the record at 8:18 p.m. and resumed at
16 8:49 p.m.)

17 CHAIR CRUZ: All right. We're going to
18 get started. If I could have the Social Justice
19 School team?

20 (Applause.)

21 CHAIR CRUZ: All right. As with the
22 others, please introduce yourself and then you

1 have the mic for a bit to share a little bit
2 about the school.

3 MR. JOHNSON: Good morning. My name is
4 Brandon Johnson. I am the Co-Founder and
5 Founding Principal of the Social Justice School.

6 MR. LONG: My name is Myron Long. I'm
7 the Founder and Executive Director of the Social
8 Justice School.

9 MS. NELSON-JAMES: Evening. My name is
10 Rael Nelson-James. I'm the Board Chair of the
11 Social Justice School.

12 MR. JONES: I'm Justice Jones, Board
13 Member of the Social Justice School.

14 MS. TUCK: Tammy Tuck, also Board Member
15 of the Social Justice School.

16 CHAIR CRUZ: Thank you. All right. You
17 want to say a few words?

18 MR. LONG: Yes. So personally, I would
19 like to thank you for having the opportunity for
20 us to present our proposal for the Social Justice
21 School. And so I want you to imagine that you
22 are a parent and you can go ahead and close your

1 eyes if you need to. You can't get the number
2 127 out of your head and it's because your child
3 is number 127 on a wait list for a school that is
4 diverse and offers innovative programming.

5 Imagine that you are extremely frustrated as a
6 parent and worried because you live in DC and
7 only a handful of middle schools are preparing
8 students for college and career. Keep your eyes
9 closed. Imagine that you are a parent and your
10 child comes home and says that they saw their
11 classmate being detained because they evaded the
12 fare at the Metro because they didn't have any
13 money on their SmarTrip. Imagine that your child
14 comes home feeling defeated and disempowered.

15 Now open your eyes. The reality is that
16 for the majority of us in this room, we are
17 privileged enough just to imagine those
18 scenarios. However, for many students and
19 families in DC, this is a reality and as a parent
20 and a Ward 5 resident, this could be the fate of
21 my daughter given the middle school options. As
22 a father and a Washingtonian, I refuse to allow

1 families to be on wait lists for schools that are
2 in demand, so this expeditionary learning. I
3 refuse to silence our young people by not
4 providing them with the opportunities to tackle
5 our nation's most challenging problems.

6 My name is Myron Long. I'm a native
7 Washingtonian, a Founder -- excuse me -- a father
8 and the Founder of the Social Justice School.
9 The Social Justice School will be a refuge for
10 both of those families, a school where students
11 engage in rigorous instruction through learning
12 expeditions and a place where students feel
13 empowered. The mission of the Social Justice
14 School is to catalyze an integrated community of
15 scholar activists who are designers of a more
16 just world.

17 At our school, we do that in three ways.
18 In our model, the parent on the wait list has the
19 opportunity to send their scholar to a school
20 where they master core content and apply what
21 they have learned in learning expeditions that
22 are rooted in social justice. We know that the

1 EL model has proven results in DC and also
2 nationwide.

3 In our model, the child who saw their
4 classmate being detained belongs to a crew which
5 is an advisory format where students have the
6 opportunity to build strong relationships with
7 their peers and also their teachers. And in our
8 school, it's even more. It's the place where our
9 students do the identity work and have the
10 critical conversations and build common language
11 in order to have conversations about waste
12 inequity. And we know that students perform
13 better when they feel that they belong to a
14 community and they feel connected deeply to an
15 adult and peers.

16 The child who saw their peer being
17 detained goes to a class called "the liberatory
18 design thinking class" and feels empowered to
19 make change. Liberatory design thinking extends
20 traditional design thinking by adding an equity,
21 race, and power to the design thinking process.
22 In this class, students explore social justice

1 issues such as fair evasion, gentrification, and
2 work with their peers to create and actually
3 implement solutions to our city's most
4 challenging problems.

5 By the time our scholars leave our
6 school, they will meet and exceed their growth
7 goals, be able to critically read all types of
8 texts, tackle mathematical problems, and would
9 have worked with their peers to actually
10 implement solutions to our city's most
11 challenging problems. The time in our country
12 says that the time is now for the Social Justice
13 School. Thank you.

14 (Applause.)

15 CHAIR CRUZ: Thank you. So I'd like to
16 start by giving you an opportunity to talk about
17 why you selected the grades that you selected and
18 some of the advantages and potential
19 disadvantages that you see going along with that
20 choice.

21 MR. LONG: Thank you. So as social
22 justice school, we are a community of designers.

1 And as a community of designers, we look at data
2 in order to make very thoughtful and informed
3 decisions. And we iterate on our model in order
4 to make sure that it's meeting the needs of all
5 the students and the families that we intend to
6 serve.

7 Last year there was a significant amount
8 of students in fifth grade who didn't get their
9 match and are currently on a wait list. And even
10 this year, there are also students on wait lists
11 as well. So there's definitely evidence that
12 there is a need for -- to start in fifth grade
13 and event that there are a significant amount of
14 students who didn't meet their -- didn't get
15 their first pick on the My School DC.

16 Second, we, as a school, are committed
17 to iteration and growth and as middle school
18 educators, we know that it will take time in
19 order to grow our scholar, and our goal is to
20 accelerate our scholars. And we really believe
21 that having our students start in fifth grade as
22 opposed to coming in later will give us the

1 opportunity in order to grow our scholars both in
2 terms of their heart and also their mind as well.

3 We also know that right now there's an
4 issue and a challenge for stand-alone middle
5 schools, and we want to be able to be the refuge
6 for those families who may not be able to get on
7 the school that has the high wait list that's a
8 pre-K-12 model. Those students and those
9 families still deserve to go to a high-quality
10 middle school, especially a middle school that's
11 going to offer rigorous academic instruction and
12 provide them with the lens of social justice as
13 well.

14 That being said, we do know that there
15 are challenges with starting in a fifth grade,
16 and we realize that within our model, that we
17 need to make sure that we're very strategic and
18 thoughtful about how we do our recruitment. And
19 we've already begun to think though some
20 strategies in order to make sure that happens.
21 And we will start off with 75 fifth graders and
22 75 sixth graders as well.

1 CHAIR CRUZ: Is there feedback that
2 you've gotten in trying to make the case for
3 demand that you would incorporate into your
4 recruitment plan?

5 MR. LONG: Can you repeat the question,
6 please?

7 CHAIR CRUZ: So is there feedback that
8 you've gotten from community, from the parents
9 about in your seeking to justify the demands, the
10 need for the school and these grades that you
11 would incorporate into your recruitment plans;
12 have you learned things in your community
13 outreach that you would factor into your
14 recruitment plan given that you will be seeking
15 to feed into a different grade?

16 MR. LONG: Thank you. So we have gotten
17 feedback from parents in both the pilots that we
18 ran and also in our interviews as well, not
19 necessarily on our start grade but actually on
20 our model, and that actually has influenced the
21 design of our model. And so one of the things
22 that was really important for students and

1 families were that they wanted to make sure that
2 students got the explicit core content that they
3 would need in order to be successful in the
4 learning expeditions, because one of the original
5 iterations of our school we had piloted in the
6 Freedom Academy, we had taught all the subjects
7 through learning expeditions, and our families in
8 the community were very explicit that like that
9 might work for some groups of students but for my
10 student who might need additional support, that
11 we need to explicitly teach them the skills that
12 they need in order to be successful.

13 CHAIR CRUZ: So one more question that's
14 sort of building upon this. So you've -- you're
15 targeting middle school, so you've chosen a
16 slightly different grade band. And, you know,
17 one of the questions we -- or concerns we raised
18 in the capacity interview was your -- the goals
19 that you're shooting for. And specifically, the
20 goals that would suggest your equaling the
21 results at standalone middle schools after five
22 years.

1 So what I'm trying to do is reconcile
2 some of the concerns that were the genesis for
3 you creating this school, which was, as you
4 described, you know, the issue with standalone
5 middle schools but then the goals that you're
6 setting out are to effectively match those
7 schools over five years.

8 So I think everyone here has an
9 appreciation for growth as a powerful measure
10 but, you know, I think growth is one measure but
11 really looking at, you know, mastering
12 achievement over time. So tell us a little bit
13 about how you came to those goals?

14 MR. LONG: Definitely. Thank you. So
15 that's actually a great question and again, I'll
16 always start with our core beliefs, and we are a
17 school that believes in iteration and inclusivity
18 and also equity as well. And so in the process
19 of designing our accountability framework, we
20 actually had the opportunity to do some
21 significant data analysis on standalone schools
22 on the PMF and on the STAR framework as well.

1 And so we took that data and then began to think
2 through like what are the metrics that are most
3 aligned to our beliefs as a school. And the
4 metrics that we thought -- that we proposed
5 around growth, particularly around Road to
6 Proficiency, it's something that we really
7 believe as a powerful metric and a powerful tool
8 to measure a student's success. And our goal is
9 for all of our students to be proficient by the
10 time they leave us in eighth grade.

11 We actually care so much about
12 proficiency that we want our students to set
13 goals for all of the proficiency -- excuse me --
14 set goals for all the students, especially the
15 students who tend to be most marginalized because
16 we know, as former school leaders, what happens
17 when we focus on those other -- focus on absolute
18 achievement, we tend to create a culture of
19 bubble kids, and we explicitly decided not to do
20 that at our school. And so we really strongly
21 believe that we ought to be held accountable for
22 the growth that our students make. And we don't

1 just believe in having our students meet their
2 growth goals. We actually want to accelerate
3 their growth goals so that they can reach and
4 exceed their growth goals as well. And so our
5 goal is not just to meet the expectation for
6 other standalone schools but actually to exceed
7 those expectations.

8 CHAIR CRUZ: Thank you.

9 MR. PEARSON: If your goal is to exceed
10 those expectations, why is it that you will do no
11 better, you will do only as well as the average
12 standalone middle school in the city when we all
13 know that that is a group of schools that has
14 pretty depressing results?

15 MR. LONG: Thank you. Again, that's a
16 great question. We've been grappling with this
17 question in the entire design phase, and so for -
18 - as a standalone middle school, we know that
19 standalone middle schools also face challenges in
20 the sense that they don't have the opportunity to
21 grow their students from as early as pre-K all
22 the way up into eighth grade, right, and so that

1 puts them, one might suggest, in a significant
2 disadvantage, because some schools have eight
3 years to grow their students as opposed to some
4 schools who have seven months. And so we wanted
5 to make sure that we were comparing ourselves to
6 schools that had similar timeframe in order to
7 grow their students. But again, I just want to
8 continue to iterate that our goal is not just to
9 meet those expectations but to exceed those
10 expectations.

11 MEMBER CRUSEY: So in the design phase,
12 did you revisit the assumption of these grade
13 bands correspondingly considering to start
14 earlier? Or did you consider adjusting these
15 goals to -- so that they're exceeding the goals
16 of the other -- or the performance of other
17 standalone middle schools?

18 MR. LONG: Thank you. Great question.
19 So we didn't necessarily consider changing fifth
20 to eighth grade but again, as designers, if we
21 were to have a condition of approval where we
22 needed to rethink that particular structure, as

1 designers, we would want to get in a room with
2 members of your staff and definitely try to make
3 sure that we came up with a grade band agreement
4 that met our expectations and also met your
5 expectations as a board as well. But we have
6 been in the process of constantly iterating on
7 our accountability framework. And so I think if
8 there is a conditional approval around like us
9 making sure that we create an accountability that
10 might include other metrics in order to meet the
11 expectations of the Board, then we're definitely
12 willing to engage in that conversation.

13 VICE CHAIR BIREDA: I really appreciate
14 your focus on middle school and I'm a middle
15 school teacher and I recognize, as we've talked
16 about there, what a challenging endeavor that is
17 But I guess I would like to know what is it about
18 your model that you think really gets at the
19 challenges of teaching middle schoolers and
20 having them achieve academically and be ready for
21 high school. And then also, I'm curious, given
22 what you said about some schools having, you

1 know, eight years of kids, you'll have four, are
2 you going to back-fill just given the reality of
3 equity concerns across the city?

4 MR. JOHNSON: So I would like to speak
5 to the first part of that question. I think two
6 distinct challenges that middle schools have, one
7 is around culture. Everybody that's taught
8 middle school knows that identity is a really
9 hard -- you know, is a big thing for middle
10 schoolers, and they really struggle with who they
11 are as well as forming strong peer groups. So
12 one of the things that we think is integral in
13 our model is Crew. Crew is an opportunity for
14 students to come together across difference and
15 really build relationships that will allow them
16 to kind of diffuse some of those barriers that
17 persist and commonly don't get discussed and
18 build those authentic relationships so that they
19 can be in a meaningful classroom and engage in
20 authentic ways where they're building real
21 relationships and even engaging in some of those
22 difficult conversations such as like who am I,

1 how do I find myself fitting in amongst my peers,
2 and what are some of the challenges that they
3 face.

4 In terms of academic challenges the
5 students face, typically, I'm a middle school
6 leader currently right now working as an
7 instructional coach. And some of the deficits
8 that we see tend to be around reading
9 particularly. And so one of the things that we
10 put in place is we are an EL school, but we're
11 using the EL curriculum. And so in our
12 instructional model, we've included basically
13 like a double block of math and literacy that
14 will allow students additional time to receive
15 instruction in the all block, which is the second
16 part of the literacy block, that gives students
17 some time to small differentiated instruction,
18 which will be pertinent to any information that
19 they might have received in the instruction that
20 they still might not have mastered. And so in
21 that block, you'll have the general educator, the
22 special educator, and if needed, the English

1 language teacher as well.

2 So I would say that identity and social-
3 emotional development is really key. And so I
4 think Crew is a really important feature in our
5 school model. And I think in terms of academics,
6 it's just sometimes some of the deficits that
7 students come into the middle school level with,
8 especially at sixth grade, having deficits in
9 terms of their ability to read and decode.

10 MR. LONG: And so I think in addition to
11 what Brandon said in terms of the actual
12 curricula that we'll use in those double math and
13 ELA blocks, you know, we know that -- as teachers
14 and content leaders, we know that reading and
15 math is very complex, and so we need to make sure
16 that we have the right intervention in order to
17 meet the specific needs of their families --
18 excuse me - the needs of students. And so we've
19 thought through like LLI as a curriculum that we
20 would use, Spring Math, Read 180 as well, because
21 we know that those particular programs are
22 diverse enough to meet the variety of needs of

1 learners in terms of their reading and
2 mathematical capacity as well.

3 And yes, we do plan to back-fill, and we
4 know that that would be a significant challenge,
5 and we've thought through already in terms of how
6 do we, when a family comes to us earlier, we want
7 to attach that member immediately to a crew and
8 make sure that crew leader has that first one-to-
9 one touch with that particular student
10 immediately and gets the change to spend some
11 time with that student in order to build their
12 capacity as well.

13 MR. JOHNSON: So I think the last thing
14 I just wanted to iterate, kind of build on is we
15 also know that kids at that age are starting to
16 wonder and be curious and wanting to explore on
17 their own, especially as it comes to wanting to
18 be engaged in meaningful tasks that will allow
19 them to engage in a really authentic way. And so
20 through the liberatory design thinking lab, that
21 will give students an opportunity to engage in
22 real problem-solving in which they won't just do

1 problem-solving in the classrooms where similar
2 to some other like problem-based curriculum, but
3 they'll have the opportunity to go out into the
4 community and engage in projects in which they're
5 solving for real things that they're facing in
6 their own communities. And I think in tandem,
7 those three things will really allow students to
8 be engaged and feel like they're part of a
9 meaningful experience that will keep them engaged
10 not only through middle school but to high
11 school.

12 MEMBER BUMBAUGH: So you all ran a
13 summer pilot. Can you talk about that and tell
14 us what you learned from it and how it's going to
15 -- how it informs the model of the school you're
16 proposing?

