

Proposed New Heights Charter School of Brockton

Questions derived from review panel and documentation review

In attendance:

Michael Sullivan, proposed board chair

Emmanuel Daphnis, proposed board vice chair

Nicholas Christ, proposed board treasurer

Maria Fernandes, proposed board member

Carlos Gomes, proposed board member (*joined group after final application was submitted*)

Vincent Marturano, proposed board member

Anthony Modica, proposed board member

Gregory Philips, proposed board member

Rick Schwartz, proposed board member (*joined group after final application was submitted*)

Traci (Keene) Vaughan, proposed board member

Omari Walker, proposed executive director

Janice Manning, proposed head of school

Meredith Morrison, proposed dean of curriculum and instruction

Neal Klayman, proposed dean of student services

Jessica Geier, proposed director of college access

Ann Ferioli, proposed student and family outreach coordinator

Tiara Washington, pre-operational outreach coordinator

Deanna Yameen, Dean, Humanities and Fine Arts, Massasoit Community College

Deborah Howard, Chief Operating Officer, EDWorks

Absent:

Carlina Evora, proposed board member (current student at Brockton High School)

1. What is your proposed school's mission?

- Every student goes to college prepared.

2. Could you then explain or define college preparedness? What are the attributes of college-ready?

- In order to ensure that all the students are prepared for college, the model is designed so that all the students are ready for college-level work by a particular grade, in the eleventh grade. With the two models, college ready and college prep model, we will have the opportunity to go through

our developmental sequence and then take the Accuplacer, which will then determine if students are prepared for college-level courses.

[Follow-up]: Is there anything else anyone wants to add about the definition of college preparedness? What are the attributes or characteristics of a college-ready student?

- Absolutely. We'll have students ready to read, write, think, and also to self-motivate on a variety of levels. We'll be focusing, as traditional, on reading, writing, and mathematics, but also to get students to the point where they're not just developing skills—skills can't always be taken from one place and applied to another, we can't guarantee that—if we work on abilities, students will have the ability to take a skill and knowledge together and also take a step back to reflect so they'll know how it works here and how it works somewhere else. There's roughly 40 years of research on what college-ready reading, writing, and thinking abilities are. I would actually say that although we are using Accuplacer across the state, it's not all we use. Massasoit also uses a writing sample, which I believe is much better. We do not use the writing portion of Accuplacer. And we're also developing, and will continue to develop with this partner, some much more exciting and richer measures of that based on all the national research that's happening right now.
- The other thing as we've worked with early college high schools across the country, we look not just at the academic but at the maturity level of the students, and so as we work with the team as soon as they're approved, we'll sit down and start developing a rubric and a series of gateways that will also talk about those affective skills that the students need to be successful. From a student standpoint what we would like to ensure is that the students are ready to participate in college-level courses so that they do not have to take developmental courses, and that's very important for the early college high school students because they're generally students who don't have the opportunity to go to college and we want them to go as far and as rapidly as they possibly can.
- In some ways I think it goes well beyond just the readiness for college. It's also to be successful at the college level. The educational component is key, but making sure that they have the self-confidence and self-motivation and self-esteem to be successful in college is critically important as well.

3. You have these three tracks, and here's a statement in the application that the founding team is confident that regardless of the pathways students choose, they will be prepared for college. You have three tracks, presumably three outcomes, and so there's this question of timing. If the mission of the school is every student goes to college, when is that achieved and when is that achieved for students in each of these three tracks?

- I do want to just explain that the mission is that every student is prepared for college. I didn't want to have to correct, but I think that's important for the record.
- Our students will have the opportunity to earn up to 60 college credits, meaning our students regardless of college-ready or college-prep will in fact take college-level courses. What year that occurs could look different depending on the particular student and their readiness for those level courses. If they're not ready for that class, they'll take the developmental sequence as was mentioned through Massasoit to ensure that that readiness is there. But our students will take college-level courses. It just might look differently depending on the particular pathway.

[Follow-up]: So the goal is met at the point where students cross the line to taking college courses?

- I would say credit-bearing courses. We want them to not only prove it to themselves and to us that they are in fact ready to be successful in those credit bearing courses, which is why we have those developmental sequences in place prior to the college credit bearing courses.
- We also encourage the school to set an interim milestone for themselves to look at a minimum of 25 hours of college credit, so moving as many students to 25 hours of college credit as possible because the national research shows once a student attains 25 to 30 hours of college credit, they are far more likely to complete a degree, and that again is the ultimate goal for these students.
- And I think to answer your question directly, two out of the three tracks achieve the goal of actually having our students successfully complete college course while with us. The third track is for students who for some reason either choose not to go to college or are not quite ready to go to college, and our goal for that group is to make sure that they're prepared for college, meaning they can leave us with a diploma not having to take a developmental sequence at a community college. Of course that third track is going to be our smallest.

4. How is what you are proposing to offer different than what is already available to students in Brockton?

- That's a question we see often and we were just talking about that this morning because a Brockton parent had just posted something on our Facebook page. There's a distinct difference between dual enrollment and early college and gateway to college. I think the lowest lying group is gateway. We're very lucky that Massasoit is hosting a working group with our staff, the Massasoit staff, and Chris who runs gateway for Massasoit has been at those meetings, and I think the clear distinction that we've reached is that the population that gateway is working with is very different from the population that we're working with. If we move on to the dual enrollment versus the early college, I think it's best to look at the dual enrollment literature that's coming out of the community college research center that looks at the singleton programs, single dual enrollment one hit course, students aren't receiving the extra wraparound services, they aren't receiving the supplemental instruction that we'll be offering back in our high school when our students leave the Massasoit campus, and they're not receiving the enrichment that occurs in a comprehensive program like an early college.
- Also, as far as the singletons go, they tend to be the strongest students anyway. That doesn't mean they don't need our help, and they're wonderful students, but the students who are stepping forward and saying, 'I'm ready for college and high school,' are doing quite well. We actually have a policy where they come in and we sit down with them and their parents to make sure that they are in fact individually ready. But again, they get no other wraparound services whatsoever. We're incredibly proud of our gateway to college program. It's been cited nationally, but it basically is an intervention after things have gone wrong. We're talking about prevention here, which is huge. We're talking about setting students up for success years earlier. As someone who's been in developmental education in community colleges 28 years now, much of what we deal with is in fact that affective, of students coming in and saying they can't do it. That's a harder fight than teaching someone how to write or how to take on an upper-level mathematics course or a developmental-level math course. So the fact that students will not be having that experience I think speaks to a huge difference here, that it's a completely alternative path that's prevention, not intervention.

- And I think the biggest distinction that Jess and Deanna mentioned is the preparation to start as early as sixth grade, and that's one of the services that they receive in sixth grade and while they're at the college.
- Sixth grade is the year. Middle school is the first time, all the research shows, that the student says, 'I can't do it,' the parent says, 'My kid can't do it,' and the teacher says, 'I'm not sure if they can do it.' That really is the big crux of American education, so to start there is huge.
- I think just one major distinction is that all our students take the developmental sequence. That's different.

5. You talk in the application about 'personalization of the school environment for each student.' Can you clarify what you mean by that?

- As dean of student services, critical to my role is getting to know and disseminating the information about each of our students, our parents, and everyone in the community. In addition to that, helping them to understand where the embedded support services are in our program and then attaching those students, those parents, and at times faculty members to where they can get their needs met. To get to know students, we have embedded formative assessments in every lesson plan that teachers will develop. We're going to have quarterly summaries of those formative assessments. We're going to have a myriad of classroom observations and also learning block crews. We have diagnostic testing including the ACCESS exam, the W-APT for English language learners (ELLs), special education cumulative folders with lots of information. That raw data goes to our data rooms to be organized. The organized data then comes to our Friday afternoon professional development opportunities, also faculty meetings, also grade-level meetings and common planning time. In those meetings, the raw data get turned into actions, those actions get played out in the classrooms. If the classroom time is not sufficient, we have afterschool tutoring where we will continue to provide specific individualized and targeted structural interventions to students, and then the cycle repeats itself.
- The biggest part of my role is working with families in their homes, with the children, with the students, and it's simpler than what Neal's role is, and it's to be going into their homes, because if children can't get past some of the things that are going on in the homes, we know there's going to be poverty, if there's different diversities, if there is no food, if there is domestic violence, et cetera, getting the family the supports so that the child is more able and willing when they get to school.

6. What are meaningful school performance metrics that you will use to assess progress towards achieving your mission?

- At the board level, probably not the same level of detail that they're going to be getting either at the classroom level or at the management or operational level of the school, but certainly we'll have very specific goals and benchmarks and develop the measurement tools to see how well we're going against those goals and benchmarks and if there's a gap, to see how the board can participate in terms of closing that gap. That would be from an educational expectation, from a financial expectation, from a community outreach expectation, so it'll be pretty broad, but based on engagement of the board, I think there's going to be a high level of expectation to get regular reporting on a monthly basis on how well we're doing against goals and the development of metrics that best gives the information to the board in the way that the board can be very useful in engaging with the staff, particularly through the executive director.

