

In The Matter Of:
Department of Education
Eastside Charter

Public Hearing
November 13, 2019

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THE STATE OF DELAWARE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
and
BOARD OF EDUCATION

In re:)
)
EASTSIDE CHARTER)

TRANSCRIPT OF PUBLIC HEARING

New Castle Public Library
424 Delaware Street
New Castle, Delaware
November 13, 2019
5:22 p.m.

HEARD BEFORE: LEROY TRAVERS
WALI RUSHDAN

APPEARANCES:

DARRYL PARSON, Deputy Attorney General
for the Department of Education

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1 MR. TRAVERS: Good evening,
2 everyone. I declare this public hearing to
3 be open. My name is Leroy Travers. I'm
4 the education associate with the Charter
5 School Office, and I've been appointed by
6 the Secretary of Education to conduct this
7 public hearing.

8 EastSide Charter School has
9 filed an application to renew its charter
10 for a term of five years. As is required
11 by law, the matter was referred to the
12 Charter School Accountability Committee for
13 investigation and report.

14 This joint public hearing is
15 being held by the Department of Education
16 and the State Board of Education.

17 At this time I ask the others
18 at the table to introduce themselves.

19 MR. RUSHDAN: Wali Rushdan,
20 State Board of Education.

21 MR. PARSON: Darryl Parson,
22 Department of Justice.

23 MR. TRAVERS: I would like the
24 record to reflect that notice of the time,



1 date, and place of today's public hearing
2 was published in The News Journal and the
3 Delaware State News on October 10, 2019.

4 In addition, notice was posted
5 at the Charter School Accountability
6 Committee's official place of business, on
7 the Department of Education's official
8 website, and on the state public meeting
9 calendar on the State's official website.

10 Further, EastSide Charter
11 School was personally notified of the time,
12 date, and place of today's public hearing
13 on June 19, 2019 and notified of the change
14 in location on September 5, 2019.

15 A court reporter is present so
16 that a record of this hearing can be made.
17 It will be necessary for each speaker to
18 clearly identify his or herself before
19 beginning to speak so that the court
20 reporter will be able to note who you are.

21 The record of this hearing will
22 be provided to the Secretary of Education
23 and members of the State Board of Education
24 together with any written or electronic



1 comments received during the course of the
2 renewal decision process.

3 To date comments received on
4 this renewal application are posted on the
5 Charter School Office's website.

6 We will proceed in the
7 following manner: First, we will hear from
8 representatives of the charter school who
9 wish to comment on the renewal application.
10 Then we will take comments from anyone else
11 who desired to speak.

12 There are sign-up sheets at the
13 back of the room. If you desire to speak
14 and have not signed up, please do so now
15 and ensure to mark the check box that you
16 wish to speak. Those who have not signed
17 up will not be permitted to speak and
18 instead will be asked to submit written
19 comment.

20 We will now pause for a moment
21 to ensure that anyone that wishes to sign
22 up can do so.

23 (A discussion was held off the
24 record.)



1 MR. TRAVERS: I reserve the
2 right to limit comment if it is purely
3 repetitive or cumulative. This hearing's
4 purpose is strictly to collect public
5 comment. Questions of the Department of
6 Education or the State Board of Education
7 are not permitted and will not be
8 acknowledged.

9 At this point we will accept
10 comments from any representative of the
11 school. Representatives of EastSide
12 Charter?

13 MS. MILES-SMITH: Yes. Good
14 evening, everyone. My name is Kairlyn
15 Miles-Smith, and I am a middle school
16 science teacher at EastSide Charter School
17 as well as a grandparent slash parent. And
18 I've been at EastSide Charter for two
19 years, and I love every minute at EastSide
20 Charter.

21 I applied at EastSide Charter
22 approximately two years ago. And when I
23 walked into the building I knew it was the
24 place for me. I did my trial lesson there,



1 and I fell in love with the students, the
2 staff, the nurse, everyone at the school.

3 I believe in a growth mindset,
4 and that means you put effort into your
5 teaching, you take students from I won't do
6 it, I can't do it, to I will do it, I want
7 to do it. And when I walked into that
8 classroom and I started to teach those
9 kids, I knew that that's what they had been
10 used to.