17 MR. JOHNSON: So our original idea was
18 that we could do all of our teaching through
19 projects. That was a fallacy we learned very
20 early on. We learned that there still is a need
21 for traditional instruction in which targeted
22 skills are taught. The goal was to essentially -

1 - it was a four-week pilot in which we wanted to
2 take students through main content areas, mass
3 incarceration, school-to-prison pipeline as well
4 as the history of lynching followed by a
5 culminating trip where they would get to go to
6 Alabama and experience some real hands-on
7 experience as to what -- how that -- those three
8 themes kind of come together.

9 Through that experience, the first part
10 of the day, students would engage in the main
11 content such as where they would learn through
12 maybe it might be graphs, maybe it might be
13 through hearing from different videos or engaging
14 in research. And then in the afternoon, they
15 would have a design lab and in this design lab,
16 they would have the opportunity to engage in
17 design experiences where they would be forced --
18 faced with a problem, have to engage in empathy
19 interviews, and then have to design solutions.
20 Our goal in doing that was we know that we wanted
21 students to be able to solve real and meaningful
22 problems, but they also had to learn the design

1 principles so that they could apply those
2 principles to solving real problems.

3 To answer your question around some of
4 the lessons that we learned, in addition to the
5 fact that you can't teach everything through
6 projects, we also learned that there's a need to
7 continue to provide really engaging experiences
8 for kids that is design-oriented, which is why we
9 continued with the liberatory design theme in
10 class. It was something that we had an
11 assumption about as an effective measure in terms
12 of educating kids, but we did have to scale it in
13 terms of where we fit it into our model.

14 I think the second thing that we learned
15 is that it's important for kids to engage in real
16 and compelling things so they very much got --
17 were impassioned and felt motivated by learning
18 about the school-to-prison pipeline as one of our
19 former students spoke about they really became
20 motivated and aware of things that they otherwise
21 wouldn't have been informed about through this
22 experience. And so to that point, we see the

1 need to provide instruction that is meaningful
2 and is also real and current to students and
3 gives them the space to grapple and have
4 discussions about those things.

5 MR. LONG: I think we also learned the
6 importance of Crew as an actual structure and
7 also as a form of PD because again, when our
8 students, when we asked them why they would come
9 to our school, they named two things. It was
10 one, the relationships that they had with the
11 adults and their peers and also, the liberatory
12 design class. And so what they told us is that
13 in order for us to create these relationships
14 with students, as teachers we have to be
15 vulnerable. We're asking the students to engage
16 in really tough work that, to be frank, most
17 adults are not still yet comfortable having
18 conversations about waste and equity. And so we
19 had to model that very explicitly, and being able
20 to model that allowed our teachers -- excuse me --
21 - allowed our students to then they were the
22 mirror of those conversations back and be engaged

1 with them as well.

2 I think we also again learned this power
3 of the type of teacher that we're looking for and
4 the PD that we would need in order to provide
5 those teachers, because the Liberatory design
6 thinking is somebody that's kind of new for the
7 average teacher. I think the average teacher may
8 have had some experience. Design thing is
9 becoming like a, you know, more or less a more
10 formal phase, and so making sure that we provide
11 like very scaffolding PD and thinking through how
12 we want to roll out our model in a very
13 thoughtful way, because I think initially, we
14 thought that we could come in and have every part
15 of our model immediately, but we wanted to make
16 sure that we roll it out very strategically.

17 And so our number one priority in our
18 first year is to master our core content and do
19 that really, really well and then to make sure
20 that we develop Crew and liberatory design
21 thinking. And then we'll build on the
22 implementation of learning expeditions but

1 building implementations of case studies, because
2 we know that what we're asking teachers to do can
3 be heavy. And so we want to make sure they have
4 the support that they need.

5 And also, our students told us a kind of
6 funny analogy. They came to us and said, "Can we
7 just play dodge ball," which is a very strange
8 question but what they were trying to say is
9 like, man, social justice work is hard, like I
10 need a break. And we're like, yes, you do. And
11 so we wanted to make sure that we have
12 intentional time for our students to have recess
13 and lunch in order for them to build those
14 relationships and be able to decompress, because
15 the struggle is real and it's hard, but we have
16 to make sure that we preserve ourselves so that
17 we can continue to be in the work.

18 PARTICIPANT: Yes.

19 MR. LONG: Thank you.

20 CHAIR CRUZ: I'm going to start using
21 that in meetings. I'll point out tonight.

22 So, Myron, we spoke about this in the

1 capacity interview, and we really appreciated
2 your reflection on your previous leadership
3 experience and some of the challenges you saw
4 there, in particular, some of the declines in
5 performance. So we'd just like for you to share
6 that more broadly with the Corp.

7 MR. LONG: Totally. So thank you for
8 asking that question. I've had a wonderful and
9 privileged opportunity to take this year to
10 reflect on myself as a leader through being
11 supported by CityBridge, Camelback and New
12 Schools Venture Fund as well. And so as a
13 leader, I see myself always being in a learner
14 stand. And that means that I'm always thinking
15 through both the technical and adaptive
16 challenges that I need to work on in order to
17 build my practice.

18 But I also know as a leader, the first
19 thing that you have to do is take responsibility
20 for the actions that you have made, especially
21 when those expectations aren't what you thought
22 they would be.

1 And we know that this has a significant
2 impact on students and families. And so as a
3 leader, and my tenure at my previous school, at
4 the time, I thought it was the best decision to
5 create this culture of belonging and
6 togetherness. And so we really focused on
7 advisory and we began to focus on trying to
8 create a restorative model and shift that,
9 because we knew the impact that that would have
10 on students just wanting to be at school.

11 And so as a result, our attendance rates
12 were some of the highest in the city and also,
13 our re-enrollment weights as well, because our
14 students really, really wanted to be there but I
15 also got some feedback -- I had a very dynamic
16 team of leaders at my former school who told me
17 and reminded me that that's not enough, and as a
18 leader, you have to do this really complex job of
19 creating a culture of belonging but also creating
20 a culture of rigorous academic instruction.

21 And so my last year, we double downed
22 observation feedback, we double downed on our

1 weekly data meetings, and we did begin to see an
2 increase in our ELA scores and our algebra scores
3 in particular. And so after my transition, I had
4 the opportunity to seek out feedback from former
5 teachers, some of whom are in the room, former
6 leaders and other ed reformers that I respect in
7 the world, in D.C., who know about my work, and I
8 learned a lot of things that I brought into this
9 design phase.

10 And so, for me, one of the first things
11 that I learned was that in order to build a
12 transformative school, you have to create a
13 transformative team and you need a team that has
14 the expertise -- the broad expertise and that's
15 diverse in order to make sure they operationalize
16 the school mission. And that team has to be
17 willing to hold the school leader accountable.
18 That is the job of the board and that's their job
19 to hold me accountable as an ED.

20 The second thing that I learned is that
21 you have to -- in order to create a
22 transformative culture, you have to create the

1 transformative systems and routines that we need
2 in order to be effective. And it's generally
3 considered my first nature to think about those
4 routines in terms of academic performance, but we
5 also know that those routines need to be built up
6 for a culture as well.

7 And so we and Brandon and our design
8 teams had the opportunity to think through like
9 as much as we have done the research for the
10 curriculum around instruction, what's the
11 curricula that we want to use to build our
12 culture, what's the PD that we want to have, what
13 are the data monitoring systems that we're going
14 to implement, and what are the response to
15 interventions that we're going to need in order
16 to get there, to make sure that we see that
17 through-line for instruction in the same way
18 which we do with the culture as well.

19 And so in our designing and my
20 development of Brandon as well, we have him in
21 the school leader lab and have the opportunity to
22 be a resident at the Inspire Demonstration School

1 so he can see firsthand what a high-quality
2 performing school looks like and also be able to
3 build his capacity in terms of those core
4 practices around adult PD, building student
5 culture, and observation and feedback and data
6 analysis to make sure that those particular
7 things I did in my previous school are actually
8 not done in this next venture and that the Social
9 Justice School will be successful.

10 I'm also really thankful for the
11 experiences that I've had because I believe that
12 those experiences have brought me to this table
13 today, and I am very confident that based on
14 those learnings, that the next venture, Social
15 Justice School, will be even more successful.

16 (Applause.)

17 CHAIR CRUZ: Thank you.

18 MEMBER BUMBAUGH: Can I ask a similar
19 question of the Board Chair, in terms of how you
20 think about the leadership and in particular, you
21 know, investing in these two gentlemen?

22 MS. NELSON-JAMES: Sure. So I see the

1 Board's role in two major buckets, the first is
2 to enable school leadership to do their job well
3 by getting various obstacles out of their way and
4 being a strategic thought partner. And the
5 second really is around accountability, so
6 thinking about how we're creating a dashboard to
7 have information flowing to board members across
8 expertise that we can understand easily and
9 conducting an annual review of Myron and
10 supporting him in evaluating his team, because we
11 only have one employee for us, and to think about
12 how we can help him support what's going on in
13 the building.

14 You know, I think we already have a
15 strong founding board. You know, it's -- one of
16 my goals is to accelerate pass the phase of like
17 a friends and family board to a real professional
18 operating board. And I think we are already, you
19 know, farther along the way than I think a lot of
20 schools are at this phase in terms of being
21 strategic about what expertise is around the
22 table, what experiences are around the table, and

1 also just making sure that we gel as a group so
2 that we can do -- we can play that role
3 effectively.

4 CHAIR CRUZ: Thank you.

5 MEMBER SHELTON: This is outside of what
6 we thought about, talked about, and what you all
7 had in your capacity hearing, but I wanted to ask
8 this specifically of middle schools. And just
9 thinking about where would you see your students
10 going to high school; you know, the more that
11 you're looking to locate is where it is and we
12 know what the high schools look like there, what
13 are you thinking about where your students would
14 attend school?

15 MR. LONG: Thank you. That's a really
16 great question, and so we want our students to
17 have options. We strongly believe that our
18 students should be prepared to be able to go to
19 the specific high school that they desire, but
20 like you said, we know that that particular more
21 can be a challenge. And so we've already had
22 early conversations with Stacy Kane and WLA as a

1 possible high school that we would send our
2 students given both of our shared alignment to
3 social justice and equity as well. And we would
4 be happy and delighted if our students would be
5 able to be as a part of that particular school
6 community given the work that they're doing,
7 particularly around race and equity. But they're
8 -- if our students are seeking to go to other
9 schools, that's one of the things that we have
10 already learned from the head of schools at
11 Center for Inspired Teaching, Debbie, because we
12 know that families are going to ask that question
13 around like high school, and so thinking through
14 how we use this planning year to begin to develop
15 those relationships with different schools to
16 make sure that our students feel that we have
17 their backs and we can support them in that
18 transition.

19 MEMBER SHELTON: And then to go to your
20 capacity interview, can you talk about how plan
21 to support students with disabilities and how you
22 -- what it would look like in an inclusive

1 setting and how the supports vary and intensify
2 across your continuum?

3 MR. JOHNSON: So I'll start very broadly
4 just saying that we believe in providing an
5 inclusive learning environment for all students
6 and providing the least restrictive environment
7 for every student. Having said that, part of the
8 thing that we've done in our budgeting model is
9 made sure that we provide for three special
10 education teachers as well as a director of
11 student supports. When you think about providing
12 adequate services for students, it always starts
13 with professional development for those people
14 giving instruction to those students. So one of
15 the things that we want to make sure that we do
16 is, through the director of student supports, is
17 provide adequate and frequent support to the
18 director of student supports so that he can,
19 therefore, support the students with the
20 instructional coaches that -- and the teachers --
21 sorry, not the instructional coaches, the
22 teachers that would teach students with

1 disabilities.

2 In addition to that, we also -- I also
3 speak about the fact that we are -- we have
4 allocated for three special education teachers to
5 support our fifth and sixth grade in our opening
6 year. So if we think about -- I'm making a very
7 like tangible example -- so in fifth and sixth
8 grade -- again, I'll speak about the double block
9 -- so in math, literacy, we have double block of
10 math and literacy and in those blocks, you will
11 have a special education teacher that will push
12 into that block providing additional supports.

13 The second thing that we think about in
14 terms of -- in addition to professional
15 development is providing adequate planning so in
16 addition to having a Wednesday professional
17 development, part of that time is built in which
18 teachers will have the opportunity to plan, with
19 grade-level teachers, to make sure that they're
20 providing inclusive supports for all students.

21 The third thing that I think is really
22 important is making sure that we have adequate

1 data practices and that we are constantly looking
2 at data to determine how effectively we are
3 providing supports for students with
4 disabilities, but really, all students. So I
5 will say that we plan to examine data weekly but
6 every six weeks freshly, making sure that we're
7 visiting IEPs to make sure that we're providing
8 the right goals and the right supports for each
9 one of our students each day.

10 MR. LONG: And I would add that within
11 our staffing model, we made a very intentional
12 decision to have three special education
13 teachers, because we did not want to fall into
14 the trap of the teacher having to play this
15 hybrid role of like I'm going to do the resource
16 room, I'm going to do push in, I'm going to do
17 pull out. And we know that that happens in
18 schools and teachers begin to feel burned out.

19 We also know for us, the liberatory
20 design thinking class is what might some people
21 would consider in their school like an elective,
22 but it's a core class for us, and we wanted to

1 make sure that we have the bandwidth for our
2 teachers to be supporting all of our classes, and
3 we've already done -- we've already modeled out
4 what that would look like for students along the
5 continuum of services in the sample schedules
6 that we provided in the application.

7 MS. TUCK: I think the only other thing
8 that we would add is that like we know that we're
9 going to have students that we will work together
10 with the teams to identify what their needs are
11 and write individual education plans that best
12 serve their needs, and that could be at any level
13 or any setting. And so along with state
14 guidelines and requirements, also the students
15 that we receive, we would honor what's in their
16 IEPs and provide them an appropriate educational
17 plan.

18 MEMBER SHELTON: Thank you.

19 MEMBER BUMBAUGH: I'm going to drill
20 into the questions that Rick asked. When you see
21 this sort of tension between achievement and the
22 sorts of things you were talking about, like

1 culture and attendance and re-enrollment, it
2 sounds like when you were at E.L. Haynes, you got
3 that part of the formula correct. Some of the
4 schools that we call "high-achieving" don't get
5 that part of the formula correct. They have high
6 suspension rates and relatively low re-enrollment
7 rates which calls into question how we're
8 defining achievement. But if you could go back
9 to E.L. Haynes and maintain the parts of that
10 formula that had high attendance rates and high
11 re-enrollment rates and low suspension rates, very
12 specifically, what would you do differently now
13 to work on achievement rates and how would that
14 be reflected in your school? And Brandon, you
15 should feel free to jump in as well.

16 MR. LONG: Okay. Thank you. So I spoke
17 of this a little bit earlier but I think my
18 understanding of instruction has evolved in the
19 sense of the through-line; right? And so one, we
20 know that we have to get teachers -- we have to
21 create a staff and adult culture whereas staff
22 and adults feel that they are invested in the

1 instructional decisions that are made, and we're
2 creating a culture of student investment --
3 excuse me -- teacher investment and not
4 necessarily a culture of adult compliance,
5 because we know when there is tension over
6 curriculum choices, that that can be problematic
7 and lead to a decline.

8 And so in thinking through the model
9 that we chose, we wanted to make sure that all of
10 the curriculum was aligned to our core beliefs
11 around is it research-based, does it have proven
12 results, does it have built-in supports for
13 students with disabilities, and does it provide
14 the opportunity for students to engage in these
15 deeper learning roll-out experiences. And so I
16 think one, it's about building that correct adult
17 culture around instruction, and it's going to
18 need to grow up, which is a mindset challenge.

19 And then I think the technical actual
20 move around like creating -- excuse me --
21 implementing high-quality instruction and
22 curriculum that has already been developed so

1 that teachers aren't trying to make up lesson
2 plans day-to-day, because we know that that is
3 what fails. And now we have to think through
4 what is the high-quality PD that teachers are
5 going to have on a consistent basis in order to
6 make sure that they are implementing the
7 curriculum correctly. And so in our model now,
8 we have Wednesday half-day PD schedule where
9 teachers have a rotating cycle where they're able
10 to collectively create lesson plans but also go
11 into the specific strategy that we've identified
12 as universal and will be able to get that support
13 there.