7. From a general standpoint, if you're looking at measuring the school's success, moving towards your school's mission of every child goes to college, period, what are the metrics you're looking at along the way--in sixth grade, in seventh grade--how do you know that you're making progress towards the mission?

- We are very data-informed, and we are going to be implementing interim assessments that our students from sixth grade, seventh grade, eighth grade will be taking and we have sort of backwards designed those to ensure that our students, both college ready and college prep, are able to begin those developmental courses in the ninth and tenth grade, respectively. We want to ensure their success in those courses, so we are designing quarterly tests to track our progress toward that, and then once our students do in fact get into the tenth and eleventh grade, of course we're going to measure our success with how many students are enrolled in our college credit-bearing courses and what are their successes within those courses. Because it's one thing to be in them, it's another thing to be in them and doing well, and I think that's a huge piece of data that we are going to be looking at and constantly reforming our curriculum along the way.
- The assessments in the college courses will be exactly the same as they are on the college campus.

8. Let's hear more about what happens before students get to the college classes. How do you know between sixth grade and ninth or tenth grade when they start college courses, that they are on target?

- There are several milestones that we'll work together to look at. The first one is very simply, on a quarterly basis, are students progressing the way they need to progress to be able to finish this grade on time at the knowledge level that they need to attain? That's your first piece. Because we anticipate that many of our students are going to come in below grade level and face challenges, we're also going to want to look at, from these interim assessments, are students earning at least more than one year of growth in a single year? The way that we've talked about looking at doubling up on math and doubling up on language arts is a way to make sure that students are able to experience more than a year's worth of growth as they do that. You want them moving on time. You want them moving at the level of rigor that they're going to need to be able to be successful by the time they get to the college courses.

9. What are desired non-academic outcomes for students?

- We've looked a lot at student advocacy for themselves. Is the student able to recognize when they need help and to feel comfortable asking for help? As we look at students going to college, so many times they're not successful because they're afraid to ask for help thinking that may mean that they're less than. So that's a very particular piece of competence and growth mindset that we look for in students.
- We're looking for families to be involved and specifically have hired someone on a proposed level and will bring in a second person in year two who works specifically with our families. And Deanna, do you want to speak a little bit about what your role will be relating to nonacademic involvement?
- Again, it will be making sure that the whole child is able to attend school, that everything that's going on in the home doesn't come back into the school for them, to be able to advocate for them in those areas, and to be able to teach themselves confidence, to be able to speak up when they

get into school, when they're at their own IEP meetings or whatever other type of meetings they may be at that they're able to feel confident that they have someone with them that they can speak up and someone will have their back.

10. At what point will students have achieved this outcome of being effective advocates for themselves? And the follow-up question is, how do you assess the progress along the way?

- For kids it'll just be how many days they're in school. Making sure that they come to school, that they're not late, that they're able to learn.
- The qualities that we're looking for in our students are actually taught in the classroom through gradually releasing responsibility to our youngest students who are getting their needs met in a classroom by slowly removing the scaffolding that they need in order to be successful to increase independence, and we do that over time. But it starts immediately as soon as students are introduced to our instructional programs.
- I think it's important to mention the KTECH culture that's part of what we're talking about here, and that's something that's going to be a part of who we are, a part of our professional development implemented on day one. There will be a set of standards developed with our EDWorks partner to make sure that we do have those measures built not only into our curriculum, but the way we interact with one another and our students.
- We also have advisories that aren't just fluff time. That's time where the teacher will work with their group of students every morning, and the main goal there is to build relationships with these students and to know the students, that as a student walks in the door, they're going to be able to know the student well enough to know if they're having a bad day and to perhaps put some interventions in place. So during that time this advisor will follow these students from the day they enter the school until the day they graduate. So they're going to build relationships with these people and those relationships will automatically become trust and be able to have open and real conversations to be able to gauge that student and help them move along to independence.

11. What is it you ultimately achieve by having this KTECH culture?

- I'll start with my personal history, that building relationships with students, which I believe is KTECH, is your key to student success because once students know you believe in them, they have the confidence to reach their potential. And I believe that KTECH is the core of our student success.
- It starts with knowing them and trusting them, empowering them, really connecting them with each other and the community in ways that will build that confidence and build those skills, and then finding a way to honor the growth that the students have made and the skills that they've built along the way.

12. Please describe the evidence you have of parental support for the proposed school. For the early college program? For grades 6-8? For the numbers of students you are proposing to enroll?

- Currently we have over 672 enrolls in our database. We have 121 sixth graders, 186 seventh graders, 183 eighth graders. And for the past two weeks, for about 80 hours a week, I've been making calls to parents, just confirming their information, making sure everything is up to date, so we do have a lot of families who were able to add other siblings, because at the time when they

applied they may have had a child in sixth grade and maybe they're going into eighth grade now or ninth grade and they're not eligible anymore, so the number is increasing by day.

[Follow-up]: What's the differential? You had 600-something and when you add up the three grades that's...

- Right, it doesn't come to match each other. Those are the group that I was talking about. So if a family enrolled or submitted an intent-to-enroll in, like, 2014 or the beginning of 2015 and their child was in sixth grade, they could possibly be going into ninth grade, so we did lose some applicants.

[Follow-up]: So are these grade-by-grade numbers fresh?

- Yes. I'm going through them now in our database. So sixth grade is just about accurate, it's about 121. I've just about finished sixth grade. Seventh grade, I'm still working on calling parents, and eighth grade. So it ranges, but we are working on it right now.
- I would just add, Cliff, that it's 123. We got two sixth grade applicants as I was walking into the building this morning.
- We have numbers of applications that are too young.

[Follow-up]: So the seventh and eighth aren't fresh yet, the numbers you gave us?

- Yes, we're still working on it, but I just checked it literally last night and wrote this number in, so 186 for seventh graders and 183 for eighth graders.

[Follow-up]: But that's inclusive of kids who may have applied when they were younger, so you rolled them into seventh grade, but they may now be in a middle school that they don't intend to leave?

- Yes.

13. Based on the intent-to-enroll forms you have received, what are the characteristics of the students that you are attracting? How do they reflect or not reflect the communities the school will serve?

- From all different backgrounds: we get Cape Verdeans, Haitians, whites, we get all different backgrounds. For the Brockton area, we've met many parents who are interested in this school, ready to submit letters of support or enroll their children. That population there, they've been looking for a charter school. They really want it. And we've been able to target certain areas where we have gone to laundromats or door-to-door. So it's a greater area to really focus in on, 'OK, we know where we're going to go.' In Randolph it was a bit more tricky because whereas Brockton has about 20 laundromats, and that was the place where we were going, Randolph has about 3, so it made it a little bit more difficult. But the population, they all still are very interested in the school; it's just harder trying to find parents who have children going into sixth, seventh, and eighth grade. And then as for Taunton, everyone's excited there as well. So we really haven't met parents who aren't for the school. They're all really excited and willing to help. But with Taunton, the superintendent had promised us the opportunity to have an assembly, which didn't

happen. We were trying to figure out when we could go in there. During this assembly they said, 'Well, you can talk to sixth grade to eighth grade,' and they just kind of rolled us, kept saying, 'Oh, you'll get to go,' but it never happened. So we started outreach later in Taunton.

- We also have through our website families can submit an intent-to-enroll electronically, and we do it though paper as well. We also have a survey option for parents and families and community members who are interested in learning more about our school. We have about 50 people who have registered there. In our proposal you see an excerpt of the comments that parents and families and community members have offered: you know, 'We need this,' 'Thank you for coming. We're looking for school choice. We're looking for different options. We don't want to drive to "fill-in-the-blank" anymore where we've been commuting to bring our child to a different school.' So that's sometimes 50 people independent entirely of our intent-to-enroll pool answer it.
- As a minister in Brockton, we've had an opportunity to have a number of different families express interest in the charter school initiative. We've opened the doors to hold some informational meetings and what we found across the board from the community is that folks are just excited about having a chance to have a different opportunity. They're excited about having a chance at choice.
- On a more personal level, I have a child who just entered middle school. They originally assigned him to a very low performing school that I was not happy about and they told me I had no other choice, and because I was able to advocate for my child, I was able to get him into another school, but I don't think all parents necessarily have that option or are aware of the option that they can appeal the decision. I may decide that my son is doing well in this school and can stay at this school, but if there is the option to send him to another school, that should be there for parents rather than being forced into one particular school.
- I think there needs to be a point of clarity. We have intentionally recruited students from poor areas, so I think that needs to be on the record. And I also want to say that we did separate students who reported that they were too old, so we've already removed those students out. What Tiara's doing right now is just verifying. So there are some discrepancies. We may find that four or five of the kids who we think are in seventh grade right now are actually in eighth grade and we have to move them up, but we've moved the bulk of those students up, which are over 200 applications that we've already disqualified, who we believe are in the eighth grade now. So I don't want you to think that the seventh and eighth graders that we're going through are most likely or have a greater chance of being ineligible. There's a slight chance of being ineligible through their reporting.