11 The second thing that I liked
12 about EastSide Charter, in my interview the
13 assistant principal told me that from
14 kindergarten through college that they
15 follow their students and they offer
16 scholarship funds for those students.

17 I'm from the Eastern Shore of
18 Maryland, and I thought that was
19 phenomenal. Where I come from the schools
20 do not follow their students. They do not
21 track them through college, and they
22 definitely do not give them scholarship
23 funds.

24 This year I had the opportunity



1 to be a part of the selection for my
2 granddaughter to attend a new honors
3 program there. It's a very structured,
4 rigor, highly academic-focused honors
5 program by the name of Apex.

6 My granddaughter worried me to
7 death all last year that she wanted to join
8 this program. I think that's where my gray
9 hair came from because she worried me that
10 much. And I said you've got to give me a
11 reason why you want to be in this program.
12 She's in the sixth grade.

13 She wrote an essay. She did
14 all of her qualifications herself. So I
15 said, one day we're riding home, "What does
16 Apex mean?"

17 She said, "Gram, it means top.
18 It means the highest point of something."

19 I said, "You got it." I said,
20 "You're absolutely correct."

21 She says, "If you let me be in
22 this program, I'll be the best
23 granddaughter that you can have."

24 And I said, "Tell me more about



1 the program."

2 She said, "If I get in that
3 program, Gram," she says, "they'll help me
4 get into some of the best schools in
5 Wilmington because they give you
6 scholarship money to go there."

7 I said, "More scholarship
8 money?" I said, "Well, EastSide Charter's
9 just giving away all their money." I said,
10 "I'll tell you what. I'll try it. I'll
11 let you get into that program." And lo and
12 behold she wrote her essay and she got
13 accepted into the program.

14 And she's doing phenomenally
15 well in that honors program at EastSide
16 Charter, and it's changed her whole
17 personality, her whole self-esteem. And
18 that's another thing that I like about
19 EastSide Charter. They build students'
20 self-esteem.

21 At EastSide Charter, the best
22 thing that I most like about them is they
23 grow lifelong learners. They follow
24 students from kindergarten through college.



1 They build their self-esteem, and they
2 change students' mindset.

3 Also, the entire school puts
4 forth the effort to attain learning. We
5 help our students with challenges,
6 setbacks. When they're stuck we say let's
7 talk about it. We ask them what have you
8 tried and what can we try next.

9 We do not tell them, oh, don't
10 worry about it, you'll get it if you keep
11 trying. We ask them what can we help you
12 do next. We try to grow that mindset to
13 let them figure it out for themselves.

14 Also what I like about EastSide
15 Charter is that we try to close the
16 achievement gap. We don't hide it. We
17 tell the truth to our students and the
18 parents.

19 The most important thing that I
20 like about EastSide Charter is that we're a
21 family there. We make everyone feel
22 welcome. When you walk into that building,
23 you know that you're home. And the first
24 time I walked in that building I knew that



1 was the place for me. Thank you very much.

2 MR. TRAVERS: Other
3 representatives of the school that would
4 like to speak?

5 MS. SIMMS: Hi. Good evening.
6 My name is Alexis Simms, and I'm here as a
7 proud EastSide parent.

8 My oldest daughter -- I have
9 three daughters. My oldest started at
10 EastSide as a third grader, and because of
11 the education, love, and support she
12 received at EastSide, she is currently
13 flourishing as a sophomore at Tower Hill
14 School, to which she received some of the
15 scholarship funds that EastSide provides
16 for their students.

17 My middle daughter is currently
18 in EastSide's Apex honors program, and my
19 youngest is working hard in fifth grade at
20 EastSide to earn her way into Apex next
21 year.

22 I am the parent representative
23 on the board of directors, and I am also
24 PTO president. During my eight-year



1 involvement with EastSide Charter School I
2 have never experienced a staff that has
3 committed not only to working tirelessly to
4 deliver curriculum to the students they
5 serve, but they have created a culture of
6 family and love that is almost tangible.

7 The students walk into the
8 building from all sorts of backgrounds and
9 circumstances, some we may not ever fully
10 comprehend. But once they enter those
11 doors, they know that they are safe and
12 that they are loved.