14 And in terms of other types of PD,
15 making sure that every particular leader in our
16 building is trained on our particular way of
17 observing and giving feedback, and making sure
18 teachers get their bite-sized action step that
19 they need in order to grow, and also weekly data
20 meetings and making sure that we're consistently
21 monitoring the data so that we can predict.
22 There should be no surprise at the end of the

1 year of whether or not our students are exceeding
2 our goals, and once we get that data, making sure
3 that we have responded to it using an RTI
4 framework in order to make sure that we have the
5 interventions that we needed to do as well. And
6 so I think that's the types of different shifts
7 that I would definitely make within the next
8 model and the support that Brandon will get
9 through the school leader lab will actually cover
10 all of that particular through-line and then
11 applying that same strategic thinking with
12 instruction to culture is how we merge those
13 things together.

14 MEMBER SHELTON: So I'm thinking about
15 a question that a friend posed to me earlier
16 today in thinking about balancing -- with Steve's
17 point -- discipline but also creating a space of,
18 you know, budding social justice. So how do you
19 -- what are you going to be doing to support the
20 inclusiveness, the affirming, you know, pro-black
21 pro, right; how are you balancing those two
22 cultures in a way that when they go to high

1 school, if and when they are brought into a space
2 and opportunity, that they are assured of
3 themselves? Like what culture -- what are you
4 creating for the student in that experience in
5 that four years?

6 MEMBER BUMBAUGH: So I'll go back and
7 reverence Crew. So the curriculum that we plan
8 to use during Crew is called "being the change."
9 And a lot of that curriculum is based -- is
10 rooted in the ability to be able to be aware of
11 not only like identity and the different
12 complexities of our identity but how that shows
13 up in the larger framework of this world and then
14 how do we deal with those things. I think one of
15 the biggest things that students content with is
16 having number one, first, the language to be able
17 to have those conversations and awareness to have
18 -- an awareness of themselves to know like what
19 it is that they're experiencing but then also the
20 power to speak up against that. So I think that
21 Crew will be the first opportunity for them to
22 create that awareness and that understanding of

1 themselves as well as have the language to be
2 able to engage in those conversations.

3 And I think that because a lot of our
4 curriculum is rooted in the pursuit of social
5 justice, we will give students opportunities to
6 go out and to advocate for things that they're
7 passionate about. Does that mean that they will
8 be faced with adversity? Sure, but we all are,
9 correct? So in knowing that, students are going
10 to have a culmination of experiences that will
11 allow them the opportunity to have these three
12 kind of merging of a skill set so that they can
13 go to high school and feel prepared and feel
14 comfortable enough to engage in those
15 conversations no matter what environment that
16 they do engage in.

17 MR. LONG: And in addition, we plan to
18 affirm students' identity through community
19 meetings as well because we know that that's a
20 place where students get a chance to really be
21 their authentic selves. And for us, social
22 justice shows up in the text and the tasks and

1 the topics that we engage in. And so what we
2 often see in middle school is that students do
3 the identity work almost as an active insurgency,
4 because they know that their teachers may not be
5 able to engage in these conversations about my
6 blackness, my womanness, my Latinness, me being a
7 queer, me being a potential atheist, right, and
8 so we have thought through curricula that
9 actually builds in that opportunity for students
10 to engage in those rigorous -- engage in those
11 particular social justice issues so that they can
12 see the through-line. They can say like, "in my
13 Crew, we talked about intersectionality and we
14 intentionally chose this text because it actually
15 gets the reader to explore this idea of
16 intersectionality even more, and making sure that
17 teachers and students have the capacity. But we
18 also know as a school, we need to make sure that
19 we are monitoring our ability to do that.

20 And we know that there are certain
21 frameworks like Castle that do the social and
22 emotional learning, but we actually want to take

1 it a little bit further. And so there's an
2 organization called Tripod that's working on
3 creating a DEI assessment. And it asks like how
4 often do my teachers have conversations about
5 race and equity, do I feel like I can be my
6 authentic self, because we want to constantly be
7 using data to improve our practice, and we want
8 to hear from the students about whether or not we
9 are affirming their individual identities, which
10 is really one of the important core components of
11 our model.

12 MEMBER SHELTON: Thank you.

13 MR. LONG: Thank you.

14 VICE CHAIR BIREDA: Just maybe one last
15 question. I'm curious about the diverse by
16 design intention. It's -- obviously, we have
17 many schools that come before us and have that
18 desire. It's difficult to do. You've said a lot
19 of things that I think would appeal to a wide
20 swath of families, but how -- what are you going
21 to do to do as best as you can to create the
22 school that has, as you said, less than 50

1 percent of any one ethnic group?

2 MR. LONG: Thank you. And so we are
3 seeking to create an integrated community and
4 that's our goal. And we know that we can't
5 necessarily predict who comes to our building,
6 and so we believe, as a school, that all students
7 are different and they bring a variety of
8 different parts to themselves. And so we know
9 that if a -- if our students who, even if they
10 may be considering going to a school that is a
11 homogenous, there's still a particular uniqueness
12 within every particular student around class,
13 around Ward, which is really important to DC, and
14 home language. But we also know that there are
15 schools currently that have done this work around
16 recruiting of diverse student families.

17 So we had the opportunity to talk to the
18 folks from E.L. Haynes. We had the opportunity
19 to talk to folks from Cap City and Bricolage in
20 New Orleans, and so one of the things that they
21 reminded us is that in order for you to recruit
22 diverse families, you have to be at places where

1 there are diverse groups of people.

2 And so thinking through very
3 strategically like what are the street festivals,
4 Adams Morgan, Takoma Park, H Street festivals
5 that we know will bring in a huge broad band of
6 cities and families that actually reflect the
7 diversity and the changing landscape within DC
8 and how do we strategically target those
9 particular events in order to make sure that we
10 are doing what we can in order to recruit the
11 diversity that we want to have as a school.

12 And like you said, we also know that as
13 an EL school and as a social justice school, it
14 definitely puts us in a position to recruit some
15 of those families, and so making sure that we are
16 constantly reminding our families that we are a
17 social justice school but we're an expeditionary
18 learning school that is focused on social justice
19 as well in terms of making in terms of making
20 sure that we are in that market.

21 And so we know that some of our
22 potential sister schools in the EL framework have

1 considerable wait lists of a diverse background
2 population. And so we can think through how do
3 we leverage their networks in order to make sure
4 that like you may not be able to get into Cap
5 City but there's another school called Social
6 Justice School that's also a learning expedition
7 school that you can get in, because we'll have a
8 smaller wait list more than likely, in year one
9 at least.

10 MR. JOHNSON: I also would like to add.
11 So this upcoming year, I'll be working at the
12 Center for Inspired Demonstration School, which
13 is considered to be a diverse by design school,
14 and I'm also partaking in a fellowship that will
15 allow me opportunities to go visit schools that
16 are diverse by design. And so I'm hoping to
17 learn from them as well how to maybe continue --
18 consider how to recruit a diverse student body.

19 CHAIR CRUZ: Good questions. Thank you,
20 guys, very much.

21 MR. LONG: Thank you for this
22 opportunity.

1 (Applause.)

2 CHAIR CRUZ: All right. If the BOLT
3 Academy team would join us?

4 (Pause.)

5 CHAIR CRUZ: All right, you guys know the
6 drill by now, intros and opening remarks.

7 MS. SHANAHAN: So to start off, my name
8 is Meaghan Shanahan. I am the founder and
9 executive director of BOLT Academy.

10 MS. STONE: Hi, my name is Chandell
11 Stone. I'm the prospective founding principal.

12 MR. FOX: Hi, my name is Travis Fox.
13 I'm the prospective director of operations.

14 MR. CARTER: Good evening. My name is
15 Cordell Carter, board chair.

16 MS. SHANAHAN: So, although there's been
17 great advancement in D.C. schools over the past
18 decade, the reality is that many high schools,
19 especially those serving predominantly African
20 American students in Wards 6, 7, and 8, do not
21 prepare students for success in the future.

22 Research from the D.C. Fiscal Policy

1 Institute indicates that the average median
2 income for black families in D.C. is less than a
3 third of that of white families, and individuals
4 in the District with a bachelor's degree or
5 higher had a median wage more than twice that of
6 those with only a high school diploma.

7 Existing DCPS schools are not preparing
8 students to change these statistics. Too many
9 seniors graduate without the knowledge and skills
10 they need to be prepared for jobs or post-
11 secondary education.

12 D.C. needs schools that prepare students
13 academically, teach students relevant and
14 applicable skills, and provide experiences that
15 level and inequitable playing field.

16 BOLT Academy will provide students with
17 the knowledge, skills, and experiences they need
18 to overcome existing barriers in D.C. and beyond.
19 BOLT students will graduate prepared for college
20 level instruction across all core subjects.

21 Our education model will meet students
22 at their current academic level and provide the

1 targeted support they need to increase
2 performance.

3 While many schools teach to the middle
4 leaving students on the margins without the
5 support they need, BOLT will supplement grade
6 level instruction with individualized lab classes
7 where every student has ample time for
8 reinforcement, remediation, and enrichment.

9 Required courses in computer science
10 will provide students with critical future ready
11 technology skills and teach them how to use
12 computational thinking to understand, break down,
13 and solve complex problems. These courses will
14 provide skills necessary for many competitive
15 jobs in high growth, high paying sectors.

16 College and career success courses at
17 BOLT will focus on building the skills students
18 need for employment, post-secondary education,
19 and independent living.

20 Students will learn about their role in
21 the world, develop and apply entrepreneurship and
22 design thinking skills, and learn how to apply

1 for and succeed in future classes and careers.

2 Families, employers, and college
3 admissions counselors all understand the need to
4 prepare students to interact with, understand,
5 and work alongside people from various cultures
6 and backgrounds. Unfortunately, many D.C.
7 schools continue to segregate students by race
8 and socioeconomic status, limiting opportunities
9 to develop these important skills.

10 BOLT is prepared to provide fully funded
11 immersive experiences for all students during
12 which they will have the opportunity to develop
13 highly marketable foreign language skills,
14 participate in intercultural exchange, and
15 connect what they've learned to the broader
16 world.

17 Studying abroad has been shown to
18 develop important traits, including self
19 advocacy, independence, and confidence, traits
20 that will serve students regardless of the future
21 they choose.

22 The BOLT team has a proven track record

1 of increasing student and teacher performance,
2 designing curriculum aligned to development of
3 critical skills, and operating complex programs
4 across countries.

5 We're a team of dedicated entrepreneurs
6 who have partnered with communities to design and
7 lead schools and educational programs that have
8 impacted tens of thousands of students across 11
9 countries.

10 With our combined experience, dedication
11 to the mission, and innovative model, we'll
12 provide students boundless opportunities to learn
13 and travel, changing their lives, their
14 communities, and the world.

15 CHAIR CRUZ: Thank you. I can lead off.
16 So you came before us last year and we elected at
17 that time not to move forward, not to approve a
18 charter.

19 Since that time, if you could tell us a
20 little bit about what has changed about the
21 application, and specifically how you've
22 addressed some of the deficiencies or concerns

1 that we raised around the application last year?

2 MS. SHANAHAN: Definitely. So we took
3 a lot of time to really reflect on the feedback
4 from the board and from the staff, as well as
5 continued feedback that we have solicited from
6 families and community members, specifically in
7 the wards that we hope to serve.

8 And so if we kind of break down the
9 issues that were kind of front of mind last year,
10 we had a residential program that provided a lot
11 of concerns. We have removed the residential
12 program.

13 We still believe that there are many --
14 there's a lot of value to a residential program,
15 but in thinking through what was most critical to
16 our mission, the residential program was kind of
17 the first thing that we were able to step back
18 from.

19 Another large concern was around kind of
20 the vagueness in our study abroad programming
21 proposal. So what we've done this year is really
22 tightened up what that study abroad looks like,

1 formed partnerships with two industry leading
2 education companies that do study abroad at
3 exchange programs for students in high school, so
4 that's CET Academic Programs and Amigos de las
5 Americas.

6 And paired down from last year where we
7 said, you know, we're confident we could find a
8 program in a country that would meet the needs of
9 each student, brought that down to a menu of 12
10 programs across eight countries with these two
11 partners that were really sure.

12 It's very clear. It's concise. They're
13 ready to meet the needs of our students, and
14 moving that study abroad portion to the summer
15 rather than doing it during an academic term,
16 because there's a lot of concerns about how we
17 would know what students learned and what they
18 missed.

19 When we think about our founding group,
20 so you should recognize most of us who are here
21 who are back and dedicated to the mission.

22 There were some concerns about the

1 experience level of our founding group, and so
2 still working to continue to increase the skills
3 within our group.

4 We've brought on Travis, who is a new
5 member, as a prospective director of operations,
6 which was in direct response to some concerns
7 around a lack of finance experience, and so he's
8 come in with some great experience there.

9 And the other kind of areas that we've
10 looked at and that we've edited was one around
11 like exactly what curriculum we're using and
12 making sure that we have a proven effective
13 curriculum that is ready to go and accessible for
14 our teachers and students, and making sure that
15 our students with special needs are accounted for
16 and supported in absolutely every aspect of the
17 school design from daily lessons to study abroad.

18 CHAIR CRUZ: Specifically one of the
19 concerns was raised, to your point about the
20 founding group, was school leadership, and you
21 mentioned that. So how do you propose to -- I
22 mean, it's a pretty fundamental set of skills

1 that we're looking for in the founding group, so
2 if that isn't fully remediated at this point,
3 what's your plan?

4 MS. STONE: So I just wanted to get an
5 opportunity to maybe speak a little bit more to
6 my experience with, or how I feel that I am
7 equipped to lead a school.

8 And first starting with my experience as
9 an assistant principal and as a teacher, I taught
10 in Harlem at a high performing charter school
11 with demonstrated results. I also was an
12 assistant principal in the South Bronx which is
13 the poorest congressional district in this
14 country.

15 And, you know, under my leadership, my
16 school, when I initially started my stint there,
17 we were at the bottom of the network in terms of
18 results at the charter school network that I was
19 working with, and at the end of the year, we were
20 number one and ranked number eight in the state
21 in mathematics.

22 And in my second year, we were able to,

1 as an assistant principal, we were able to
2 increase results in a neighboring school in the
3 South Bronx as well under my leadership, and with
4 a predominantly, a teacher team of predominantly
5 brand-new teachers, I think additionally, which I
6 think speaks to my ability to lead a team of
7 teachers.

8 In terms of the ability to found a
9 school and some of those entrepreneurial skills
10 that are necessary, I'm a two-time company
11 founder.

12 I've operated a company now, one of
13 which for five years called Destination Impact,
14 which operates across five countries and also has
15 done significant community work to the tune of
16 creating a teacher scholarship program in Kenya,
17 building a free children's library, various
18 endeavors.

19 And so, yes, I think that speaks to my
20 ability to sort of get scrappy and lead a team,
21 especially across multiple countries.

22 And additionally, I think a lot of, part

1 of our school design has like a tech heavy
2 component as well. My master's degree is focused
3 on educational technology. I did research under
4 Math 180 under the program author, and also
5 managed computer science teams as well as a
6 school leader.

7 And while I know that still doesn't
8 replace the exact job of being a school
9 principal, I think that a lot of those skills
10 that I bring to the table equips me to be able to
11 take that on.

12 CHAIR CRUZ: Okay, thank you.

13 MEMBER CRUSEY: Hi, one of my colleagues
14 spoke earlier to another applicant who has, their
15 application has graduation requirements that are
16 more intense and kind of more rigorous than
17 neighboring DCPS high schools or other DCPS high
18 schools.

19 And we've seen instances where
20 retainment of students, students end up moving
21 high schools so as to be able to increase their
22 chances of graduating.

1 Similarly, your plans have more
2 restrictive graduation requirements. Can you
3 speak to how you plan to mitigate those kinds of
4 dynamics or concerns for losing students?