[Follow-up]: Do those eighth grade numbers reflect parents who have verified that they are currently interested in going into eighth grade at this school, or is that rolled from before?

- There are parents that have self-reported that their children are now in the seventh grade and will be in the eighth grade next year. What we're finding is some of the self-reporting is incorrect.
- Our biggest pool of students is currently the eighth grade students, which surprised me when I got those numbers, which surprised me because when we did this last year it was our hardest pool to get, but right now, as of yesterday, it's our greatest number of applicants, grade eight, current.

[Follow-up]: Of the 123 on the sixth grade list, could you tell us the numbers for each of the three communities, Brockton, Taunton, and Randolph?

- I'm not sure how current this data is. I believe we had like 13 Randolph applicants for grade 6. I believe we had two applicants for Taunton, and then for seventh grade we had like nine applicants for Randolph and two for Taunton and then for eighth grade we had six Randolph applicants and at that time we didn't have any eighth grade Taunton.

[Follow-up]: So your 90% Brockton enrollment and 10% Randolph and Taunton projected split is roughly aligned...

- Yes.

14. Does the group expect Parent/Family Outreach Coordinators to be bilingual? Please describe your capacity to communicate with community members who do not speak English.

- We've encountered a lot of families that do speak Haitian Creole or Cape Verdean Creole and we've had people who were on our team that were able to translate either right there in person or through our fliers. We've had fliers translated into Haitian Creole and Spanish and Cape Verdean Creole.

[Follow-up]: When you say 'people on our team,' who do you mean?

- I think we're talking two different things here. Tiara's talking about our outreach team. We have about eight people that do outreach, three of them are bilingual, maybe four. And we made sure that depending on where we're going, we do our best to make sure that we have those native speakers working in those communities. I think what we're talking about is the parent family outreach coordinators and right now the person we have on staff is Ann. She is not bilingual. What we have done in the past is we have been really good at making sure when we are working with families that do not speak English and we need to go over to the house and make a home visit or we need to have someone answer the phone, our clerk will absolutely be bilingual, but when we have to go over to their house, we bring someone who's a native speaker with us.
- I've been doing this job for almost eleven years for the Department of Children and Families. I am totally used to not being able to speak every language, but finding ways, finding people to go with me, the social workers, a neighbor, one of the children in the home that can interpret. I've always found a way to make it work with the families and I have always had a pretty good connection even when I couldn't speak the language.

15. [For EDWorks]: What is being proposed here that is different from what you have done in the past? What are potential challenges?

- We have in the past had schools that began in the sixth or the seventh grade, so that is very similar. I think the huge difference between what is happening at this school and what we've done in the past is the focus on ELL students with so many different languages. We have had small populations of ELL students, primarily Spanish-speaking, but this work that's done here is going to be very, very different. It's been very important as we've worked with the school to design, to make sure they have appropriate ELL supports to be able to work with the students well and in depth. The same would be true for the special needs population. On average our

schools will have a small special education population. It might be only one to two to five students in an early college high school and so the fact that there is a larger special needs population here is a little bit different. Again, working with the team, particularly with their background in alternative education, to be able to make sure that they have the supports envisioned for the staff is I think very good and strong.

[Follow-up]: The plan is to send teachers and specialists from the high school along with students when they are taking courses on the college campus. Is this something that is part of the EDWorks model? What is EDWorks' assessment of this plan?

- We've had some discussions about that particular thing because when we're really looking at building the self-efficacy of the students, the idea of the teacher being with them throughout the class made us think, 'Is this going to qualitatively change the student experience?' It's common for us to have someone who checks in on the students every once in a while to make sure that they're in the class where they say they're going to be, but more often than not, we work with the college partners to monitor student grades and progress and then the teachers in the high school courses will support the students. So they might, for instance, take an English language arts course Monday, Wednesday, Friday with the college and on Tuesday and Thursday, a high school language arts teacher would be supporting them. We did wonder if this was going to work, but the more the team came together and discussed this process, we decided that it was a good and a strong—I would say it's an innovation to the model—that this team has come up with and I feel like this is the thing that will make the larger special needs population and the larger ELL population very successful.

16. Is this the plan for all the college classes? All students, irrespective of status as an ELL (English language learner) or students with disabilities, will have teachers that will go with them?

- Yes.
- All students, not just students with disabilities.

[Follow-up]: So in the case of students with disabilities, could there be two teachers going?

- Yes.
- Three.
- So what we have to do is work closely with the college. There is a college working group. There were some concerns expressed by the college that simply said, 'How many teachers? It's too much. And how are we going to utilize these teachers to the best of our ability?' We've kind of come up with the fact that our teachers will kind of serve as teacher aides while on the college campus, but there is going to have to be some work in seeing how that actually plays out in reality. Our goal is to make sure that our staff are knowledgeable of what's taking place on the college campus and what students need what services so on Tuesdays and Thursdays we can provide those services and we can make sure that our students are not only keeping current but are able to thrive in those college classes. From our standpoint, this is how we can make the claim that our students are going to be successful on college campuses.

17. I would like to hear from the Massasoit Community College's perspective, in terms of how it would perhaps be quite unusual for your current instructors to effectively utilize multiple adults, which could be a luxury but is not necessarily a given in terms of skill.

- We have begun the conversations and they'll continue. One piece I think is important is that no faculty from Massasoit will be assigned to these courses unless they want to be, first of all. None of the teachers will be assigned it as part of their full-time load. We've also made an effort, the college, and will continue to since over 70 percent of our students are developmental, we're hiring faculty in a very specific way, especially in English and math so they have expertise in understanding students who are younger in high school. So we have a lot of people who are cross-over people, which we find to be a huge strength. A lot more are used to aides in the class. We also have a series of courses on campus where we've made...if it's going to make a student successful, we don't want it to be voluntary, so we're building things in to classes. If you're familiar with the Community College of Baltimore model of accelerated English and developmental education, you actually have a tutor in the room with students. So it's not as unusual as you may think on college campuses, but there is no question, we're going to have to keep talking about this because it is a new model.
- I just wanted to say, the Amy Biehl School in Albuquerque, New Mexico has been using this model for quite a long time exactly as described, so it's not a new model. It's also a charter school, created by the brilliant Tony Monfilleto. It's a remarkable program. They use the University of New Mexico. I've seen it. I've done some work with them. This is not a new concept. It works.

18. [For EDWorks]: Please describe your contributions during the first few years of the school's operation, before students actually start taking college classes.

- When you call Omari and tell him the school is approved, we will have a team here, and the way that we work is we believe we need to be with the school a significant amount of time. We have talked a lot about the amount of time we need to be here before the school opens. We'll be here three to four times a month. We're going to help with developing curriculum; we'll be looking at developing assessments, unpacking standards, really moving that work forward. We'll have a team member, who is an expert in leadership development and has led an innovative early college high school, that will work with the school director and the team to make sure that all the operational and organizational strategies are in place to make the school successful. We on an average, as we look across the first three years of our work together, we'll be on the ground here in the school roughly six days a month every month. We'll be involved in the summer retreat and the retreat that comes at the middle of the school year. We're going to work really closely with the team to make sure we're integrating our professional development. We want to make sure that our language when we're speaking to our teachers on the ground is the same as Meredith's language when she's speaking with the teachers when we're not here. As I think about the way we've worked with new schools, that week before the school opens, we're going to have people on the ground here and they are going to be extra hands to make sure that everything is in place. We can do anything from helping teachers set up classrooms to making sure parents get their students to the right classrooms. We're a partner that's here to work with the school.

[Follow-up]: Can you quantify when you say ‘we’re on the ground six days a month’? How many people are you talking about?

- There will be at least one person from EDWorks on the ground six to eight days a month. In general, we often have two. It will probably not be more than two people on the ground six to eight days a month. I am not the best person to be on the ground to deal with the nitty-gritty, so we’re going to get you someone with a lot more expertise than I to come in and help you, but I am personally invested in the school, so I am going to be here on a regular basis as well.
- And what skill sets will those people have who are going to be coming?
- The people who will be coming to work on the instructional program are national board-certified teachers. They have been involved in early college high schools for multiple years. They are instructional specialists and they know how to use data to move the work forward. There also will be a person who has leadership expertise themselves, either as a principal, as a central office administrator, as a district administrator, as a nonprofit executive—a couple of our persons are nonprofit executives. So they can help in terms of not just the academic work, but the instructional work. We have former college professors who are great at working with the higher-education partners and working through some of those issues and challenges that come up. But I have to tell you, Massasoit has been one of the most involved and the most wonderful higher-education partners that we’ve ever experienced as we’ve been designing an early college.