13 Mr. Bass and the staff at
14 EastSide understand the secret to success
15 when it comes to education, building
16 relationships. Building those
17 relationships at the foundation of the
18 educational process builds confidence and
19 sets up students for future success.

20 Because of the foundation she
21 received at EastSide Charter School, my
22 sophomore has become heavily invested in
23 creating solutions for the educational
24 disparities between students from lower



1 socioeconomic backgrounds and their more
2 affluent counterparts.

3 My sixth grader who has always
4 wanted to be a doctor now wants to run the
5 hospitals to ensure equity in treatment and
6 care for all patients. My fifth grader
7 wants to be like her art teacher,
8 Mr. Taylor. She wants to teach what she is
9 passionate about, which for her is dance.

10 My daughters' ambition,
11 confidence, and passion for learning are a
12 product of the education they have received
13 at EastSide -- they have and are receiving
14 at EastSide Charter.

15 As a parent and educator and a
16 city resident, I am heavily invested in the
17 success of EastSide Charter School, and I
18 am looking forward to have the CSAC and the
19 State Board recommend EastSide Charter
20 School for its renewal for five years.
21 Thank you.

22 MR. BASS: Greetings. I'm glad
23 to be here as a proud parent of EastSide
24 Charter School. I have a son who's in the



1 middle school as well as serving as CEO for
2 EastSide Charter.

3 This year EastSide is actually
4 welcoming many partners for our school.
5 Those partners include the Delaware
6 Literacy Initiative -- Delaware Early
7 Literacy Initiative, the Multi-tiered
8 System of Support, and the American
9 Institute for Research, in addition to
10 Achievement First.

11 We're focused on results, and
12 for that reason we've now raised our
13 attendance to be consistently above the
14 state average for attendance. We've seen a
15 58 percent decline in referrals for
16 students this year.

17 And also based on our
18 assessments we found through DOE we have an
19 8 percent increase in our SBAC results,
20 expect to show those later on this year.
21 Our staff attrition has also decreased by
22 20 percent within one year.

23 We've also started a
24 partnership, as you heard from our parent



1 teacher slash also our board member who's
2 also a parent. That partnership was
3 established with Tower Hill, Wilmington
4 Friends School, Tatnall, and Sanford.
5 These partnerships allow our students to
6 actually engage in learning not only at
7 EastSide campus but also throughout
8 Delaware.

9 In addition, EastSide has
10 focused on a larger partnership called the
11 REACH Riverside partnership. It's a
12 partnership between Kingswood, EastSide
13 Charter School, and Wilmington Housing
14 Authority.

15 We're putting a \$100 million
16 investment into holistic neighborhood
17 revitalization. The current master plan
18 replaces 300 units with 600 high-quality
19 units in the Riverside area. This is
20 replicating the work that was done in
21 Atlanta through Purpose Built.

22 Our focus is cradle to college,
23 also health and wellness, making sure that
24 we are forever changing Riverside as well



1 as EastSide Charter School for years to
2 come. We look forward to continued work
3 with your approval for our renewal. Thank
4 you.

5 THE REPORTER: Could I have
6 your name?

7 MR. BASS: Aaron Bass.

8 MR. TRAVERS: Are there other
9 representatives from the EastSide Charter
10 School that would like to speak at this
11 time?

12 At this point we will accept
13 comments from any member of the public who
14 would like to speak regarding EastSide
15 Charter School.

16 I want to thank you all for
17 participating today. The secretary will
18 consider your comments in deciding at the
19 conclusion of the renewal process what
20 decision to submit to the State Board for
21 assent if needed. The hearing for EastSide
22 Charter School is now closed.

23 (Hearing concluded at 5:36
24 p.m.)



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1 REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

2
3 I, SUSAN ARNOLD YODER, Registered
4 Professional Reporter and Notary Public, do
5 hereby certify that the foregoing record,
6 pages 1 through 16 inclusive, is a true and
7 accurate transcript of my stenographic notes
8 taken on November 13, 2019, in the
9 above-captioned matter.

10 IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set
11 my hand and seal this 19th day of November,
12 2019, at Wilmington.

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18 SUSAN ARNOLD YODER, RPR

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