5 MS. STONE: Sure, I'm no stranger to
6 that being an issue. When I was teaching at the
7 high school level, I also worked in a school that
8 similar had very high standards for graduation
9 requirements, and I think that they were able to
10 --

11 The way that they were able to
12 accomplish being able to retain students, I would
13 hope to bring some of those elements into our
14 school.

15 And so one of those is being extremely
16 up front with parents and there being no got you
17 around what our requirements are for students to
18 be successful at the school so that parents and
19 families are joining us because they believe in
20 what we believe in, which is making sure valuing
21 preparedness over speed in getting through
22 graduation.

1 I think additionally, one of the
2 elements of the design in terms of the difference
3 between failing a class and failing an entire
4 grade level kind of gives us some additional
5 chips in that most schools, if you fail one of
6 the core classes, you're retained for the entire
7 grade, and that's not the case in our structure.

8 So they would be able to continue in
9 those courses. So if they have classes that they
10 are excelling in, that they're able to stay the
11 course in those and have the thing that is
12 inspiring and working for them while they get
13 remediation in these other places.

14 And so, yeah, I think those are some of
15 the elements. Obviously you still will have
16 people who are like, "I want my child to finish
17 in four years."

18 But I do think that, especially over the
19 course of time, when you have college acceptance
20 letters and retention rates that speak to the
21 power of rigorous instruction and holding a
22 really strong line that those people then flock

1 back and start to realize the power in what we're
2 suggesting.

3 MEMBER CRUSEY: I'll just jump in with
4 another question. So in a blended learning
5 model, for students who don't master content the
6 first time, and also the same students who are
7 approaching adulthood and have the chance to move
8 if they don't feel confident in their ability to
9 continue on and persist and all of that, so how
10 do you intend to keep students engaged in a
11 blended learning model and, yes, speak to that,
12 please?

13 MS. SHANAHAN: So I think that, you
14 know, one of the first ways that we keep students
15 engaged is by using a really diverse set of
16 resources.

17 So when we're thinking about our lab
18 classes and the list of activities that students
19 are going through individually kind of at their
20 own pace, we're looking at a variety of different
21 materials that range from traditional worksheets,
22 to small groups doing a small project, to

1 problem-based and project-based learning, to, you
2 know, a Khan Academy video and a set of questions
3 that follows it.

4 And so having a variety of different
5 materials that address a variety of different
6 learning modalities I think is important to
7 keeping kids engaged, also looking at the
8 opportunities that we provide kind of outside of
9 the traditional school schedule.

10 So one way in which we're doing that is
11 through our accelerator programs, which there are
12 three. There's a winter, a spring, and a summer
13 accelerator.

14 Summer accelerator is much more like a
15 traditional summer school program, but the winter
16 and spring accelerators are seven-day programs
17 that occur, they slot right in right before
18 Christmas break and one right before spring break
19 that allow students and teachers to do more
20 project-based cross disciplinary projects and
21 activities that allow them to connect with their
22 learning or what they're about to learn to the

1 broader world to see connections between what
2 they're learning in different classes to really
3 explore some areas that students or teachers are
4 passionate about.

5 And I think these provide, you know,
6 great motivators, and those are designed in-house
7 by our teachers, by teams, cross disciplinary
8 teams of teachers so that we're really able to
9 kind of address specific student interests or
10 specific teacher interests and pull them in.

11 Also through programs such as our travel
12 programs, the BOLT trips, which are structured
13 occurring in the summer between school years, and
14 so we start after ninth grade with a domestic
15 trip where students explore a part of the United
16 States that provides a new context or helps them
17 understand.

18 We're working on developing trips that
19 are aligned to our social studies curriculum, so
20 like a suggested BOLT trip for ninth grade might
21 be to do a tour of the deep south to look at what
22 was the impact, the lasting impacts of the

1 transatlantic slave trade which they learn about
2 in ninth grade history.

3 After their sophomore year, we're
4 looking at the first international trip. We
5 really want to make sure we're scaffolding these
6 trips so that students and their parents are
7 confident that they have the skills that they
8 need to travel on a more like independent basis,
9 so we're starting by building these skills in
10 group travel.

11 And so we have an organization, Walking
12 Tree Travel, that came up with a proposed
13 itinerary for us. They've done numerous trips
14 for schools all over, including several trips for
15 DCI, and so they came up with a program that
16 would explore some of the history of the world
17 wars in Germany, and so our students would get
18 kind of like that connection to the real world.

19 And then looking at our longer term more
20 immersive experience, which is a four to six-week
21 experience through either CET Academic Programs
22 or Amigos de las Americas, that allows students

1 to develop, increase and develop new language
2 skills, allows them to work and live alongside
3 people from a very different culture and allows
4 them to gain these intercultural experiences and
5 skills that are so important for so many jobs
6 that are like increasing in the globalized world.

7 MEMBER CRUSEY: Okay, that sounds
8 fascinating. How are both the accelerator and
9 the study abroad opportunities connecting back to
10 academic goals and measuring success --

11 MS. SHANAHAN: Yeah.

12 MEMBER CRUSEY: -- and credit access?

13 MS. SHANAHAN: Sure, so the accelerators
14 are like -- the heart of what we are planning to
15 do at BOLT is all about alignment to the
16 standards and ensuring that students are
17 continuously developing skills, that we're
18 meeting them at whatever level they're coming in
19 at.

20 And we know from other schools that
21 those levels vary wildly for ninth grades, but
22 meeting them at their level and giving them the

1 support that they need to continuously increase
2 their performance.

3 And so that looks like remediation for
4 students who need it, and it looks like
5 enrichment for students who need it, and it might
6 look different for the same student across
7 different classes.

8 So the programs that are being developed
9 for the accelerators are aligned to the standards
10 that were covered in the previous semester.

11 So when we're looking at a winter
12 accelerator, perhaps that specific accelerator is
13 developed by a U.S. history teacher and an
14 English teacher who are doing a cross
15 disciplinary project.

16 And so they're looking at what are the
17 skills that we want students to develop in the
18 first term? So we wanted them to look at primary
19 source documents, and we wanted them to, you
20 know, dive into world history on this one
21 specific topic.

22 And so using those to weave into these

1 accelerator programs so that students have the
2 opportunity to get those skills reinforced or
3 potentially preview skills from the next term,
4 but mostly we're looking at continuing to monitor
5 how students performed in the previous term and
6 using these different opportunities to kind of
7 hit on those same skills and keep students and
8 teachers engaged in the work that they're doing.

9 So that's a continuous process
10 throughout the year of how do these fit to the
11 standards and how can we make sure that they're
12 being used in the best possible way?

13 The first two BOLT trips are much more
14 focused on like curricular alignment, less on
15 necessarily proving a standard and more on,
16 "Okay, we spent six weeks talking about the
17 transatlantic slave trade. Let's look at like
18 what that looks like in the real world.

19 "Let's provide deeper context. Let's
20 have deeper conversations about the impact that
21 what we learn in the classroom has in the world
22 around us," because I think that that's -- I know

1 for me personally, that's extremely motivating.

2 When I was in high school, I often
3 questioned why I was learning what I was learning
4 and like why it was important, how it was going
5 to serve me, and so I think that that brings a
6 lot of students in being able to make those
7 connections.

8 And the more immersive BOLT trip is less
9 focused on curricular alignment and more focused
10 on the development of design thinking and cross
11 cultural skills, specific academic areas of focus
12 for like the CET academic programs and things
13 like that.

14 So that is a little less tied into like
15 common core standards. It still goes to our like
16 P21 global competence standards, which are things
17 that are woven throughout our programs to ensure
18 that students are developing them before they
19 graduate.

20 VICE CHAIR BIREDA: So as you remember,
21 one of our concerns last year was around
22 inclusion and the ability of students with

1 disabilities to access all parts of your program.

2 I continue to --

3 I'm not sure how that happens for the
4 more immersive four to six-week trips, especially
5 when we're talking about a student who is a level
6 three or four, so I would like to hear your
7 thoughts on that.

8 And I think last year, I raised just the
9 legal implications of that, like potentially a
10 change in placement, so I'm not sure if you've
11 figured that out this year?

12 MS. SHANAHAN: So one thing from a legal
13 aspect, because this is occurring outside of the
14 regular school year, it's like an additional
15 trip, so it does not constitute a change in
16 placement.

17 We wanted to make sure that students,
18 every student was able to access these programs,
19 and so they're slotted into a time of year that
20 allows students who need to participate in the
21 summer accelerator or like extended school year
22 programs, they're still able to access these

1 trips because they occur after ESY or summer
2 accelerator would end and before the new school
3 year starts.

4 VICE CHAIR BIREDA: So they're getting
5 credit through for the more immersive trips?

6 MS. SHANAHAN: They're getting credit?

7 VICE CHAIR BIREDA: I mean, it's part of
8 their --

9 MS. SHANAHAN: It's part of the
10 experience, but they're not receiving any grades.
11 They're not --

12 VICE CHAIR BIREDA: Okay.

13 MS. SHANAHAN: Yeah, so higher
14 performing students may elect to participate in
15 CET academic program excursions, which those come
16 with four college credits, and so students are
17 taking courses, a language course and a site
18 specific course that ranges from Chinese
19 entrepreneurship and technology to Italian art,
20 culture, and society.

21 So there are some students who will be
22 receiving credit, but it's not like reflected on

1 the BOLT transcript. It will be, you know,
2 towards their college credits.

3 For students who need extra support in
4 a variety of different ways, we've talked to
5 these two organizations. Both have experience
6 providing accommodations and modifications to
7 their existing course work, and site placements,
8 and things like that.

9 So with CET, like I said, our students
10 are in class in the morning and then they spend
11 the afternoon doing cultural immersion, trips,
12 things like that.

13 They have fully established and staffed
14 residential sites at each one of their locations,
15 and so they are taken care of within those like
16 residential sites.

17 With Amigos de las Americas, students
18 are placed with home stay families, and
19 traditionally, they're placed like several home
20 stays within one small village, and a site
21 supervisor kind of goes around and visits each
22 one, and these are all families that have been

1 vetted thoroughly and they've got strict safety
2 protocols and things like that.

3 So in talking to Amigos, they were
4 talking about how they might be able to support
5 more higher needs learners, students with
6 physical impairments who may not be able to, you
7 know, get to the village that they have other
8 students in, students with behavioral concerns,
9 students who just need more support for daily
10 activities and life in one of these sites.

11 And so they have expressed an interest
12 in developing a program only for BOLT should we
13 have students that require it that could be
14 located in a more major city, that could have
15 more frequent, you know, check ins and feedback,
16 that could potentially include a one-on-one or a
17 staff member from BOLT going and joining the
18 students on their process, also having
19 flexibility about the length of the trip.

20 And so we believe that there are many
21 different ways to develop the types of global
22 literacy and global competence that we want.

1 They're going to be woven throughout our program.
2 We think that BOLT trips are a fantastic way to
3 do that, but they're not the only way to do it.

4 And so if we needed to, say, reduce the
5 length of a BOLT trip, like one of our Amigos
6 trips to three weeks or two weeks in order to
7 accommodate student needs, that's something that
8 we have flexibility to do because they design
9 both, like, off-the-shelf projects, and they are
10 willing to design specific programs to meet the
11 needs of our specific students.

12 VICE CHAIR BIREDA: Okay, but that's
13 fully paid for, the trips?

14 MS. SHANAHAN: Correct.

15 VICE CHAIR BIREDA: Okay, if a student
16 -- we've had schools before that have done these
17 sort of trips, and I think paid for them, and
18 they still had trouble getting students to go.

19 If a student didn't attend a BOLT trip,
20 let's say their 10th grade year, like how much of
21 like the BOLT experience are they losing, just
22 the reality of --

1 MS. SHANAHAN: Sure.

2 VICE CHAIR BIREDA: -- like life and --

3 MS. SHANAHAN: I mean, I think that
4 these trips are going to be extremely
5 motivational, and exciting, and engaging for
6 students. We consistently have gotten feedback
7 from students and parents that this was something
8 that would draw them to our program.

9 We see things like the DCPS global
10 studies program that are massively over enrolled,
11 like there's not enough seats for the students
12 who want to be there.

13 And so I think that the majority of
14 students who elect to join our program are
15 probably doing it with at least the knowledge,
16 or, I know, excitement about participating in
17 these trips. However, they're not firmly
18 required.

19 Like I said, what is required, like what
20 we're focusing on is building those skills, and
21 the BOLT trips are not the only way to do them.
22 They're just a really effective fun way to do

1 them, so we would have flexibility.

2 You know, there may also be students
3 whose immigration status doesn't allow them to
4 leave the country, so we'll be flexible in
5 looking at the specific needs of our students
6 when they're through the door, and we have a full
7 school year to understand what those needs are
8 and prepare students and prepare families before
9 we ever take our first trip.

10 And I think that the scaffolding of
11 those trips, going from a domestic trip that's
12 shorter, you know, five to seven days, to a 10 to
13 12-day international trip all together as a group
14 really is more likely to build those feelings of
15 confidence for both students and parents.

16 VICE CHAIR BIREDA: My last question, am
17 I right that teachers would be both having the
18 demands just of being a regular teacher and
19 teaching at the accelerator?

20 MS. SHANAHAN: So the way that the
21 accelerators are designed is that teachers would
22 plan either spring or winter, either winter or

1 spring accelerator as part of a team.

2 VICE CHAIR BIREDA: Okay.

3 MS. SHANAHAN: And so half the teachers
4 would plan winter accelerator and administer it.
5 The other half of teachers would do spring, so
6 the flip flop, they would have off.

7 VICE CHAIR BIREDA: And teachers will
8 plan the trips? I know not the longer immersive
9 trips that have a partner, but the shorter trip,
10 the teachers will plan and ostensibly run?

11 MS. SHANAHAN: So the trips abroad with
12 Walking Tree Travel, that will be planned
13 externally. It's entirely possible -- we've
14 talked with Walking Tree about potentially
15 planning our domestic trip as well. That would
16 not be something that would fall on teachers.

17 So we'll have a director of
18 international education who would probably take
19 the lead on developing that trip, but
20 consistently thinking about what is covered in
21 classes.

22 So there would be some collaboration

1 with teachers to see what, you know, students
2 were interested in and what they had covered, but
3 it's not the responsibility of the teacher to
4 plan any of the excursions.

5 CHAIR CRUZ: All right, are there any
6 other questions? Okay, thank you, guys.

7 MS. SHANAHAN: Thank you.

8 CHAIR CRUZ: All right, if we can bring
9 up the team from Aspire to Excellence Academy?
10 Welcome, if you could all introduce yourself and
11 then deliver your opening statement?

12 MS. OWENS: Dr. Kristal Owens, I'm the
13 chair.

14 MS. BANKS HALL: Stacie Banks Hall.

15 MR. JONES: I'm Dr. Charles Jones, board
16 member.

17 MS. MARBRAY: Robyn Marbray, founding
18 group member and director of finance and
19 operations.

20 MS. THOMAS: And I'm Krystle Thomas
21 helping with the special ed department.

22 MS. OWENS: Good evening, members of the

1 Public Charter School Board, staff, guests, and
2 supporters. My name is Dr. Kristal Owens, and I
3 am the chair of Aspire to Excellence Academy
4 Public Charter School founding group.

5 Aspire to Excellence Academy is created
6 to provide a comprehensive adult education
7 program for young adults here in the District of
8 Columbia who may need a high school credential,
9 valuable job skills to improve the quality of
10 life for themselves and their families, and a
11 solid educational foundation for three and four-
12 year-old children.

13 Aspire Academy's mission is to offer
14 high quality vocational and preschool
15 opportunities for children and adults that will
16 put families on the pathway to educational,
17 personal, and financial success.

18 Research on education for children and
19 adults in the District has shown that more than
20 60,000 residents lack a high school credential,
21 and yet by 2020, nearly 65 percent of all jobs in
22 the economy will require education beyond a high

1 school diploma.

2 The lack of a high school credential for
3 adults is strongly associated with unemployment,
4 poverty, and eventually similar problems for
5 their children.