19. The application references three tracks: College Ready, College Prep, and ‘a more traditional high school course model to meet the needs of students who enter NHCS in their late high school careers or those students who may not be ready to fully participate in (or choose to participate) in college courses.’ How do you decide which track the student is assigned to?

- I think initially in our inaugural year, when we’re opening sixth, seventh, and eighth grade, we’re going to be looking at state standardized tests, so more likely than not MCAS, to see both math and English and reading comprehension fluency, those sorts of things. We’re also going to be implementing diagnostic assessments within the first couple weeks of school of our own because we realize that often times when students enter in to districts, you can’t necessarily find MCAS test data, so in order to make sure we have our own data we will be giving for our ELL students their specific tests. Also diagnostic in terms of F&P and other reading comprehension tests in order to as best as possible assign our students to a specific group. I think it should be said too that our college ready, especially in our first few years while there are two tracks, our students for the most part are going to be taking the same courses; it’s just our students in the college prep are going to be receiving more support in the classroom. So while it seems as though there’s different tracks, I think it’s really important to know that our students are going to be taking very similar curriculum and content, just our students who need the additional support—special education, teachers, tutors, paraprofessionals, ELL services—will be getting those in those courses.

20. According to the application, it looks like the points at which the students would be assigned to the different tracks are sixth grade, ninth grade, and eleventh grade. Is there any possibility of moving between tracks at other points along the way? How would you determine that?

- We don’t believe in being stagnant. We believe in doing what’s best for kids. If it makes sense halfway through the school year that this child is able to move from a C group to a B group, that has more to do with the level of support that they may not need that they needed at one point, and there may be a student that may be in one of the higher groups that needs a little bit more support.

We're going to do what's best for the students, but for the most part, the curriculum's going to be the same, as Meredith had explained. It's just making sure that we put the proper supports in place. That does differ when we go to the D track and I know that, especially in the seventh grade, C and D for the first two groups and then D from there on, I think math is the divider, where we see that students start taking pre-algebra for half the year in the seventh grade and then enter algebra one in the eighth grade. So we will have to work out how movement takes place once the math class comes into effect, and there may be some more to do with scheduling where we may be able to just change the math class and still move the child. So there's work to be done, but those are good conversations and we know those are things we have to look at.

[Follow-up]: Is a choice being made at the sixth grade level whether a student is in one of the three tracks? How does that intersect with the four cohorts?

- The third track does not come into play, which is high school only, until twelfth grade. So it's really the college ready and college prep.

[Follow-up]: And then the A, B, C, D cohorts are how to determine what supports you get? So there's really only two tracks in middle school. And that is a school-determined placement based on assessment and not a choice, like 'I'm going to be college ready'—it's a support structure?

- Yes.

[Follow-up]: Just help me understand: you're saying it's the same courses, it's the support level that's different, and yet the outcomes in college ready are not the same outcomes for students in college prep because at some point college ready is doing college work while college prep is not.

- We had many conversations, and Judge Philips, who is working on the board, is saying, 'Make this easier! Is there a chart that can explain this?' To the best of my ability, math is the divider. Students who are in A and B group are taking math fundamentals for the first half and pre-algebra for the second. That then triggers who's taking algebra one versus who's taking pre-algebra in the eighth grade, and then as ninth graders, for the first inaugural seventh and eighth graders, the ninth graders will be taking geometry in college ready and they'll be taking algebra one in college prep. Those students who take algebra one as eighth graders and geometry as ninth graders are then taking a developmental math class while on our campus in the ninth grade. So because the college prep students don't take geometry until their sophomore year, we've determined that they need to have passed algebra one in order to be in a developmental classroom, so as sophomores their college prep group can now access the developmental class and the geometry. So our outcomes are different for the first two years for 50 percent, however, in our inaugural sixth grade, college ready is going to consist of A, B, and C groups; therefore, those three groups in the seventh grade will get a half year of pre-algebra and a full year of algebra one as eighth graders. That core sequence is what triggers a difference in the outcomes.

[Follow-up]: Bottom line at the back end, those students who are college ready are going to have more credits than those who are college prep and the high school-only track is perhaps for students who will be ready to take college courses when they graduate, but they won't get any credits before. And you expect that to be a small amount.

- Who have taken a developmental sequence.

- And I would say just from experience, as the team becomes more active with the students, and the students actually begin to see their colleagues in the college ready doing very, very well, sometimes those students are going to say, 'I want to go into this. I want to be in the college ready track.' And so the students may start advocating for themselves to be moved and we will work with the team to figure out when that's appropriate and how that happens.

[Follow-up]: But again, ultimately the difference is how many college credits you're going to get when you graduate. And the ceiling is college ready but you can move up to that ceiling if you want to.

- You just have to be willing to do the work.
- And pass the Accuplacer and pass the developmental sequence.

21. What is the minimum number of students who need to be assigned to each track in order for it to remain viable?

- We're expecting all of our classes to be between 24 and 27 students, so minimum I'd say is somewhere around 20, which would impact the other groups.

[Follow-up]: So you could run a track if you only had one strand, one cohort?

- Yes.

[Follow-up]: Which could be split between an A and a B or a C and a D?

- Yes.
- We don't see any difference between A and C other than the level of services. The expectations will be the same.

22. What is EDWorks' experience with the tracking aspect of the proposal?

- We have not seen a proposal quite as complex as this with the tracking, but this has been very thoughtfully designed and we believe it has great opportunity for students, and frankly we think it's going to work. We also think that maybe a year into this, there may be some adjustments to that, but that would be normal. Every early college high school is continuously making adjustments based on the needs of the students and the progress of their students, and so while it is more complex, we think it's very well planned.

23. How will the board and school leadership ensure that the program provides equitable access to college for all learners? Looking at this description of the tracks, where students are grouped by ability, how do you balance that with concerns about providing equitable access?

- All students will have access to college. We also have our Summer Bridge Program, where it will run on the Massasoit campus in between students entering their eighth and ninth grade summer, and that is going to be a four week, four day a week college experience where students will begin to explore college elective type classes. And many of them do not need prerequisite college-level

classes, even though a student in group D chooses not to take a college or maybe isn't able to because they haven't passed the Accuplacer or the developmental classes, they can still earn college credit through some of these credit-bearing courses. So this is one way we're ensuring that all kids have access to college classes. Every summer they'll have access to these college-level classes on the college campus.

- We're just not sending kids on a bus to go to Massasoit; there's quite a crew who will go with them in a supervisory capacity. So it's not in isolation, where students may leave New Heights to head off to take college classes. We're also very much assessment-driven, not just in terms of standardized assessments—MCAS is crucial—but just life in the daily classroom is going to be based on placement diagnostics and formative assessments. So based on the clear communication we have with Massasoit and within the New Heights staff, as a member of the board of directors, the chair of academic excellence, I think the key to our success is the communication and also being very proud and honored with being able to associate ourselves with Massasoit Community College. The communication piece is the key, and I pride myself on recognizing how Mr. Walker and the board and his staff maintain how important it is to communicate clearly and to be assessment and data-driven.

24. How does the school calendar align or not align with the college calendar? Will there be times when students are on the NHCSB campus all week because the college is not in session? If so, what instruction will take place during these periods?

- We've discussed this quite a bit. The students that are coming to our campus will be maintained within that calendar, but then we've built in supports, so when students are not on the college campus they will receive supplemental instruction and services on the New Heights campus.

[Follow-up]: And does that only happen in eleventh and twelfth, because I think some of the classes are taught by Massasoit faculty at New Heights?

- The classes where the professors are on the New Heights campus, they're co-taught by the New Heights teacher.
- Quick qualification: our classes, our curriculum, and our assessments, the developmental ones, will be taught at New Heights by New Heights teachers who have been working with our faculty.

[Follow-up]: So students on the Massasoit Community College campus will start when they're in college-level credit-bearing courses?

- Right. I think that will also build the capacity of the school because the teachers and the faculty will be working together on that.

[Follow-up]: The question is, on the weeks where classes at Massasoit Community College (MCC) aren't in session, what are they doing?

- During spring break at the college, we'll have the students back at New Heights for the full week, and there are a couple of different options we're talking about exploring. One is that the students will receive targeted instruction from our special-education staff on study skills and other things that we see coming up in the college classes that students need some additional support on. Maybe there will be some opportunities to do some college-level work, research papers and the

like, that they'll receive the support from New Heights. But a newer innovation that we've been talking about is the possibility of New Heights bringing in on a contractual basis the college faculty to work with our students as tutors and support the New Heights staff. So that could be a case where Massasoit faculty could come work with our students, work with our faculty and really help create a rich experience for the student for things that may occur outside of the course. Not a re-teaching of the course, but strengthening those softer skills, the effective skills they need to be courageous enough and have the confidence to be the self-advocates they need to be on a college campus.

