***Proposed* Map Academy Charter School**

**Summary of Interview**

*Questions derived from review panel and documentation review*

***Note: The interview summary is not a transcript of the interview audio. Responses have been summarized by Department staff. The order of questions and responses within the summary may not reflect the chronology during the interview.***

**In attendance:**

**Mary Burke**, proposed board member

**Kim Hunt**, proposed board member

**Edward Jacoubs**, proposed board member

**Paul Kitchen**, proposed board member

**Linda McCann**, proposed board member

**David Peck**, proposed board member

**Joanne Peterson**, proposed board member

**Rachel Babcock**, proposed co-director and proposed board member

**Josh Charpentier**, proposed co-director and proposed board member

**Kevin Avitabile**, proposed dean of culture

1. **What is your current thinking about when the school will open? This fall, or in the fall of 2018? What is it that you will accomplish with more time?**
* Our (Rachel Babcock and Josh Charpentier, proposed co-directors) plan is to finish this school year as employees of Plymouth Public Schools, then resign and focus on Map Academy and open in the fall of 2018. The CSP (Charter Schools Program) grant and the Barr Foundation will support us during the planning year.
* The additional time will allow us not to rush. We are trying to think outside the box for everything from content delivery to physical space to see how we can best design Map Academy to support a population that traditional schools have not worked for. We will use the additional time to grow the model and to find the key people that we need for our team.
* Kevin (Kevin Avitabile, proposed dean of culture) will run the alternative program at Plymouth Public Schools next year, and we will collaborate with him to figure out the best way to transition and phase out that program so there is no gap in equitable education for the at-risk population in Plymouth.
1. **Please update us on your recruitment efforts and on the evidence of demand for the proposed school. How did you determine the proposed charter region? Why include Wareham and Carver as sending districts? Why not other surrounding districts? What specific evidence of demand do you have from the Wareham and Carver communities?**
* The proposed region makes sense because of existing public transportation routes. The communities of Wareham and Carver have public transportation routes to the north Plymouth area where we hope to locate and where Quincy College at Plymouth is located.
* Based on our interactions with other adults and agencies working with the students we hope to serve, we know there is a critical mass of young people in these communities who are not being served right now. We get calls all the time from parents and families of students. We have a binder just of kids in Plymouth that we know.
* Our student population is not the student population that is out looking for better educational opportunities. Our students are the students leaving school and never returning. We know who the students are. We know who the families are. We know how to build relationships with them. We know how to build rapport and trust. A lot of the kids who were there at the public hearing were there because they know that feeling of someone reaching out.
* Opening with 130 students will work because we currently serve almost 100 students in the Plymouth alternative education program, students are perpetually on the waiting list, and the phone is ringing all the time with parents seeking options for their children.
1. **The school is planning to serve students who have completed grade 8 through age 24, who will enroll with a range of competency levels. Do you have a sense of what the student body will look like initially (e.g., Mostly ninth graders? Mostly students over 20? An even mix of students of all ages and competency levels?)**
* We expect a broad range of students. We will see kids coming straight from middle school and kids who have already tried traditional high school and have disengaged from that. We expect that there will be some critical mass of students coming from the current Plymouth Public Schools alternative program to Map Academy when we are ready to open.
1. **How have you determined that the proposed growth plan is feasible and sustainable? Have you considered any alternate growth plans, such as opening larger, growing more quickly, or initially serving students in a more narrow age or competency range? How do you offer a program serving students across the age and competency range, with the degree of flexibility you describe, with eight core content area teachers in year one?**
* We modeled our plan on BDEA (Boston Day and Evening Academy Charter School), where we spent a significant amount of time over the past two years. What we learned from their experience is that well-trained teachers are able to meet the needs of a roomful of students.
* Our partnership with Quincy College will enable us to meet the needs of students who come to us who are more academically capable. The college’s wide array of both academic and career-focused coursework will allow us to create an individualized pathway for those students.
* We will structure the academic program to meet the core needs with a small staff at the beginning, and build out as we grow.
1. **How is the program described in the application both similar to and different from the program currently offered at Boston Day and Evening Charter School (BDEA)?**
* The Linked Learning approach, which embeds career development in the academic program, and the intentional focus on social-emotional competencies using the CASEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning) framework are elements that are unique to our program. We will use the planning year to further develop these elements.
1. **Please explain what is included in the Boston Day and Evening Charter School (BDEA) curricular materials, beyond the list of modules and benchmark descriptions included as attachments to the application. What additional work needs to be done initially to develop school curriculum? Who will be developing the curricular materials? Will BDEA staff members support the process in any way?**
* We are incredibly thankful for the partnership with BDEA. They have been incredibly generous. They have made all of their instructional materials available to us. In addition, before we open BDEA staff members will provide training to our staff on shifting to a competency-based assessment model.
* During the planning year we will need to integrate the Linked Learning (career development) approach into the curriculum. In a couple weeks we will be attending the Linked Learning convention in California and visiting schools to look at how they are embedding career development in their academic program.