6 In fact, low educational attainment
7 coupled with poor literacy and numeracy skills
8 contribute to poverty and are ingredients for
9 homelessness, unemployment, underemployment, high
10 crime levels, and poor general health.

11 These statistics and their impacts are
12 an enormous challenge for children and also the
13 immense possibilities for the creation of
14 educational opportunities for working age adults.

15 We believe this data illustrates the
16 need for innovative and collaborative solutions
17 to address the city's adult education challenges.
18 To respond to this need, our founding group is
19 proposing to establish Aspire to Excellent
20 Academy Public Charter School.

21 Our goal is to provide adult learners
22 the opportunity to further their education, the

1 opportunity to increase their earning power by
2 gaining critical job skills, and the opportunity
3 to provide a quality educational experience for
4 their preschoolers.

5 The adult education program will offer
6 a curriculum that includes construction trades,
7 certified bookkeeping, and natural hair care.

8 In addition to our adult learnings, we
9 know that preschool age children excel when they
10 are exposed to a positive and stimulating
11 learning environment early in their educational
12 journey.

13 Aspire Academy's preschool program will
14 provide three and four-year-olds with a
15 curriculum that will prepare them for
16 kindergarten and beyond, and through an
17 intergenerational model, the adult learners will
18 interact with the preschoolers and facilitate
19 their acquisition of literacy and numeracy
20 skills. In addition, the adults will receive
21 parenting skills to offer their children support
22 for social and emotional learning process.

1 We believe that both the adults and
2 their preschoolers here in the District deserve a
3 program that will provide them with an
4 educational program that they can learn and grow
5 together.

6 We thank you for the opportunity to
7 share with you our mission and vision, and we are
8 happy to answer any questions you may have.
9 Thank you.

10 CHAIR CRUZ: Thank you. Okay, opening
11 questions?

12 MEMBER SHELTON: So you state in your
13 goals that you want to locate in Ward 5. Can you
14 walk us through the rationale for that and how is
15 that going to work with other programs, similar
16 programs that are already in Ward 5?

17 MS. OWENS: We currently are associated
18 with an organization, as a matter of fact, one
19 that I direct that's a Ward 5 based organization.
20 We have partners that are in Ward 5, Progressive
21 Life Center. We also work with Empowerment
22 Center, and we are providing services for

1 particularly DYRS youth and also their family
2 members.

3 So we are based in Fort Lincoln and we
4 believe that through our partnership and our
5 dedicated work in that area, that we'll be able
6 to provide the support for individuals to receive
7 adult ed services.

8 MEMBER SHELTON: And then you said that
9 you would locate to Ward 7 if you weren't able to
10 find suitable space in Ward 5. What's your
11 rationale behind that?

12 MS. OWENS: One of our partners, and of
13 course are youth are throughout the District, is
14 in Ward 7, and providing services in the
15 immediate area for youth. We've been working
16 with the Egypt Clinic. We provide services with
17 Stick that's in Ward 7, as well as the Marshall
18 Heights Community Development Center, so we're
19 very connected in that area as well.

20 MEMBER CRUSEY: You mentioned the
21 vocational trades as construction, certified
22 bookkeeping, and natural hair care. Can you

1 share with us how the founding group focused on
2 these three to start, what kind of analysis you
3 had done to choose those and how you may be
4 thinking about expanding beyond that down the
5 line?

6 MS. OWENS: I will speak to it in
7 general. Our founding members have that skill
8 set. We have Dr. Charles Jones, who has the NCCR
9 certification. He can manage, certify, and
10 provide the certification for the construction
11 trades.

12 We have our founding group member Robyn
13 Marbray, who is a CPA, and she's of course well
14 versed in terms of the bookkeeping, and Shannon
15 Evans who has the experience in terms of natural
16 hair care. So these are areas in which we are
17 experts in, as well as in providing services with
18 our youth.

19 Additionally, I think that, especially
20 in terms of the construction trades, there is a
21 growth area for young people to get into these
22 fields in terms of construction trades

1 particularly, but the others.

2 There is 1.6 million job vacancies where
3 companies all over the country are looking for
4 skilled laborers in the field of construction.

5 For natural hair care, there are
6 elements which we want to address in terms of
7 those who aren't licensed and really need to
8 establish themselves legally to function within
9 the District in providing natural hair care.

10 And then of course the growing area in
11 accounting, especially certified bookkeeping, is
12 an area that I think is of growth. And then I
13 will ask for members to --

14 MR. JONES: In the area of construction,
15 there's a dire need for laborers in the
16 construction field. I have more than 30 years of
17 experience in the construction field.

18 I'm currently facilitating
19 apprenticeship training for over 500 contractors
20 and I constantly hear, "Doc, I need more
21 laborers. I need more laborers. I need more
22 laborers."

1 And in the District of Columbia, we have
2 a number of areas that we can tap into such as
3 the military installations that are around here,
4 retooling the vets, and the graduates from high
5 schools in the District of Columbia that don't
6 have direction yet.

7 This program can be a vital asset to
8 them for getting employment and learning some
9 skills, and even going through the program to the
10 level of a journeyman.

11 The average journeyman's rate of pay is
12 \$28.00 an hour, and that's after four years in a
13 program, and that's minimally about \$55,000 to
14 \$60,000 a year. That's without overtime, and if
15 we roll over overtime, the numbers go
16 phenomenally high.

17 So there's a desperate need for
18 laborers, apprentices in construction, and
19 there's lots of contractors in the District of
20 Columbia that are crying for those type of
21 people.

22 **MEMBER SHELTON:** What skills or

1 competencies do you think the learners, or what
2 will they require before they get there and how
3 are you going to close the gap in what they do or
4 don't have to ensure that they're able to
5 smoothly go into the vocational training?

6 MR. JONES: Okay, thank you for asking
7 that question. We have an entry pre-exam that
8 we'll have them go through. And what is going on
9 in the NCCR curriculum, they have everything
10 based on a sixth grade reading competency level,
11 but a ninth grade math level to negotiate through
12 the NCCR curriculum that we're using because the
13 NCCR curriculum is nationally accredited.

14 And being a master trainer of that
15 curriculum, I have the ability to train and
16 certify instructors to be able to teach that
17 curriculum, and we will walk the students through
18 the areas that they have challenges in.

19 We have plans to have them reinforce
20 those skills that they are short in so that they
21 will comfortably be able to negotiate all of the
22 challenges throughout the curriculum.

1 CHAIR CRUZ: I really like the
2 multigenerational approach and there aren't
3 enough programs like that in D.C.

4 As you think about the leadership
5 experience and the skills that the founding group
6 needs to run both an adult education program and
7 an early childhood education program, could you
8 reflect on what the founding group has and what
9 you'll need to further develop in order to manage
10 the school, both parts of it?

11 MS. OWENS: Sure, I'll have Ms. Hall to
12 speak.

13 MS. BANKS HALL: Okay, so as an
14 educational leader and director of both adult
15 students and preschool children, I find this very
16 exciting to be a part of.

17 One of the most important things to me
18 is that even though they're young children, we
19 will have designed a high academic standard for
20 them as well.

21 This is inclusive, and one of the things
22 that I love the most, of course, as being a

1 parent myself, is the parent involvement piece.
2 The parents will be there at the school. There
3 will be lots of opportunities for them to
4 interact. Children will have opportunities to
5 have lunch with their parents.

6 And because this is an extended day all
7 the way into the evening, we have some other
8 activities and things that we will have available
9 to our students as well.

10 We will keep abreast of all of the new
11 techniques and things in working with children,
12 and we'll be abreast of literacy skills for
13 children, reading aloud.

14 This gives us an opportunity in the
15 evening for having the children have bedtime
16 stories because we will have a double rest time
17 during the normal schedule during the day as well
18 as during the evening time. There will be times
19 also when parents will have opportunities to come
20 and read with their children.

21 So collaboratively as the instructors
22 and the parents have the opportunity to teach

1 their children, both of them will be in school.
2 The parents will be modeling for the children how
3 important it is to be in school and they will see
4 their parents doing those things.

5 There will be projects and other
6 opportunities for them to work on together, which
7 is a big deal. We will create activities and
8 projects for them to maybe begin at school and
9 finish up at home, and other opportunities to go
10 out and do things together.

11 In some of my experience, I have
12 started, and restored, and actually expanded very
13 quality programs that children have really
14 benefitted from, but this also gives the
15 opportunity to integrate having the parents
16 really a part of that process because they'll be
17 on the same campus.

18 I've worked with Doc before with the
19 construction program, and we have seen some of
20 the many needs that the families have. So I also
21 will be able to bring the experience of social
22 services with them so that those are not excuses

1 for them not to show up to class, to help them
2 with a variety of things that they may need from,
3 it could be as basic as food, clothing, and, you
4 know, where to navigate and get those resources
5 that they really need, so I see that as a huge
6 part of my responsibility in addition to the
7 curriculum we have talked about, and we use the
8 creative curriculum.

9 But also I have a background in
10 Montessori, and in the Montessori learning
11 process, all children were involved. When Maria
12 Montessori invented the program, well, it wasn't
13 a program there, but it was for children who had
14 special needs.

15 So, and my own children went through a
16 Montessori program, so I have seen the success of
17 it, and believe that with the creative curriculum
18 that has been very successful, we'll bring what
19 our young learners need on the onset to be
20 prepared for school when they move onto
21 kindergarten.

22 MEMBER BUMBAUGH: So like Rick, I

1 thought that was the most interesting aspect of
2 the application, the intergenerational piece, and
3 I'm wondering if this is a completely new idea or
4 if there are examples of other schools like this
5 that you explored?

6 MS. THOMAS: When we designed our school
7 model -- Briya has a similar model where they
8 offer the pre-k -- Briya has a similar model. We
9 have explored their model. We do know they offer
10 the two generational, the pre-k three and pre-k
11 four with adult, but our solution is totally
12 different.

13 We have an innovative solution to
14 address the needs of the disenfranchised
15 residents in the District of Columbia. We're
16 offering specific trades that will provide the
17 skills needs for entry level jobs.

18 MEMBER CRUSEY: What portion of your
19 students do you anticipate would be taking
20 advantage of the intergenerational piece and what
21 portion of students do you anticipate won't do
22 that, whether it's at one time because there's

1 this two-year period where the young children
2 would be in the school, and the adult may still
3 be in the school and the kid has moved on, or the
4 adult is interested in the program, but they
5 don't have a young child who fits that age span?
6 What do you anticipate for that kind of demand
7 for the two different instructional types?

8 MS. OWENS: I know that we have set
9 aside 30 slots for the pre-k three and four, so I
10 would surmise that we are going to be starting
11 out with 100 adults, and so just looking in terms
12 of that ratio, maybe 20 percent, 25 percent in
13 terms of that, and then if we don't fill those
14 out, we'll extend out and invite others to be a
15 part of the school.

16 MS. BANKS HALL: And additionally, one
17 of the things, as a school leader with a
18 preschool program, we often have parents who are
19 not employed who don't have skills, and so this
20 is a very entry level place where they can as
21 well, rather than just going back home, have
22 something that they can do as well that will

1 propel their life also.

2 So from the recruitment of the children
3 in the program, we're anticipating that some of
4 the adults will be interested in one of those
5 three areas.

6 PARTICIPANT: In your application, you
7 mentioned BOTH the TABE and the CASAS tests. Do
8 you have a reason that you expressed plans to
9 assess your students using both?

10 MS. OWENS: Yes, we wanted to just meet
11 the needs of what the District required, and of
12 course in terms of the national diploma program,
13 and so we wanted to have the students afforded
14 the opportunity to be assessed on both.

15 PARTICIPANT: Thank you.

16 VICE CHAIR BIREDA: Given that you may
17 be serving both preschoolers that may have
18 disabilities as well as adult learners that would
19 have disabilities, I would just like to hear
20 about your plan for providing services to both of
21 those populations.

22 MS. THOMAS: Hi, I'll speak on that one.

1 So I'm an early childhood teacher with DCPS, and
2 I noticed the one thing, the biggest thing that I
3 see that works really well and works towards
4 what's happening in this generation is
5 technology.

6 So a tool that I use currently in my
7 position is Embrace, Embrace IEP, which is an
8 online program tool that you can use, the parent
9 can use while they're there to see updates on how
10 the child is meeting individual educational
11 plans, not only in school, but also at home, so
12 you're addressing the whole child and not just in
13 school based, so that when we do have annual IEP
14 meetings, we can sit down and look at the data,
15 because data is everything when it comes to
16 making sure students are meeting their goals, so
17 definitely including that technology piece into
18 the program.

19 CHAIR CRUZ: Do you have any other
20 questions? Thank you very much.

21 MS. OWENS: Thank you for the
22 opportunity.

1 CHAIR CRUZ: Capital Village team? All
2 right, you guys have been around all evening, so
3 thank you. If you could introduce yourself, and
4 then Monica, I imagine you'll start off with some
5 opening remarks?

6 MS. GREEN: Hello, Monica Green, founder
7 and executive director of Capital Village.

8 MS. GANDY: Martrice Gandy, board chair,
9 I mean, sorry, board secretary.

10 MR. HARE: Matt Hare, member of the
11 board.

12 MS. TOLBERT: Latoya Tolbert, board
13 members.

14 MS. KYLES-SMITH: Kristina Kyles-Smith,
15 partner.

16 MS. GREEN: So first we'd like to thank
17 the board and staff for your consideration of our
18 application. We are so excited to share with you
19 our progress and our growth throughout this past
20 year.

21 So when our founding team began, we were
22 struck by a frustrating question. Where are all

1 of the high quality middle schools in D.C.? Last
2 year, only four out of 64 public middle schools
3 in D.C. were high performing on D.C.'s star
4 framework.

5 All four of these schools are full. In
6 fact, 875 applicants competed for their 17
7 available seats combined. We view this as a
8 crisis.

9 Furthermore, in middle school, the
10 crucial years where students should be set up for
11 success in high school, college, and beyond, only
12 certain students in certain schools in certain
13 neighborhoods have their learning needs met, only
14 certain students.

15 For example, research shows that whether
16 a student will graduate high school is likely
17 indicated by how well he does in eighth grade.

18 Well, if you're an eighth grade student
19 with disabilities in a D.C. public school, there
20 is only a four percent chance that you meet or
21 exceed college and career readiness standards
22 using the 2018 PARCC assessment as a measure, a

1 four percent chance. This is an emergency.

2 With the help and feedback of students,
3 parents, educators, community members and
4 organizations, Capital Village seeks to redesign
5 middle school so that it is not predictable who
6 will fail and who will succeed.

7 Our mission is to prepare all students
8 regardless of background or circumstance to reach
9 their fullest potential, becoming agents of
10 change in the community. We will do this in
11 three ways.

12 First, learning at Capital Village will
13 be relentlessly centered and driven by the
14 student. Every student at Capital Village will
15 have a mentor and an individual learning plan
16 tailored to his or her specific needs, interests,
17 and ambitions. The small size of our school,
18 half the size of an average middle school, will
19 help us do this.

20 Second, learning at Capital Village will
21 be relevant and based in the real world. Our
22 instructional program will be rooted in students

1 solving real problems, producing real products
2 for real audiences.

3 Finally, we will be a village working
4 together to lift up the whole child. Along with
5 academic skills, teachers will work with
6 families, community members, and organizations to
7 support each child's holistic development. This
8 combination is what is needed to improve middle
9 schools for our students.

10 We are blessed to have a talented,
11 experienced, and growing founding group, the
12 partnership of EL Education, and the investment
13 of leaders in school reform alongside of us in
14 the journey.

15 We need your support now. Redesigning
16 middle school is a priority and it can't wait.
17 Our team is ready and the time is now. Thank
18 you.

19 MEMBER SHELTON: So, thank you, and
20 welcome back.

21 MS. GREEN: Thank you.

22 MEMBER SHELTON: Last year, we had a

1 very interesting conversation around, and I think
2 Steve and I were in the same place of like if we
3 had a longer runway.