- As we work with them on instructional design, then what we're going to help them do is look at different ways that the students can be engaged and for some of the early college high schools, the weeks when the college is off, become weeks when the students almost have mini-mesters, that they can do a series of either perhaps they need to do some catch-up work or perhaps they are spending time at an art class that they wouldn't normally be able to take, and so it just depends as we're working together on instructional design what that actually includes.

25. Do students have any choice in the courses they take, once they are assigned to a cohort? Do they ever take courses at MCC that are not exclusively with their high school classmates?

- Deanna [Yameen] and Doug Brown, who is the Dean of Math and Sciences at Massasoit, and I [Jessica Geier] and Maria [Fernandes] as well have been having these conversations in our college working group, so the truth is no. The easy answer is no.
- For now.
- But one of the things we talked about—I'm really excited about this—is in math in particular. The developmental education courses that Massasoit offers are through ALEKS, an online program, tailored to the Massasoit outcomes, course, that we teach in three semesters, starting in the ninth or tenth grade depending on which cohort you're in or which track you're in. We are going to be working, and this is already happening at Massasoit, developing those courses for acceleration, and Doug shared with us that there could be two tracks. What they're finding is that there's kind of the statistics track, in which students follow a set of courses, or a calculus/pre-calculus track, and that's something that we could tailor the ALEKS program to address. So that might be the first place that students get to—I hesitate to say choice, because of course it would be based on ability—but that would be the first place that we could start tailoring the courses.

[Follow-up]: Is this common at other EDWorks schools, where the students who are doing early college coursework at the college are cohorted?

- We have schools that do both. Some of the students will be in a college course with other traditional college students and in that case usually it's three to five students will be in a course, but we also have cohorted classes, so it depends on the particular design.

[Follow-up]: And I'm assuming because teachers are travelling, the logistics, is why you're...

- Right. And even in those schools where we don't have cohorted classes, there's not much choice in terms of what courses students take and that's because basically you want those students to be able to complete what amounts to their first two years of college and so they can't be taking one off of this shelf and one off of that shelf because then they won't get those basic courses that they need.

- Our goal is to grow towards a certificate track as well. We don't have the financing for that. That's one of the things we're going to undertake as a board in terms of trying to look at ways where the students that are in that last track that do not want to go to college but want to do something, Massasoit offers an array of certificate programs that we want to tap into. So our goal is to find the funding and do real strategic, thoughtful work with our finance committee to see if we could actually find those funds within the budget or find them outside for those few students who want to do different programs.

26. Why has the group decided that the first introduction of students to college work would be MCC remedial courses?

- By definition they're high school courses. They're pre-college. That's where those abilities to be developed is the appropriate thing to do. From the college readiness standpoint, it's what we typically would expect. It's what we hope for before someone gets there, so why not just be direct about it, and teach that and assess that?
- Part of the definition of readiness is their ability to engage in college coursework without having to take remedial coursework.

[Follow-up]: I think the question is, remedial coursework, there's a deficit connotation. As I understand it, the teachers, the faculty as you describe it will be New Heights faculty, not actual developmental faculty. But those courses are designed at colleges to remediate something that they would have gotten in high school had they been appropriately prepared.

- I'll tell you why I recommended it. Very, very clearly, what happens to students often across a lot of different areas of education is we have all these systems going, and they're expected to jump over some gaps that there are, so instead of creating a gap getting people ready, why not just teach the class that gets them ready? So instead of taking one high school structure and a college structure and trying to do this, why not just take the structure we not only know works at Massasoit but there's some national research around, so we just said, 'Why not just build to success?' Why, instead of taking something and trying to jerry-rig or get it closer, what we tried to do is take the curriculum and just push it down so that alignment is done. Our assessments go from ELL and developmental education through college level.
- I think it's also important to note that since our classes are double-blocked, two English, two math, while yes, students will be taking a developmental math course, they are still in fact taking a more traditional math course. So they might be taking the Massasoit developmental math course, but they're also taking geometry with our teachers at the same time. Same thing with English. Because we have those double blocks of English and writing, they're taking a developmental course as well as a more traditional ninth grade course.

[Follow-up]: So it's layered?

- Yes.

27. How will the school ensure the quality of the instruction provided by MCC staff?

- As a college person, I think there are a few different mechanisms. We survey students at the end of college courses and the students will be encouraged to give honest feedback. We will use that

feedback. We have a working group that's been meeting nearly a year. The New Heights team, the Massasoit team, we're going to be very mindful of the instructors we hire. As you heard Deanna say, these instructors will be hired because of a proven track record in working with the hybrid or transitional group. And then we'll also have our own staff in those classrooms who will be bringing information back to the school-based leadership team, to my position as director of college access that I would then be able to bring back to the executive director or to the college working group to say, 'Look, we have a problem here.' I have in my previous life done that work at the board level and have seen it work very effectively for individual students and/or parents and instructional staff at the high school level to raise a concern that then could be brought in a meaningful way to that faculty member, and there is a mechanism that we've discussed within the working group so that that conversation goes to the level that it needs to go to, to ensure that our students are receiving the best possible instructional services.

28. Let's say I'm a student at this proposed school. I'm taking the developmental courses in ninth and tenth grade, but I also will be taking the MCAS to get my high school diploma. I want to hear about the alignment of those courses to the state frameworks to ensure that your students are not only being prepared for additional Massasoit credit-bearing courses, but in fact are demonstrating proficiency or advanced proficiency on that state assessment so that in fact they can get their high school diploma.

- As part of the whole curriculum design process, we look at the syllabus from the college. We look at the outcomes the college is trying to attain and we sit with the teachers and unpack the standards from all the content areas and we make that crosswalk. The crosswalk is very clear from the beginning when you design a course. And more often than not because of the quality of the Massachusetts standards, there will be very strong alignment between the college and the 9-12 courses in particular. Again, that is done up front to make sure that that alignment exists. In some cases as we've worked in some states, the community college courses have actually changed as they've seen what the expectations are in the K-12 standards. It's actually changed the expectations at the college. So I think it goes both ways.
- Short and sweet, we were constantly going back between this either/or idea and we decided to do both/and. Because, as Meredith explained, we have two blocks of English and two blocks of math, we're able to satisfy the high school requirements for state testing while providing a more traditional course sequence for math and English and do the college piece with the developmental-level classes. So students will be taking both two math classes and two English classes, both designed to satisfy both requirements.

[Follow-up]: With the same New Heights teacher or different ones?

- In most cases the same.

[Follow-up]: So the one who teaches the course on the New Heights campus will also travel to the college?

- Yes, that will always be the same.
- And both college deans, myself [Deana Yameen] and Doug Brown, the dean for math and science, our developmental English coordinator, our developmental math coordinator, have all been over the years parts of MCAS development, PARCC development, college readiness, so that

from a college level I'm very confident that that expertise already exists and is reflected in our assessments and our outcomes.

29. Please update us on the current status of your curriculum planning for grades 6-8. What curriculum development work still needs to happen before the school opens? Who will do that work?

- With our partner EDWorks we do have a scope and plan for what we're going to be doing in March when we hopefully get that lovely phone call from you all, and I think our main thing is of course to build that curriculum starting with the assessments that our teachers are going to be given, those IAs (interim assessments) that are going to be given quarterly for the main content areas: your English, your math, your social studies, and your sciences. That is going to really be a good bulk of my work as the dean of curriculum and instruction, to look at the standards, both Massachusetts and Common Core, to ensure that we have rigorous aligned standards, both vertically and horizontally aligned, of course. Prior to this year and also the year before—it all sort of comes together—I worked on a scope and sequence particularly for the humanities. My background is in English, history, and writing, so I have a scope and sequence for sixth, seventh, and eighth grade English and composition courses, and am working on finalizing the social studies or world studies courses. My background is of course the humanities, so we have a good bit built out. I am of course going to be reaching out to EDWorks so that they can help me refine the curriculum that I have created prior to this, and then of course we can also focus on the math and science piece as well with EDWorks.
- And then as soon as they have engaged the teachers, that will be the first year teachers, then we'll immediately start to delve in and build those units and lesson plans and that will work through the whole process. You look at the focus of the learning, the evidence of the learning, and then the instructional strategies, and we'll work hand-in-hand to help the school build those out.

[Follow-up]: And when will the teachers be able to begin working on this?

- Ideally we want to going in to that retreat in the summer and by then we want to have teachers, have those interim those assessments to basically backwards-map from. Those are huge frameworks. Ideally, I'm not quite sure if we'll have every single unit plan done, to be perfectly honest with you, but those IAs are huge tools for teachers to be able to see this is what my student needs to be able to do by the end of quarter one, how are we then going to get them there prior to the start of school?
- In that summer retreat, we'll get at least the first quarter.