* My (Rachel Babcock, proposed co-director) background is in instruction and in curriculum development, but it is really important that the teachers are involved in developing the curriculum. At the beginning we will use the framework that BDEA has created, but as at BDEA, our staff members will be empowered to create engaging content that meets students where they are. If we are asking teachers to meet students where they are, we can’t script exactly what is going to happen.
* BDEA has spent the last few years developing a Salesforce system to track the data used to determine if a student has met the benchmarks. We’ve had a chance to preview it, and we’ve been discussing the logistics of how we could purchase the system from them to use at Map Academy. Every trimester we will have a new set of data, and as we see how kids are doing, we will know what is working and not working.
1. **Please tell us more about the plan to recruit, train, and support teachers who will be able to successfully implement the program described in the application.**
* We will use our professional networks to identify staff members for key positions, and then we will be able to leverage those staff members’ networks as well. We want to find staff members who are passionate about working with this population. Graduates of the program we currently work in will help us vet prospective staff members.
1. **What additional training will teachers need prior to the school opening to prepare them for a successful start?**
* Teachers will need trauma training and restorative justice training.
* We will need to develop a really strong culture among our staff. Staff development will have to start right away.
1. **When in the schedule will teachers collaborate, participate in ILT (instructional leadership team) meetings, SST (student support team) meetings, and go with students to appointments?**
* We are asking a lot of the staff. We’ll find staff with the mentality to put students first. We can’t expect students to achieve academic success without meeting their social-emotional needs.
* The leadership team will be very hands on with the staff. During our Friday staff meetings we will prioritize staff well-being. We’ll do collaborative problem-solving with the staff, just like we do with students.
* The lead teachers will perform some administrative duties such as participating in ILT meetings, so they will teach fewer classes.
1. **How will you know whether a particular student is succeeding over time, and whether students served by the school are succeeding over time? What criteria will you use? Will success be determined in relation to set standards of achievement? By taking into account growth/progress?**
* The standards are the same for all students. In order to graduate you have to meet the required benchmarks. That’s not negotiable.
* Knowing that we are talking about students whose relationship with school and often with life is broken, we have to measure their progress or we won’t retain them. Feeling defeated and unable to make progress is the number one thing that drives students away from traditional high schools. The beauty of the competency-based model is that every trimester we are validating the progress that students have made in the academic sphere, the social-emotional sphere, and the job-readiness sphere. The individualized learning plan (ILP) will be constantly updated to validate a student’s progress.
* Jodie Ernst of Momentum Strategy and Research is working with us to determine what accountability looks like in this model. We don’t have a crystal clear definition yet, but what we have in the draft accountability plan are some interesting ways of looking at progress, and we will continue working on those.
1. **What support services will be offered for students, and what are some of the methods that will be used to provide a continuum of services to meet students’ needs as they are identified?**
* Academic success cannot be achieved until after students’ social-emotional needs have first been met. We need to focus on social-emotional support. I (Kevin Avitabile, proposed dean of culture) am a licensed clinical social worker. I and other school staff members will work on building relationships with students. We have incorporated a class called Foundations that will be taught by our social workers. The class will incorporate the CASEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning) framework, and will provide opportunities to address the real-life issues students are dealing with. They will work on things like self-management, self-awareness, and decision-making.
* We are empowering the staff to go beyond the four walls of the school. Our kids are uneducated when it comes to the outside world, when it comes to the court system, when it comes to finding their own mental health treatment, and when it comes to finding substance abuse treatment. Our staff will help them access support services in the community as needed. Rachel and Josh (Rachel Babcock and Josh Charpentier, proposed co-directors) have already established relationships with organizations in the community.
* The single biggest support is the ability to customize each student’s academic program. Everything is driven by the ILP (individualized learning plan). Students are enrolled in new modules every 12 weeks that are at just the right level for them, and are able to repeat modules as needed.
* The right teacher for Map Academy doesn’t see differentiating instruction as something that they have to do, but something that they innately want to do. What the classroom looks like is a thriving, relaxed, yet structured environment where students have control over their own learning guided by a highly qualified facilitator.
* We will have a learning center that will be staffed all day under the direction of the special education coordinator. The services delivered there will be determined by a student’s ILP.
* Map Academy students will be able to access Quincy College’s tutoring center when they are enrolled as students there.
1. **What is the rationale for special education teacher staffing levels? How did you determine that one special education teacher (and one dual-certified teacher) will be adequate, considering 40 percent of students may be students with disabilities?**
* We have to go beyond the traditional special education process. Our approach is to treat every student as if they need an IEP (Individualized Education Program) by creating an individualized learning plan (ILP) for all students. Students’ ILPs are created during their first trimester at Map Academy, when we are going to assess everything about them.
* For a student who comes with an IEP, the special education coordinator, the special education teacher, Kevin (Kevin Avitabile, proposed dean of culture) and his social emotional staff, and we as a leadership team will look at the existing IEP and talk to the student and the family to see what was and wasn’t working.