4 So I would love to hear if you could
5 walk us through the lessons that you learned, the
6 most important lessons you learned in this time
7 frame of reflection and tweaking if you could
8 walk us through that?

9 MS. GREEN: Right, so our organizational
10 core values are that we're learners first, and so
11 we considered the board's feedback carefully in
12 relationship to our mission and our vision, and
13 we also solicited the feedback of a lot of our
14 other partners and stakeholders as well.

15 And so there were three pieces of
16 feedback that the board gave that really
17 resonated with us, and those include the
18 feasibility of our teacher roles, the efficiency
19 of our staffing plan, and the clarity of our
20 instructional program, and so I'll talk a little
21 bit about each of those and I can delve more into
22 that later.

1 And so you think about the feasibility.
2 The concern of the board was how realistic the
3 teacher roles were, the workload and also pairing
4 that with the innovating nature of our school
5 model.

6 And so what we did was we met with and
7 visited other small schools. We did a lot of
8 research and kind of conversations with other
9 school leaders grappling with the same problem.
10 You know, our question was really how do other
11 small schools do this?

12 And from that, we were able to create a
13 lab coach position, which you'll see in the
14 application this year, and that position is an
15 excellent additional support for students and it
16 is also a way of lightening the workload of the
17 teacher, sort of sharing the duties.

18 Secondly, the staffing plan was a
19 concern. The board did a good job sort of making
20 us understand how it wasn't necessarily the most
21 flexible and efficient way of meeting all
22 students' needs, and so we went through multiple

1 revisions.

2 We hosted like a dozen of sort of
3 feedback sessions and we came up with a master
4 schedule that we tested in our summer pilot this
5 last summer. That summer pilot was a one
6 classroom, four-week full day version of our
7 master schedule.

8 And we sort of hired and staffed it to
9 look exactly like a day would so that we could
10 kind of go through and try to find the kinks, and
11 we definitely learned a lot in that summer pilot,
12 especially around that lab coach position.

13 And then finally, our instructional
14 program, we were able to apply and were accepted
15 to EL Education's school design fellowship, and
16 that really allowed us to delve deep with a
17 school designer who we were able to access
18 earlier than most schools into the nitty-gritty
19 of our curricular programs.

20 So we were able to partner with Two
21 Rivers, which is another successful EL school
22 here in D.C., and under the leadership of Maggie

1 Bello, like just being able to sort of ask as
2 many questions as necessary, see as many
3 resources, kind of just live an EL school that is
4 successful, and using that knowledge, we have
5 been able to pick all of our curriculum, choose
6 our instructional technology, and really tighten
7 up a lot of elements of our instructional
8 program.

9 So with like these three things, we kind
10 of view this year as a blessing in disguise, one
11 that maybe we didn't ask for, but a blessing in
12 disguise, a learning experience that really
13 helped us to strengthen our plan immensely.

14 MEMBER SHELTON: So because your program
15 is so unique, you've also decided to backfill
16 seats?

17 MS. GREEN: Mm-hmm.

18 MEMBER SHELTON: How are you going to,
19 you know, integrate students into this model
20 because it is so different, and what are going to
21 do when students aren't successful in the
22 program, and how would you consider -- would you

1 consider backfilling more than twice a year?

2 MS. GREEN: So that was another area
3 that the board kind of alerted us to, the equity
4 issue around backfilling, and we're really
5 grateful that that came up in our public hearing
6 last year, and so we definitely considered.

7 What we were weighing is the importance
8 of building culture in an EL school or any school
9 in general, and also, you know, making sure that
10 we're able to open up seats to students that are
11 looking for a high quality school.

12 And so we did decide to backfill between
13 fifth and sixth grades, sixth and seventh grade,
14 and two times a year, two seasons in the year,
15 and our thought behind that was because we could
16 use a natural transition point to integrate and
17 slowly sort of onboard our students so that they
18 are successful in acclimating to the culture.

19 You know, in the beginning of our year,
20 we'll have an orientation process for new
21 students, and so that's one opportunity, and then
22 also we've sort of played around with the idea of

1 kind of having a shorter orientation season
2 during the winter where we might pair a new
3 student with another student and kind of being
4 able to walk them through into the environment.

5 And so if students aren't -- well, I'm
6 also going to just go back to your third
7 question. So like would we backfill more than
8 three times? And the backfilling decision has
9 been one that we have grappled with as a team
10 like a whole lot, and so I think it's just one
11 that we'll continue to look at on a like
12 quarterly basis, looking at our attendance, our
13 attendance goals.

14 As a board, we have metrics around
15 attendance and sort of seeing where we are and
16 how we're doing, and if there's changes that need
17 to be made, we will make those changes, and
18 that's just something that we'll do with
19 anything, looking at our goals and seeing where
20 action steps need to be taken.

21 But then back to your point about
22 struggling students, and I'll pass it to Martrice

1 to add a little bit more onto that, you know, our
2 framework is around all students, regardless of
3 where they're coming from, regardless of their
4 circumstances, being successful.

5 And so the very setup of our
6 instructional model being that we have the
7 seminar classes where students are accessing
8 grade level standards, but then also the
9 intensive intervention of a lab course where
10 students are working through Just Right
11 instruction, we already have sort of a structure
12 where students are going to be able to get their
13 individual needs met while also being held to a
14 rigorous standard.

15 We've also staffed it purposefully so
16 that all core classes have both a general teacher
17 and a specialist for special education purposes,
18 so we have access to multiple adults, and do you
19 want to jump in? Okay, because I'll talk
20 forever.

21 MS. GANDY: What was the explicit
22 question about struggling students?

1 MS. GREEN: How we deal with struggling
2 students that are coming into the --

3 MS. GANDY: Yeah, and getting those
4 students kind of caught up and acclimated to the
5 model and the framework making sure that we have
6 dedicated staff like hand holding those students
7 and those families through that process

8 And making sure that while they are
9 remaining in their, you know, assigned classes or
10 coursework, they were also provided like the
11 supplemental time to like explicitly focus on
12 those students.

13 MS. GREEN: I probably said everything.

14 MS. GANDY: Yeah.

15 MS. GREEN: Did I answer your question?

16 MS. GANDY: Mm-hmm.

17 MS. GREEN: Thanks.

18 MEMBER CRUSEY: You mentioned that you
19 had this opportunity to do this pilot --

20 MS. GREEN: Yes.

21 MEMBER CRUSEY: -- where you piloted the
22 master day, and you learned a lot from it. Can

1 you tell us more about what you learned from it?

2 MS. GREEN: I was hoping you'd ask me
3 that question. So yes. So our summer pilot was
4 amazing. We, through the support of New Schools
5 Venture Plan 4.0 Schools we were able to, you
6 know, recruit students, hire staff, go through
7 the process of onboarding and professionally
8 developing staff, going through the process of
9 orienting our parents and our families through a
10 one classroom model of our school day.

11 The students were able to -- Martrice
12 wrote an expedition using food deserts as sort of
13 a lens to take students through their core
14 instruction. And students were able to create
15 solutions for food deserts in our city, and which
16 they presented to a panel, much like this right
17 here.

18 And it was really amazing to see their
19 growth. And I think we had almost like almost
20 over 90 percent students were able to
21 successfully complete that project according to
22 our rubric.

1 And what we did learn about that, the
2 most important thing that we learned about that
3 was the importance of the lab coach position. So
4 you'll notice in our staffing plan, you know, for
5 each grade level we have lab coaches in
6 humanities and math that motivate and guide
7 students through the independent portion of their
8 core instruction.

9 And we had staff -- we staffed lab
10 coaches for our summer program. We had someone
11 who was a retired DCPS teacher. We had a
12 psychologist or psychology graduate, and we had
13 like a soccer coach. And these folks really
14 motivated.

15 They sort of formed relationships with,
16 motivated and just sat with our students that
17 needed that additional support, really pushing
18 students over the edge to do work that they
19 probably, you know, would not have thought that
20 they could possibly do in that period.

21 So work was hard, and the kids told us
22 that, but that support of that lab coach really

1 like just showed us how important it was. So
2 then in the fall as we start looking at budgets
3 and there starts to be attention, we really knew
4 that we had to hold onto that lab coach position.

5 Another thing that I would think that we
6 looked at and we were able to sort of pull from
7 that was the importance of screening for and
8 developing teachers around our expectations
9 around how they handle student behavior.

10 And so, you know, we just underestimated
11 like the importance of like where a teacher might
12 have spent their, you know, early years as a
13 teacher and sort of what practices come natural
14 to them even though they know what kind of school
15 we are forming.

16 And so, we had several times that we had
17 to kind of re-acclimate, revisit what our
18 expectations were for teachers when we're dealing
19 with student behavior. And although we were
20 successful, it really opened our eyes to like
21 while we could have spent more time thinking
22 about that in our hiring process and that really

1 sort of translated as we thought through our
2 current positions that we're hiring for now,
3 really spending time to think about what does the
4 ideal candidate look like.

5 What are competencies and the mind sets
6 that we're hiring for, even more important than
7 like the skill set, like who are the people and
8 what do they believe about kids. And that's
9 really been amazing for us right now as we're
10 going through the process with our leadership
11 team.

12 MS. GANDY: Anyone want to add anything?

13 MS. GREEN: Okay.

14 VICE CHAIR BIREDA: I probably was the
15 person who you had the conversation about
16 backfilling with last time.

17 MS. GREEN: Mm-hmm. Yep.

18 VICE CHAIR BIREDA: So I appreciate that
19 you've made some changes. It makes sense to me
20 to backfill because it's an opportunity to give
21 more kids a chance to experience your school. So
22 I'll let you think about that.

1 But additionally, because you made this
2 very big change around the lab and teaching staff
3 would like to hear about the qualifications of
4 the lab coaches. Am I hearing the right?

5 MS. GREEN: Yep, lab coach.

6 VICE CHAIR BIREDA: The lab coaches and
7 the decision not to have content-specific
8 teachers being lab coaches, different content
9 teachers.

10 MS. GREEN: Yes. So again, just going
11 back to the mission and vision of our school, we
12 are -- we're -- sort of our guiding light is
13 making sure that all students are successful.
14 And so that means creating a flexible
15 environment, but it also means providing access
16 to multiple layers of support.

17 And so the lab coach position is
18 representative of an additional layer of support
19 for students. You can have a blended learning
20 classroom where you have a teacher teaching a
21 small group and you have students on the backroom
22 computers without a lab coach.

1 And I've taught in one of those
2 classrooms, and oftentimes what you're missing is
3 still that human element, that guiding force,
4 that motivating factor. A computer is not going
5 to do that work for you. The computer will
6 differentiate down to the skill, the scaffold
7 that's needed.

8 But the computer will not recognize when
9 a student is feeling overwhelmed or bored or had
10 a bad day, you know, got in a fight and really
11 just needs like either some tough love or some
12 nurturing. And so, that's really what that lab
13 coach position is for. And what they need to be
14 able to do is be able to observe, motivate and
15 guide kids.

16 Like observe, see where -- have a
17 relationship with the student first of all,
18 right? Have formed a positive bond with them.
19 Be able to sort of see how they're doing and what
20 they need, be able to motivate them, you know, be
21 able to sort of say to a student, okay. Get some
22 water, come back and do it again or your goal was

1 this.

2 Here's where you are. And then guide.
3 Like what's the next best step for you? Should
4 you re-watch this video? Should you look at your
5 notes? Let's look at your notes. Oh, these
6 aren't notes. You know, just be able to do that.
7 And those competencies we found out this summer
8 are just key.

9 So when asked about, you know, who to put in
10 that position, like those are the kind of skills
11 that we're looking for. Because the students are
12 engaged in independent work at that time, work
13 using the online blended learning platform or
14 work from the seminar course, the content teacher
15 has already started that work for them.

16 They were just in the class the day
17 before. They're now continuing on to something
18 that's like a practice or a reinforcement. So
19 they don't need to have someone who has that
20 master's degree in math in order to do that.
21 What they need is someone who is able to form
22 relationships with them and make sure that

1 they're able to stay on task.

2 However, all of the teachers work
3 together as a team. No one is working on an
4 island. And so because it's collaborative
5 planning, all of the teachers are going to be
6 able to work together. And so the teachers are
7 able to plan. They would know what's coming up.
8 The content level teacher could prepare the lab
9 coach for what might confuse the students.

10 They could already have downloaded some
11 lessons to sort of help them be able to guide
12 those students. But really, it's about putting
13 teachers in the place that's most efficient for
14 them. We want to have content teachers in the
15 seminar class where they need to be, and we need
16 those that are our coaches in that setting.

17 VICE CHAIR BIREDA: And just quickly to
18 follow up, that was very thoughtful. You can
19 imagine a scenario for 8th grade where it's pre-
20 algebra where there's pre-algebra questions being
21 asked of the lab coach.

22 And we're not sure if the lab coach has

1 that extensive knowledge of math instruction, so
2 answering that scenario. But also just would
3 like to know if -- it seems like you saw this at
4 a different school where it was successful. And
5 so would like to hear about that.

6 MS. GREEN: Yes. So before Latoya jumps
7 up, because I know she wants to, I want to talk a
8 little bit about where we did see this work. So
9 we definitely visited a lot of schools. We
10 visited -- any school where you can get to the
11 personalized learning, student centered models.

12 One school that stuck out was Intrinsic
13 School in Chicago. And also, Brooker Lab School
14 in New York. Those schools really -- they call
15 them tutors maybe or coaches, and they were the
16 ones that were sort of manning the system,
17 manning the computer labs so to speak for
18 students.

19 Here in D.C., Rocketship Ride which is
20 a Bull Prize Award Winning School also does the
21 same thing. Often in these settings, in all of
22 these settings, the numbers are a lot bigger so

1 they're not just 22 kids in the class. It's 30
2 or 40 or 60 in a lab setting with one or two lab
3 coaches or tutors.

4 And so we've actually -- I feel like
5 we've shrunk sort of the scope of this and, you
6 know, I think we'll be able to see some greater
7 gains because of the relationships that can kind
8 of be fostered within that environment. And then
9 Latoya will kind of talk about how they can
10 handle --

11 MS. TOLBERT: So I know math is always
12 a concern. Reading is a little more --

13 VICE CHAIR BIREDA: Because I couldn't
14 have answered that question.

15 MS. TOLBERT: It's all good. I
16 understand totally. Math is my passion. I want
17 to make sure everyone loves math when they leave
18 any classroom that I am acquainted to. But as
19 far as answering that question, the program that
20 was chosen, the blended learning program that was
21 chosen was very purposeful in that the program
22 provides the resources and tools for whatever

1 adult is in that room to be able to walk them
2 through the lesson.

3 What it will require of that person,
4 that lab coach that is in the room is for them to
5 take the time to review the material that student
6 needs to access. So for instance, the students
7 will start that year with a diagnostic
8 assessment. And that diagnostic assessment will
9 then show the teacher, both the general teacher
10 in the seminar class along with that lab coach
11 what skills that student is lacking.

12 So now when they're working together in
13 that collaborative planning session, the general
14 educator and that lab coach can look at okay.
15 Well, this is the content that we're learning at
16 grade level. This is the content that the
17 student is lacking below grade level. Now how
18 can we meet where that student is and where they
19 need to be.

20 But there are lesson plans built into
21 that blended learning, so not just what the
22 student gets on the computer and does on their

1 own. But there are some small group things that
2 the lab coach could pull and they can follow word
3 for word what is said in that lesson, not to say
4 that it couldn't be maybe empowered a little
5 different if a certified math teacher was in the
6 room.

7 But it is set up to be able to be used
8 in like intervention courses where there are
9 maybe special educators who are not
10 mathematically trained or different people of
11 those nature. So it is built for this type of
12 scenario where it's not a certified educator in
13 the room.

14 MS. GREEN: If I can -- thank you. You
15 said that so perfectly. If I can just -- there
16 were two more things I thought of as she was
17 talking because I know this is a concern. And I
18 want to make sure that we do a good job with
19 explaining some of the things that we thought
20 about to make sure that this lab coach is
21 successful.