[Follow-up]: But prior to the teachers starting out, it was you and EDWorks and...?

- And Neal.
- Neal has a math/science background as well.

30. The application includes a description of three leadership teams: the Executive Leadership Team, the Student Emotional Leadership Team, and the Curriculum and Instruction Leadership Team. Can someone on the team briefly describe the role and specific responsibilities of each of these teams and explain how the three teams work together. What decisions are made by each team? Tell us about the interaction between these teams.

- These leadership teams come up often. We look at this as a multilayered approach. We have the executive leadership team who will be operating at the superintendency level, that is going to be making the broad-based decisions for the school, and with the executive director at its helm, being the liaison to the board. The school-based leadership team will be working on curriculum instruction and assessment. That team will be comprised of our instructional team as well as our student services team. And then we have the emotional leadership team that will be working with our families and with our students, social workers, school nurse, if necessary. How do they all work together? I see it as kind of a triangular trifecta. We have this layered approach so that all can be working together, and we also have staff members who are staggered throughout all three leadership teams, so that ultimately the head of school will have a presence on all three. She'll be able to bring that information up to the executive leadership team on a necessary basis or bring that information down, if you will, to the student emotional leadership team. That's my first step.
- I will also add that the data we collect with regards to current performance levels of students, performance levels of faculty, what's going on in our community really binds the three teams together, and we create action plans in our professional development common planning meetings, and so it's really the data that really binds the work of the three groups together.
- On Fridays we allow the students to leave early to have our professional development as a school, but for a half hour after that, all three teams will meet to discuss ongoing issues throughout the school on a weekly basis.

31. Can you clarify your expectations around student promotion?

- We are looking at ways—and this is a conversation that we've had over the last few months—where we can turn that summer bridge into somewhat of a remediation program for students who can't afford to pay for school. This comes out to a budgetary issue, again, and that's something we're going to have to work out. We know that some families may not be able to afford to pay for summer school in the sending district. The goal here is to do something that makes that happen. We know we have to work on that.

[Follow-up]: Is that the same policy in middle school and high school regardless of the course? What's the rationale? It would appear that if you fail one course, you repeat the academic year. What does that mean?

- We know this is an area that has to be worked on. One of the challenges here was trying to fiscally fit everything in prior to this meeting. We know that the financial restraints will be eased once we're chartered and we can really begin to do fundraising. That's something we don't want to talk about until we actually have the funds, but we know that at some point we'll be sitting down and revisiting this where we can put in real feasible options for students who fail. We know that this is not enough.
- If a seventh grade student fails a math class but they make it through their other classes, first of all, I don't think that's going to happen, and what I mean by that is we're going to have the supports in place to make sure that doesn't happen. However, should it happen, the next year that

student could re-enroll in that seventh grade class and continue in the eighth grade classes. That could happen very easily the way we've set up our schedule. So that is an option.

- It's only a small piece, but the college courses, in any of the mathematics courses that we're offering, the ones that are run through the ALEKS system, you stop at a certain place. You may not pass then, but you pick back up then. The next time you walk back into that classroom or you do your homework, you start from there. One thing is, we won't be rolling students back. So if I'm not quite there yet, a student could accelerate through one and a half classes in, say, a semester or less, but they don't lose any of those pieces. We're also in talks this week with the college-level team, about let's say it's English, one thing we want to try to do, and we're almost there, is a student who doesn't get there, of course we're not going to pass or promote, there's cases where two or three weeks with that college faculty member working on the reading and writing portfolio will put them over the top. Building those things in, we can even do it with college tutors. If someone gets—I don't like timelines—but, say, ten weeks through the course or twelve weeks through and doesn't quite make it, of course we're not going to pass them, but we have other things on the college campus that can help someone out to get them those last couple pieces, but that's more for the college-level courses. We already do that at Massasoit.
- I think just to be transparent, if we have a student that's failing three core classes, that student is staying back a year. That's a no-brainer. I don't know if that's the kind of answer you're looking for, but if the student has not achieved those skills, that student needs to repeat that grade.
- Let me also add that failure at that level would trigger our tiered level of support. We would be utilizing RTI up until perhaps some type of evaluation for an Individualized Education Plan if that was necessary.

32. You include something you call an 'exit policy' in the final application. It says, 'In the event that a student must be asked to leave, due to low academic performance, a failure of the school to meet the student's academic or emotional needs, or due to behavior unbecoming a student.' Can you tell us what you had in mind with this?

- We come from an alternative education background. I think in our entire time working there, I've worked with many folks, I think we've expelled one student. We don't see this as something where we're asking students to leave; it's more if we have a student who is simply not willing to do anything, not willing to come to school, not willing to stay after school, not willing to do the summer bridge, not willing to even make an attempt, we will do everything in our power to reengage that student. And then at the end of the year, it comes down to, 'What is it you want? How can we help you get there? Does this make sense? Is there anything else we can do to intervene in this mindset?' And we don't think this is something that is going to happen. We don't give up on students. We don't plan on giving up on students, but in the event that a student is simply not willing to engage in the process, we'll talk about what's best for them.

[Follow-up]: Whose choice is it, though? Because the way I believe it's raised is, 'if a student is asked to leave.'

- We understand that. In reality, this is about how do we keep kids in and not how do we exclude them.
- Right. I think the student is asking to leave by their actions and basically not buying into...

[Follow-up]: Right, but the subject here isn't the student. To the board: What is your thinking on this policy? What is your understanding of the board's responsibility with respect to student enrollment?

- I would say from a board's perspective, it probably starts with the philosophy that's already been described by Omari Walker in terms of the board's expectation is that the kids who are participating in the program, we're going to do everything humanly possible to make sure it's a successful experience for them. I think it's going to be a rare occurrence in which a student is asked to leave. I think it's going to be at the point where there's no other options and it's likely having an impact on the ability for the other students to be successful. I will say we've not spent virtually any time talking about this at this point in time because of the commitment of both the organization and the board in terms of achieving success, not identifying what do we do about the failures. Probably not a good answer, but something I think we can look at from a policy perspective.
- I think you're looking for what would have to happen for a child to be asked to leave.
- I think there are going to be some instances unfortunately where, two things: one, needs significant special services that they would need to go somewhere else, but we wouldn't ask them to leave. We would be working with their sending school. But another time would be a child who according to the laws, a child has a felony, and it has been deemed by the team, because we would have a process where we would all sit down and decide, by the law, yes, by the laws that are governed to have and sit down and talk about having an expulsion hearing when we feel that a child puts other students in extreme risk.

[Follow-up]: Bottom line, are you saying anything other than what is valid by law with respect to expulsions or what is allowed by law if the needs of the child are out of district placement?

- No, I don't think there's any expectation on the part of the board to do something that's beyond what's allowed by law.
- Because all those other kids in between are the kids we like to work with.

[Follow-up]: So the promotion policy that's written in the final application, the exit policy that's written in the final application is not accurate?

- They're a work in progress. We absolutely have to revisit this as a board.

[Shift to discussion with only proposed board members present.]

33. I want to be sure I understand what the board's understanding is with respect to this proposed exit policy. It does appear in the proposed policy that a child can be asked to leave. Under what circumstances would that ever be permitted?

- Obviously if someone has broken the law or conducted him or herself in a way that is not appropriate.

[Follow-up]: The phrase ‘unbecoming of an NHCS student’ is rife with interpretation. What, again, is the legal framework under which if a parent complains to you, as the board of trustees, that their child were kicked out of this school, what is your understanding of what your role is as the board of trustees with respect to a child leaving?

- You know, I’ve got to say, I don’t know if this is a fair interpretation of that or not, but I can tell you I’ve sat on these situations a million times and it’s not unlike the Supreme Court, which is, you don’t know until you see it. It’s that thing on censorship or pornography to the extent that the first case comes to you, other than the obvious. I’ve been to Omari’s school when a student was taken out in handcuffs, his school in Fall River. So there are some that are just incredibly obvious.

[Follow-up]: So the question is, do you have discretion about this?

- I would think that we would, but again, it hasn’t happened. There’s no school to talk about. A reasonable board of directors dealing with a new thing that doesn’t fit in to an obvious...that’s how policy gets developed. So Omari comes to the board one day, it might be a phone call, it might be an emergency meeting, and says, ‘Here’s how we need to develop a policy. Here comes that student. We love our students. We want to do every imaginable thing. Here’s a case.’ And you help enunciate the policy at that time. And I think to say today, for a school that doesn’t even exist yet, that, ‘Please tell us right now what exactly is going to be the policy and how it’s going to be enunciated,’ is sort of silly.
- Let me just add a couple of thoughts or a couple of points, and again, I think in fairness to the board, we haven’t focused in on that provision, I think for obvious reasons. I think the commitment is what do we do in terms of supporting the students and achieving this success, but now having said that, I think the threshold question is, is it legal for the purposes of requiring the student to leave? That’s the threshold question and there’s going to be no ambiguity about that. Then the question becomes, is there discretion within the legal ability to do it? And I think that’s going to be the role first and foremost of the staff in terms of their advocacy and then beyond that the role of the board in terms of whether or not they could support the staff in terms of keeping the student there.
- We’re not going to define legality. The judge is going to define legality.