1. **[Board] Please describe the task of overseeing the proposed program. What is involved?**
* We have a range of oversight obligations, including fiduciary and compliance obligations. We will review and approve the budget. We will oversee the implementation of the school policies and procedures, and we will hold the co-directors responsible for running the school, meeting the school’s goals, and providing state-of-the-school reports at board meetings on a monthly basis or as needed. We will be a sounding board for the co-directors and will work with them if there are areas where the school is not quite meeting performance expectations.
* We also need to be ambassadors for the school, advocates in the community to articulate the goals and objectives of the school and why we stand behind it.
1. **Have you identified proposed board officers? If so, please clarify how your role is distinct from other board members.**
* We have identified Paul Kitchen as the treasurer. We have not identified other board officers.
1. **What specific types of data will you need in order to be able to perform your oversight duties? How will the board respond to challenges in school performance? If you are looking at the data and it is not what you would like it to be, how will you respond?**
* We will periodically review financial data, enrollment data, and student performance data, so that we know whether the mission is being addressed. We will collect and look at all the things that the Department requires.
* We expect that there will be challenges during the first year or two. It will be up to us to come together and address any issues that come up. We will respond to challenges by asking the co-directors to develop a plan. This can be tied to the evaluations of the co-directors.
1. **Have you identified areas of expertise that you believe would strengthen the proposed board? How will you go about recruiting new board members?**
* Right now we have a very good and balanced board.
* To recruit a new board member, we would first talk to them to see if they are interested. Then we would invite them to attend one or more board meetings and to visit the school. We will need to develop a vetting process to review their skills. You want someone who rolls up their sleeves and works.
1. **Please describe succession planning related to the co-directors. What happens if one or the other leaves?**
* Any good leader needs to plan for who is going to take over for them. Josh and Rachel (Rachel Babcock and Josh Charpentier, proposed co-directors) have put a plan in place for when they leave Plymouth Public Schools, and we as a board can make sure a succession plan is in place for Josh and Rachel at Map Academy. The co-directors’ employee contracts will need to include notice provisions.
1. **How will the board ensure that the dual role of the co-directors as both school employees and trustees does not interfere with the management or governance of the school?**
* We (Rachel Babcock and Josh Charpentier, proposed co-directors) will be voting members, but we will not vote on issues that impact us. During the planning period we will work with a consultant to make sure our roles as co-directors and as board members are clearly delineated. We’ve started to work on this in our draft bylaws.
1. **[Mary Burke, proposed board member and vice president of academic and administrative affairs at Quincy College] Please describe the partnership with Quincy College. What is it that the college will be providing that will support the school? What will the college receive in return?**
* We have talked about a capstone English or math course. A group of students could come to the college, or a Quincy College professor could go to Map Academy to teach a course to students there. We may be able to weave students into our existing courses. We can create independent studies. We offer courses of different lengths as well as online summer and winter sessions. We are flexible with our existing students and can be with Map Academy students.
* In terms of career exploration, we have our own career counseling office that would be available to Map Academy students. Students will take different tests to match skills and interests. We have a robust internship program. We have grant opportunities for students to be paid if they are placed with non-profit organizations. That too will be available to Map Academy students.
* We have significant wraparound services, both academic and services that we provide to prevent obstacles to success. Those would all be available to Map Academy students as well.
1. **What will be the costs associated with the services provided by Quincy College? What arrangements have been made between the school and Quincy College?**
* We are still discussing the specifics. Costs would depend on the services being provided. We won’t know the exact costs until we are chartered and formalize the agreement.
1. **How will the board be trained to conduct an evaluation of the co-directors using the Massachusetts Educator Evaluation System?**
* We have a couple members who are familiar with the evaluation system. We can acquire more information about it if we need to.
1. **Do you have any facilities updates to share?**
* We have a space plan that was informed by the MSBA’s (Massachusetts School Building Authority) space guidelines.
* We are looking at several facilities options. One supportive businessman has several potential facilities that could be renovated to suit our needs. If there is empty land, we could build to suit.
* We are looking in North Plymouth because Quincy College is located there and because there are many students in that area who could walk to school.
1. **Please describe the process you used to review the draft budget. What testing did you do in reviewing the budget and cash flow projections?**
* We had funding from the Barr Foundation to hire two charter school experts in the finance industry to develop the cash flow projections and the budget.
* We based the salaries on salaries in the surrounding 20 districts.
* Working on the budget has been an iterative process, and we will continue working on it during the pre-operational period.
1. **What assumptions are you making about the revenue stream and the numbers of students enrolled at the school?**
* There will be multiple entry points and multiple graduation opportunities during the school year. We will conduct ongoing recruitment, and are confident that the turnover of students will allow us to stay at capacity.
* Our per pupil revenue numbers are based on conversations with Department (MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education) staff.
* We didn’t include much grant revenue in the budget projections because we wanted to show that initially we could operate on a budget that does not assume a lot of grant revenue.
* To do everything we are trying to do will require additional funding. That is why we established a 501(c)(3) organization.