22 So one of the things that we did do with

1 sort of like our restructuring of our staff here
2 model is we hired an instructional coach. So
3 that instructional coach can push into the lab
4 course or any classroom and really be sort of a
5 resource for the teacher.

6 If there's some sort of professional
7 development that's necessary, if they're not able
8 to reach student needs, that's someone that can
9 kind of help coach and guide them. Additionally,
10 like we're not just grabbing people off the
11 street, you know, and putting them in the
12 classroom.

13 These are content-specific lab courses.
14 So this might be a space for someone who is
15 looking to yeah, sort of transition into a math,
16 you know, a math position to be a math teacher.
17 Or it might be, you know, someone who, you know,
18 is getting a degree in something that's math-
19 related.

20 So like we're obviously going to look
21 for folks that can offer what our students need.
22 We're again going to be thoughtful about who

1 we're hiring, what the competencies need to be.
2 And so, and one more thing is that, like she
3 said, the program that we're using is purposeful
4 because it's adaptive.

5 So if you have a student who is spending
6 three days on an algebra program -- that's quite
7 an exaggeration, but you know what I mean. The
8 program is going to take a step backwards. It's
9 going to say okay. You're not ready for this.
10 Let me give you this substandard or this
11 prerequisite. So the program is going to adjust.
12 The child is not going to be just sitting there
13 banging their head against the wall.

14 There's going to be videos and notes and
15 also just the intelligence of the technology to
16 sort of put them where they need to be. That can
17 be, you know, tweaked by the teacher, but it is
18 an adaptive program. So I think all of these
19 elements, at least in what I've seen, I fully
20 expect for it to be successful. And I think it's
21 also just really powerful, a powerful time for
22 students.

1 MS. GANDY: I think I will also, to just
2 kind of reiterate the opportunity that this
3 summer pilot had to test this specific thing out
4 because originally the lab coach was like a
5 smaller piece of the day. And then as we saw
6 really after that first week, they needed to be
7 there full-time.

8 MS. GREEN: Yeah.

9 MS. GANDY: And their ability to connect
10 with the students and really to move them in
11 those intervention programs was so phenomenal and
12 how those students almost responded better to the
13 lab coaches than to the classroom teacher in
14 terms of who they sought to get help from and who
15 they felt more comfortable kind of like being
16 vulnerable with in order to make those gains in
17 their academic deficits, it really showed for us
18 this was a super important role and something
19 that kind of like helped us to hunker down and be
20 like no, this is a super important role.

21 And again, looking at hiring, making
22 sure that the folks that we are bringing into the

1 position are already interested in the teaching
2 field and interested in supporting students in
3 that way and like really see themselves as the
4 additional support and kind of have that
5 collaborative nature, who are willing to sit down
6 with those general and special education teachers
7 and make sure they have the appropriate tools in
8 order to support all students.

9 I think particularly for our students
10 who are like already showing up as those high
11 flyers in the first couple of days, like the way
12 those students were able to turn around by kind
13 of having this one on one relationship with
14 someone just being able to walk by and being like
15 I see you fidgeting.

16 Like go take a walk. Hey, want to go
17 with me to go get a cup of water, or let's set up
18 the lunch and like having someone in that lab
19 room who is able to quickly see that but doesn't
20 necessarily know whatever algebra function of
21 systems of equation, like that was really
22 powerful for us.

1 MEMBER BUMBAUGH: I wonder if you all
2 have given any thought to having the lab coaches
3 follow the students from grade to grade to loop
4 the lab coaches.

5 MS. GREEN: You might need to come join
6 us. That's an excellent idea. I'm going to
7 write that down. I mean definitely we -- I guess
8 we already do loop because of the 5/6
9 combination, so the same teachers that -- both
10 the seminar and the lab teachers that teach 5th
11 grade also teach 6th grade. So that kind of is a
12 loop, but I like that we can keep going. Thank
13 you for that. We definitely can look into that.

14 MEMBER CRUSEY: Can you speak to any
15 operational or budgetary challenges either at
16 scale or even in your startup year with a small
17 school focus?

18 MS. GREEN: It's a good question. I
19 definitely want to speak to the finance question
20 because it is one that came up last year as a
21 concern for the board. And, you know, we have an
22 amazing team. And one of the things we

1 definitely were aware of in the beginning was
2 making sure that we had a sound budget and a
3 budget that is sustainable, a budget that will
4 grow and be able to fund what we are trying to
5 do.

6 So we are redesigning middle school. We
7 are doing something different, but I think that
8 we view our size not as of, you know, as sort of
9 a liability but as an asset. And we view it as
10 an asset in several ways but also in our
11 finances. The prevailing thought is that, you
12 know, less kids, less money.

13 And that's true, less kids, less money, but
14 there's also, you know, smaller schools are known
15 to be more efficient with money. Research shows
16 that smaller schools, you know, sort of have less
17 overhead. And actually, we did some work on
18 flattening our admin structure.

19 And so I'll have Matt talk a little bit
20 like about how we're being thoughtful about
21 contingencies around finance. But I definitely
22 want to make sure I drive home the point that,

1 you know, even in something like in facilities,
2 you know, our size is an asset.

3 We are actually -- we sort of have an
4 angle and the real estate market that most
5 schools wouldn't be able to because, you know, if
6 you think about the guidance of square footage
7 per child, right, at 160 students at 100, you
8 know, square feet per child, which is the
9 guidance, we can be looking for facilities that
10 are 16,000 square feet or something like that,
11 around that, you know, sort of ballpark.

12 And we actually included some examples
13 of this in the application. Like these are like
14 spaces that are available that are in our budget,
15 that are in our target wards, that we could
16 pursue if approved, that a school that's planning
17 to, you know, grow to 300 or 400 or 500 would
18 never consider.

19 And so that is an asset. And so I
20 definitely want to challenge the Board to think,
21 you know, to think about the size as an asset,
22 not only as far as personalizing and sort of

1 centering around the student but also financially
2 as well.

3 MR. HARE: I would say, as it relates to
4 contingencies, there are two primary areas of
5 focus that we've spent a lot of time thinking
6 about, to our under enrollment and higher than
7 projected facilities costs. I would reemphasize
8 what Monica said, which is that for our
9 particular school, those are both contingencies
10 against risks, which should be less probable for
11 this model than they would be for a larger
12 school.

13 In the case of under-enrollment, just
14 given the fact that we're looking to enroll fewer
15 kids means that we should have a higher
16 probability of meeting those goals each year.
17 And on the facilities side of the equation, as
18 Monica said, we've got some flexibility on that
19 front, too.

20 I'll start with the enrollment
21 contingency. What we've tried to do is equate
22 the forgone or equate each student by which we're

1 under-enrolled into a sort of dollar amount of
2 forgone revenue. Clearly if that's specific to a
3 certain grade, but we're having you know, greater
4 success let's say with 5th grade than 6th grade
5 in enrolling kids.

6 We've got the ability to increase our
7 enrollment numbers by as much as five students
8 per grade without compromising the model in any
9 way in our opinion. If it's something that is
10 more extensive than a single grade, then we move
11 to the next contingency.

12 We're fortunate in that Monica and the
13 founding team have done a phenomenal job of
14 fundraising to this point. We're forecasting to
15 enter year 1 with a cash balance of \$130,000 off
16 the bat. If you convert that into, you know, how
17 much revenue we lose for each student by which
18 we're under-enrolled, that average dollar amount
19 is about \$18,500.

20 So that \$130,000 equates to about seven
21 students by which we can afford to really be
22 under-enrolled by in year 1. Clearly, that's not

1 something which is long-term sustainable. And so
2 we introduced further contingencies from there.

3 I think if there's a need to compensate
4 further than seven students, I think the first
5 thing we would look to do would be to suspend the
6 instructional coach position, temporarily of
7 course, and instead change one of the master
8 teacher positions to tack on a stipended role of
9 a half-day of coaching responsibilities for one
10 of those teachers as well.

11 That will enhance our ability to support
12 under-enrollment of up to 10 students in Year 1.
13 Beyond that, we would have the ability to suspend
14 some of our contractor positions to the extent
15 necessary, again, you know, only as long as
16 necessary.

17 That could add the potential to support
18 under-enrollment by another two or three
19 students. And then finally contingency, if it
20 came to this, would be to modify the counselor
21 position to a part-time role. So at this point
22 we're talking about under-enrollment of as much

1 as 15 students. That's close to 20 percent of
2 what our projected enrollment is for Year 1, so
3 fairly dire circumstances.

4 The other contingency, which I'll just
5 touch on briefly is the higher than expected
6 facilities cost. We mentioned a little bit about
7 how we have some flexibility as a model broadly
8 speaking, but that flexibility is even more
9 pronounced in our first couple of years where
10 we're not even operating at full scale yet.

11 So our ability to be nimble with a
12 facility is, you know, really very strong in
13 these first couple of years. As I mentioned, we
14 do have the ability to increase enrollment of
15 each grade by up to five students without
16 compromising the integrity of the model.

17 If you go back to sort of average
18 dollars that we might expect to take in from
19 those additional five students per grade, I mean
20 that translates to potentially as much as
21 \$370,000 a year. That, relative to our cost of
22 facilities that we've projected in our budget

1 would be an overshoot by about two-thirds relative
2 to what we forecasted.

3 So hopefully that provides us with
4 enough cushion to feel pretty confident that we
5 can find a facility that meets our goals. If
6 worse comes to worse, I think it's nice for us to
7 be able to fall back on the fact that Monica and
8 the founding team have a proven ability to be
9 extraordinary fundraisers. So again, that's not
10 something which we're relying on. It's not
11 something which is built into our budget in any
12 respect, but that track record is there as well.

13 MS. GREEN: Thank you, Matt. You know,
14 I definitely wanted to sort of piggy back off
15 what you said about fundraising. You know, we
16 have fundraised a little over \$1 million, but we
17 haven't put any uncommitted funds in our budget.

18 And our budget as it stands is sound.
19 It has a growing surplus cash or plus, and you
20 know, it starts off in the green and with, you
21 know, I think two months of cash in our first
22 year. And so I think, you know, we are in a good

1 space. And as you can tell, we've been very
2 thoughtful about what would happen if we weren't
3 in a good space.

4 CHAIR CRUZ: All right. I don't think
5 there are any other questions. Thank you.

6 MS. GREEN: Thank you.

7 CHAIR CRUZ: All right. Last but not
8 least, Arabic Language Public Charter School.
9 Patiently waiting, thank you. All right. So
10 introduce yourselves, and love to hear your
11 opening statement.

12 DR. AWAD: So my name is Hani Abo Awad,
13 and I am the founder and the head of the school.

14 MR. CALLIS: Daniel Callis, prospective
15 board chair.

16 MS. GUBARTALLA: Jayme Shores
17 Gubartalla, prospective special education
18 director.

19 MR. DAVIS: Lee Davis, prospective board
20 member.

21 DR. AWAD: Okay. So our application --
22 first, thank you, Mr. Cruz.

1 CHAIR CRUZ: Move the microphone just a
2 little closer to you.

3 DR. AWAD: Okay. The board members and
4 the staff and who actually decided to stay that
5 late. Thank you so much. So our application is
6 very simple. It's an immersion school. It's
7 full immersion that will start with Pre-K 3/4,
8 Kindergarten and grow one grade a year until 5th
9 grade.

10 Our model is to have full immersion in
11 Pre-K 3 and 4, and we switch to 50/50 model in
12 Kindergarten. We have a co-teaching model in
13 each class. And we will have teacher aide in
14 Pre-K 3 and 4. We also decide to adopt a
15 responsive classroom approach, and we also
16 decided to choose Ward 6, 1 and 4 as official
17 locations for the school.

18 MR. CALLIS: As our application
19 discusses, knowledge of Arabic does indeed offer
20 many benefits. I can say though that I studied
21 French in junior and senior high school, and I've
22 never used the language professionally. However,

1 I remember how the study of grammar in another
2 language increased my understanding of English
3 grammar.

4 And that background of a second language
5 gave me the confidence to take opportunities to
6 live and work where other languages are spoken,
7 including Arabic, Dutch, Russian, Serbian, Urdu,
8 and Dari. I can attest to the benefits that come
9 from firsthand experience with other languages
10 and cultures, especially in terms of personal
11 development and life experience.

12 And I know that learning about other
13 cultures can help you gain greater appreciation
14 of your own culture. We're excited at the chance
15 to offer a second language opportunity to the
16 children of the District to the study of Arabic,
17 to expand their boundaries from their first
18 formal education experience and to open their
19 minds to the world while offering a top rate
20 education.

21 MS. GUBARTALLA: We know here in our
22 city of D.C. that we are a diverse population

1 with families of unique languages and cultures,
2 not just Arabic but Spanish, Amharic, Italian,
3 Vietnamese, Ibo and many, many others. And we at
4 ALPCS, we want to focus on all the individual
5 needs and families that will be coming into our
6 building.

7 We want to meet every child
8 developmentally, socially, linguistically,
9 academically to provide the best plan for each
10 child. When a student needs specialized
11 education or extra English language acquisition,
12 we will support them by having a lower student
13 and teacher ratio. We will work with all
14 families to build a strong, inclusive community
15 among staff, families, students and the
16 neighborhood that we make our home as well as the
17 D.C. community at large. Thank you.

18 MEMBER BUMBAUGH: Thank you. So I've
19 been the parent of a child consuming dual
20 language immersion education for the past 13
21 years. So I have an interest in your
22 application. What I do not have an expertise in

1 is Arabic language. My understanding is that
2 there are some distinct dialects. And if that's
3 the case, are you going to instruct in a specific
4 dialect? And if so, which one and why?

5 DR. AWAD: So first the Arabic language
6 is diverse language. We have multiple dialects.
7 Even sometimes in one country you have three or
8 four dialects. So in the U.S.A., we decided to
9 adopt the MSA, Modern Standard Arabic, for teach.
10 However, we integrate some dialects with the MSA.

11 So I'm an Arabic teacher now for high
12 school. We do the basic MSA, and we add the
13 Shami, the Jordanian dialect, which is closely
14 related to all countries. In this case, we want
15 to work to have diverse teachers from different
16 countries that can give the children the
17 opportunity to learn different dialects, too.
18 But the base will be the MSA.

19 MEMBER BUMBAUGH: And why?

20 DR. AWAD: Because it's the language
21 that if you travel to Egypt, to Cairo, to
22 Damascus, to Casablanca or any other country you

1 can communicate with them. And when you learn a
2 language, the most important thing is to
3 communicate with the other, you know, people who
4 speak the language.

5 MEMBER BUMBAUGH: Kind of like British
6 English, huh?

7 DR. AWAD: Kind of, but still like we
8 want to make sure that when they go to Amman and
9 order falafel they not sounds like what you
10 talking about. They want to make sure that they
11 will understand them.

12 MEMBER BUMBAUGH: So there's also a
13 well-established research basis in language
14 immersion programs that have a plurality of
15 students who are native speakers that is really
16 critical for both acculturation and language
17 development.

18 I'm from D.C., but I actually am not --
19 I don't know if we have a critical mass of native
20 Arab speaking students here. So that's my
21 question. Do we have enough children who speak
22 Arabic at home to have that plurality of students

1 in a classroom?

2 DR. AWAD: So this, actually, the school
3 will design the model. It's not for Arabic
4 speakers, to be honest, because we know that the
5 DMV have a large Arab community but D.C. doesn't,
6 which actually I was surprised that there are
7 actually Arab families. And we do find a lot of
8 demand among mixed families, American and Arab,
9 that they want to send their children to learn
10 Arabic.

11 Unfortunately, they don't speak Arabic
12 to them at home, so we estimated that we'll have
13 8 to 9 percent families who speak Arabic at home,
14 but the model is not specific for Arabic
15 families. We welcome any family, and I think one
16 of the models we follow and we learned and we
17 adopt is the Chinese, that the student have large
18 people who speak the language, but still it's a
19 very successful language.

20 MEMBER BUMBAUGH: Before I turn it over
21 to my colleagues, just one more question for you,
22 Dr. Awad. Talk about your preparation to be the

1 head of an elementary school.