[Follow-up]: I’m just going to point to one other clause, it says, ‘In the event a student must be asked to leave due to low academic performance.’ That doesn’t seem consistent necessarily with, you know, that’s not a felony—that’s the kid struggling.

- It would seem to me that philosophically, in I think everything we’ve talked about, that such measures would be only as a last resort when...
- First of all, there has to be a process, and I that’s a process question you’re asking. If you’re talking about a criminal act, that’s something else. If you’re talking about an academic issue, that’s a different process, and there has to be a developed process by the board or by the charter adopted by the board, that says, ‘OK, this is how we’re going to do it.’
- I think the process would be the process in terms of advocacy to the board about whether or not the board should be taking on a role as an exception to the policy, not in terms of the implementation. The question about academic achievement—again, I think in fairness to the board, we probably haven’t focused on that point, and listening to you read it, I think I’d be in a position to revisit that policy with staff to suggest that that should not be a condition of forcing a student to leave or asking a student to leave because in many respects it would seem that we’ve

failed in terms of getting the student to that academic achievement level that I believe we're obligated to achieve as part of our mission.

34. What involvement did members of the board have in the development and review of the final application?

- There's been tremendous engagement between the proposed staff, Omari and others, made accessible and available to all the board members, mainly through email communication and then through in-person meetings as well, a number of them. And all the applications, the early drafts, all the board members have had an opportunity to review them, to offer their comments and input on them.
- As a representative from Massasoit Community College, from the president to the chief academic officer and the working group, as we've mentioned several times we've been at the table since the beginning and have continued to be as now a proposed board member. So, from all the changes from the very beginning to the writing of the proposal to submitting and now the interview, we've been involved all along.
- And I think far more engagement this time around than last time around and I think that's driven mostly by timing issues, not because they didn't have any interest in board engagement, but this time around, clearly far more engagement in terms of offering thoughts and opinions about particular sections of the application itself. Particularly when we had some areas of expertise or expressed some specific interest in those areas.
- I was brought on board because I think I have a unique perspective in the classroom. My career spans five decades. I started as a teacher; I've been a coordinator; I've been a department chair; I've been a building administrator, and presently I'm teaching math because I can't get enough. I've taught in schools; I've been in schools with Mr. Walker, and you had to separate a red team from a blue team because of danger issues. So when it comes to an issue where a student may not be a good fit for our school academically, I trust the judgment of Mr. Walker, and also Mr. Schwartz mentioned situational leadership. To me that's critical. We can put a policy together, and I'm sure they will, but again, it all comes down to judgment, not only based on our data analysis, statistics, and probability, but the good judgment of the executive director. Lastly, I was a big proponent of doubling up on English and math before the term 'differentiation' and 'mainstreaming' was even part of our listening/speaking vocabulary. We've been practicing that. I am driven by how well are my students going to be able to do on MCAS 2.0. Even though we have Common Core, we're still looking at curriculum frameworks, I have faith in the administration, the minute our team is put together, to make sure if in fact our students need to be able to prove they have that particular academic excellence based on MCAS 2.0, that doubling up on math and English and extended learning is critical, absolutely critical. Also, being able to connect our school with what happens on the mean streets. We're going to have a lot of kids that got to be very bright and have a good aptitude to survive on the dog-eat-dog streets. Once they get into our particular classroom, it's funny how weak they might seem to be, but because I appreciate that, I've been able to contribute to understand that we're starting out at sixth grade. By the time these guys are ready to get to Massasoit, we've created a culture—I don't want to say cult—I want to say culture, that's going to indicate to these kids that college is a reality. We've visited various colleges with some of our students in the alternative programs, they thought there was going to be a bell to stop the particular class. They had no clue about college. They knew where the particular funeral homes are, they know where the bodegas are, they don't know where Massasoit is. They don't know where Bridgewater State University is. But their parents know, just like my parents, that these students need an education to be makers and not takers, and

because of that particular support, we've encouraged parents to be part of the instructional program, to participate as much as they can, and also to make sure that the time when learning is very valuable. Everything we do at New Heights is very important and we will not give up on them.

35. What would be an example of a decision you would make as a board, particularly a decision that would require you to vote as a board?

- There are some very basic ones that any board, whether it's a private nonprofit board of trustees or a public board, has to make. Part of that is around finances of the organization, reviewing and approving a budget that meets the operational needs of the organization, making a decision about the executive director or the CEO or the president of an organization. That's a board's role, essentially understanding how the organization is going to meet or exceed the objectives and then what metrics would be available for the board to review to determine whether or not we're on target. And if there are gaps during the course of the performance, whether it's the financial performance, the academic performance, or the performance of the executive director, what can the board do to assist in closing those gaps? It might be fundraising. It could be at the end of the day we need additional resources beyond what's available in terms of the funding. It's not unusual, particularly for a private nonprofit to essentially have an independent fundraising capability, and I think the board understands that there'll be a role that we play in terms of helping to raise funds on the financial side that hopefully has the desired impact on the educational component side.
- We also have the responsibility of internally assessing ourselves and making sure that we're maintaining our board responsibilities as board members, and if not, that is something that the board will come together to decide what should happen beyond that, how we move forward.
- You just asked one: the question about the policy of when a student would be removed. To reverse what he's saying, there will be some stuff that is absolutely the administrator's position. The board does not double guess every single time what the executive director... But there is some that either the executive director chooses, brings before the board because he wants guidance, or, absolutely, is the realm, and I would use that policy as one of them. If it says, 'because of low academic performance,' if it should make it to the final piece, he brings it to the table and says, 'That's way too vague.' Or he says, 'Here's a student, supposed to be college only,' (Omari used the phrase 'they won't try'), 'we've tried sixteen times to get the student to do homework, come to classes, whatever that range of low performances, I'm bringing this here because I'm at my wit's end. I would like the board to now define "low academic performance."' So there's an example that I think they would do it. I think that's fine. I will tell you that we have about a twelve page accountability standard for the board that we will hold Omari and his senior staff accountable for. So I understand where you're going with individual cases, as someone who's worked with a hundred and some nonprofits. More important to make sure that every week, every month this group will be meeting quarterly, that we would be overseeing—and that's our responsibility.
- Governance. We have academic excellence. We have budgets. So apparently, if you want a specific, Mr. Christ, if we're not paying our bills, how does that fit into what your role is?
- To speak before to your question in terms of actually being involved in the final proposal, the challenges in terms of funds, or lack of funds in the CSP (federal Charter School Program grant), I think it was actually a huge challenge, so the amount of involvement was pretty significant, actually more so than I anticipated because you were thinking that that money would be there. To be able to offset that, in a variety of meetings, we met with the Chief Financial Officer of Atlantis

Charter School in Fall River to review last year's proposed budget, finance leaders in the community that deal with extremely large budgets, but the whole idea was, how are we going to bridge the gap? You had this per-pupil expense that everybody's agreed on. How are you going to bridge that gap? So from a budgetary standpoint, that was the first challenge before we even made it to this meeting.

36. You're taking out some pretty large loans to cover your expenses in the first year. What's the board's understanding of when those loans are being paid back? When is the line of credit paid back and to what extent is that incorporated into the budget?

- The idea is that the construction loan, the line of credit—the line of credit obviously provides a kind of security—but in terms of the construction loan piece I think, speaking with the executive director...
- One thing we've talked about, and fundraising has come up, but bridging that gap in the short term, the line of credit will allow you to access those funds, but short of not actually being an actual charter, there's money out there that we're going to be able to access through fundraising. I know people don't want to hear about things you don't have, but the line of credit bridges that gap and it all has to do with the lack of funds that...
- I think the idea is that over a five year span the line of credit won't have a balance, is my understanding.
- It's actually extremely well defined in the application. In fact, it shows us being totally out of debt in the fifth year.
- If I may piggyback too on the earlier question relative to our involvement in the process then, from my perspective, I think each of us were uniquely recruited based on certain skill sets we bring to the table, and during the process of the application development and refinement the second time around, each of us played a role relative to our experience. In my particular case, I happened to run a YMCA that is in downtown Brockton. I have lots of personal experience in terms of, unfortunately, without pointing a finger, in terms of how kids get themselves in situations and families that ultimately are just the beginning of a real downward spiral. Secondly, I've been involved in nonprofit work for forty-two years now, especially when I work for boards and serve on boards, and I think I'm very reasonably comfortable in understanding governance and how it works. Certainly through our efforts in the governance structure, there's lots of work to do. I think the reality is that in governance, policy development is kind of a continuous process, if you will, and there will be many opportunities to do that. Lastly, and I think maybe equally as important, the expectation that we bring in terms of our stewardship role, we're the people who are here to stay and we're the ones that are going to be staying behind and ensuring that the promises made are going to be the promises kept within the scope of the proposal. I think too from the stewardship perspective, everything is local. Particularly, I'm absolutely thrilled with the relationship we have with the community college. In my position as the president of the Old Colony Y, we've had at least a 22 year experience with the college and particularly around educational gap issues. From my perspective we're dealing with quality people. More than that, from a transparency perspective, the chair of the board of the community college and one of the board members sit on our board. Mike is the former chair of our board and our relationship with Dr. Wall and his two previous predecessors all bode well that the commitment that we've made, because Massasoit is such a critical partner, that we're going to get this thing done and we're going to get it done in a way that brings values to kids and families that are being served by the school.