2 DR. AWAD: So as I said, I am Arabic
3 teacher, and when we put together like
4 requirement for the head of the school, we
5 focused on the skills needed to be head of the
6 school. And we have five to six schools we have
7 focused on.

8 One of them, like it's a leader, and as
9 my work -- at my previous school as the
10 department chair and at my current school that I
11 develop curriculum for four years that actually
12 working and I have my students go on to obtain
13 scholarships from the State Department and
14 spending summer in Jordan and when they go to
15 college, I have one student who will spend one
16 year in Cairo next year.

17 And we're talking about the community
18 and outreach to the community. I think I learned
19 in D.C., I've been here in D.C. seven and a half
20 years. And D.C. very well connects to diverse
21 people, and I find myself like engaging and we
22 build like very interesting and diverse team, our

1 leadership, our founding team.

2 In terms of strategic planning and
3 setting goals, as assistant principal and at my
4 previous school back home and at my current
5 school, I was engaging in setting the goals for
6 the school and involved in setting the strategic
7 plan for like six years and then now when we
8 adjust and we evolve and we assist the strategic
9 plan, I also take part in this. And I think it's
10 very beneficial for me to set like long-term
11 goals.

12 Also, like in terms of like evaluation,
13 I was in charge of the evaluation, and I evaluate
14 the leadership teams and I think like even though
15 that I do not have the experience in being like
16 head of school in D.C. Charter Schools, I do have
17 the schools. And in terms of operational and
18 financial, I need to learn more.

19 That's why like we have very heavy
20 financial people on the board that will help us,
21 either Daniel and Mr. Davis. And I think like
22 both things together, this application and

1 bringing everybody together is also like kind of
2 evidence that we can make a good opportunity for
3 D.C. children here.

4 MEMBER CRUSEY: Can you speak to us
5 about your plans to recruit Arabic speaking
6 teachers for the school setting?

7 DR. AWAD: Sure. I was involved in PD,
8 professional development, for Arabic immersion
9 schools. I went like to three meetings. I met
10 colleagues who teach Arabic. I'm also part of
11 the WhatsApp group. We are like in 2019. That
12 includes more than 300 teachers who teach Arabic
13 in the United States in different levels.

14 We also like have a large Arab community
15 in D.C. A lot of them work in Arabic, Islamic
16 school in Virginia because they don't have other
17 options to do so. So we do like have -- right
18 now we do have like more than eight applications
19 for people who actually want to teach in D.C.

20 And I think D.C. itself it has something
21 that attracts people to come and work here. And
22 also like the benefits that we offer to teachers

1 is way more than like other schools that can
2 offer in the area and the other Arab schools.

3 MEMBER CRUSEY: And among the responses
4 and insight you've gained from the WhatsApp group
5 and those who have already indicated interest,
6 have you found alignment with content expertise?

7 DR. AWAD: Say it again.

8 MEMBER CRUSEY: Expertise, whether with
9 content specific as in curriculum and math, ELA
10 as well as experience working with young
11 children?

12 DR. AWAD: Yes. Actually, I have
13 teachers who work in the 1st and I think all the
14 immersion school in Houston, that they want to
15 try new things. And I they want to work Pre-K 3
16 and 4. And they're willing to move.

17 We're not going to like steal them from
18 the school, but if they're looking for a good
19 opportunity and good pay, it's also free market
20 here. And we do find like people who speak
21 Arabic and ELA experts and speak Arabic and
22 special ed experts. And I think it's very

1 important for us to have those people, especially
2 in the Pre-K 3 and 4 when we all will be speaking
3 Arabic at that level.

4 CHAIR CRUZ: Similar to Steve, I have
5 had many years of experience with my children in
6 immersion programs. And I know in the Spanish
7 language oftentimes it's hard to find high
8 quality work written in language. And that's
9 Spanish. It still shocks me sometimes. What's
10 been your experience in particular as you think
11 about materials for elementary and preschool age
12 students?

13 DR. AWAD: Honestly, there's no like
14 curriculum that evolved for Arabic immersion. I
15 went to the Arabic magnet school in Houston, and
16 they're using the Frog Street curriculum. It's
17 easy for them to adopt it to Arabic. And we also
18 have like adopted like curriculum for Arabic from
19 the Global Project Learning for five years, so
20 starting from Pre-K.

21 I know that we will hire Arabic
22 coordinator that we will be working involving the

1 staff. At the same time like there's no like
2 specific curriculum. There is few for like
3 Islamic schools or Islamic like -- more like
4 literature. But we use this in the public
5 schools. So what we're going to use for Pre-K 3
6 and 4, we're going to use the Frog Street with
7 the Global Project Learning curriculum for five
8 years.

9 CHAIR CRUZ: Thank you.

10 PARTICIPANT: Can you talk about your
11 community outreach efforts as part of the
12 planning for the application?

13 MR. DAVIS: Sure. Yeah, we've done a
14 significant amount of that. We've had meetings
15 in multiple community settings, one recently in
16 Ward 6. We had several families come and had an
17 opportunity to speak with them. We have had
18 multiple meetings with local government community
19 leaders, people in the ANC, the newly elected
20 school board member from Ward 6. And what else,
21 Hani? Do you have anything else?

22 DR. AWAD: Yeah, so honestly like it was

1 surprising me that almost all people we met with
2 were basically open for the opportunity to have
3 Arabic immersion schools. And one thing that
4 like each group of people in different wards
5 wanted the school in their ward.

6 And which was like, you know, we cannot
7 have one school in like eight wards, so which was
8 like three of them. But we do find it's very
9 supportive from the community, that they support
10 establishing the Arabic immersion school. And
11 also when we met with Jessica, she was very
12 supportive and she want the school in Ward 6.

13 Jessica --

14 MR. DAVIS: Yeah, Sutter.

15 DR. AWAD: -- the Education Board
16 member.

17 MR. DAVIS: Yeah.

18 DR. AWAD: And she was very supportive
19 for the opportunity to have this unique model in
20 the ward.

21 PARTICIPANT: Any outreach outside of
22 Ward 6?

1 DR. AWAD: Yeah. We did like in D.C. in
2 general, we have like families from Ward 4. They
3 were here, but they left, you know, it's so late
4 for them. We also have families from Ward 5.

5 MR. DAVIS: And we participated in that,
6 the bilingual language fair.

7 DR. AWAD: Yeah, last year.

8 MR. DAVIS: Yeah, last year.

9 DR. AWAD: Yeah. And we actually find
10 it's people who are willing to travel because
11 they want this opportunity for their kids, and I
12 think like having Arabic as immersion program is
13 going to open a lot of opportunities for the
14 children, specifically when we have a long
15 waiting list in all immersion schools almost in
16 D.C.

17 And one of the things that we were
18 thinking about in Ward 6 is there's one immersion
19 school, and 70 percent of the children who attend
20 charter schools live to other wards. And the
21 majority of them go to immersion schools, so
22 there's a huge demand for another immersion

1 school. And we think that Arabic could be a good
2 fit in the District.

3 MEMBER CRUSEY: For students -- I'm
4 going --

5 DR. AWAD: Okay. It's 11:30.

6 PARTICIPANT: Can you grab that?

7 MEMBER CRUSEY: For students who would
8 be entering the school after Pre-K 3, how do you
9 envision being able to acclimate them to the
10 school culture and your program?

11 MS. GUBARTALLA: We're going to offer
12 opportunities for Arabic immersion in the summer
13 for students to be able -- it won't be mandatory
14 required, but it'll be an opportunity for
15 students and families to be able to experience
16 what their child will be doing during the school
17 year as well as that in Pre-K 3 and Pre-K 4, for
18 all students coming for all different
19 backgrounds, will have three teachers within
20 those Pre-K classrooms as well as EL teachers,
21 special education teachers to be able to push in,
22 to be able to observe students, see what they

1 need and help them grow and transition from home
2 to school.

3 DR. AWAD: And one thing that we insist
4 even if it was very expensive to have two
5 teachers in the classroom is any language you
6 have levels. Like different students get
7 different levels, so when you have the
8 opportunity to do differentiation in the
9 classroom with two teachers, it's very beneficial
10 for the children.

11 MS. GUBARTALLA: One of the other
12 opportunities will be programs before and after
13 school for students to also have more
14 opportunities to experience the language and
15 support.

16 CHAIR CRUZ: So I just want to come back
17 to one of the questions we started with. So as
18 I'm thinking about what you'll need to do should
19 we authorize this school, there's curriculum
20 development.

21 DR. AWAD: You should, sir.

22 CHAIR CRUZ: So a lot of work. What I'm

1 stuck on is the human capital need that you'll
2 have in terms of you'll want a principal, right -
3 -

4 DR. AWAD: Yes.

5 CHAIR CRUZ: -- who hopefully has
6 elementary experience and Arabic language
7 experience and will have some facility with being
8 a bit of an entrepreneur in starting this school.
9 So take me a little bit deeper into how you're
10 thinking about finding that person aside from the
11 one person in Houston who will probably be able
12 to command whatever he or she wants at this point
13 since that's -- but seriously, how are you
14 thinking about that recruitment?

15 DR. AWAD: Honestly, like we're having
16 very specific requirement for the principal
17 position. And we really need someone who has
18 experience in early education. We need someone
19 who has experience in D.C. education, charter
20 school, immersion school and Arabic.

21 We will not find someone who have all
22 this, but if we find someone who have experience

1 in immersion school and in charter or D.C.
2 schools, they can fit because I believe, and my
3 supervisor at the school, they don't speak
4 Arabic, but they work with me very well even
5 though they don't speak the language. And I
6 think we start reaching out, publishing the
7 position to people that we know and centers that
8 we work with to have more candidate.

9 We have at our founding team a retired
10 principal. We have Dr. Jefferson. We have
11 assistant principal from BCBS, Dr. Hamm, and we
12 have Ms. Reem Labib. She was head of school and
13 principal, and they will be part of the
14 committee, including me and board members, that
15 will choose the head of the school.

16 We're going to do a very professional
17 process to make sure that we're finding the right
18 person, the right fit for the school because we
19 believe that it's very important to find the
20 person who can actually start up school. It's
21 not -- we have different people for different
22 things, and for startup school, you need a very

1 specific personality.

2 MR. DAVIS: That being said, one of the
3 things that we considered when we designed --
4 when we thought about the size of the school,
5 it's one benefit to starting small. There are
6 fewer teachers to recruit in the first year, and
7 so -- and we believe that this will be a national
8 draw.

9 As Hani said, there are not very many
10 Arabic immersion schools in the country, so in
11 terms of where we'd be recruiting, we, you know,
12 would be looking to national organizations and
13 D.C. is a very attractive place to move to,
14 especially with a good salary.

15 MR. CALLIS: And also, just to
16 reiterate, it would be wonderful if we found a
17 principal who was an Arabic speaker, but that's
18 not an absolute requirement. The requirement
19 would be someone who has experience in an
20 immersion school.

21 MEMBER BUMBAUGH: So that was pretty
22 much the question I was going to ask. But just

1 very specifically, you'd mentioned five criteria
2 that would constitute your perfect candidate. So
3 Dr. Awad, of those criteria, which ones could you
4 give up? It sounds like language fluency is one
5 of them.

6 DR. AWAD: Yeah, I agree with Daniel.
7 And it's from my own experience that the
8 principal have the experience and knowledge to be
9 in immersion school. They know exactly how to
10 evaluate teachers, how to hire teachers, and I
11 think for example, the person who start up the
12 school in Houston, she don't speak Arabic. And
13 she was a big success.

14 And after three, four years she moved on
15 because she's expert in actually establishing
16 schools. And so some people have this expertise,
17 have this gift to start up things, and then at
18 one point they're leaving. So if we find, we're
19 not giving up. We're still getting like more
20 applicants for the school that we'll have this
21 perfect person that has everything. But we will
22 give up the Arabic. And I believe that we will

1 have Arabic director and curriculum developer
2 that speak Arabic that will be very helpful for
3 the principal on the Arabic side.

4 CHAIR CRUZ: Any other questions? All
5 right. Thank you.

6 DR. AWAD: Thank you very much.

7 CHAIR CRUZ: All right. And that closes
8 out our public hearing for this evening. So I
9 guess we have a few folks who want to add to the
10 public record. We'll ask that you keep it to two
11 minutes each.

12 MR. GANEM: Hi. My name is George
13 Ganem, and I'm here to support my support for the
14 Arabic Language Charter School. I'm a resident
15 in Ward 6, and I know that ALPCS will be an asset
16 to our neighborhood or one of the other wards as
17 well but the city as a whole.

18 I believe the school will provide
19 educational choice to families like my own. My
20 wife and I have a child. It's currently
21 unavailable in our ward, and this will fill like
22 a much needed void for language immersion,

1 especially in general but particularly for Arabic
2 language. I, myself, grew up speaking Arabic.

3 I'm Palestinian, but I didn't learn it
4 in school. And it was kind of to the detriment,
5 I think, of my education, but I want my daughter
6 to learn how to speak it and write it. I speak
7 to her at home, but my wife does not speak it.
8 So an immersion school would be a great benefit
9 to my family and other Arabic friends that I have
10 and family members.

11 And one of the things I think about when
12 I talk to the board members and other people in
13 the community is we like the diversity that this
14 will bring, particularly to the school and to the
15 early childhood development and exposure to like
16 Arabic language and the cultures and also the
17 curriculum that's strong in math and STEM
18 particularly because I work in technology. And I
19 know the importance of mathematics. So I think
20 that this will be a really good benefit for the
21 city as a whole.

22 CHAIR CRUZ: Thank you, and thank you

1 for staying out so long. Anybody who wants to
2 make a statement, if you all want to come up now
3 so we can work through all of them.

4 MR. GUBARTALLA: Thank you all for your
5 time. I know it's late. I want to thank you all
6 for what you're doing here this evening. I want
7 to thank you all.

8 CHAIR CRUZ: Thank you.

9 MR. GUBARTALLA: So my name is Abdel
10 Amir, and I am currently an Arabic teacher here
11 in the city. I've been teaching here in the
12 District since 2007. I originally was a
13 humanities teacher, and I moved back from Japan
14 overseas. I started teaching Arabic at E.L.
15 Hanes Public Charter School where they had a
16 fledgling Arabic program for high school
17 students.

18 And that was funded by the Qatar
19 Foundation. And it was an immense success. I
20 was there for about three years. I helped get
21 the program off the ground, and I eventually
22 moved on to teach at St. Anselm's Abbey School in

1 the nearby Fort Totten neighborhood where I also
2 started the Arabic program there. I'm in my
3 fifth year there, and it is a tremendous success,
4 if I want to -- can toot my own horn.

5 It is now the biggest language program.
6 We have more students in Arabic than French and
7 Spanish. I have a letter of support from our
8 head of school. The school itself, although a
9 Catholic school, has been tremendously
10 supportive, overwhelming amount of support.

11 The kids have really jumped in. There's
12 something tangible about Arabic. They feel like
13 they are immediately the experts in the family
14 when they learn it. They're very proud of what
15 they're learning, and I teach my kids that it's
16 not just about the language. You need to learn
17 about the culture. You need something that helps
18 you connect to the language, and culture does
19 that.

20 So the Arabic culture is very diverse.
21 It's rich. It's beautiful. I myself am half
22 Egyptian and half Sudanese, so I grew up speaking

1 the language. I think that there's a deficit in
2 this city, that we're missing out on opportunity
3 to provide our citizens with this opportunity to
4 connect with a culture where there's this give
5 and take between Western culture and Arab culture
6 in the moment, that I feel like we need to help
7 start building bridges there, if I can use that
8 euphemism.

9 So I thank you for your time. I'm just
10 here to support the school, and I think that it
11 would be amazing to have this opportunity here in
12 our city. Thank you.

13 CHAIR CRUZ: Thank you. Thank you all.
14 And we're adjourned. Exactly. Thank you all.

15 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter
16 went off the record at 11:33 p.m.)
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In the matter of: New Schools Public Hearing

Before: DCPCSB

Date: 04-23-18

Place: Washington, DC

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