37. I would like every member of the proposed board to respond to this question: What do you consider the most important role of a charter school trustee?

- In twenty-five years of being a judge for the Commonwealth, I've had to hold people accountable to myself and to the law. What I think I bring to this process is integrity in my role in my position as a judge that I will make sure as much as I can that the goals of the charter, that the employees and the staff hold to their roles. I am probably the least educated as far as this process, but I'm learning every day about what we should be doing here. But I do bring integrity. I have a reputation in the Commonwealth of being tough and asking the right questions and expecting the right answers. That's what I bring.
- Fiscal discipline and control and being an advocate for any fundraising efforts to support the school's mission.
- Same here, just holding Omari accountable, basically as part of the board. We're here making sure we're able to meet on a monthly basis just to make sure that the plans we have in place, we are moving in the right direction.
- I would say mission success. At the end of the day what I want to see is this organization achieve the mission. The mission is making sure students are prepared for a college environment. As Omari said, not that every student is going to attend college immediately after school, but at least being prepared to attend college. So mission success, and there are a lot of components that go into that, but at the end of the day, I say we have to do everything in our power working collectively as a board. And I'll tell you, we're a very collegial board, there are some strong voices and strong opinions, and we're very transparent as a board. So mission success is for me the overriding goal.
- I agree. I'm glad there's a whole bunch of people here who know what they're doing and they'll know all the finances and they'll do all the accountability thing, but I'm strictly a provocateur. I want to make sure this place stays imaginative. There's not a need for a charter school if it's not imaginative, exciting, trying new ideas. If it's not doing that, then it shouldn't be a charter school. I'm with him, if it's not trying that mission and doing something different to get there and making sure that it's working hard to get there, then what's the point?
- And I think it's important to make sure that Omari and the New Heights staff, that we're holding them accountable and they have the academic rigor and success that they promised in the proposal and we hold them to that.
- I think it's most important that we hold them accountable for meeting those needs. I'm a special education teacher and it's so important that we don't let those struggling and diverse learners fall and that we monitor and we make sure they're keeping effective progress, keeping the data and monitoring it and intervening when possible. I know you asked earlier about a vote we might have, academically there might be materials or services that a child needs that we need to decide how we're going to make that work on a financial aspect. Holding the board accountable for those special education students is important.
- For me it's been, kind of like my two colleagues here spoke to pretty clearly, it's about maintaining the mission we set up to accomplish. We know that every charter school board is supposed to be faithful to the terms of the charter, but for me, what that really boils down to is, OK we've got a mission, let's make sure we nail this thing with all of the underlying layers we have.

- From my perspective, obviously the board as a legal entity of the corporation, and stewardship, which has many dimensions, is certainly number one. Equally, and it's been stated, but mission accountability: are we doing what we say we're doing? Are we accomplishing it? And then thirdly, from my perspective, quite honestly is sustainability. While we need to be prepared to deal with today, the real issue is that where are we going to be three, five, ten years down the road. And that's a heavy, heavy responsibility that we take on.
- To be as succinct as I can: I understand clearly about duty and care. To back up what Vinnie said, each individual was chosen because of their particular skill set that they brought to the table, whether it's governance or finances or mine being academic excellence. My role again is, let's take a look at the numbers, are we meeting or exceeding our goals, and if not, why not?

38. If on February 23rd, there is a vote by the board of education to award you a charter, you will become a public entity responsible for millions of dollars. If you imagine yourselves a year from now, what will you be talking about at that January board meeting? How do you know that the school is on track to meet its mission? What are you looking at in terms of that first year, since you're opening really fast and relatively big? How are you going to know you're actually succeeding in that first year?

- I think ultimately we keep talking about data and data points. It's looking at the data to make sure we are where we said we were going to be one semester out, looking at the finances, making sure where we're supposed to be one semester out. And if we're not, how do we move forward? And if we are, how do we continue to do what we're doing in holding, again going back to accountability, making sure that everybody's doing their piece, whether it's the board members or Omari or Omari's holding his staff accountable.
- One of the accountability standards that I was mentioning before is actually talking to the students and asking how they feel, asking the parents how they feel, and asking the staff how they feel. We are asking every half year. That's in the accountability standards. Because again, as you pointed out, it's one semester. So if you're asking, are the grades going to be better, then that's a problem for you to be asking that kind of reaction after a semester.
- We're asking how are people doing. We're going to find out whether the building—we're looking at two buildings right now for a school—is the building construction being completed? Because it might not be completely done by that fall. They'll be asking really basic questions. Where are we? Is it holding up? So I would say, there's a couple of questions right there.
- We'll also be asking, what are some of the challenges that the school has faced? How can we be of support? We're not just looking to crack the whip here. We're really trying to ensure that school staff knows that we're here for support to ensure that they succeed.
- But if you're asking for specific metrics, I think student attendance. We will have grades at that point. And are the students where they were supposed to be at that point, whether it's testing, assessments, social skills, all those types of metrics that we'll have access to as a board.
- All those types of metrics will be critically important in terms of the board's appreciation on how well we're meeting and achieving the mission. But things like recruitment and retention will be important numbers as well. There's going to be tremendous transparency between the parents' expectations and how they're being met and reports to the board as well because that's I think an important understanding on how well we're actually achieving a critical constituency's expectations. Also, it's not lost on us in terms of the tremendous fiduciary responsibilities we have, both from a financial perspective, but also in terms of the perspectives of the students that are entrusted to the organization's care as well. All the metrics you would expect school

committees to have an opportunity to participate in, this board will as well. As you can sense, there's a great passion amongst these board members and they're all here, I think somebody mentioned recruitment—a lot of us don't feel like we were recruited. A lot of us feel like we're doing something that is critically important to do. So I think there's a number of metrics.

- To follow up on his point, I would say most of the people who are sitting around here at this table are at this table because they've seen this work at work. We virtually all know Omari. We know Jan. We've seen the passion there and we want something different to happen in education. So some of the other kind of metrics are, were there community meetings? Have there been meetings with parents, not because the kid is failing, but because want to set up, we know that that's an aspect of success. Have there been meetings with local social workers? Have there been meetings that set up the possibility of good? So there's another metric. We want to find out how we as board members can foster some of those community meetings. Are we meeting with Rotary Club? What do we need to do, what have we done? Again, we'll only have been four or five months in school, but there will be stuff we will have done in the community.

39. Can you please update us on your facilities plan?

- We currently have a lease option with a building. They've asked to remain anonymous until we are approved, but it meets our needs for the first three years and has potential for the last two.
- I've spoken with the potential landlord and the potential landlord is absolutely committed to essentially providing the necessary space that we project that we need over these next two or three years.

[Follow-up]: So it's the same information that's in the final application as well? There's no changes or updates?

- I think we had two options. We've identified one and we actually have a lease option on the preferred location. Because it allows us to stay there.
- I want to echo Mike. I too have spoken to the owner of the property. My organization already has a longstanding relationship in terms of leasing space from him and we've had nothing but a very positive experience over the last six years with this individual property owner.

40. In general, is the team, the board in particular, satisfied that you can afford to do what you're proposing? Because what you describe in terms of double teachers in many cases, are you satisfied you've pressure-tested that your financial modeling is in fact doable and you can attract quality teachers both at the school as well as the staffing at the college through your contractual arrangement with the college?

- The answer is yes. To be specific in terms of how we came up with the numbers, we did a survey of other charter schools in the state, teachers' salaries, administrators' salaries, and so on and so forth, so the steps have been taken to ensure that the budget is as accurate as it can be.

[Follow-up for Massasoit representative]: You are confident that the amount of funding that is coming to you allows you to provide the kind of services writ large that you are promising to this school as a partner?

Proposed New Heights Charter School of Brockton Interview Summary
2015-2016 Application Cycle

- Absolutely. It's the exact same amount we charge anyone else. We've done it. It's no different financially from any of our partnerships.
- We already have scores of teachers who have reached out to want to work with us and we have not yet been approved.